



# Screening Volunteers - A Guide for Clubs

These Top Tips aim to provide information to assist clubs in:

- recognising their responsibilities for screening volunteers
- establishing procedures for screening volunteers
- identifying sources of further information and support.

Throughout this text, reference is made to sports 'clubs'. This term is used to include all sports organisations, such as leagues, county and area associations, and other community groups that provide sporting opportunities, whether in an organised setting or a more informal environment.

Reference is also made in the text to 'volunteers'. However, the same principles apply to screening people employed to work within the club. For example, a part-time coach who receives a fee for his/her services or who is formally employed by the club.

## **what is screening?**

Screening is used here to mean checking. For example, checking if someone has a criminal record. It is one way of reducing the risk of recruiting volunteers who may be unsuitable to work with young people or vulnerable people.

## **the limitations of screening**

Nothing can take the place of good practice when working with young and vulnerable people. Clubs should not assume that by screening volunteers they have done enough. It is vital to always carry out effective recruitment, training and supervision of all volunteers.

Screening is a valuable tool in identifying unsuitable volunteers, but it is not foolproof. For example, 90% of child sex offenders have no relevant criminal record.

## **why do clubs need to screen volunteers?**

Clubs need to screen volunteers for the following reasons:

- To make every possible effort to ensure the safety of young and vulnerable people within the club.
- To ensure clubs provide a duty of care to young and vulnerable people.
- As a matter of good policy and practice.
- To meet legal responsibilities through Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks – it is a criminal offence to take on someone who you know to be banned from working with young people, if they are to be with young people.

### **who should you screen?**

Think about the volunteers within your club who might have unsupervised, isolated or regular one-to-one contact with young people. For example, a coach, an official, a chaperone, a team manager or a sports leader. The nature of volunteering in clubs allows for people changing from one role to another. For example, this year's fixtures secretary becomes next year's team manager. You should check anyone who may have the potential to abuse young people in some way.

### **how do you go about screening volunteers?**

Any screening procedures established by the sports club should be used consistently for all volunteers who might now, or in the future, have unsupervised, isolated or regular one-to-one contact with young and vulnerable people. Existing volunteers can be asked to provide the same information as new, potential volunteers.

### **what do you need to know?**

There are three levels of CRB checks – enhanced, standard and basic. The club will need enough information in order to receive a minimum of a Standard Disclosure from the CRB. You will need to follow the advice from the CRB on the information you are required to collect (as they have strict criteria on the ID that needs to be seen). However, the following gives some guidance.

You will need the following information about volunteers/potential volunteers:

- Clear identification (eg driving licence/passport and at least two utility bills).
- Their previous involvement in sport or volunteering.

- A self-declaration of:
  - any criminal record
  - any notification to a social services department as being an actual or potential risk to young people
  - whether they have had action taken against them in relation to child abuse, sexual offences or violence.

All volunteers should be required to complete a volunteer profile/application and provide independent references from an appropriate source.

The sensitive and confidential information could be a separate part of the form, which must be treated confidentially.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 allows ex-offenders to consider certain offences as

'spent' after a period of time, which varies according to the length of sentence given. Many paid and voluntary jobs that involve access to young and vulnerable people are exempt, which means that a prospective volunteer can be required to disclose **all** previous offences.

For more detailed information about CRB checks, equal opportunities for ex-offenders and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, view the Volunteering England 'Screening and Police Checking' information sheet – [www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers/information/onlineinformationsheets/index.htm](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers/information/onlineinformationsheets/index.htm)

#### **what to do with the information when you have it?**

You will need to submit the relevant information to the CRB for checking. In order to make this check, you will need to be either a registered body with the CRB or make the application through an umbrella body, eg your national governing body (NGB). There is no cost for screening volunteers with the CRB (charges do apply for paid staff), but some umbrella registered bodies are making a small charge for the administration they have to undertake to

process applications. Alternatively, your club could become a registered body at a cost of £300.

Information held about individuals by a club may be subject to the Data Protection Act (you may need to check what your responsibilities are in terms of data protection. Information collected in confidence must be treated in confidence).

### **after the check**

What action are you going to take if information is disclosed which may impact upon the individual's involvement as a volunteer? You may need to consider:

- the nature of the offence
- the nature of the voluntary role
- how long ago the offence was committed
- the frequency of the offence and whether there is a pattern of similar offences
- the need for further information from the volunteer to clarify the exact nature of declared offences.

If you are unsure about what to do with potentially difficult information, it is important to check with a relevant body (see further information and useful contacts).

Until you are confident that the individual has undergone the necessary checks, it is good practice not to leave them unsupervised with young or vulnerable people.

**Top Tip:** The information given is only as good as its source. A clean criminal record might just mean that the individual has not yet been successfully prosecuted for offences against young people. Screening must not take the place of good practice around working with young and vulnerable people.

### **further information and useful contacts**

Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)

NSPCC National Training Centre

3 Gilmour Close

Beaumont Leys

Leicester LE4 1EZ

Tel: 0116-234 7278/7280

Fax: 0116-234 0464

Email: [cpsu@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:cpsu@nspcc.org.uk)

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