Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme – BHS Approved Centres

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 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/Horse Scotland provides a checking service for BHS Approved Centres and BHS Affiliated Riding Clubs (BRC).

Do I need to join

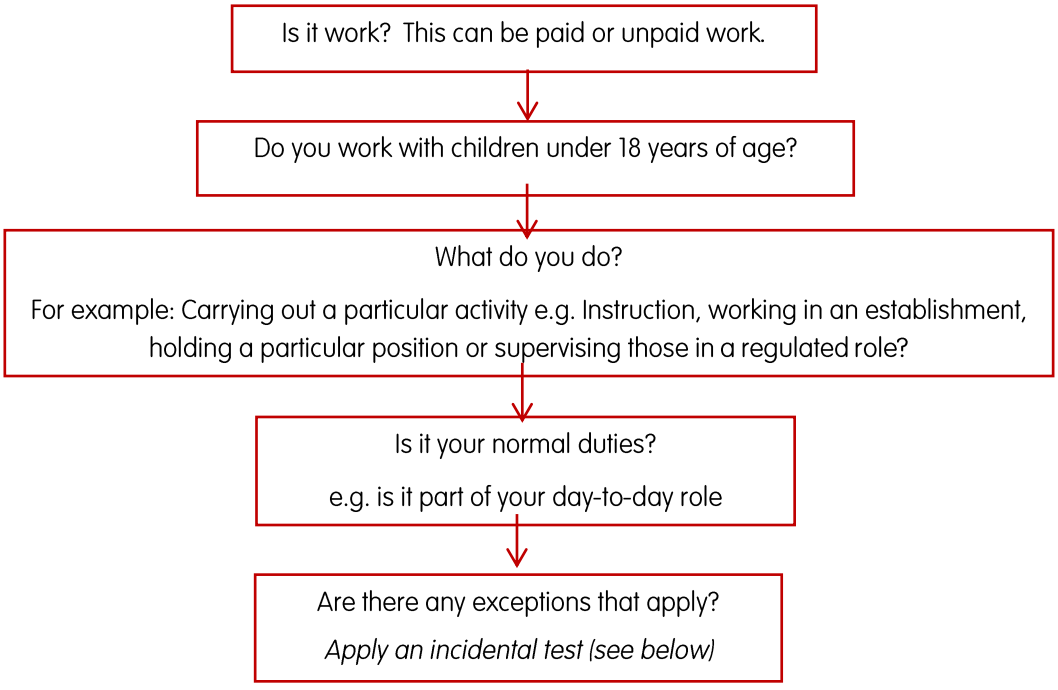
When an organisation is asking an individual to do a regulated role with children and/or with protected adults for them for the first time (whether an existing or new member of staff whether an employee or volunteer, the organisation will ask the individual to join the PVG Scheme.

Individuals who are self-employed or expect to become self-employed, in a capacity which involves a regulated role may be required **BY LAW** to join the PVG Scheme for or in anticipation of such role. This includes BHS Approved Centre Proprietors.

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 16 or over who is provided with (and thus receives) a type of care, health, community care or welfare service.

If you offer an activity that is 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 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).

Roles which are likely to need a PVG check:-

- Proprietor
- Instructor
- Welfare Officer/Child Protection Officer
- First Aider
- Team Trainer/Coach
- Camp/Team Supervisor

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. 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.

Work with children who are in work

If a 16 or 17 year old is in work themselves the individual who is supervising them is within the scope of a regulated role.

Care should be taken around children in employment and children on work experience. For further information please contact the BHS Lead Safeguarding Officer.

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.

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 a Scot Account and apply via your account.

Application to join the PVG scheme
Proprietors and Safeguarding Officers of BHS Approved Centres can apply to the BHS to co-ordinate their application online with Disclosure Scotland. The link to the form is –
https://forms.monday.com/forms/c6a174d6621765b61fd729ec7076fb55?r=use1
The fee payable to the BHS can be paid by BACS or through our secure telephone payment system.

Cost
For paid individuals
Application to join the confirmation of PVG Scheme membership - £59.00 or £69.00 if co-ordinated by the BHS for Proprietors. Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership (Existing) - £18.00 or £28.00 if co-ordinated by the BHS for Proprietors

For Volunteers:
Please contact the BHS Safeguarding Team for further guidance on the checking of volunteers.

Checking your identity
Who can check my documents
The Approved Centre must verify the staff members' identity documents.
Copies of the verified and signed ID will need to be sent with your application form.

If there is no one able to check your ID, we can arrange to check your ID via a video call with staff at BHS HQ. Once your application and copies of your ID documents have been received, we can contact you about arranging video call.

If you have any queries regarding your ID documents including what is acceptable please contact the BHS Safeguarding Team, details below.

