

Volunteer applications

As you will be aware from previous editions of this publication, the CRB has introduced a new RB compliance process. One of the specific areas we are focusing on is the inappropriate use of free-of-charge volunteer applications.

The term volunteer is defined in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, as:

“Any person engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party and not a close relative.”

To qualify for a free-of-charge CRB check, the applicant must not benefit directly from the position the CRB application is being

submitted for. The applicant must not:

- Receive any payment (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses).
- Be on a work placement.
- Be on a course that requires them to do this job role.
- Be in a trainee position that will lead to a full time role/qualification.

Since we began the compliance process, we have identified a number of Registered Bodies who have been submitting inappropriate applications and we are keen to provide support and guidance to prevent this from happening in the future.

The following case studies have been put together based on some of the common errors we have identified so far.

Position applied for	CRB 'volunteer' status	Reasoning
Students mentoring/tutoring children in schools (three scenarios)		
Scenario 1:- Where there is no benefit to the student except to gain experience, develop skills and enhance their CV.	Scenario 1: Eligible	Scenario 1: This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.
Scenario 2:- Where the student receives a qualification or credit towards a qualification as a direct result of their voluntary activity.	Scenario 2: Ineligible	Scenario 2: This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and provides a service to a third party; but also provides a direct benefit in kind to the student.
Scenario 3:- Where the student receives a qualification or credit towards a qualification and an opportunity to earn a tax free bursary or payment.	Scenario 3: Ineligible	Scenario 3: This activity is entirely voluntary and provides a service to a third party; but also provides a benefit in kind to the student and an opportunity to receive a tax free bursary or payment.

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Position applied for	CRB 'volunteer' status	Reasoning
Parent helpers in schools.	Eligible	This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.
Scout/Guide leaders.	Eligible	This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.
Adoptive parents and other household members over 18 years old.	Eligible	This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.
Foster carers and members of the same household over 18 years old.	Ineligible	This activity is entirely voluntary but foster carers usually receive payments for these activities therefore it is deemed that neither foster carers nor other members of the household are entitled to free checks.
Individuals working abroad on volunteering projects.	Ineligible	This activity is entirely voluntary and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party, but these persons usually receive payment of a local salary, and lump sum payments, above and beyond what could be described as “travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses”.
Medical/Teaching/Social Work student on work placement, as part of training.	Ineligible	This activity is a mandatory course requirement, is usually paid and is primarily undertaken to benefit the students themselves.

The CRB is committed to providing free-of-charge checks for all volunteer applications that meet the CRB definition of a volunteer. However it is essential that Registered Bodies comply with their conditions of registration

and ensure that only applicants who meet the CRB definition of a volunteer have the volunteer box selected as 'Yes' at question x68 on the application form.