

VOLUNTEERING
MADE
DIFFICULT:
HOW THE CHILD
PROTECTION
BUREAUCRACY
IS
OBSTRUCTING
VOLUNTEERS

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Manifesto Club Campaign Against Vetting

The Manifesto Club has been campaigning against the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act since October 2006, when we launched a petition signed by individuals including Fay Weldon, Johnny Ball and Alan Silitoe, and hundreds of volunteers, parents and concerned adults. We relaunched this petition in October 2009.

Reports: We have also published a series of reports, documenting the expansion of vetting and its damaging effect on social life, including:

The Case Against Vetting

October 2006 Provides an overview of the dramatic expansion of vetting, and shows how this feeds a child protection bureaucracy, while undermining everyday relationships between adults and children.

How the Child Protection Industry Stole Christmas

December 2006 Shows how overregulation is ruining seasonal celebrations.

Hobby Clubs *April 2007*

Documents how some mixed-age clubs are banning children.

Briefing Document *April 2008*

Shows how the government's new vetting laws are late, over-budget and over-stretched.

Briefing Document *July 2009*

Regulating Trust – reports on a leaked government document, and exposes officials' absurd plans for the vetting database.

Vetting Under-18s: An education in mistrust

December 2009 Shows how Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are undermining teenage volunteers.

See a record of our campaigning, here: www.manifestoclub.com/hubs/vetting

Executive summary

1. Over the past eight years, there has been a massive rise in the CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checking of volunteers – from 239,731 in 2002/3, to 756,905 in 2008–9¹. In total there have been more than four million checks on volunteers since 2002. According to an FOI response, two million volunteers would have to register on the vetting database, if it goes ahead as planned. This checking has been at considerable cost. The total cost of CRB checking volunteers since 2002 is £220.8 million, while ISA registration would cost £136 million.

¹ CRB response to Manifesto Club FOI request, 29 April 2010

2. The bureaucracy to which volunteers are subjected is completely out of proportion to the informal and low-key nature of their activities. People have been asked to complete a CRB check for activities including: flower arranging in a cathedral; working on a local newsletter; visiting elderly people to chat and do crosswords; listening to children read in a school.

3. Child protection rules mean that volunteers are treated with suspicion and subjected to humiliating and invasive procedures. Cases documented in this report include: volunteers being accompanied to the toilet in schools; volunteers being asked to wear ID badges including their CRB number; volunteers being asked to list all their places of residence for the past 10 years.

4. This report documents the damaging effects of child protection procedures. Many long-term volunteers are resigning in protest, and other potential volunteers are deciding not to take up opportunities. People cited in this report who refuse to undergo child protection procedures, and have resigned or been sacked as a result, include: a serving police officer; a parish priest; a county councillor; several doctors; head of an angling club. Some volunteers of over 20 years have recently been pushed to resign. In several cases, groups such as sports clubs, hobby clubs and international exchanges have either closed down, or decided to exclude children from their membership.

5. Volunteers' concerns about CRB checks include:

Disrespect/Mistrust:

volunteers said that they felt 'totally disrespected' or found procedures 'thoroughly insulting'.

Bureaucratic burden:

one volunteer said that CRB checks mean '*paperwork, paperwork, paperwork*'; another said that they turned volunteering into 'a burden and a bore'.

Privacy concerns:

volunteers said they did not want to reveal personal information or have someone 'rummaging through personal details'.

6. Vetting and child protection procedures are obstructing volunteering and civic activity, which is damaging children's development and wellbeing. This report feeds into the government's review of the vetting and barring scheme. We call for:

First: the exclusion of all volunteers from any vetting and barring scheme. A mother should not be required to register on a vetting database before she goes into her child's school to listen to reading. Under current plans, two million volunteers would have to register on the database. We call for all of these two million to be excluded from any vetting and barring scheme.

Second: a halt to the common practice of CRB checking volunteers. The CRB checking of volunteers is common policy of councils, voluntary organisations and sports bodies (enforced by official bodies such as Ofsted and the Child Protection in Sport Unit), and leads to over 700,000 CRB checks every year. We call for the review and halting of this general policy.

Third: the rolling back of child protection bureaucracy from voluntary activity. Volunteers are obstructed by many over-the-top 'child protection' rules, such as rules that they must be accompanied to the toilet, or rules against a volunteer being alone with a child or elderly person. These rules are as off-putting and damaging as CRB checks and the vetting database, and should be reconsidered and rolled back.

THE RISE IN CRB CHECKING VOLUNTEERS

Whole swathes of civic activity – and a whole section of national institutions – rely on the unpaid contributions of citizens in their free time. Without contract or remuneration, volunteers teach children football or fishing, arrange flowers in churches, maintain historic houses, rescue injured walkers and run youth clubs.

Volunteering is not like a job: arrangements are made informally, with an advert in a village newsletter or an agreement among neighbours. Yet increasingly, volunteers face the burdens of bureaucratic checks and legal responsibilities, without the rights or financial benefits of a job contract.

Until a few years ago, it was extremely rare for volunteers to undergo CRB checks or other formal procedures. Teachers and other child professions were police checked, but volunteers were vetted only in exceptional circumstances. This is no longer the case. Since 2002, it has become common practice to CRB check those volunteering with 'vulnerable' groups: children; or 'vulnerable adults' such as the elderly, homeless, or adults with disabilities. Volunteers are also increasingly asked to comply with other formal procedures, including going on child protection courses or assuming legal responsibility for children or for fellow volunteers.

A Freedom of Information response received by the Manifesto Club revealed that the number of volunteers being CRB checked has almost tripled since 2002, from 239,731 to 756,905. Since 2002, nearly four million CRB checks have been issued to volunteers – a fifth of the total enhanced CRB checks issued over that period. The majority (over 90%) of these checks were issued for volunteers working with children. There have been 308,630 checks for volunteers working with vulnerable adults.²

| Financial Year | Enhanced CRB Certificates Issued | CRB checks for volunteers with vulnerable adults | Total CRB checks of volunteers |
|----------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 2002–03 | 1,258,719 | 0 | 239,731 |
| 2003–04 | 1,999,558 | 1 | 426,907 |
| 2004–05 | 2,155,740 | 29,459 | 519,791 |
| 2005–06 | 2,456,897 | 45,729 | 586,664 |
| 2006–07 | 2,948,734 | 53,189 | 664,566 |
| 2007–08 | 3,028,659 | 54,789 | 682,028 |
| 2008–09 | 3,459,415 | 58,031 | 756,905 |
| 2009–10* | 3,625,342 | 67,432 | —** |
| Total | 20,933,064 | 308,630 | 3,876,592 |

* Up to the end of February 2010

** Figures for 2009–10 not provided. Assuming CRB checks continued at the same rate as the previous year, this would be a total of over 4.6million checks for volunteers.

