

## Safeguarding in Mothers' Union

# The Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) and criminal records checks

In England & Wales, those who wish to work with children or adults at risk need a criminal record check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (often referred to as the DBS). These checks need to be carried out by the organisation responsible for the safer recruitment and safeguarding training of the volunteers (see *Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding Training: Who is responsible?*

<https://www.mothersunion.org/sites/default/files/resources/public/Safer%20Recruitment%20Who%20is%20responsible.pdf> )

If a diocesan Mothers' Union is responsible for the safer recruitment and safeguarding training of volunteers, they are also responsible for the DBS checks.

It is recommended that each diocesan Mothers' Union should

- Register with one of the safeguarding agencies who offer electronic DBS checks. Agencies charge an annual registration fee and an administration charge for each check.
- Appoint an appropriate individual to be responsible for administering the checks, being informed of check results and maintaining appropriate records.

*Thirtyone:eight* is recommended as a safeguarding agency. It is a Christian organisation specialising in supporting faith groups and widely used by Anglican dioceses as well as Mothers' Union for the central staff.

## Portability & update

There are provisions which avoid the need for volunteers to complete multiple Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) applications, provided inter alia that the check is:

- For a voluntary (not paid) role
- The same level of check is required
- Relates to the same group (i.e. working with children or adults or both)

## Update service

It is possible for volunteers to register free of charge with the DBS Update Service, provided they do so within 30 days of the date of issue of the DBS certificate.

This means a volunteer doesn't need to go through the online DBS application and checking process when they apply for another voluntary role. Instead, they need to produce their original DBS

certificate with its 12 digit reference number, their full name and date of birth, which allows their current status to be checked on line by the new organisation they are volunteering with.

The Update Service can only be used for:

- standard and enhanced checks (not checks where barring information is required)
- the same level of check and
- the same workforce (children, adult or both)

More information about the DBS update service, including how to check a volunteer's record, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide>

Where a volunteer has registered for the Update Service, you should check the current status of the record every three years.

### **Portability**

Some volunteers may have an existing DBS certificate for other church related activities which could meet the requirement for a DBS check through portability. To meet the portability requirement, their DBS certificate must be seen and meet the following criteria:

- Issued for a role within the same Anglican diocese, for example as a PCC member or a Sunday school teacher
- Apply to the same "workforce" (children, adult or both)
- Eligible for the same/lower level of criminal record check as the other (or previous) role
- Be current and not in need of renewal. Mothers' Union in B&I require DBS certificates to be renewed every three years, unless registered with the Update Service (see above).

DBS certificates relating to current employment or from other voluntary organisations (including Girlguiding and the Scout Association) or from other Anglican dioceses are not acceptable.

### **DBS checks for Mothers' Union trustees**

The Charity Commission for England & Wales recommends that all trustees of charities working with children and vulnerable adults should have an enhanced DBS check. This is not an issue of whether the trustee has any direct contact, but that, as part of the body responsible for decision making relating to work with these groups, each trustee should be an appropriate person to undertake such decisions. The Church of England and the Church in Wales have similar requirements for members of PCCs which sponsor and approve work with children and adults at risk.

The B&I Group have agreed that Mothers' Union trustees in England and Wales must have a DBS enhanced check for working with both children and vulnerable adults issued in the past three years and that each diocesan Mothers' Union is responsible for the DBS checks of its trustees. DBS checks are for working relating to children or adults or both groups. In most instances, diocesan trustees will require checking for both groups as Mothers' Union activities are likely to involve both children and adults at risk.

A trustee who has had an equivalent check with another voluntary organisation and is registered with the DBS update service (see above) can give permission for their record to be checked via that service by the diocesan Mothers' Union.

Similarly, a Mothers' Union trustee with an equivalent current certificate as a volunteer within the Church of England or the Church in Wales can use that certificate through the portability provisions of the DBS system.