

Volunteers and CRB checks

Since 2002 the CRB has provided both Standard and Enhanced checks for volunteers free of charge.

What is a volunteer?

A volunteer, in this instance is:

‘a person who performs any activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travelling and other out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives’.

This definition is taken from the 1997 Police Act (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002 and is used by the CRB to decide whether a check should be free or paid for. Organisations involving volunteers should be careful to ensure that CRB checks that they submit as “volunteer” fulfil this criteria or the CRB may charge you for the check.

Special Categories

Full-time volunteers

Full-time volunteers, those involved in programmes that last around 35 hours per week will be treated as all other volunteers by the CRB, providing that they are only reimbursed or receive an allowance that covers actual expenses.

Students undertaking volunteering as part of a course

Students on some courses are required to undertake a work placement to obtain a qualification. Such activities are often described as ‘volunteering’, a better description would be work experience or a work placement, particularly as the student is doing the activity solely for their own benefit. Where an individual is undertaking a placement of this type as a requirement for a course, they would not be eligible for a free CRB check. This does not include volunteering to obtain an award, such as a Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Volunteers from overseas

There are two main barriers to obtaining CRB checks for individuals from overseas. In some cases a person’s relatively short time in this country will mean that a CRB check is unlikely to reveal any conviction information that satisfies the need for organisations to reassure themselves that a potential volunteer is appropriate for a role. The second

is that they may not have the necessary identification documents to apply for a CRB check.

There are organisations that have found ways of addressing these barriers and VAE can give direction if required.