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, volunteers will have to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), if they carry out their voluntary activity with children once a week, three days at a time, or overnight. The new government has said that it will review and scale back this vetting and barring scheme, which we welcome.

The CRB's response to our Freedom of Information request revealed the latest estimates on the number of volunteers who will have to register on the vetting database, if it goes ahead as planned. This reveals that, even after the Singleton review,³ *two million volunteers will have to register on the ISA database or be guilty of a criminal offence*. This means that a quarter of all individuals registered on the database would be volunteers.

The 'employer' – often another volunteer – has a legal responsibility to ensure that all the volunteers in their group are checked. If a volunteer is not checked, they and their 'employer' could both be convicted and given a fine of up to £5000.

The CRB's response in full read:

'The total number of people it is currently estimated that will eventually register with the ISA is 7.5 million. The estimated number of volunteers who will eventually be registered on the ISA database is 2 million volunteers of which 1.4 million are forecast to be registered for work with children, 0.1 million are forecast to be registered for work with vulnerable adults and 0.4 million are forecast to be registered for work with both children and vulnerable adults.'⁴

The vetting and barring scheme would have huge implications for volunteering organisations. According to a Scouts representative, the Scouts process 60,000 CRB applications a year, and would expect to handle 60,000 ISA registrations a year.⁵

An analysis of 'registered' and 'umbrella' bodies also indicates the scale of CRB checking volunteers. 'Registered bodies' are organisations registered with the CRB to process CRB checks for their members. As of 1 January 2010, there were 4,297 organisations registered to process CRB applications for their members; of these, 3,468 had submitted application forms for volunteers. At the same time, there were 1,779 organisations registered with the CRB as 'umbrella bodies', which means that they can also process CRB checks for people outside of their membership, often as a paid service; of these, 1,355 had submitted applications from volunteers.⁶

3 The Singleton review, in December 2009, recommended a loosening of the specifications for registration on the ISA database: most importantly, the definition of 'frequent activity' was changed from once a month to once a week.

4 CRB response to Manifesto Club FOI request, 29 April 2010

5 Telephone interview with Paul Wilkinson, Scouts Safeguarding Team

6 CRB response to Manifesto Club FOI request, 29 April 2010

THE COST OF CRB CHECKING VOLUNTEERS

It is often claimed that CRB checks are free for volunteers, but this is not really the case. First, volunteers and volunteering organisations pay an administration fee, or bear the cost of the administration within their organisation, which around £20 a CRB check (this is the average umbrella body charge for this service). The £20 administration cost for 4.6 million volunteers' CRB checks since 2002 is around £92 million; the administration cost for the ISA registration of 2 million volunteers would be around £40 million.

Secondly, the fee for CRB checking volunteers is borne by fees paid by other CRB checks, which are correspondingly more expensive. The cost of processing CRBs for volunteers – which is borne by other CRB checks – can be estimated at an average of £28 for a CRB check, and £48 for ISA registration. This means a total cost of £128.8

million for 4.6 million CRB checks since 2002, and a cost of £96 million for ISA registration⁷ of 2 million volunteers.

| | Total (millions £) | Cost of CRB checks (millions £) | Admin costs (millions £) |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| CRB checks 2002–10 | 220.8 | 128.8 ⁸ | 92 |
| ISA registration | 136 | 96 ⁹ | 40 |
| Total cost | 356.8 | 224.8 | 132 |

To put it in institutional perspective: the Scouts' 60,000 checks means admin costs of around £1.2 million a year. This could have paid for a lot of sports equipment, outings, and other facilities that volunteering organisations in this country badly need.

TREATING VOLUNTEERS AS SUSPECTS

⁷ These figures are, respectively, a fifth and a quarter below the cost price of CRB checks and ISA registration; ie, the real cost of volunteers' CRB checks that is being subsidised by other checks.

⁸ 4.6 million checks at cost of £28 each

⁹ 2 million registrations at a cost of £48 each

¹⁰ <http://www.eastbourneherald.co.uk/hailsham-news/Age-Concern-urges-people-to.6334873.jp>

CRB checks are part of a growing child protection apparatus that effectively treats volunteers like suspects. An offer to help out – to drive the boys to football or take old ladies shopping – is treated as potential preparation for some kind of abuse. When somebody offers to help out, the first thing they have to do is to be checked out and to prove that they are not a paedophile.

People are being CRB checked for the most innocuous of activities. Age Concern Sussex recently advertised a 'befriender' scheme, which would include volunteers visiting an old person for 'general chatting or sharing hobbies such as crosswords and chess'. The Age Concern representative stated that 'volunteers will need a CRB check'.¹⁰ (Indeed, if these volunteers visited the old person once a week, they would fall within the remit of the vetting database.)

To put this in proportion: somebody wanting to sell explosives would undergo a lower level of security vetting than a grandmother who listens to children read once a week. The explosives seller would undergo a standard CRB check, which only shows up convictions and cautions, and they would not have to go on any surveillance database; the grandmother would have to undergo an enhanced CRB check, which also shows up information on local police files, and (under current plans) she would additionally have to register on the ISA database.

