

Safer Recruitment of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

Risk assessment and supportive measures to consider

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Purpose and Definitions

This guidance is intended to assist churches in safely recruiting refugees and people seeking asylum into roles in church.

A **person seeking asylum** is anyone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. We use the phrase 'person seeking asylum' as it gives greater dignity than the phrase 'asylum seeker'.

In the UK, a person becomes a **refugee** when the government agrees that a person seeking asylum meets the definition in [the 1951 Refugee Convention | UNHCR](#). The government "recognises" that person as a refugee and issues them with refugee status documentation.

Practice Guidance for the Safer Recruitment of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

Many churches have refugees and people seeking asylum as part of their congregations. Refugees and people seeking asylum may wish to volunteer in roles and we often get questions about how to recruit people safely into these roles.

There are many benefits for both the church and the refugees/people seeking asylum, including

- A sense of belonging in the church community
- To bless, enrich and serve the church community
- Empowerment when many choices have been taken away
- Unique insight and skills to roles in church life
- Alleviates boredom and gives a sense of purpose

Friends from refugee backgrounds have skills and experience. They want to be fully involved in churches, and not always to be the ones to receive. They want to serve and be active in church life. This guidance is to try and help explore how we might aid this given some of the current barriers.

Recognised Barriers to Recruitment for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum:

Can a person seeking asylum be disclosure-checked? Yes for some people - but it can be very challenging. For many people seeking asylum, it will not be possible due to the range of factors listed below.

Can a refugee be disclosure-checked? Yes - but it can be challenging, depending on the range of factors listed below. It will be much easier, though, than for a person seeking asylum.

- 1. Proof of address for disclosure check (DBS, PVG, Access NI):** It is difficult for people seeking asylum to provide proof of address because they don't have the documentation required such as bank account statements, council tax letters and driving licences. Once provided with settled status, refugees may have more of these documents. History of address is challenging for both people seeking asylum and refugees due to potential moves and limited English language.
- 2. Photo ID for disclosure check (DBS, PVG, Access NI):** People seeking asylum will not have passports as these are confiscated by the Home Office on entering the UK or a driving licence. People seeking asylum should have a photo ID card (Application Registration Card (ARC), however this is not on the list of recognised IDs. Refugees may have a Biometric Residence Permit which is listed as a Group 1 document and a driving licence (however there may be financial constraints to a new refugee). However, Home Office Travel Documents (which are the equivalent of a passport for refugees) are not listed as a Group 1 document.
- 3. References:** It is hard for people seeking asylum and refugees to provide references as they may have moved multiple times within the UK and not had time to build up relationships in previous churches. This could also be exacerbated by potential language barriers too.

- 4. Fingerprinting (DBS only):** For those who have exhausted the DBS Routes 1, 2 and 3, and cannot provide photo ID or documentation, then the only remaining option to obtain a DBS check is fingerprinting. This option is far less robust than Routes 1,2 and 3 and will involve the person attending a police station for fingerprinting and is likely to take several months to be completed.

Please be aware, that there are risks with obtaining a DBS check for those with no UK residence history. If a church or other organisation is considering an applicant with substantial or sole overseas residency, a DBS check may hold little value because the Police National Computer contains only a limited number of overseas convictions. Equally, the applicant would then have a 'clear' certificate which may not present a true picture of their background.

People living in Scotland should seek advice from their umbrella body.

What Can We Do?

Whilst we appreciate that there are barriers as outlined above, we want to offer support and guidance for people seeking asylum and refugees. We recommend you take the following steps when safer recruitment checks cannot be undertaken.

Risk Assessments: It is important to undertake a risk assessment. Refugees or those seeking asylum do not necessarily pose a risk, but without some of the safer recruitment checks in place, your organisation can't have the same assurances that the individual does not pose a risk.

As part of the risk assessments, you would need to consider what are the potential risks of not having the relevant checks in place (due to the barriers highlighted above). Following on from detailing the risks, your organisation would then consider what you can put in place to help mitigate any potential risks. Other measures need to be considered based on the role and the context the role will be undertaken in.

