

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check Policy

1. Policy statement

- 1.1. In this document Read Easy means each of Read Easy UK (a charitable incorporated organisation) and the volunteer groups that are affiliated to it. Where the expression “Read Easy” or “the organisation” or “Affiliated Group” is used it means the CIO and/or those persons who comprise each volunteer group from time to time.
- 1.2. Each Affiliated Group has a responsibility to protect those it works with so that they will feel secure and able to concentrate on the learning process, especially those whose level of personal skills may make them susceptible to risk of manipulation or abuse as defined in clause 2 of this policy.
- 1.3. This Policy aims to set out how the Affiliated Group shall comply with its responsibilities towards adults who use its services (“Learners”) and the procedures involved in carrying out Enhanced DBS checks. The Affiliated Group aims to ensure that decisions surrounding the carrying out of Enhanced DBS checks are made carefully, without the need to create a blanket policy.

2. Definitions

Adults at risk replaces the previously used term ‘vulnerable adult’ as set out in the government’s ‘no secrets’ guidance in 2010. It is the term used to identify a person who, due to their needs for care and support (whether that be permanent or temporary, and whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs*) is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

(*The local authority may not be meeting those needs because for example, the person funds their own care, or they have not been previously known to the local authority, so no enquiry has yet been made.)

DBS refers to The Disclosure and Barring Service, an agency created out of a merger between the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). It helps employers and charities make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups by carrying out DBS checks.

There are four types of DBS check which can be carried out on volunteers:

- 2.1.1. **Basic disclosure** contains details of "unspent" convictions and cautions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 that are held on the Police National Computer.
- 2.1.2. **Standard disclosure** will reveal spent and unspent convictions, warnings, reprimands and cautions.



- 2.1.3. **Enhanced disclosure** – this is the level of DBS check required for volunteers working with adults whose level of skills or physical ability make them at risk of manipulation or abuse. This check will provide the same level of disclosure as listed above, as well as any other police information that “might” be relevant, but it does not include whether the individual is on the ‘barred list’.
- 2.1.4. **Enhanced disclosure for regulated activity** is used for individuals who work with children and adults who are elderly, disabled or sick. This check will disclose whether that particular person is on the adults and children barred list. As Read Easy is not a regulated activity, this level of disclosure is not required for our organisation.

For the purpose of this Policy, reference to a DBS check includes the Affiliated Group:

- making an initial application through an Umbrella Body or Registered Body;
- checking for updated information online, where the Volunteer has previous volunteering experience;

3. Status of the Policy

3.1. This Policy has been approved by Read Easy UK. It sets out the requirements and procedures for carrying out DBS checks and the legal conditions that must be satisfied by Read Easy UK and all Affiliated Groups.

3.2. The Trustees of Read Easy UK and the Management Team members of each Affiliated Group are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy. If you have any questions or concerns about the operation of this Policy, or if you consider that this policy has not been followed, you should raise the matter in the first instance with your Safeguarding Champion.

4. Application

The duties of this Policy apply when Volunteers may work with Learners;

- 4.1.1. whose level of personal skills may make them susceptible to risk of manipulation or abuse, or
- 4.1.2. who are ‘adults at risk’ as defined in clause 2 of this policy.

5. Procedure for recruitment

- 5.1. In order to comply with legislation about an individual’s right to privacy, the Affiliated Group does not require Volunteers to make disclosure of any unspent convictions or probation period that they are serving when making their application. However, the application form does provide Volunteers with an opportunity to provide any information that they would like to share which they think may be relevant to a placement. It also informs Volunteers that if they are assigned as Coach to an adult who has been assessed as ‘at risk’, this Policy requires that they will need to undergo an Enhanced DBS check before being placed with the Reader.
- 5.2. Information that is obtained through voluntary disclosure will be assessed in the same way as information received through DBS checks.



6. Procedure for carrying out checks

- 6.1. At enrolment, the Coordinator should assess whether the new Learner meets the requirements for safeguarding as in clause 4. This assessment should be made over the course of the interview by listening to what the applicant says about him/herself, by observation, and by using common sense. It may also be based on information provided by a referring agency. The Reader Enrolment form includes a question to remind Coordinators to make this assessment. You are not expected to mark the form in any way that discloses the reason for this assessment.
- 6.2. If the Coordinator believes that the Learner may require safeguarding, then the Affiliated Group should consider having the Volunteer in question undergo a DBS Check. The reason for conducting the DBS Check must be approved by the Safeguarding Champion.
- 6.3. It will then be up to the Coordinator to select an appropriate Volunteer for the Learner.
- 6.4. The Coordinator should inform the Volunteer why a DBS check is to be carried out and ask the Volunteer whether he/she agrees to the Affiliated Group accessing their criminal record.
- 6.5. It is up to the judgement of the Coordinator and the Safeguarding Champion as to whether it is acceptable for the Coach and new Learner to start working together before the disclosure is received, but there is no legal reason why they should not provided that the Read Easy Venue and Lone Worker Policy is strictly adhered to.