Individuals with years of experience, who by all rights should have earned respect, are treated like suspects until their CRB forms have come through. One long-time school governor complained about her demotion on the account of a late CRB check:

'I have been an active governor for 14 years, and chair for the past 5. Like most Governors I am committed to the role. However, recently my term expired and I wished to continue. My request was accepted and forms duly completed. Recently our vice Chair resigned due to work commitments. We have full governors meeting tomorrow and I have been contacted by the LA governors section to advise that they have received my acceptance but will not process it until they also receive my CRB clearance forms. As a result

I have been invited to tomorrow's meeting but can only be an observer. I am to say the least annoyed.'¹¹

Another summer camp volunteer was subjected to a similar treatment:

'I was working as a volunteer at a children's summer camp. I had actually applied for my CRB in reasonable time, but for some reason (maybe because I'd moved within the last 3 years) it hadn't arrived before the camp started. A compromise was reached where I stayed technically "off site" (laughably, over a track 30 yards or so from where my tent had been!) and I had to "sign in" each morning (By the way, I had my young daughter with me all the time, but she wasn't perceived to be in any danger!) I had been on the camp twice before so I was known to the committee (the majority of the personnel on the committee were the same).'12

Many organisations are going beyond official guidelines and CRB checking volunteers who have no substantial contact with children. Annabel Hayter, a member of the Gloucester Cathedral flower guild, said that the dean had requested CRB checks for the 60 members of the guild. 'We were told that if we aren't checked, we will have paedophiles infiltrating through the flower guild. Another reason given was because we use the same loo as the choir boys – even though the choir boys are never in the Cathedral when we are there.'13

A woman in St Andrews, Fife, reports that her local gardens CRB checked *all* volunteers: 'People volunteering at our local botanic garden have to be vetted in order to accompany primary school educational groups – which usually have two teachers with them at all times – on guided tours round the garden. The young (now pregnant) woman who works in the hut at the botanic garden gate selling admission tickets and plants also has to be vetted – and vetted each year, as she doesn't work in the winter.'14

Corrado Mella, from Perth, Scotland said that she was checked for her role editing a local newsletter, as a result of council rules: 'I volunteered in a local Newsletter group, and the funders [the council, Perth & Kinross] specifically required that every volunteer had to be vetted because – attending our tasks of producing a newsletter – we could have been in contact or working with children.'15

Some Scout troops have the policy of CRB checking parents of boys who join the pack, as one Scout leader outlines: 'It's standard practice in most Scout Groups to routinely CRB check the parents of every child who joins the group. In some cases, the child cannot join the Cubs or Scouts until this check has been done.'¹⁶ This Scout leader said that it is only this that could explain the figure of 60,000 checks each year, since Scouts only have 100,000 regular volunteers. A representative from the Scout Child Safeguarding Board confirmed that the CRB checking of parents could occur in some cases – for example, where parents had to join an obligatory volunteering rota.¹⁷

Many of these voluntary organisations are just following the official guidance from bodies such as Ofsted, local authorities, or the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU). They are also heeding official statements calling for CRB checks of all adults who have 'access to children' or an 'opportunity to build a relationship of trust with a child'. The fact is that most public roles – since children are not held in isolation camps – could mean such an opportunity.

11 Leesa Murray, posted on governornet <http://www.governornet.co.uk/threadShow.cfm?topicAreaId=8&forumId=4368&pageStart=11&sortOrder=datePosted>

12 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

13 Telephone interview, March 2010

14 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

15 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

16 Email, 6 April 2010

17 Telephone interview with Paul Wilkinson, Scouts Safeguarding Team, May 2010

CRB checks are not the end of it, though. Volunteers are subjected to even greater levels of surveillance and mistrust, due to 'safeguarding' regulations emanating from Ofsted and other official bodies. One representative for a charity that took retired volunteers into schools described the humiliating conditions to which her volunteers were subjected. One local education authority (LEA) first of all demanded that all volunteers wear ID badges, then raised another demand:

'we then had to redesign and reissue 70 ID badges because the LA decided they wanted the date of the CRB put on the back (although no-one looks at the front, let alone the back of the badges)'.¹⁸

The organiser detailed a series of humiliating barriers that her volunteers face when they go into schools:

'It is now quite difficult to get into many schools and volunteers had to stand out in the snow this winter for up to 10 minutes (some with health conditions) before they could attract attention. One secondary school has now separated waiting visitors from the school so my volunteers have had to wait for up to 20 minutes in a glassed area with a door continually opening to the outside, not enough seating and no heating. They were not allowed to go to the toilet till our teacher came to escort us. At a recent conference, we all had to be escorted to the toilet (by the deputy head!) at another school, and one of my volunteers was escorted to the toilet by the teacher while the rest of the volunteers were left in the class with 32 children!'¹⁹

18 Email, 9 March 2010

19 Email, 9 March 2010

20 Telephone conversations, May 2010

Such treatment has unsurprisingly resulted in lost volunteers.

LOST VOLUNTEERS

CRB checks and the attendant child protection bureaucracy are causing significant losses of volunteers. This is something that everybody who has contact with volunteering organisations knows, but New Labour government officials refused to admit. Former Home Office minister Meg Hillier once put out a press release blasting the 'myth' that vetting puts off volunteers. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) England head David Butler, and a spokesman for the Office of the Third Sector, have both told me that didn't know any cases of vetting putting off volunteers.²⁰

When pushed on the issue, New Labour officials gave me two responses: either that people are using the CRB check as an 'excuse' for not volunteering; or, as one Home office minister told me, that there are 'suspicious reasons' for people not wanting to be CRB checked.

This report is an answer to these claims. It shows that volunteers *are* being put off because of child protection procedures, and for entirely understandable and good reasons. Volunteers' concerns include: they resent the implied mistrust; they do

not like the invasion of privacy; or they feel overburdened with bureaucracy or legal responsibility that is out of tune with the volunteering role.

The people resigning are not the 'suspicious' people. On the contrary, perhaps these are the best people, the people for whom the offer of help was genuine and so who most resent the bad-faith bureaucracy. Many of these volunteers are veritable pillars of the community who have volunteered for a decade or more.

Lost volunteers

Eric Tweedie, British Aikido Board: 'Almost all of the children's sections of our organisation have been closed because of the requirements of the Child Protection legislation.'²¹

21 Email, 8 May 2010

22 Email, 6 May 2010

23 Telephone interview, March 2010

24 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

25 Telephone interview, May 2010

Mike Hansford, angler, Leigh on Sea, Essex: 'Personally as a result of my experience and the impending rules I handed over the running of the Juniors [anglers]. After some 25 years of starting and running the club I am not prepared to have my integrity questioned by a bunch of bureaucrats who seem to think that a piece of paper will stop the Huntleys of this world. I have nothing to hide but I find the whole concept insulting. Although now in my sixties I am still active but I would not get involved in activity where vetting is a requirement as a matter of principle!'

Mark Timlett, Junior 4-Somes golf league, Kent: 'We have lost volunteers, mainly due to the increased bureaucracy, and they are not being replaced by people with the right skills which has led to various problems.'²²

Annabel Hayter, flower guild, Gloucester Cathedral: 'When CRB checking was done five years ago we lost 6 Guild Members. This time round I have letters from about 30 Guild Members all against vetting – of those 30 I expect to lose at least 20 [if the dean insists on CRB checking the flower guild]. I would be one of the members resigning. That would leave a Guild of 35 members and the flower arrangements in the Cathedral will be greatly reduced.'²³

District commissioner, Scout Association: 'A serving Police Officer who already holds clearances' [stopped volunteering because of the CRB check requirement].

Rob Readhead, community volunteer: 'many have told me they will cease volunteering when the ISA scheme is implemented.'²⁴

Malcolm Ash, Little League Football: 'Sometimes a volunteer, as soon as they hear there is a CRB check, they don't want to know anymore. It is very difficult to quantify how many these are.'²⁵

Some volunteers are resigning quietly. A few others – unlikely militants, perhaps – are refusing to resign and staying in their positions. Jeremy Hummerstone, a parish priest

from Great Torrington, Devon, describes his and his wife's stands against being CRB checked, which resulted in both being eventually removed from their posts:

'I am a parish priest and my post includes the chaplaincy of the local cottage hospital and membership of the governors of the church school. The new chaplain of the nearby district hospital told me that he was my line manager, and that I was to agree to a CRB forthwith. I declined, but also was unwilling to resign, which, he said, left him no option but to arrange my dismissal. Although I put up no resistance, it took a whole year to get rid of me. School governors were told they must all have the CRB check, but the matter was never pressed on me. I have noticed, however, that I am never left alone in a classroom, whereas I used to teach one of the classes.

'The Archdeacon tried to make me have a 3rd CRB check for my general position in the parish. He said that if I did not, the parish would be regarded as a dangerous area, and the police would have to come to our church fetes, etc. Since I have the freehold of the benefice he was unable to force me to comply, and the police have shown no interest in this dangerous place.

'My wife did volunteer driving for a local charity – taking people to hospital, or to visit friends, go shopping etc. Several times they mentioned CRB checks but my wife never did anything about it. They continued to use her, being evidently very short of volunteers. A while ago we realized that the urgent requests for help had stopped, so she has been dropped.'²⁶

26 Email, 14 April 2010

27 Posting on Manifesto Club petition against vetting: <http://www.petitiononline.com/MCVet/petition.html>

DISRESPECT/ MISTRUST

Many volunteers resent the disrespect or mistrust implied by CRB checks and other child protection regulations. They feel that they are offering their time and efforts, and yet are being treated with mistrust and taken for granted. 'We don't grow on trees', one volunteer said to me.

'[My volunteers] felt totally disrespected'. [Representative of charity whose volunteers were required to wear CRB check ID badges]

'I found the CRB procedure thoroughly insulting and I contemplated resigning as a Reader rather than submit to it.'²⁷ Professor Tom Addiscott, Reader in Church of England

They also feel that they are being asked to prove their innocence even when they have lived in the area for years and, in one lady's words, 'produced sufficient evidence already':

'At the request of my daughter who is teaching at our local village school, I have been attending for two hours every Wednesday for 3 months, to hear children read. Naturally, I had to produce required documents for a CRB check, in fact I produced different documents on two occasions, including my driving licence. I subsequently heard that there was a problem and the school received a request to forward on to me to have my finger prints taken, and to produce three passport type photographs... . I have lived at my present address for 41 years, during which time my family and I have been closely associated with the school. I feel that I have produced sufficient evidence already... not to warrant my being inconvenienced further.'²⁸

A woman from Dumfriesshire, Scotland, described the suspicious procedures that put her off volunteering with the RSPB:

'Yesterday I decided against volunteering with the RSPB. They were looking to form a Wildlife Explorer group for youngsters in my area and needed people to lead it. This I thought I could do. Hence I went along with my three copies of ID as requested. The ID I thought was for the Disclosure Scotland Application form, but studying the form, you don't seem to need more than two forms of ID. The disclosure form I can cope with, in my case it is the RSPB I can't work with, they want to know where I have lived for the last ten years (the disclosure form only wants my whereabouts for the last five years). It wants two referees, which perhaps I should supply but to me they should take me as they see me.'²⁹

28 Email to Campaign
Against Vetting

29 Email, 17 May 2010

30 Response to Manifesto
Club survey: Vetting and
Volunteering

31 Vetting blog, 17
August 2009: <http://www.manifestoclub.com/node/477>

CRB checks are putting off seasoned volunteers, who have been doing it for years and then at a certain point crack.

'I have been CRB checked at least 6 times in the past but I've had enough. I no longer volunteer because I'm tired of having to prove a negative. Vetting people does nothing but destroy trust within a society. Becoming an adult is no longer something to look forward to because once you turn 16 you are no longer trusted.' Jeff, former volunteer from the scouts.³⁰

One long-time volunteer emailed the Manifesto Club vetting blog about his accumulation of CRB checks for helping out in his small village:

'A couple of years ago I agreed to a CRB check in order to be able to carry on helping out with my children's (age 10) junior football club in our village (population about 850). More recently, I've been asked to submit to another one to be able to help out at their local Cubs. So far, I've simply ignored this and will continue to do so as a matter of principle. If I'm asked specifically to go through the check again I'll refuse and the Cubs will lose another volunteer.'³¹

As well as the personal insult, volunteers object to the principle of vetting. Emeritus Professor of Medicine Raymond Tallis was asked to be vetted in order to perform his role on a health board, and wrote a letter of protest:

'You have invited all the board members to undergo a CRB check. I am afraid I have to decline as a matter of principle. If the board wants to have my services, it will have to take on trust that I am not a paedophile, an international terrorist, a user of or trafficker in Class A drugs, or any other kind of felon.'

This matter of principle, for Tallis as for many others, is not merely a personal matter but also a stand against a society built on suspicion and bad faith. In his letter, Tallis continued:

'Over the last 10 years we have been driven by collective paranoia towards a "total surveillance" society. I have nothing to hide but I do not propose to fill in a form protesting this fact. Collective paranoia has colluded with the political class and the politically correct to ensue that we hand over more and more of our freedoms to the powerful. This is not safe for anyone. Hence this small protest.'

32 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

33 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

Tallis' protest, then, came not because he cared little about his position but because he cared a lot, and could not abide voluntary relationships that were organised on the basis of suspicion and surveillance.

People who already have CRB checks for their jobs may object to being asked to do them as a volunteer. One GP, David Jones from Denbigh, north Wales, writes

'I refused to get a police check as a member of our Local Health board when they moved the goal posts to make board members have this. This caused a difficult situation. I eventually had to relent and get one done as a GP in order to continue working and earning a living...so that solved their problem! My wife and I have in the past done such things as acting as house parents for youth orchestra courses. We could not and would not do it now. I would not undertake any helping or volunteering that requires a police check...even though there would be no problems with it and I still have to get them done with tedious regularity as a GP.'³²

Child protection bureaucracy creates friction and resentment within volunteering organisations. We have been contacted by volunteers and former volunteers from organisations including the Scouts, model flying and other sports, who see the heads of their organisations as 'agents for the CRB', set against the bulk of volunteers. The leadership – and the 'child protection bureaucracy' – are viewed as fundamentally hostile to ordinary volunteers, which undermines any *esprit de corps* or commitment to the organisation.

'It causes so much stress between members of the club they feel they can't be trusted and feel why should we bother.' Bob Spooner, Chairman, Aberkayakers³³

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Another concern is that volunteers have is the intrusion on their privacy. They object to being 'checked out', or being asked to produce CRB certificates or other documents when they go into schools.

'I am not prepared to undergo CRB or other vetting checks for straightforward volunteering. I resent my life being closed down by such Orwellian madness.' Kevin Hunt, southwest England³⁴

'Our volunteers resigned because they resented the invasion of their privacy. We are now worried that the government is unable to hold on to data securely and that the vetting is against our human rights.' Annabel Hayter, flower guild, Gloucester Cathedral

34 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

One would-be volunteer, Sharmini Brookes, who works for Hackney Council, said that CRB checks put her off listening to children read:

35 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

'I felt I would like to volunteer to help young people in Hackney with their reading and I was sent a questionnaire asking me to agree to having my personal records checked before I could be offered the chance to sit with kids for an hour a week in a supervised situation in a library or school to help them with their reading. I had nothing to hide but did not like the idea of someone rummaging through my personal history and so the questionnaire and the opportunity to volunteer have been put on hold for now.'³⁵

36 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

Because this volunteer would have been carrying out her activity 'weekly', even if only for an hour, she would fall within the purview of the vetting database as it stands. She quite reasonably didn't want to have to undergo this level of personal scrutiny in order to sit with a child in the school library for an hour a week.

Netta Glover, councillor for Buckingham County Council, says that she refuses to show her CRB certificate when visiting schools, which becomes an increasingly difficult task:

'Well it has put me off [volunteering]. As a County Councillor I have an enhanced CRB certificate. These certificates give so much personal detail that each time you show the thing you stand a chance of suffering identity theft so I refuse to visit establishments which require the production of the certificate. Except for the more prestigious establishments it is getting more and more difficult to get people to act as school governors. This probably has as much to do with the amount of training and the draconian penalties if anything goes wrong as it has with the vetting procedure.'³⁶

Sylvia Kilross, a 66-year-old ex-youth worker and volunteer, also objected to the request to show CRB documents:

'I've been working in schools for the last 25 years. I've had CRBs from the Council, the college, from schools and from various voluntary organisations. Recently I gave up volunteering with one organisation where I have been volunteering for almost 10 years. With this organisation I had an enhanced CRB which allowed us into every school in the borough to do our group projects. However, last autumn when the new Ofsted framework came in, all the schools started asking for all our papers (which they weren't entitled to do) and even stopped two projects when we wouldn't show them, even though this work has been going on for years. I objected to: All my details being stored for the year on the computer of every school I visited even after I'd left (I was working in 6 different schools – 2 per term); and having to have all my confidential personal details on a name badge to get into each school.'³⁷

Again, this is not just a personal question but a view about the principles on which society is organised, and a belief in the value of privacy. Citizens who have a sense of their privacy and liberty will resist being 'checked out' or asked to go on a database. Indeed, one could say that these are model citizens.

Volunteers may also question the inefficacy of CRB checks, which makes the invasion of privacy all the worse:

'I personally refuse to go through the process because I believe it to be totally unnecessary, it records unnecessary information, it is inefficient and it does not address the fundamental problem of personal responsibility, rather bureaucratic box ticking and shoulder sloping.' Bernard Cadogan, West Midlands³⁸

One volunteer organiser describes the doubts that volunteers express about being checked out by the authorities:

'People I know have been worried about what the checks involved, even once told, they have doubts and feel that other things may be checked in their life!'³⁹

Grant Hole, a former volunteer for model aircraft flying in Hertford, raised the problem of false accusations:

'I was aware of significant numbers of falsely attributed criminal records for those who had been vetted, and that those unfortunate enough to suffer it were experiencing great difficulties in having it corrected, some had suffered appreciable detriments in consequence. I understand that false attribution is something that has worsened rather than improved since.'⁴⁰

Additionally, some people have some form of criminal conviction – often a minor conviction when they were young - which they not want to be revealed to their neighbours. Nacro's Mervyn Barrett says that this concern is frequently voiced by callers to the Nacro helpline.

37 Email, 16 April 2010

38 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

39 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

40 Email, 14 June 2010

VOLUNTEERING BECOMES 'A BURDEN AND A BORE'

As a result of child protection bureaucracy, volunteering organisations spend more and more of their time filling in forms. As well as CRB checking volunteers, they spend time reading the latest child protection policy documents (which sometimes stretch to hundreds of pages), going on child protection courses or writing child protection policies or guidelines.

Volunteering becomes, in the words of volunteer Brian Denman, a 'burden and a bore'. He describes the bureaucracy placed in the way of the most ordinary activities:

'I help run The Club at Brentwood Baptist Church. The Club meets on Mondays and has a membership of about 12, half boys and half girls in the 11–14 age range. We just play games, table tennis, pool, playstation and have short talks. Tonight we may have to close for the night. We have four leaders but our two lady leaders are not available and we cannot meet as we have girls and no female leader on site. If we cannot find a stand-in lady leader at short notice we should turn the youngsters away from their club.

41 Email to Campaign
Against Vetting

'The rules create other problems. We have a nice building but on a summer evening it would be good to take the youngsters over to the park about two miles away. This needs written permission from all parents which means no spontaneous visit can be made easily. If we arrange such a trip we can use the church minibus but this would now require special seats for those kids that are below the height imposed by another new law. Alternatively we can give lifts in cars. However it's necessary to have at least two enhanced CRB checked adults in each vehicle, normally leaving only three seats for kids. This means a lot of cars and adults are required to move a small number of kids. Again it destroys any spontaneous action because finding enough available folk who have been checked is not easy.'⁴¹

Denman points out that this changes the very nature of voluntary activity, into a 'burden and a bore':

'There is another insidious impact that is very hard to quantify. I sense that the imposition of regulation, responsibility and risks upon volunteers is a significant discouragement to people going into and continuing in voluntary youth work. It can easily turn youth work from fun and joy (not an unreasonable reward for a volunteer) into a burden and a bore.'

Volunteers will have to deal with their fair share of paperwork as part of their working lives. It is too much if weekends and evenings are also taken up with forms, checks and databases.

Lance Coulton, a youth worker, playworker, and first aider with St John Ambulance, said that the main problem with CRB checks is 'Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork', which has a demoralising effect:

'Paperwork is extremely time consuming, and the waiting period for the checks to come back can take so long that volunteers have become demotivated or centres have to shut as they can't take on the member of staff until all checks are back.'⁴²

A series of obstacles put in the way of the most apparently simple activity. Netta Glover, a local councillor, says:

'The latest thing we are trying to encourage is Good Neighbour schemes where people will help with visiting, shopping, pet walking, reading and simple form filling – even this bit of good neighbourliness requires a CRB check. Things neighbours have been doing for one another for generations.'⁴³

Child protection officials might say that people are put off too easily, and that they should persevere if they really wanted to volunteer. But as one Scout leader pointed out, people have busy lives and volunteering is squeezed in between. It is quite reasonable to not want to have your free time frittered away in pointless bureaucracy.

Systems seem to have been designed to obstruct volunteers, who have to jump through hoops and procedures. One man volunteering as an 'independent visitor' for children in care, described demands for CRBs that are almost impossible to fulfil:

'When I signed up for this programme I filled in one CRB form. During the training course it was taken over by the council who promptly got me to fill in another CRB form. Now – one year later I've had a letter with a new form to fill in saying my CRB check has "expired" and is due for "renewal". It goes on – we (the department of the council which runs this programme) hope that the Council (i.e. another department) processes the form so that you can continue visiting your young person. This translates as something like this: we have only realised we have this "renewal" rule 3 weeks before the date of "expiry" and are late. We think it quite likely we (the other department) won't process your form in time (indeed given my previous experience it is highly likely that they won't) and that given the ridiculousness of our rules we'll then have to phone you up and tell you to stop visiting your young person until we do manage to process the form.'⁴⁴

Anna Pearson, who has experience as a lobbyist in the charity sector, struggled with the bureaucracy required to get clearance as a volunteer:

'My personal experience of seeking to get a check done for myself in order to run my organisation – I contacted local umbrella bodies who charge admin fees of between £10 and £25 for a volunteer check (this is in Hackney). I got in touch with one and it seemed that they thought I was lucky to be able to arrange an appointment for my check in three weeks time – apparently there had been a cancellation. I don't know how people trying to set up their own volunteering activity rather than going through

42 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

43 Response to Manifesto Club survey: Vetting and Volunteering

44 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

a big organisation like the scouts etc are meant to navigate the system. I'm a public policy geek and I find it altogether too much hassle!'⁴⁵

It is actually astounding how much bureaucracy many volunteers put up with. When I called the child protection officer of Little League Football, Malcolm Ash, he was ploughing through the 80-page government update on the vetting and barring scheme. He was responsible for processing CRBs for 1000 volunteers, in order that boys can play football. 'We do it as a hobby', he said ruefully. 'Unless somebody is prepared to do [CRBs], it won't get done. If doesn't get done, kids don't get to play football.'⁴⁶

While Ash's forbearance is admirable, this is not what a hobby should be. Almost every volunteering organisation – however small – now requires somebody who is essentially a bureaucrat. Every Scout organisation, church choir or sports organisation needs a 'child protection coordinator', 'enforcement officer', or 'safeguarding coordinator', whose main role is to manage the demands of the child protection bureaucracy in order that the group's activity can continue.

One local allotment group in Lancashire nearly had to close when the person responsible for processing CRB checks moved on.⁴⁷ Child protection bureaucracy sucks up a substantial portion of voluntary organisations' precious resources and energy, as one volunteer testified:

45 Email, 9 June 2010

46 Telephone interview, May 2010

47 http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/8105150.Lifeline_for_Barnoldswick_allotment_group/

48 Post on Saga website, 12 January 2010: <http://www.sagazone.co.uk/forums/thread/54062/>

'I am the secretary for a charity which is for blind and partially sighted elderly people. Originally only the organiser had to have a CRB check, but later this Spring all volunteers will need to undergo the check. This includes our rota of drivers, who collect and deliver the members to the club, supplied by the local Rotary Club. I am still waiting to hear how this will be managed. It is an extremely small charity and I am uncertain who will have to pay for the 20–25 volunteers CRB checks. I am absolutely certain that if the volunteers have to pay to have the checks, i.e. pay to be a volunteer – then the club will be forced to close. As it is, we struggle to keep our heads above water, what with paying room rental, speakers, refreshments etc. At the moment the club members each pay £4 per meeting, just to cover those costs.'⁴⁸

Another volunteer, Rob Rotheram, who as a semi-retired person wanted to volunteer to help with adult illiteracy, described his demoralising experiences as 'volunteering made difficult':

'At the third attempt [of trying to contact the volunteering organisation], I managed to speak to the person I wanted...at the end of the call he asked me to email him saying what I wanted to do... A few hours later he replied to my email, asking me to complete the application form he was putting in the [surface] mail and to return it with a covering letter saying what I wanted to do. Once received, the college would authorise a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check on me, a process which should take about three weeks. The check didn't worry me, but it was a surprise because I wasn't seeking to work with children and the whole process was becoming far more formal and bureaucratic than I had envisaged. When it came, "the form" was

actually a wodge including two forms which, together, required me to give a considerable amount of detail about myself and nominate two referees. This is getting silly, I thought. All I want to do is try to help a few adults to learn to read and write better. I'm a teacher with over 30 years experience – albeit in a different setting – and I'm offering a day a week of my time, for free.'

