

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 80

Ymateb gan : RAY Ceredigion

Response from : RAY Ceredigion

### **Disclosure and Barring Service checks update service for staff and volunteers**

RAY Ceredigion is a children's charity based in Ceredigion, Mid Wales, we deliver a range of activities throughout the county and in our premises in Aberaeron. We work with parents of babies and pre-school children, run a holiday playscheme for 3 - 14 year olds, provide crèches for ourselves and other organisations including Flying Start, provide outdoor open access play sessions, are a Millennium Volunteering Centre for young volunteers to gain recognition for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering, run monthly youth groups for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people aged 11 - 18 including looked after children, young carers, and young people in the youth justice system, a monthly club for disabled young adults aged 17 - 30 and a recycled arts and crafts group for adults including older and retired people and those with life limiting health conditions.

We employ 22 staff, the majority on casual contracts, and we support 60+ volunteers of all ages, from 14 to retirees. Because of the nature of our work and our registration with CSSIW for our crèches, holiday playscheme and open access play sessions, we request enhanced DBS checks on a regular basis.

The issue we would request your committee to investigate is the free update service, which has the advantage of making DBS checks 'portable.' Without the update service every employer or volunteer placement has to pay a fee, anything from between £30 - £50 per individual. So for example an individual might volunteer or work in a playgroup for one employer in the morning, be a school lunch time supervisor in the local school, then work for a third employer in an after school club. Each of these employers (until the introduction of the update service) had to pay separately for a DBS check.

Our concern is that we still find ourselves in the position of having to carry out numerous costly DBS checks on all employees and volunteers, and that the update service is not being used. When we request a DBS check the only paperwork that is issued by the checker goes to the individual staff member or volunteers home address. They then have a certain number of days from the date of issue of the DBS to go online and pay a fee (free for volunteers) to register with the update service.

From my own experience by the time my paper copy of my DBS check arrived at my home address I had 11 days to register online for the update service. Two weekends when I tried to access the website it was closed for maintenance, meaning that in order to meet the deadline I had to take time off work on the Monday morning to ring the helpline in order to register.

This system is not working and is not fit for purpose.

It is not working because:

- The information on how to use the update service is not made plain when individuals receive their DBS in the post – many of our employees have said they could not see any information on the update service, or how to access it
- When you do try and access the service the site is often closed for maintenance at weekends (I tried looking at the site again recently and it was closed for access)
- The update service puts the responsibility of the cost and to sign up to make the DBS ‘portable’ onto the employee for whom it is not necessarily an advantage to have it portable, as the costs of each DBS are paid by the employer
- The system currently is expensive in terms of an annual registration fee paid by employers to a DBS checking agency, and the £30 - £50 cost per volunteer or employee, the paid staff time to carry out the document checking and issue forms, make sure they are completed correctly and then submit them to the checking agency
- The employer then gets nothing back in return – the DBS goes to the employee, so the employer then has to wait for the employee, or prospective employee to receive their DBS in the post, they then bring the paper copy in to the employer for the employer to have visual sight of the document and ensure that the check confirms the individual is suitable to work or volunteer

As DBS checking affects organisations that work with children and young people in Wales, and we know that the frustrations we experience are replicated throughout Wales (through our membership of local and national groups and organisations) we think it would be appropriate for the committee to undertake an investigation into how the system is working and whether it could be made simpler for individual employees and volunteers to sign up to make their DBS ‘portable’ between employments, and it easier and more affordable for employers to carry out DBS checks.

There is a lot of wasted time in the sector by both employers and employees/volunteers (who have to fill in a form each time a DBS is requested and show new employers their documents for identification purposes).

We hope you think this would be an appropriate matter of interest to the committee.