

Volunteer disclosure and barring service checks policy

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Volunteer disclosure and barring service checks policy

This policy covers the process of why and how we carry out disclosure and barring service checks on volunteers at Parkinson's UK, as well as handling, use, storage and retention of this information.

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Volunteering team if you have any further questions after reading this policy.

1. What are disclosure and barring service checks?

An organisation may request a disclosure and barring service check processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England and Wales, Access NI in Northern Ireland and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland. The check is for roles identified as working closely with adults at risk or children. For certain roles, the check also includes information held on the children's and adults' barred lists. In addition, it involves any information that is reasonably considered to be relevant to the applied-for role and is held locally by police forces.

These checks are to help organisations in making safer volunteer recruitment and safeguarding decisions. When a check has been processed and completed by the relevant check body – for example the DBS – the individual will receive a certificate.

Parkinson's UK carries out checks as part of the volunteer recruitment process and as part of a re-check process for current volunteers in roles that need checks. Re-checks are carried out every three years.

Checks are carried out in accordance with the relevant body's government regulations. Data is handled, stored and used in accordance with these regulations, as well as the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant regulations.

Parkinson's UK uses an external organisation that is registered to carry out the checks on the charity's behalf, in accordance with the relevant check body's guidance.

2. Why are criminal records checks needed for some volunteer roles at the charity?

Parkinson's UK has a duty of care to our beneficiaries, volunteers and staff. To exercise our duty of care, we have a Safeguarding policy in place and also carry out checks on roles which involve working with adults at risk.

A generally accepted definition of an 'adult at risk', or a 'protected person' in Scotland, or 'vulnerable adult' in Northern Ireland, is:

'An adult aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be

unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (Department of Health, 2000).

We carry out enhanced DBS checks in line with DBS guidance and also included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975) and the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) regulations.

The Volunteering team risk assesses all new volunteer roles and works with the designated protection officer to decide if volunteers in the role are eligible to be checked. The vast majority of volunteer roles at Parkinson's UK are rightly not eligible to be checked because they do not meet the criteria.

3. What happens once the initial check has been completed?

There is no official expiry date for a record check. Any information revealed on a disclosure and barring service check certificate will be accurate at the time the certificate was issued. It is for the organisation to decide whether to request an updated record check and this may be required periodically.

Parkinson's UK re-checks certificates for volunteers every three years, in line with the policy for re-checking staff.

4. What is the process?

- The record check process is carried out by the Volunteering team.
- The process starts when the staff contact of the potential volunteer gets in touch with the Volunteering team to let them know the volunteer has been successful at interview stage and that they require a check.
- The Volunteering team contacts the volunteer with the details of the check process.
- The volunteer needs to complete an online application form provided by the external organisation the charity uses. Paper copies are available for those without internet access.
- When the form is complete, the potential volunteer needs to provide three supporting documents from the list of accepted valid identification documents. The documents must be the originals as copies cannot be accepted. These can either be posted to the Volunteering team or brought in by hand. They are checked and two copies of each are taken. The original documents are then returned to the person by special/recorded delivery or by hand. The Volunteering team records any received or returned documents by post into a log, which is stored in the HR team's secure safe. This ensures that all documents that have been kept can be tracked.
- The Volunteering team completes the *Verification of evidence of ID checklist for volunteers* form and attaches a copy of each supporting document. Each document needs to be signed and dated by the verifier (a member of the Volunteering team). We take a copy of the form for the Volunteering team's records and keep it in a folder locked in a non-portable filing cabinet. We post the original to the external organisation via special/recorded delivery.
- The Volunteering team maintains a tracking spreadsheet of disclosure and barring service checks. This is updated with details of when the check email was sent and documents were sent to the external organisation.