This was only the start of it. After a series of similarly obstructive experiences, he summed up:

'It's so frustrating. In six months where I have made all the running, I have managed to do just two half-days of voluntary work. At a time when politicians of all parties speak positively about volunteering and during a period when our new prime minister has been encouraging us to do our bit for his "big society", I have gone through the proper channels, been drawn into malfunctioning bureaucracies and achieved almost nothing. Is this common, or even typical, I wonder?'

⁴⁹

49 Posting on <http://bobrotheram.wordpress.com/2010/06/>; and email communication with Manifesto Club

50 Email to Campaign Against Vetting

51 Email, 14 June 2010

Bureaucratic procedures work against the informal way in which voluntary help is asked for and offered. Viv Regan, who works for the youth education charity WORLDWrite, says that vetting makes it impossible to organise spontaneous events for a week or two hence, or to bring in offers of help when they happen:

'One of the consequences of vetting is that people in communities who see a need cannot act upon it. Many volunteers we work with have a desire to help others but the process of being CRB checked sucks the life out of any spontaneous act of caring as you are "not allowed" until you have been cleared.'

⁵⁰

Volunteers also feel overburdened with the legal responsibility that is heaped on them by many child protection codes. Grant Hole, a former volunteer teaching children model aircraft flying, described what made him give up this position:

'I was given a large folder and was told to read through it; it imposed all manner of onuses, responsibilities, and conditions to a good will activity. The choice was such an obvious one: a large amount of hassle and risk, or give up the activity and have none of it. It really wasn't a difficult decision.'

⁵¹

Volunteering with children is often described as a 'hassle' (burdened by bureaucracy) and a 'risk' (opening yourself up to suspicions or false accusations).

One Scout organiser said that he felt volunteers were forced to take on the legal responsibility of an employment contract, without any comparative rights or payoffs:

'If an applicant fails to register under the new [vetting and barring] scheme within a certain time frame – they get a £5000 fine. If their "employer" also a volunteer fails to register them in time, they get a £10,000 fine. Now, in a voluntary organisation, things can't always be done

to strict deadlines. Volunteers have jobs, families and lots of other “distractions” preventing them giving up their time.’⁵²

This Scout organiser also cites cases of volunteers who were dismissed because of allegations, which could then damage their working life. In one case, a man was dismissed from the Scouts for suggesting in a survival session that Scouts could use a condom for emergency water carrying – a suggestion that was deemed to be inappropriate. The Scout organiser – who has recruited volunteers for 30 years – says:

‘No one in their right mind will volunteer with children or vulnerable adults if they know the full implications of what they could be letting themselves in for.’

Indeed, one responder to the Manifesto Club vetting and volunteering survey said that she was recently ‘thrown out of Scouting after 30 years’ because of an event for which she had been cleared 12 years ago, ‘because HQ officials wanted to look good with the ISA’. She says that details about her dismissal have now been passed on to the ISA, and she faces a possible ban on working with children altogether, so has decided to get out now:

52 Email, 6 April 2010

53 Response to Manifesto Club survey, Monday 7 June 2010

54 Email, 7 June 2010

‘I am a teacher, but now want to give up working with children altogether because I know that under new vetting scheme, if I will never be able to get another teaching job if, because this nonsense will be on my file forever and no one will ever employ me, so best to get out of both voluntary and paid work with children.’⁵³

Finally, many voluntary organisations have wasted many hours attempting to understand the complex and irrational specifications of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation. For the past three years, the Manifesto Club has been inundated with emails from voluntary groups asking what the law will mean for them – often after they have failed to get a clear answer from the Department for Education or other officials.

One freshwater angler, Mike Hansford, who set up the junior section for his club in Leigh on Sea, Essex, described his efforts to discover how his small club would be affected by the vetting and barring scheme:⁵⁴

‘Our fishery is surrounded by a security fence and is accessed by a locked gate. On site there is a small lake which the Juniors have exclusive use of and the larger Senior lake which the juniors are allowed to fish on certain days of the week. Also on receipt of a letter of authorisation Juniors of 14 and over were allowed to night fish. So our problem, in a nut shell, was who would need vetting! Just those running the section and or the 300 Senior Members? After all some Seniors fish “frequently” others “infrequently” but in either case could be in the same “locked” fishery area as “frequent” or “infrequent” juniors but “frequently” in contact as defined by the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups] act!

‘So I was asked to look into the matter. Initially I searched the internet, various Government sites forums etc. In all I spent about 30

hours and got absolutely nowhere. The Club chairman also tried wasting about the same amount of time and like me got nowhere. We came to the conclusion that the act had no answers but was subject to “individual” interpretation... As a result of all this the club committee started seriously talking about closing down the Junior section but as there was just under two years before implementation of the Act I said I would try to get a ruling/clarification via my MP. With his help, it took me *eighteen months going right up to Cabinet Office*, to get an answer to our problem that has allowed the Juniors to remain. The “Answer” is that apparently they are regarded as “Peers” in the general membership and only those who are involved directly, such as organising matches and thus likely to be in “frequent” contact would need to be vetted! Since those in charge are “Senior Members” and thus “Peers” and we only run approximately nine matches a year we are still not too certain where that leaves us!’

The problem is that the categories of ‘frequent’ and ‘intensive’ activity in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act have little bearing to the complicated reality of a voluntary organisation, where relationships and activities are informal and ever-changing. People do not fall into the neat categories of carrying out activities ‘once a week’ or ‘once a month’, and any attempt to impose such rules on social life results only in absurdity.

I have attended government briefing meetings where trained child protection bureaucrats have struggled to understand exactly who would fall under the new law. So there is little hope for volunteers who, after all, are not trained to think in this ludicrous way and moreover have much better things to be doing with their busy lives.

THE LOSS TO CHILDREN

Never has a policy purporting to protect children done so much harm. At every turn, the introduction of these measures has meant dwindling volunteers, and activity clubs closing their doors to children or shutting down entirely.

