Criminal Record Checks – Scotland

Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme - APC

This guidance has been produced to explain what the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme is and who needs to join.

More advice is available www.bhs.org.uk/safeguardingchildren

What is the PVG Scheme

The aim of the PVG scheme is to ensure those who have regular contact with children and protected adults, through paid or unpaid work, do not have a known history of harmful behaviour.

The BHS in conjunction with Disclosure Scotland and Horse Scotland provides a checking service for BHS Approved Centres, Accredited Professional Coaches (APC's) and BHS Affiliated Riding Clubs (BRC). The BHS cannot process PVG's on behalf of APC's, we can only advise what they will need to do.

Do I need to join

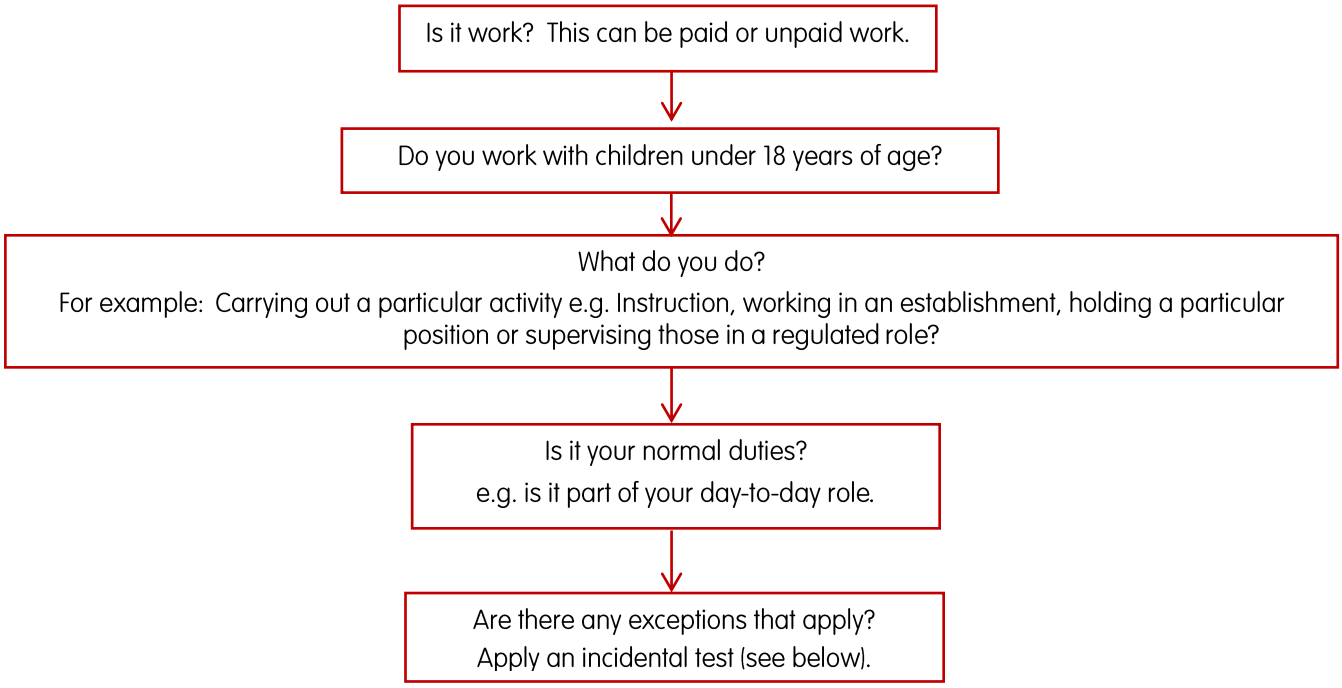
Individuals who are self-employed, or expect to become self-employed, in a capacity which involves a regulated role with Under 18's or Protected Adults, will be required **BY LAW** to join the PVG Scheme for or in anticipation of such work. This includes BHS Accredited Professional Coaches.

As a freelance riding instructor, if you are working with children/young people under 18 years of age you may be required to join the PVG scheme. However, it is your responsibility as a self-employed individual to ascertain whether your role meets the criteria and are legally required or eligible to join the PVG scheme. If you are unsure about your role please speak to one of the BHS Safeguarding team using the contact details at the end of this document.

What is a Regulated Role

Regulated roles with children

There are 5 steps to assessing whether an individual is in a regulated role. If you answer yes to every section you are in a regulated role. If you answer no to any section you are not in a regulated role.



Regulated Roles with Protected Adults

A protected adult is defined as an individual aged 18 years or over who is provided with (and thus receives) a type of care, health, community care or welfare service.

If you offer an activity aimed at protected adults then a PVG check may be required but will have to also satisfy the 5 criteria above but in relation to protected adults.