- When a check has been completed and approved, the individual is notified directly by the external organisation and their certificate posted to them.
- The external organisation also notifies the Volunteering team that a check has been completed. The Volunteering team emails the potential volunteer and asks them to send in their certificate. Due to legislation, Parkinson's UK staff do not receive copies of certificates and have to request them from the individuals being checked. The Volunteering team must see the original certificate to check it is clear or if there is information on it. When the team receives the certificate, they scan the document, save it in an electronic folder and return the original to the volunteer.
- This process is repeated every three years, when a renewal is required.

5. What does the Volunteering team do with the copies of disclosure and barring service checks certificates?

- The Volunteering team must see the original certificate to check it is clear or if there is information on it.
- Details of the check – check date, certificate number and check result – are entered onto a secure tracking spreadsheet maintained by the Volunteering team.
- The team also updates the tracking spreadsheet to show the individual's check has been completed.
- Copies of scanned certificates are kept in a folder which is password protected. All certificates are kept confidential. Access to criminal record information is limited to those who need to see the information as part of their roles.
- Certificate information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested, and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

6. What happens if the certificate is clear?

If the certificate is clear no further action needs to be taken. The volunteer's staff contact will be informed that the volunteer is cleared to start.

Before the check is processed we ask that volunteers disclose any previous convictions, as detailed in the *Policy statement on involving people with criminal records as volunteers*. Therefore, the head of Volunteering will expect the certificate to come back detailing any conviction(s).

As long as any convictions are consistent with those disclosed previously by the volunteer, only the action agreed with the volunteer at the application stage will need to be taken.

7. What happens if the convictions on the certificate are different to those initially disclosed?

If the convictions are different to those initially disclosed, or the volunteer did not disclose a previous conviction before the application for the check was made, the head of Volunteering will contact the volunteer. The head of Volunteering will discuss the reasons for the discrepancy with them and will take into account the volunteer's individual circumstances. They follow the decision-making process, as detailed in the

Policy statement on involving people with criminal records as volunteers, to determine the next steps.

8. What happens if the certificate shows that a volunteer has been barred from working with adults at risk?

- If the certificate shows the volunteer is on the barring register, the head of Volunteering and designated protection officer will discuss the situation.
- Immediate action will be taken to withdraw the offer of the volunteering role or ask a current volunteer to leave, in line with the charity's volunteer Problem solving policy.
- The relevant authorities are notified in line with current legislation.
- The Volunteering team makes a note on the secure tracking spreadsheet.

9. How long are certificates kept?

We keep certificates for up to six months. In very exceptional circumstances, it might be necessary to keep certificate information for longer than six months. In these cases, we will consult with the relevant disclosure and barring service checks body and give full consideration to the data protection and human rights of the individual before doing so.

10. What happens to certificates after six months?

After six months, the documents will be deleted from our folders. We do not keep any photocopy or other image of the certificate, or any copy or representation of the contents of a certificate.

However, we do keep a record of the check date, certificate number and check result on our tracking spreadsheet. We also make a record of when the next check is due, in accordance with our policy of renewing checks every three years. We also keep a note of cases in which we have to take action.

11. How often does the charity carry out check renewals?

The charity requires volunteers to renew their disclosure and barring service checks every three years. The Volunteering team regularly checks the tracking spreadsheet to identify who needs their checks renewed and contacts the volunteers.

Renewals are recorded on the tracking spreadsheet. The renewal process follows the process explained in section 4 of this policy.

12. What to do if you are convicted of an offence while volunteering at the charity

- Volunteers must tell their staff contact if an offence occurs while volunteering at the charity. This should be at the time the offence happens.
- The staff contact will inform the head of Volunteering, who decides if any action must be taken, in line with the Safeguarding policy and the relevant body's guidelines.
- This will mean that the charity is aware of the offence before any re-checks are done.

- If a volunteer does not disclose an offence at the time it occurs they may be asked to leave their volunteer role.

13. Confidentiality

The Volunteering team keeps all information related to criminal records checks securely and confidentially in accordance with data protection legislation. Only those who need to know this information have access.

The external organisation the charity uses will also treat individual information confidentially and in line with government guidance and data protection.