‘I used to be a qualified windsurfing instructor working as a director of a large watersports store in Poole. We used to run a programme in conjunction with Poole council to give disadvantaged inner city children a chance to try out watersports for free. It was called Youth Afloat and relied upon volunteers to function. Sadly this scheme no longer exists as the volunteers reduced by 75% when the police forms (hugely detailed and personal) had to be filled out in order to help. The only losers here were the children.’ James Crocker, Poole⁵⁵

As we documented in our report, ‘Hobby Clubs’, several mixed-age clubs and groups have voted to bar under-18s from joining, since it was seen as ‘too much trouble’.⁵⁶ Indeed, it has become a lot of trouble to work with children – thanks to the child protection industry. Before these rules, hobby clubs welcomed young members, who after all keep the sport alive and give it a future.

55 Posted in response to BBC Panorama: http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front_page/newsid_8505000/8505864.stm

56 See our report, ‘Hobby Clubs’: <http://www.manifestoclub.com/node/140>

Many ideas for new projects do not get off the ground, weighed down by the thoughts of the bureaucratic burden to come. A model flying enthusiast outlined how the vetting database dissuaded local flyers from forming a new club:

'Following discussions we decided not to proceed [with the new club]. One of the reasons for the lack of enthusiasm was all the palaver of compliance with the vulnerables legislation, appointing a welfare officer, getting people checked by the safeguarding authority, etc – or else entering into arguments as to why the club must be an adults-only club to which members cannot bring under 18s.'⁵⁷

This means a reduction of opportunities for under-18s. Andrew Hadley, from Momentum Youth Development, which provides international activities for young people, said that CRB checks and other procedures meant that they decided to exclude 16 and 17-year olds:

'We are organising our first international mentoring and leadership event this summer, and have already decided to limit this to participants over 18. As a small, new organisation (despite the extensive previous experience of our staff) we just can't afford to do otherwise.'⁵⁸

57 Email to Vetting blog: <http://www.manifestoclub.com/node/484>

58 Email, 31 May 2010

59 Email, 14 June 2010

Mike Hansford says that the vetting and barring scheme's restriction on 'overnight activity' has meant that youngsters are now not allowed to go night fishing, unless their parents accompany them:

'Once upon a time at 16 you were an adult and became a Senior Member. Not now it would seem so the Senior Club has had to change its rules. If you are 17 and want to do some night fishing, you have to have mum or dad sit with you – like that's going to happen!'⁵⁹

There are more subtle ways in which safeguarding procedures diminish the quality of children's lives, and their relationships with adults.

One volunteer explains how safeguarding experiences affected his independent visitor programme for children in care:

'When [the programme] was given to the department which deals with complaints made by children in care, one of the first new rules was that Independent Visitors would have to spend the first three visits in the young person's home and not take them out. In most cases this would be a children's home. But in fact what this does is associate the Independent Visitor with the adults around the young person, ie, the care staff. So it detracts from the Independent Visitor's independence and to my mind makes them less likely to be able to fulfil their role as a truly independent member of the community to whom the child or young person might feel able to make a complaint about the care staff.'⁶⁰

George Hoare, a PhD student who volunteers with young people, described how 'safeguarding procedures' diminish adults' ability to care for children:

'As a leader on a residential holiday (in a converted Berkshire vicarage) for mostly unruly 10 to 12 year olds from the poorer parts of Oxfordshire, there was a rule that a second person as required whenever an adult with any of the children. You could not be alone with the children. So, when another leader was trying to calm down one of the children who had become upset, I had to lurk by the door, invading what was a private moment and turning the interaction into a staged one for both the leader and child.'⁶¹

Finally, there is the message that these procedures send to children – effectively, that suspicion of others should be a default position. Andrew Hadley judges:

'The young people we want to work with need to experience and learn one thing above all – trust. We do not believe that forcing our young volunteers to undergo checks by a distant and anonymous authority is the way to develop this.'⁶²

60 Email to Campaign
Against Vetting

61 A Grown Up Child
Protection Policy, George
Hoare, Manifesto Club
Thinkpiece: <http://www.manifestoclub.com/files/GeorgeHoare01.pdf>

62 Email, 18 May 2010

Conclusion

ABOLISH THE CHILD PROTECTION BUREAUCRACY FOR VOLUNTEERS

We welcome the new government's suspension of the vetting and barring scheme while a review is taking place. This report will be submitted as evidence to that review.

Volunteering is invaluable to the civic life of this country, and the welfare of children and adults. Volunteering is not like a job, and it is not appropriate that it be subjected to the same level of regulation and bureaucracy. Such regulation can only obstruct voluntary activity. This report calls for:

First: the exclusion of all volunteers from any vetting and barring scheme. A mother should not be required to register on a vetting database before she goes into her child's school to listen to reading. Under current plans, two million volunteers would have to register on the database. We call for all of these two million to be excluded from any vetting and barring scheme.

Second: a halt to the common practice of CRB checking volunteers. The CRB checking of volunteers is common policy of councils, voluntary organisations and sports bodies (enforced by official bodies such as Ofsted and the Child Protection in Sport Unit), and leads to over 700,000 CRB checks every year. We call for the review and halting of this general policy.

Third: the rolling back of child protection bureaucracy from voluntary activity. Volunteers are obstructed by many suspicious rules, such as rules that they must be accompanied to the toilet, or rules against a volunteer being alone with a child or elderly person. These rules are as off-putting and damaging as CRB checks and the vetting database, and should be reconsidered and rolled back.

In voicing volunteers' concerns about CRB checks, this report hopefully also shows what voluntary activity can and should be about. These volunteers' testimonies demonstrate the basic level of good faith and common sense that still exists on the ground in civic life, which should be the foundation of any future policy.

About the author

Josie Appleton founded and runs the Manifesto Club. She has coordinated the club's Campaign Against Vetting for the past three years; writes many of the club's reports and documents; and edits Manifesto Club publications. As a journalist and writer, she comments frequently on contemporary freedom issues.



About the Manifesto Club

The Manifesto Club campaigns against the hyper-regulation of everyday life. We support free movement across borders, free expression and free association. We challenge booze bans, photo bans, vetting and speech codes – all new ways in which the state regulates everyday life on the streets, in workplaces and in our private lives.

Our rapidly growing membership hails from all political traditions and none, and from all corners of the world. To join this group of free thinkers and campaigners, see: manifestoclub.com/join



