



C2: Disclosure checks

In this section

1. What is a disclosure check?
2. Who needs to be checked?
3. The disclosure process
4. If an applicant has a criminal record
5. Disclosure on the Portal

1. What is a disclosure check?

As part of our wider commitment to safeguarding, volunteers in particular roles at the MS Society may be required to have a disclosure check as part of their recruitment process. This applies to all new volunteers and current volunteers if they take on a new role that requires a check.

Disclosure checks must be renewed every three years.



See [A5: Health, safety and wellbeing](#) for more on dealing with safeguarding concerns.

Roles that require a disclosure check, and the process you must follow vary, depending on where you are in the UK. We have separate policies for England and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland:

- [Disclosure Policy and Procedure \(England and Wales\)](#)
- [Disclosure Policy and Procedure \(Northern Ireland\)](#)
- [Disclosure policy and procedure \(Scotland\)](#)

Volunteers must not start in a role requiring a disclosure check until the process has been completed, and must not continue in a role requiring a disclosure if they have not renewed their check.

1.1. Your Coordinating Team

Your **Coordinating Team** is responsible for making sure that anyone who volunteers for your group completes a disclosure check before they start doing their role, if required.

Keeping us informed

Whenever you recruit a new volunteer, or an existing volunteer changes role, make sure you contact the **Supporter Care Team** to update our central volunteer database.



For more on how the **Supporter Care Team** can help you, see [Supporter Care Team](#) on our volunteer website.

2. Who needs to be checked?

2.1. Group volunteers

If your volunteer role involves contact with adults with MS when they take part in certain activities, you must complete a disclosure check before taking up the role. Refer to the relevant policy for roles that need disclosure checks where you are.



For a list of who needs to be checked where you are, see [Disclosure](#) on our volunteer website, or ask your LNO for help.

2.2. Service providers

Individuals who provide services on behalf of your group ('service providers') may also need to be checked. This includes, but is not limited to, physiotherapists, counsellors and others who work with service users.

All disclosure checks must be completed before a service starts. Ask your service provider to contact our **Disclosure Team** at disclosure@mssociety.org.uk to request an application form, or to check existing certificates before they start delivering a service.

Disclosure checks are free of charge for volunteers, but service providers must pay for their disclosure check, in the same way that they pay for their own insurance and any professional registration they hold. Your **Coordinating Team** may decide to cover this fee.

3. The disclosure process

3.1. England and Wales

In England and Wales, disclosure checks are provided by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

- When your group recruits a volunteer or service provider in a role or activity that requires a disclosure check, contact our **Disclosure Team** at disclosure@mssociety.org.uk to request an application form, or to check an existing disclosure certificate.
- The applicant completes the application form and provides three identity documents from the list included in the application pack.
- A member of your **Coordinating Team** witnesses that the three identity documents confirm the applicant's identity.
- The applicant uses the pre-paid envelope provided to submit their application form and identity check form to our **Disclosure Team**. If they are a service provider, they must also enclose payment.
- We send your application form to the DBS who will process it.
- The DBS sends the disclosure certificate to the applicant and informs us.
- If a disclosure certificate is returned with a disclosure on it, the process is not finished until the applicant has sent in their certificate and we have completed any necessary risk assessment.
- We add disclosure details to the **Portal** and inform the applicant and your **Group Coordinator** that the disclosure check has been completed and the applicant is suitable to volunteer or provide services.
- If you have lived outside the UK for a significant period of time you may have to complete additional checks. Our **Disclosure Team** will provide the information you need if this is the case.

Update service for England and Wales

The DBS update service keeps your disclosure certificate current and lets you take it to other organisations. This is a free service for volunteers (service providers pay £13 a year). Our **Disclosure Team** will enrol you on request.

If you already have a disclosure certificate and you are registered with the update service, contact our [Disclosure Team](#) as you may be able to use it for your role with us.

We update certificates regularly, but to save time, you may wish to sign up to the update service.

Witnessing identity documents

In England and Wales, all members of your [Coordinating Team](#) can witness identity documents. This means checking that the applicant has provided the correct number and type of identity documents, and recording some of this information to confirm that you have done so.

You must not make or keep photocopies of an applicant's identity documents.

3.2. Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, disclosure checks are provided by Access NI.

- When your group recruits a volunteer or a service provider in a role or activity that requires a disclosure check, contact your [Local Networks Officer](#) (LNO) to request an application form.
- The applicant completes the application form and provides three identity documents from the list included in the application pack. If they are a service provider, they must also enclose payment.
- Your LNO checks the applicant's identity documents and forwards the completed application to the [Day Centre Manager](#) (DCM) at our Resource Centre, Belfast.
- Our DCM witnesses that the three identity documents confirm the applicant's identity and submits the application to Access NI.
- Access NI sends the disclosure certificate to the applicant and informs us.
- We add disclosure details to the [Portal](#) and inform the applicant and the [Group Coordinator](#) that the disclosure check has been completed and the applicant is suitable to volunteer or provide services.

3.3. Scotland

In Scotland, volunteer disclosure checks are provided by the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) and administered by Volunteer Scotland. Service providers must arrange and pay for their own disclosure checks.

- Your **Coordinating Team** agrees on a **Nominated Lead Person** to have the task of dealing with disclosure applications added to their role description.
- When your group recruits a volunteer in a role or activity that requires a disclosure check, your **Nominated Lead Person** contacts your **Local Networks Officer** (LNO) to request an application form.
- The volunteer completes the application form and provides three identity documents from the list included in the application pack.
- Your **Nominated Lead Person** checks the three identity documents confirm the applicant's identity and submits the completed application to your LNO.
- Your LNO witnesses that the three identity documents confirm the applicant's identity and submits the completed application to Volunteer Scotland for processing.
- Volunteer Scotland sends the disclosure certificate to the applicant and informs us.
- We add disclosure details to the **Portal** and inform the applicant and your **Nominated Lead Person** that the disclosure check has been completed and the applicant is suitable to volunteer.



For contact details for your LNO, see [Local Networks Team](#) on our volunteer website, or ask the **Supporter Care Team** for help.

4. If an applicant has a criminal record

Having a criminal record does not automatically prevent anyone from volunteering with us.

If a disclosure certificate is returned with a record, a risk assessment will be carried out. As part of that process, our **Head of Volunteering** may contact the applicant to discuss the result.

5. Disclosure on the Portal

The 'volunteers' tab on the [Portal](#) is our record of all MS Society volunteers throughout the UK. This is where we track disclosure checks, from initial application through to receipt of certificate.



To request your [Portal](#) account, log in or get support, see [Using the Portal](#) on our volunteer website, or ask the [Supporter Care Team](#) for help.

Progressing disclosure checks

Roles with access to personal data about our volunteers can use the [Portal](#) to check the progress of a disclosure application.



See [A6: Handling data](#) for your responsibilities when handling personal data.

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