7. Delayed DBS checks

- 7.1. Although the Coordinator may decide that a Learner does not require safeguarding at the enrolment stage, this does not mean that he/she cannot revise this decision later. In this event the Coordinator should discuss the case with the Safeguarding Champion and consider whether it is necessary for the Volunteer working with that person to undergo a DBS check.
- 7.2. DBS checks which are carried out at a later date should not be done so on an arbitrary basis, and only after careful consideration by the Coordinator and the Safeguarding Champion. The Coordinator should inform the Volunteer and follow the procedure in Clause 6.4.

8. Who pays for checks?

- 8.1. There is no charge made by the Disclosure and Barring service for carrying out DBS checks on Volunteers. However, an Umbrella Body must pay a fee to register with the DBS. Some of these bodies pass a portion of this fee onto the organisations for whom it carries out DBS checks for Volunteers, some do not.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1. The Affiliated Group will hold the information made from voluntary disclosure and DBS checks in strict adherence to its Data Protection Policy, as well as data protection laws, and recognise that this type of information constitutes a Special Category Personal Data. For more information on how data will be handled refer to the Read Easy Data Protection Policy, which is available from the Management



Team. Read Easy UK recommends that Affiliated Groups destroy the disclosure information provided by the DBS, once they have marked the individual Volunteer's form and/or electronic record as being 'suitable' or 'unsuitable for coaching a Learner assessed to be 'at risk'. Details of the specific convictions should not be recorded.

10. Equality statement

- 10.1. Read Easy UK takes a firm stance in avoiding discrimination in its recruitment process and it expects its Affiliated Groups to do the same. Applicants with a criminal record will not be automatically barred from volunteering within the Affiliated Group or even from working with Learners requiring safeguarding.

11. Assessing the suitability of Volunteers with criminal records

- 11.1. In relation to this Policy, the Affiliated Group's key aim is to protect Learners and Coaches. Consequently, Volunteers with a criminal record will be dealt with on a case by case basis by conducting a fair and full risk assessment. *However, as a first point of principle, no Volunteer with a criminal record will be placed with a Reader who has been assessed as being 'at risk', regardless of the type of offence.*
- 11.2. It will be the decision of the Coordinator and the Safeguarding Champion to make the assessment as to whether a Volunteer with a criminal record can be placed with *an adult not considered to be 'at risk'*, taking into account:
- whether the offence committed is considered to present a high risk. An unspent conviction for personal violence, drug dealing or a sexual offence should be considered high risk and the Volunteer should be considered unsuitable for a role involving working one-to-one. Any convictions of 4 years or more do not become spent.
 - if the conviction is 'spent', whether the nature of the offence may still present a high risk when working in a one-to-one situation with a Learner, or presents only a low-level risk.
 - if the risk is considered to be 'low', how much time has elapsed since the offence was committed, and whether this affects the suitability of the Volunteer in the short term.
 - if the risk is considered to be low and the Volunteer is considered to be immediately suitable as a Coach, whether the Learner to be assigned has indicated on the Reader Enrolment Form that they would be willing to be coached by someone with a low-risk offending background.
- 11.3. If the Coordinator and Safeguarding Champion decide to place the Volunteer with a Learner having considered all of the above, then the Learner will be informed that the Coach who will be assigned to them has an offending background, but is not considered to pose any significant risk. Details of the offence will not be provided, but the Learner will be given the opportunity to change their mind if they wish.
- 11.4. If the Coordinator and Safeguarding Champion decide that the Volunteer cannot be offered the opportunity to become a Reading Coach, the Volunteer can still be invited to take on another role within the affiliated group, such as becoming a Management Team member.



12. Period of validity

- 12.1. Read Easy recommends that Enhanced DBS Checks are renewed after a period of three years, or where a major change in circumstance has occurred for the volunteer (e.g. financial vulnerability).

13. Miscellaneous

- 13.1. The above Policy does not stand alone and should be carried out in accordance with the agreement between the Affiliated Group and the Umbrella Body who administers DBS checks.
- 13.2. If you require further information in relation to this Policy or if you have any concerns with regard to its content, please speak to your Safeguarding Champion, or, if necessary, Read Easy UK.

14. Current legislation that informs this policy

REUK is committed to improving outcomes for adults at risk by adhering to current legislation that supports the safeguarding of adults, which includes:

- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and the Freedom of Information Act (2004).
- Data Protection Act (2018 which incorporates GDPR)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- The Care Act 2014.
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- The Equality Act 2010.

15. Monitoring and review of the Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by Read Easy UK. Recommendations for any amendments should be reported to the Safeguarding Champion of each Organisation. Who will send them to the Read Easy Safeguarding Champion.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

If you require further information on this policy please speak to the Read Easy Safeguarding Champion.