

Thirtyone:eight – Who Are We?

We're an independent Christian charity that supports individuals, organisations, charities, faith and community groups in protecting vulnerable people from abuse.

- We do this by providing training, consultancy, DBS checks and a helpline, ensuring everyone is equipped and empowered with the tools they need.
- As leading experts in safeguarding, we work with government to inform legislation and promote high standards in safeguarding practice.
- Trusted for over 45 years, we collaborate with a network of thousands of member organisations to uphold and protect safeguarding standards.

<https://thirtyoneeight.org/about-us/who-we-are/>

Introduction

Criminal record checks help organisations in the public; private and voluntary sectors identify candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society.

The government agency responsible for administering these checks is the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), which supports employers in England and Wales to make safer recruitment decisions. Many roles, particularly those involving children or vulnerable adults, are eligible for a criminal record check. The DBS enables organisations to access these checks as part of good recruitment practice.

Applications for DBS checks must be made through a Registered Body. While many organisations require checks for their workers, they may not qualify to become a Registered Body themselves. In such cases, checks can be accessed via an umbrella organisation appointed by the DBS.

Thirtyone:eight is one such umbrella organisation. We also support users in making appropriate decisions when offences or concerns are revealed in a disclosure. Our disclosure services are available to any organisation whose workers are eligible for a DBS check.

Thirtyone:eight has developed a bespoke membership scheme tailored to the needs of dioceses within the Church of England. Benefits of this scheme include reduced rates, direct access to named Account Managers, assistance with processing DBS checks, and specialist advice on eligibility.

We are committed to working within the security procedures outlined in the DBS Code of Practice and the Police Act 1997. Within this framework, we will only disclose information received about an individual to named Recruiters or appropriate persons involved in the recruitment process within the Diocese, including its parishes and affiliated organisations.

We are available to provide impartial advice in individual cases, although the final decision on whether to appoint someone rests with the Diocese.

What is a Disclosure?

A Disclosure is a document containing information held by the police and government departments about a person's criminal record. This includes convictions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer (PNC), as well as information from DBS lists and local police forces.

Disclosures allow organisations to check the background of job applicants (paid or voluntary) to ensure they do not have a history that makes them unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable

adults. A Disclosure is a vital part of the recruitment process in any church or organisation and should be used alongside interviews, reference checks, supervision, training and ongoing support.

The person(s) within the Parish or Benefice responsible for handling Disclosures is known as the Lead Recruiter, and Thirtyone:eight will usually correspond with this individual. The role of Lead Recruiter is one of trust and requires a high level of honesty and integrity. As they will have access to highly confidential and potentially sensitive information, we ask that this role be filled by someone with the highest ethical standards.

Recruiters

The Lead Recruiter is our primary contact and is usually responsible for submitting most DBS checks for an organisation.

In addition to the Lead Recruiter, churches or organisations may appoint one or more additional Recruiters to assist with DBS processing. These individuals can be added either during initial registration or later by completing a New Recruiter Appointment Form.

How to Register

To register for the Disclosure Service Scheme your Parish/benefice should:

- Formally adopt a policy on the fair treatment of applicants and the handling and safe keeping of information. We understand that these documents may still be in development at the time of application, but they must be formally adopted and available to applicants before the Lead Recruiter begins processing checks.
- There is a model policy that you can adopt for your parish here,
- [Model Handling, Use, Secure Storage, Retention and Disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure Information | Thirtyone:eight](#), and a policy which includes the required commitments about rehabilitation of offenders, here:
- <https://thirtyoneeight.org/dbs-service/register-with-us/england-wales/before-you-register/model-equal-opportunities-statement/>
- Agree to comply with UK data protection legislation, GDPR, and the DBS Code of Practice: DBS Code of Practice
- **Complete and return the Thirtyone:eight/Diocese Disclosure Registration Form to the Diocesan email address safeguardingadministration@southwark.anglican.org**
- **You should include the 'Sub-unit name', and Organisation Reference (5 digit number), which has been provided under separate cover.**

The Diocese will authorise and forward your form to Thirtyone:eight. We will then:

- Contact the Recruiter to verify their email address.
- Issue login details and a **Recruiter's Acceptance Email**, confirming their appointment and including user guides.

Once this is complete, the Parish can begin using the Thirtyone:eight Disclosure Service to carry out criminal records checks for workers.

Enhanced Disclosure

An Enhanced Disclosure should be requested for roles involving a substantial degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults, including unsupervised activities such as teaching, supervising, training or providing advice/guidance on well-being. This applies to most roles involving children in a church setting, such as Sunday School Teachers, Youth Workers, Church Leaders, Pastors, Ministers and Vicars.

