

## DBS Checks for Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers and refugees can get DBS checks processed, however this process and establishing whether you have the right documents can be more complicated.

### Brief summary of the process:

The new DBS regulations for identity checking mean it is likely that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers will have to be re-fingerprinted in order to get a DBS check. This is because **all** refugees and asylum seekers must go through *route one* ([www.gov.uk/criminal-record-check-documents](http://www.gov.uk/criminal-record-check-documents)).

Refugees and Asylum seekers will need to have one of the following documents **AND** two further documents from either group 1,2a or 2b to avoid the fingerprint method:

- A Biometric residence permit – anyone granted Leave to remain from 2012 will have one
- A valid passport – Naturalised Citizens may have one. Travel Documents are not accepted
- A UK Driving licence with photo card and counterpart (full or provisional)

People granted leave to remain after 2012 will have a Biometric residence permit and some asylum seekers and refugees will have a full or provisional UK driving licence. Naturalised Citizens will have a passport but everyone else will need to go through the **fingerprint method**.

### The fingerprint method

It is possible for both asylum seekers and refugees to get a DBS check by having their finger prints taken at a local police station but this will take longer. This is an intrusive and intimidating process that most people would rather avoid. Some people are prepared to go through the process if they are extremely focussed on doing a specific volunteer role that needs a DBS check.

Some umbrella bodies, particularly a few online ones, will not allow the fingerprint process. Members of Chelmsford CVS are invited to use **Maldon CVS** as their Umbrella Body, with a discount for doing so. Maldon CVS allows the fingerprint process. Please contact us to be connected.

### How does the finger print method work?

1. Organisation completes the DBS check and marks Question W59 (*Have I seen sufficient documentation*) as '**No**' and sends the form in to the DBS.
2. The DBS will receive the form and automatically return it to the organisation because W59 was marked 'No'. (This is an automated process. The pro-forma letter that was available previously cannot shortcut this process.)
3. Organisation posts the same form back to the DBS.
4. On receiving the form the second time, the DBS will process the form and initiate the finger print process.
5. The DBS will post a consent letter to the volunteer's home address.
6. The volunteer must sign to say that they are happy for their fingerprints to be taken to establish their identity. They must return this consent letter with passport photos.

7. The DBS will contact the local Police Station and give them the contact details of the volunteer requesting that they arrange the fingerprinting.
8. The local Police headquarters will phone the volunteer directly to arrange a convenient time to take the fingerprints. If they call a mobile phone, it will usually show up as a 'Withheld' or 'Private number'.
9. Once the fingerprints have been taken, the DBS will be able to run a check on the fingerprints and process a DBS disclosure.

### What about completing the 5 years address history?

Refugees and asylum seekers (as well as British homeless people, travellers etc) often do not have clear addresses for complete periods of time. When completing this section you must provide a complete address history without any gaps. If there are periods of time when a person had 'no fixed abode' you should write this in the address history.

The DBS only checks the UK criminal record database so overseas addresses are not required. For asylum seekers or refugees, the overseas addresses can be put as '*Overseas from Date 1 – Date 2*' e.g:

OVERSEAS	Columbia	March 1974 - May 2012
NO FIXED ABODE	UK	May 2012 - July 2012
1 Chelmsford St, Chelmsford, CM1	UK	July 2012 - present

### How to avoid DBS checks being a barrier to volunteering

DBS checks can delay a volunteers start date and are likely to take longer if you go through the 'finger print request' method. This time delay between applying to volunteer and actually being able to start is a significant barrier for many people and sometimes leads to organisations losing volunteers.

Where volunteer roles require unsupervised work with children or vulnerable adults, there is nothing that can be done to avoid this problem. However, it is often possible to be flexible and develop ways for volunteers to start doing something before the DBS check is processed.

Here are some examples from organisations we have worked with:

- Allow the volunteer to start volunteering where they will be closely supervised by a paid member of staff.
- Wait for references to be returned and then allow the volunteer to start.
- Allow the volunteer to do tasks that don't involve working with vulnerable people, for example; office tasks until the DBS check arrives.

If it is possible to do this it will enable people to start volunteering with you quickly and not lose motivation.