

# The Campaign for Free Criminal Records Checks for Volunteers

Campaign briefing 00/03

May 2000

The Centre is part of the Criminal Records Checks Campaign Steering Group set up earlier this year. The Group, facilitated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), includes a wide range of organisations representing the volunteering sector. It is co-ordinating a renewed campaign for free checks for volunteers

## Campaign Objectives

The Campaign Steering Group supports the Government's goal of establishing a one-stop shop for checking information held by the authorities on those wishing to work with children and vulnerable adults because it will improve the screening process and help contribute to a safer volunteering environment. However, the Government is likely to charge volunteers £5 - £10 for checks. **We are campaigning for Criminal Records Bureau checks to be free for volunteers.**

## Review of the Charging Policy

The Scottish Executive has agreed to review charging policy towards volunteers' police checks in Scotland. They are currently collecting information about the likely impact of checks on volunteers. **In the short term the key objective of the current campaign is to secure a similar review of the Government's charging policy towards volunteers in England.**

## What you can do to help

**Tell us what it will cost you** – We need to gather examples of how the Government's policy of charging volunteers for their checks will affect your organization. Please complete the form at the end of this briefing and send it to us.

**Lobby your MP** – Let your MP know how the Government's charging policy will impact on your work and the services you offer to the local community. (You can find out who your MP is from the local town council, library or Citizens Advice Bureau. Alternatively look on the web at [www.locata.co.uk/commons/](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/))

- By letter - Individual letters are best, but a model letter is attached to this briefing in case you are short of time.
- In person – Most MPs have local advice sessions or surgeries where they listen to their constituent's concerns. Some of these are open access; others require an appointment.



Promotes excellence in volunteering in England

Regent's Wharf 8 All Saints Street London N1 9RL

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7520 8900 Facsimile: +44 (0) 20 7520 8910

E mail: [Volunteering@thecentre.org.uk](mailto:Volunteering@thecentre.org.uk) Web site: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

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- The practical effect of charging would be to erect a new barrier to volunteering. This contradicts the Government's stated social policy objectives of promoting volunteering and an 'active community'. It also risks undermining efforts to encourage social inclusion, because poor people, people with disabilities and the long term unemployed, who are least able to afford the cost of a check, have the most to gain from the contribution volunteering can make to promoting social inclusion.
- Volunteer-involving organisations which afford to follow good practice and reimburse their volunteers any out of pocket expenses they have incurred through volunteering are likely to pay for checks. However, this merely displaces the impact of charges onto organisations which will have to find money for this expense, possibly diverting resources away from valuable activities. In the long run much of the impact may be borne by taxpayers, through increased grants to cover the cost of checks or public provision of services needed to replace those which have been cut. If the public refuses to foot the bill, vulnerable people themselves will suffer reduced services.

## The impact of charging volunteers for police checks

Please fill in this form and return it to Andrew Mackie at the Centre

Name ..... Job Title .....

Organisation.....

Address.....

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Phone..... Fax .....

E mail..... website.....

Number of staff: Paid employees ..... Volunteers .....

Briefly summarise the services your organisation provides:

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Do you receive any Government funding (national or local) YES/NO

The Government is expected to charge £10 for high and intermediate checks and £5 for basic level check. For further information on checks. Please see the Home office leaflet which accompanies this form

	Estimated Yearly Requirement	Estimated Cost
Basic level checks (£5)		
Intermediate checks (£10)		
High level checks (£10)		
Overall cost		

Briefly describe the impact charges will have on the services your organisation is able to provide to the community. We need case studies to help bring the campaign to life.

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Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey