

In recent days many people have come forward wishing to volunteer in their local communities, helping groups and their clients, individuals and neighbours. The response has been fantastic and with that many people new to volunteering and those already volunteering are keen to ensure that they follow the right guidelines to keep both themselves and those they are helping safe.

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services have a very comprehensive resource library on their website: <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/> for you to access. They have also put together some guidance focusing on the response to COVID-19:

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/pvg-and-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Processing Priorities and Starting People

During the ongoing crisis period of COVID-19, Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services is prioritising applications for essential care, welfare and support roles. They request understanding from organisations that in these unprecedented times they need to prioritise the roles that are considered most vital as the current situation escalates.

You do not need to wait until you receive your certificate before you can place people in their role while you wait for the PVG information to come back. However, you should consider the risk involved in starting people before the PVG certificate is received and look at whether any additional safeguarding (such as closer supervision) is an option.

Which roles need a PVG?

In brief, work or volunteering which involves certain activities with children (under 18s) or protected adults (aged 16 or over) which is regular and the person's normal duties, qualifies for a PVG check. Some of the types of activities are teaching, training, instructing, supervising, caring for, supervising, being in sole charge, giving advice and guidance in relation to health and wellbeing.

For protected adults, we also have to consider both the service you're providing and who it's provided to which is a little more detailed. The organisation needs to be either a welfare, care, health or social care organisation and the adults you provide your service to, will have particular needs. A particular need is a specific requirement an individual may have arising from physical or mental illness or disability which may disadvantage that person when compared to the rest of society.

Checklists for both children and protected adults, which list the full range of activities (including determining if your adult service meets the criteria) to help you decide if someone is doing regulated work which qualifies for a PVG check, can be found on the website <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/>

Which roles don't need a PVG?

There has been a rapid increase in Community Volunteering in response to local needs.

Many organisations are concerned that until a PVG has been accessed, they will be unable to utilise new volunteers or increase their capacity or introduce new services such as telephone befriending and community transport. While many of these activities may be considered a regulated work activity, further consideration to whether (at this time) the new volunteers will be carrying out their role regularly and as part of their normal duties. Also to consider whether the activities are being directed at children or protected adults, or more generally to the community, as not every person in self-isolation will have symptoms of the virus (e.g. they may be self-isolating as someone else in their household has symptoms, they may have an underlying condition which puts them at greater risk or they may be self-isolating due to Government advice based on their age).

In order to qualify for a PVG check, new volunteers will need to be carrying out a regulated work activity with children or protected adults regularly and as part of their normal duties with an organisation and as we are in the very early stages of self-isolation, it's currently not possible to determine that the activities will be regular or normal duties. Your organisation may also consider that the new services or increased provision is in response to a crisis/emergency situation (which would not require a PVG).

There are several support activities which definitely do not require a PVG check such as shopping, cash handling, having access to people's details and dog walking. Each organisation must risk assess these activities and consider whether there is a need for any further safeguarding such as supervising new volunteers more closely.

Can PVG Membership/Certificate be Transferred?

No. A PVG certificate is issued in relation to a specific role and workgroup(s) within a named organisation. When an organisation accesses a PVG check, they register their interest in the applicant so that they are notified if the member's status changes to either barred or considered for listing. This is why, scheme members still need to complete another form when they move to another organisation. It is also worth bearing in mind that the scheme member will also have a copy of their PVG which they can share if they choose to.

Can Organisations Share PVG Information?

Yes, Section 80 of the Disclosure Scotland Code of Practice gives guidance on this. Care must be taken to ensure the organisation information is being shared with are entitled to PVG information for the role in question and the scheme member has given you written consent to share their information. You should retain this permission in case there are any queries about sharing PVG information in the future. It is also worth bearing in mind that the scheme member will also have a copy of their PVG which they can share if they choose to.

Section 86 and 87 of the Code of Practice allow for information to be shared in relation to health and education transport services. The Code allows information to be shared with specific bodies (e.g. a school, college, health body). Please refer to the Code for full details of this exemption.

The Code of Practice can be found on Disclosure Scotland's website.

<https://www.mygov.scot/disclosure-code-of-practice/disclosure-scotland-code-of-practice.pdf?inline=true>