

Criminal record checks

Safeguarding and vetting checks

Once you've decided who you want to appoint, you can make an offer. However, this should only be a conditional offer until all the safeguarding and vetting checks have been carried out. Some of these are checks that any employer would make. Others relate more specifically to the safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

What is vetting?

Vetting is the process by which personal details of prospective employees and volunteers are checked with official sources, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Access Northern Ireland (ANI) or Disclosure Scotland, as well as previous employers and qualification bodies. This is to ensure that the information gathered on applicants is accurate and true to allow the organisation to make informed recruitment decisions. Vetting is the minimum safeguard that must be utilised to prevent unsuitable people who may want to harm vulnerable groups from obtaining positions within the organisation.

It is important not to rely solely on criminal record checks to screen out unsuitable applicants. These checks are essential to safeguard, but they will only pick up those abusers who have been convicted. Many individuals who are unsuited to working with children and young people will not have any previous convictions.

England and Wales

In England and Wales criminal record disclosure checks are carried out by the **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**.

Organisations that want to request DBS checks on candidates must either:

- register with the DBS (this is only suitable for large organisations that need to carry out at least 100 checks a year)
- or use an umbrella body that is registered with the DBS (the NSPCC is not an umbrella body). **You can search for umbrella bodies on the GOV.UK website.**

Anyone working in “regulated activity” with children should undergo an Enhanced Disclosure with a check against the barred lists, ie adults barred from working with children. The definitions for regulated activity are set out in the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**, as amended by the **Protection of Freedoms Act 2012**.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, criminal record disclosure checks are carried out by **AccessNI**.

Organisations that want to request AccessNI disclosure on candidates must either:

- become a registered body (this is only suitable for large organisations)
- or use an umbrella body that is registered with AccessNI (the NSPCC is not an umbrella body). You can see a full list of umbrella bodies on the **Department of Justice for Northern Ireland website**.
- or apply as an individual (for a Basic Disclosure only).

Depending on the nature of the work, an employer may ask for a Basic, Standard or Enhanced Disclosure.

As in England and Wales, anyone working in “regulated activity” with children should undergo an Enhanced Disclosure with a check against the barred lists, ie adults barred from working with children. The definitions for regulated activity are set out in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Scotland

In Scotland criminal record disclosure checks are carried out by **Disclosure Scotland**.

Organisations needing to use the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme or request disclosure checks must either:

- register with the Disclosure Scheme (this is only suitable for large organisations)
- or use an umbrella body that is registered with Disclosure Scotland (the NSPCC is not an umbrella body). **A list of umbrella bodies is available on the Disclosure Scotland website.**

For regulated work with children or protected adults, the PVG Scheme is now the appropriate type of check. The definitions for regulated activity are set out in the **Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007**.

For other non-regulated activities where people may come into contact with children, the organisation may be able to request information held by the police on that individual via a Scotland Disclosure check. Depending on the nature of the work, an employer may ask for a Basic, Standard or Enhanced Disclosure. Only an Enhanced Disclosure will identify if an individual is on the list of adults barred from working with children.

For more information on criminal record checks see the NSPCC’s factsheet: **www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/briefings/Criminal-record-disclosure-checks_wda95750.html**

For up-to-date information on all UK legislation, visit **www.legislation.gov.uk**