Consider the role: You should consider the nature of the role that the refugee or person seeking asylum is looking to undertake. It is important to consider carefully the role in question that the refugee or person seeking asylum wishes to volunteer in. As an

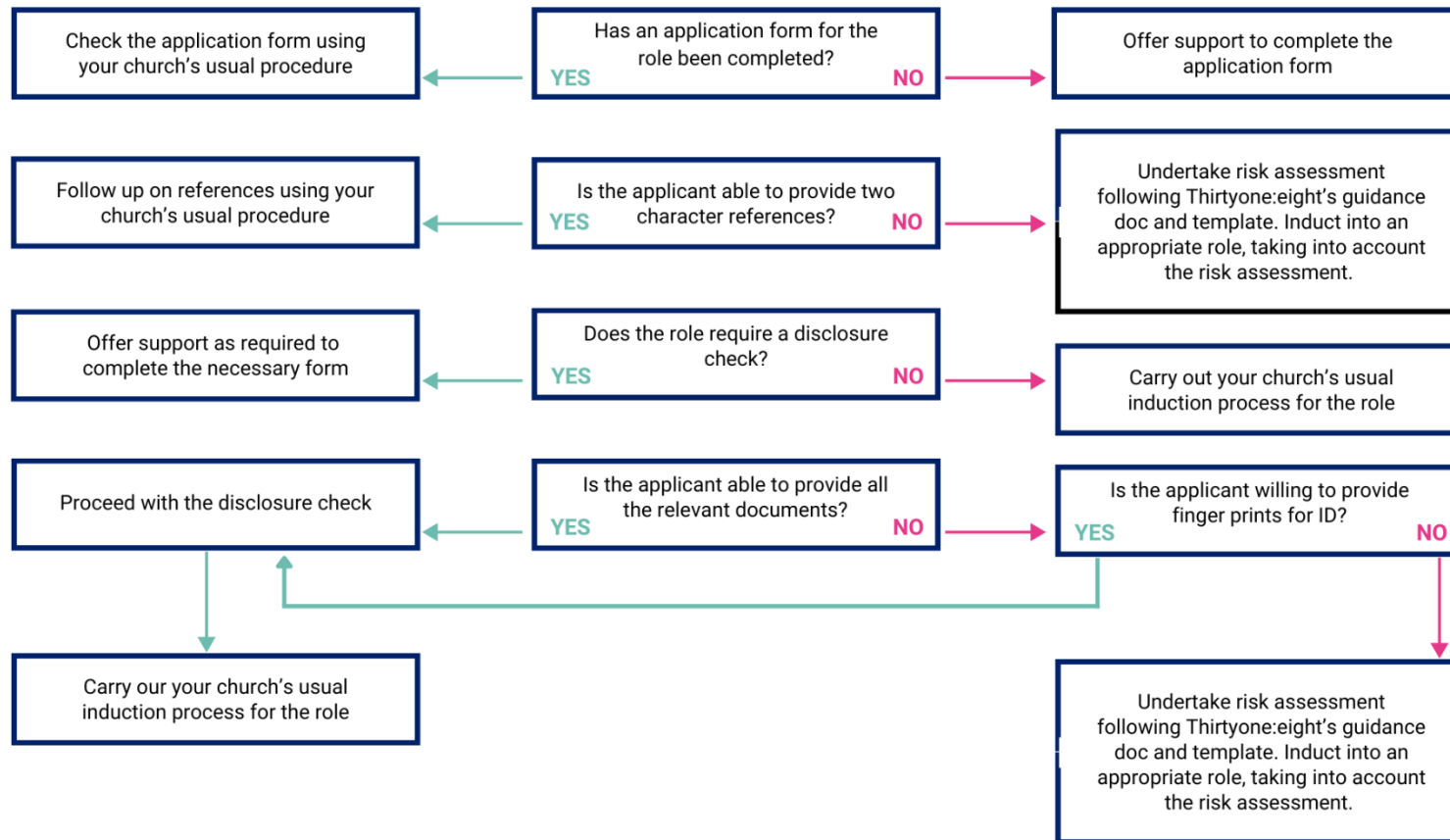
organisation, you will need to consider what roles can be done without the safer recruitment checks. In addition, you will need to consider whether supervision is required for the role in question and whether any other conditions will be required.