Further explanation on what they do in relation to the equine industry

An individual may be doing a regulated role with children if their role involves any of the following activities (as part of their normal duties):-

- Caring for children.
- Teaching, instructing, training or supervising children.
- Being in sole charge of children, unsupervised contact with children under arrangements made by the responsible person.
- Providing advice or guidance to a child or to particular children which relates to physical or emotional well-being.
- Education or training.
- Moderating a public electronic interactive communication service which is intended for use wholly or mainly by children (for example a social media site aimed at children).

Disclosure Scotland has further information on regulated roles that need PVG scheme membership - Check if a role needs PVG scheme membership - mygov.scot

Further explanation on normal duties

Normal duties can be considered as something the individual might be expected to do as part of their post on an on-going basis, for example appearing in a job description. This can be on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis, Normal duties exclude one-off occurrences and unforeseeable events.

Exceptions

Incidental test:-

An activity is likely to be incidental when it is - open to all, attractive to a wide cross-section of society or attendance is discretionary. If an activity is aimed at children or is likely to be more appealing to children it is not likely to be incidental.

Types of registration/certificate

There are four types of disclosure records available:-

Level 1 - PVG Scheme Disclosure (Join)

This is for joining the PVG scheme and is for a basic disclosure. It is also for existing PVG members who want to work with a new vulnerable group. For example if your membership is for children and you move to a role working with protected adults too. This shows unspent convictions.

Level 2 - PVG Scheme Disclosure (Existing)

This is for existing PVG members carrying out a specific role such as solicitor, accountant, prison worker who are continuing to work with the same vulnerable group on their membership. It adds an organisation to their membership.

The organisation the individual is working with will let them know if they need this disclosure and will start the application.

All Level 2 disclosures show information on unspent and certain spent convictions and other relevant information held by the police.

Note: *Self-employed individuals cannot apply for the above checks on their own. They are only available where the applicant is being offered work by an organisation. Where the applicant is self-employed or working for a personal employer (not an organisation) they can only apply for a Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership.*

Level 2 (with barred list check)

This is only used for specific activities such as adopting a child. It shows any unspent convictions and certain spent convictions. It also shows whether you are barred from work with children or protected adults.

The organisation the individual is working with will let them know if they need this disclosure and will start the application.

PVG Scheme membership

Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership (Join)

This is for self-employed people or those employed by a personal employer in a regulated role who want to work with a new vulnerable group.

Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership (Existing)

This is for existing self-employed PVG members who are continuing to work with the same vulnerable group but want to add another employer or organisation to their membership.

What do I need to provide for the Accredited Professional Coach Register

If you are not currently a member of the scheme and work in a regulated role you will need to apply direct to Disclosure Scotland - Apply to the PVG scheme - mygov.scot for a Confirmation of PVG membership (new).

What if I work for another organisation

If you work for or are likely to work for in the future another organisation e.g. a riding school or pony club you may prefer to apply for PVG membership through them. This will prevent you having to pay £59 twice.

How can I apply

If you're self-employed or work for an individual and meet the criteria in your role to join the PVG scheme you will need to apply direct to Disclosure Scotland for a PVG. The link to the website is www.mygov.scot/apply-to-pvg-scheme/self-employed. To do this you will need to create an online Scot Account and apply via your account.

Cost

Initial application to join the PVG Scheme is £59.

Membership Update - (Existing PVG Members) is £18.

Working in both Scotland and England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The PVG Scheme can only be used in respect of regulated roles in Scotland; it is an offence to use disclosure records for other purposes. The Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) should be used for checks for regulated work in England & Wales. In Northern Ireland it is AccessNI who carry out Criminal Record Checks. Normally the most appropriate check for any particular role will be determined by the employing organisation. This will mean that, in some cases, an individual will be required to be a member of both the PVG Scheme and Disclosure and Barring Service.

Updating your details

It is a legal requirement to inform Disclosure Scotland if you change your name, address, or gender and to do this you need your registered full name, PVG number and Date of Birth.

Updating a PVG Confirmation of Scheme Membership

From 1 April 2026 all PVG's will expire every 5 years. Disclosure Scotland will be confirming how this will be rolled out in due course.

For applications or further information please contact

Safeguarding Team

Email: safeguarding@bhs.org.uk

Tel: 02476 840746

or

Disclosure Scotland

PO Box 250, Glasgow, G51 1YU

Tel: 0300 020 0040

Email: response@disclosurescotland.gov.scot

Website: How to contact Disclosure Scotland - mygov.scot

Case Study

Self-Employed Riding Instructor

Sally is at college. During the summer break, she intends to offer riding lessons to children at their own homes to boost her income. She knows this will be a regulated role with children and anticipates at least some parents will want to see a Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership.

Sally applies to join the PVG Scheme in respect of her carrying out a regulated role with children. Sally pays £59. Sally is issued with a Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership in April. She starts work providing lessons in June. The first few parents are happy to see her Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership from April. When she takes on new clients in August, some parents ask for a more recent Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership. She asks one parent to countersign an application, then she pays £18 and Sally and the parent receive a Confirmation of Existing PVG Scheme membership. Sally now uses this confirmation to show to other parents.