What you will need to do
Once the BHS have completed the first part of the online application, you will be sent the second part as a link by email from Disclosure Scotland to complete and submit.

If there are any errors Disclosure Scotland or the BHS will be in touch to try and rectify them.

What the applicant will receive and who to tell about PVG membership

The applicant will receive an online disclosure which they can share with the organisation they are applying with, this must be shared within 14 days of receiving the result. This allows their employer to continue the recruitment process.

Looking after Disclosure Records

All disclosure records contain the individual's PVG Scheme membership number, which will not change. PVG Scheme members should keep a careful note of this number as it will speed up any applications made to Disclosure Scotland at a later date. Any Confirmation of PVG scheme membership issued should be retained in case any organisation wants to see it when the individual seeks to do a regulated role elsewhere. The most recent Confirmation of Scheme Membership should also be retained in case any personal employer wants to see it.

Conviction information

If there is content (convictions etc) on the certificate you will need to make a risk assessment on whether the member of staff is suitable to work on your yard. The BHS has a template content policy, please contact us for further information.

Updating a PVG Scheme Record

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.

Removing an organisation from the update

When an employee or volunteer leaves your organisation you must advise them to break the link where you would receive an update on their status via Disclosure Scotland. Please contact Disclosure Scotland via email at dsupdate@disclosurescotland.gov.scot

Referral

As an employer, you have a legal duty to notify the PVG Scheme at Disclosure Scotland about an employee when you have had to a take disciplinary action to remove this employee from a regulated role as a result of their harmful behaviour towards a child or vulnerable person. In the cases where the employee leaves before you have had the chance to carry out the disciplinary action to remove them you are still required to refer the individual to the PVG Scheme via Disclosure Scotland.

For further information please contact the BHS Lead Safeguarding Officer or visit https://www.mygov.scot/apply-for-pvg/

Updating your details

It is a legal requirement to update 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.

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

Frequently Asked Questions

I am a proprietor of a BHS Approved Centre, do I need to apply

If you are working in a regulated role or expect to carry out a regulated role you will need to apply to join the PVG scheme. If you are self-employed you will be able to access a Confirmation of PVG membership. You will need to apply online to Disclosure Scotland, 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.

If you are already a PVG member and require an updated Confirmation of PVG membership you will need to apply for a countersigned existing Confirmation of PVG membership. This can be countersigned by a client and then returned to Disclosure Scotland. Alternatively if you would like the BHS Safeguarding team to countersign please complete the online application form on the link - https://forms.monday.com/forms/c6a174d6621765b61fd729ec7076fb55?r=use1

I am working for a Riding Establishment, what do I need to do

When an individual is working or volunteering for an Approved Centre where a PVG check is necessary, it is the responsibility of the Approved Centre to ensure they access either a Confirmation of PVG membership through Disclosure Scotland or if the person is already an existing member of the PVG Scheme, the individual should apply for an existing Confirmation of PVG membership via the organisation that is employing them.

Employers at Approved Centres must ensure all their employees in regulated roles join the PVG Scheme. The BHS Safeguarding Team can help Approved Centre Proprietors to complete the necessary online forms.

I work or volunteer for more than one Approved Centre - what do I need to do

For instructors who work for more than one Approved Centre you must initially obtain a Confirmation of PVG membership through one of your employers and then you only need apply for an existing Confirmation of PVG membership for subsequent Approved Centres.

I am a Freelance Instructor - what do I need to do

As a Freelance Instructor you need to decide whether the role you are doing is considered to be 'a regulated role' and requires a PVG check. It is likely you will need one if you are working with private clients under the age of 18 in their own homes on a freelance basis. Freelance Instructors who have not yet joined the PVG Scheme but need to can obtain a Confirmation of PVG Scheme membership directly from Disclosure Scotland at a cost of £59. Alternatively parents might choose to check whether you are barred from working with children. This is through their rights to be able to access a disclosure as personal employers - they can check the suitability of the person they are seeking to employ, e.g. a parent employing a sports coach for their child or someone buying a care service directly. If you require a PVG check for your role please apply direct to Disclosure Scotland. The link to the website is www.mygov.scot/apply-to-pvg-scheme/self-employed

We run a Livery yard. Do we need to apply

If children under 18 years of age are left unsupervised at the yard and staff are responsible for them they are likely to be in a regulated role and therefore will require a check. If there is only a Proprietor on site they will need to apply for a Confirmation of PVG Membership as they are classed as self-employed.

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 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.

Recruiting individuals from overseas

Individuals recruited from overseas to do a regulated role in Scotland should ask to join the PVG Scheme in the same way as individuals recruited from Scotland. The same checks will be performed by Disclosure Scotland to discover whether they are known to UK information sources and membership of the scheme will ensure any new vetting information about them is picked up and dealt with quickly.