Make an agreement: Once you've undertaken the risk assessment, you may want to consider drawing up an agreement with the individual. This will be to ensure that everyone understands what is expected as part of the agreement for volunteering in the role. The agreement should include your organisation's commitment to supporting the individual in their volunteering role and any pastoral care required.

Provide training and support: The concept of 'safeguarding' can be difficult to grasp for someone from a non-UK culture. What is deemed acceptable in their home culture, e.g. in terms of disciplining a child, may actually be illegal in the UK. It may be helpful to present some additional informal training about what safeguarding is in the UK and why we have certain practices and procedures in place. Open and honest discussion should help new volunteers to be confident in what they are doing.

Please see below for a template risk assessment and supportive measures for agreements.

Process Flowchart:



Template risk assessment

Church / Organisation			
Individual		Location	
Date of Risk Assessment		Date for Review	
Responsible Leader		Review Frequency	
Professionals/others involved (if applicable)			
Reason for risk assessment (I.e. no disclosure checks available)			
Details of safer recruitment processes that have been undertaken to date			

What are the barriers to safe recruitment??	Given this, what are the possible risks? Who is at risk?	Can the possible risk be managed? What measures can be adopted to safeguard in this situation?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date Completed

Guidance notes

1. This document will primarily be overseen (and possibly even completed) by the Lead Recruiter within the organisation. It may be filled-in, in conjunction with a worker or volunteer or leader who knows the situation or individual well.
2. Prior to completing this document, please read our guidance document on the Safer Recruitment of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum.
3. It is important to remember that a tool like this will be useful for supporting with:
 - a. when an asylum seeker or refugee does not have the relevant documentation (ID or proof of address) for a disclosures check for a voluntary role
 - b. when an asylum seeker or refugee are not able to provide references for a voluntary role
 - c. when an asylum seeker or refugee wishes to volunteer in a voluntary role, however, have made a disclosure which indicates that they could pose a risk

Therefore, communication is key when seeking to put an assessment in place. Encourage your workers to raise/share concerns appropriately so you can make an informed decision about the nature and detail of the risk assessment.

4. Possible measures (as stated in Column 3) could range from a considering different volunteering roles, additional safer recruitment checks, or informal supervision/monitoring arrangements. Depending on the nature of the risk and the potential groups that may be vulnerable, consider ways of supporting the individual to ensure they are fully trained and equipped for the role.
5. Read information on our Knowledge Hub on safe storage and retention of these records - <http://thirtyoneeight.org/dbs-service/register-with-us/england-wales/before-you-register/model-handling-use-secure-storage-retention-and-disposal-of-disclosures-and-disclosure-information/>
6. There may be times where the lack of available safer recruitment checks requires the organisation and the individual to consider an alternative voluntary role. You as an organisation can support them to explore these alternative voluntary roles.
7. It is important to remember that when working with individuals and vulnerable groups, risk cannot be completely eliminated but can definitely be mitigated and managed safely.

Here are some examples of supportive measures that you may wish to consider to safeguard all.

Supportive measures

- I will allow myself to be supervised in my volunteering role where required
- I will attend meetings and activities as directed by the leadership.
- I will undertake all relevant training which will help equip me for my role.

- I will read and adhere to the code of conduct and advice on safe practice.
- I accept that "z" will provide me with pastoral care.

- I understand that if I do not keep to these conditions, my volunteering role may be reviewed by the leadership.
- I understand that any other concerns will be taken seriously and reported.
- I understand that this agreement will be reviewed regularly every _____ months and will remain for an agreed period.

Pastoral care

"Z" has agreed to provide you with pastoral care and support where required; they and the leadership of the organisation agree to:

- Support you in finding suitable volunteering opportunity in line with the safer recruitment checks we can undertake as an organisation.
- Work closely as a place of worship / organisation with any organisations which also support you.

- Attempt to meet any practical needs you may have, including translation to assist with the understanding of the relevant documents (such as safeguarding policy/code of conduct) and relevant training.

- Support with integration into the voluntary team, including opportunity for you to feedback on how you are finding the role.
- Be there for you and will support you.

Date: December 2024 to be reviewed December 2025.