In rare cases, the police may use common law powers to disclose information directly to employers if necessary to prevent crime or harm.

Basic Disclosure

Basic Disclosures are suitable for roles that are not eligible for an Enhanced check but still require a level of trust, either formally or informally, within the church or organisation. These roles might include worship leaders, those offering transport to/from events, administrators, welcomers, preachers, caretakers, or refreshment team members.

A Basic Disclosure involves a search of the Police National Computer (PNC) for details of current convictions. It includes convictions and conditional cautions considered unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Anyone can apply for a Basic Disclosure as long as they live or work in the England or Wales.

How the Appointment Process Should Work

The appointment process should not operate in isolation from a working safeguarding policy or government guidance on adult safeguarding. It must be prepared in accordance with the principles outlined in official government guidelines, as well as national Church and diocesan policy and practice guidance. In particular, please refer to the Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance available on your diocesan website: <https://southwark.anglican.org/safeguarding/safer-recruitment-dbs/>

Thirtyone:eight requires the Diocese to appoint one or more individuals within the Parish or Benefice to manage disclosures—known as Lead Recruiters—who are authorised by the Diocese. This may be the same person as the Parish Safeguarding Officer and will usually be the main point of contact between Thirtyone:eight and the Diocese.

Those responsible for recruiting workers must understand that a criminal records check is only one part—albeit an essential one—of a safer recruitment process. This process is vital in preventing unsuitable or dangerous individuals from gaining access to vulnerable groups. It includes:

- Completion of a job application or registration form
- A confidential declaration form
- An interview
- Reference checks
- A criminal records check
- Agreement to abide by the organisation's safeguarding policy

Operating a safer recruitment policy sends a clear message to parents, children, visitors—and those who may intend harm—that safeguarding is taken seriously.

It is important to stress to applicants that having a criminal record does not automatically bar someone from being appointed, unless children or vulnerable adults would be placed at risk. The scope of the criminal records check must be explained to the applicant, including the confidentiality of the process. Information about the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and Safe Storage policies should be made available for applicants to review.

Applicants should also be asked to complete a Confidential Declaration Form before a check is submitted. This allows individuals to disclose any past issues that may arise during the check. In such cases, advice can be given on whether the information would prevent someone from working with children or vulnerable adults. Where a disclosure contains information, the self-declaration may assist in assessing honesty and risk.

A check is one part of a safer recruitment process

A criminal records check is the final stage of the appointment process. You must follow the Safer Recruitment Process for the Church of England

In summary, you will have:

- Informed the applicant early on that the role is subject to a criminal records check, explained the scope of such checks, and outlined the policies in place. This assures the applicant that the process will be handled confidentially and professionally.
- Ensured the applicant has completed a job application or registration form and a confidential declaration form.
- Conducted an interview and received satisfactory references.
- Determined that the applicant is appointable, subject to a DBS check.

At this point, the applicant can be asked to complete a confidential declaration and submit an application for a criminal records disclosure via the **Thirtyone:eight system**.

Once completed, the Lead Recruiter will:

1. Check original identity documents.
2. Complete the Recruiter's section of the E-Bulk form.
3. Submit the form electronically to Thirtyone:eight.

The Counter-Signatory at Thirtyone:eight will authorise the application and forward it to the DBS. Once processed:

- A paper certificate is sent to the applicant.
- An electronic result is sent to Thirtyone:eight, the Parish/Benefice Lead Recruiter, and the Diocese.

From the E-Bulk system, the Lead Recruiter and Diocese can see whether the disclosure is clear or contains information. However, they will not see the specific content of the disclosure. Any

certificate containing information must be reviewed and risk assessed by the **Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser**. The applicant must not be appointed until diocesan approval is given.

These procedures apply equally to paid workers and volunteers.

Full details can be found in the **Safer Recruitment Policy for the Church of England**, [Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance | The Church of England](#)

Re-checks

Workers may be re-checked at any time if concerns arise, or routinely every three years. Parishes should be aware that a check is effectively out of date as soon as it is issued, as it only reflects information available at the time of processing.

Thirtyone:eight will send a reminder to the Lead Recruiter 2 years and 10 months after an application has been submitted, indicating that renewal is due soon.

Can I Accept a Disclosure from Another Organisation?

The only way a certificate can be transferred between roles is via the DBS Update Service. Applicants can subscribe to this service and carry their certificate between roles, provided the same level and type of check is required. They must register within 30 days of the certificate's issue date.

With the applicant's permission, employers can perform a free, instant online check to confirm whether the certificate is still up to date. Whether the Update Service can be accepted depends on your Diocese's policy.

<https://thirtyoneeight.org/dbs-update>