

Volunteer applications

The DBS definition of a 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 criminal record check, the applicant must not benefit directly from the position the DBS application is being submitted for. The applicant must not:

- benefit directly from the position for which the DBS application is being submitted
- 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

It states on the DBS application form ‘By placing a cross in the yes box (at section 68) you confirm that the post meets the DBS definition for a free-of-charge volunteer application. Please note that DBS may recover the application fee if box 68 is marked in error and this could result in the cancellation of your DBS registration’.

Please read through the examples in the table below showing common volunteer errors.

Examples of eligible and ineligible volunteer roles

Position applied for	DBS 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	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’. If no salary or lump sum payment is received, then they are eligible for a free-of-charge criminal record check

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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 student

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