

Safer Recruitment of Volunteers

Many churches are forming groups of volunteers to help their communities during the coronavirus outbreak. For example, this could be helping people who are self-isolating with their shopping or offering a listening ear (by telephone or other remote method) as a pastoral carer.

Churches need to continue with their safer recruitment processes, even in these challenging times, and that includes recognising when a DBS check is necessary for new volunteering work. To help your church identify where checks are needed, we've produced three helpful pointers:

1. Not every role requires a DBS check – be careful not to 'overcheck' volunteers

We tend to assume that all church roles need a DBS check, but this isn't the case. To help you consider this, the table below gives examples of which roles meet the threshold for a DBS check and those which don't.

DBS check required	DBS check not required
Volunteering to do shopping for someone who is self-isolating where they are handing over money to the volunteer (but only when this is something arranged by the church)	Delivering food parcels from a food bank or community kitchen to someone who is self-isolating
Supervising volunteers who themselves may be adults at risk whilst working for a food bank or community project	Helping to pack up parcels at a food bank
Picking up and delivering medication on behalf of individuals in the church as part of a church arrangement	Helping to prepare meals for delivery to people self-isolating or vulnerable connected with the church
Provision of pastoral support and care to those in need (please also refer to specific advice on social distancing in pastoral care)	Providing prayer support to those in need as part of a prayer chain or virtual prayer meeting

2. Church organised activities

Please remember that the list above applies where people are volunteering as part of church co-ordinated activities. Where people within the church make their own arrangements to support their friends with shopping, meal provision or care needs then there is no requirement for a DBS check to be completed.

If you have concerns about someone's intentions in making offers of support to others in the church, then this should be reported to the Designated Person for Safeguarding in line with the church safeguarding policy.

3. DBS Checks for volunteers

Remember that when a DBS check for a volunteer is instigated it is important to wait until you have confirmation from DDC that the Certificate has been issued before allowing the volunteer to start in their role. This is particularly important when the person is a new volunteer and no check has been completed by the church previously.

When a DBS check comes back with details of criminal convictions or police information, the National Safeguarding Team carry out the risk assessment of whether the individual can be cleared to work with children, young people and/or adults at risk. As part of this process, the individual being checked is asked to send their certificate and a photocopy of their certificate to DDC. The current emergency plans may make it difficult for people to take photocopies, and in some cases even post their documents, which means that there may be delays in response on some DBS check risk assessments.

As a church you will not always know which of your volunteers are subject to the additional risk assessment, so it is vitally important to apply a consistent approach with all volunteers; ensuring that they do not start in their volunteer role until DDC have confirmed with the verifier that the certificate has been issued.

For more information on the DBS checking process for churches

The BUGB Guide to DBS Checks is available online for more general information on DBS checks for churches. https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/452419/BUGB_Guide_to.aspx

The DBS have also published guidelines on DBS checking for volunteers during the coronavirus outbreak. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

Last Updated 1 March 2021