

Screening and police checks

If your volunteers work with children and young people and/or with vulnerable adults you will need to look at their role to determine whether they should be screened and police checked.

No screening is foolproof. It is also important to build in appropriate management systems so that you can minimise risk (see the information sheet [Safe involvement of volunteers with children and vulnerable adults](#)).

CRB and ISA

The Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) are both part of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS). These organisations act as a 'one-stop-shop' for organisations and will check police records to inform you if your volunteer has been caught and charged with any crime in the UK.

A **CRB** will:

- Check volunteers details against the UK Criminal Record Database of Recorded Crimes.
- It will give a detailed record of all known crimes committed in the UK by the volunteer.
- It will also give notes recorded by police about individuals even if they are not charged with those offences

The **ISA** is an organisation that looks at all of the people on the criminal record database and makes a decision as to whether they are safe to work with vulnerable people. This is a new screening system and it will be possible to apply for ISA registration from June 2010 and will be a legal requirement from November 2010.

ISA	CRB
Volunteers will get an ISA number. You will enter this online and will be given a Yes / No decision telling you if the person is safe to work with children or vulnerable adults.	A paper document sent to the umbrella organisation which contains a list of all convictions and notes on persons file. Checks include spent and unspent convictions.
You will get live and ongoing updates if the decision changes.	A record of past crimes only and it is not updated
ISA make the decision and will tell you if the person can volunteer.	

Both ISA and CRB have useful websites: <http://www.isa.gov.org.uk/> and <http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

When should you CRB / ISA your volunteers?

The decision to CRB / ISA a volunteer should be based on the role that the volunteer does, the people that the volunteer will work with and in some cases the location where they volunteer.

It will soon be a legal requirement to get an ISA number before people can volunteer in *some* roles. However, as the rules are very complicated it is important to talk to the Volunteer Centre or contact the ISA for specific advice.

When shouldn't you CRB / ISA your volunteers?

Requiring a CRB / ISA does put up a big barrier to potential volunteers so they should only be used if it is *legally required*. Asking for a CRB when it is not legally required is actually a breach of volunteer's rights under the Data Protection Act. In general, if the volunteer does not work with legally vulnerable adults or children you should not request a CRB.

Benefits of CRB and ISA

- It can deter convicted criminals from applying for roles
- It demonstrates a commitment to protect your service users.

Limitations

- It can give a false sense of security. It only shows a person has not been caught.

Asylum seekers can get CRB checks

Asylum seekers, refugees and other people with limited documents can get CRB checks through the 'finger print' method. See www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk for more information.