

Vetting Children

A Manifesto Club Briefing Document

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Vetting Under-16s

New data released under a Freedom of Information request to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) reveals a huge increase in the numbers of children undergoing vetting, before being licensed to volunteer with other children.

CRB checks are routinely being carried out on children who are 13-years old or younger.

- Over 3,000 children who were 13 or under have undergone CRB checks since 2002. 433 children 13 and under were CRB checked in the year 2007/8.¹
- Since 2002, a total of 43,000 under-16s have undergone CRB checks. By law, under-16s are considered to be 'children'.

Many children were required to undergo a CRB check before undertaking voluntary work, such as helping younger children with sports coaching, or learning to read, or volunteering in a care home for elderly or handicapped people.

- The number of 14-year olds undergoing CRB checks has seen a 400% increase since 2002/3: 456 checks in 2002/3, to 1,922 checks in 2008/9.

¹ CRB Freedom of Information response, received 11/12/2009

- There was a similar increase in the number of 15-year olds who were CRB checked: from 1,242 in 2002/3 to 4,999 checks in 2008/9.

The total year-on-year statistics are:

CRB applications from applicants aged less than 18 years²

Financial Yr	17 year olds	16 year olds	15 year olds	14 year olds	Under 14 year olds	Total Under 18 years of age
2002/03	21,904	18,663	1,242	456	375	42,640
2003/04	33,418	32,194	2,757	669	478	69,516
2004/05	40,110	40,263	3,209	820	415	84,817
2005/06	46,600	46,184	3,960	1,221	371	98,336
2006/07	53,106	53,094	4,830	1,753	429	113,212
2007/08	56,677	56,386	5,057	2,038	433	120,591
2008/09	63,148	60,555	4,999	1,922	336	130,960
2009/10	42,922	43,822	3,667	1,218	301	91,930
Total	357,893	351,168	29,722	10,097	3,138	752,018

These young people are being CRB checked for a range of roles, including:

Volunteering to help younger children in schools - for example, with reading practice or after-school homework sessions;

Sports coaching - under-18s are CRB checked to coach younger children in sports, or to work as swimming pool lifeguards;

Work experience - school pupils are CRB checked to carry out work experience with children or other vulnerable groups, for example in health and social care;

Jobs and volunteering with 'vulnerable adults' - under-18s must be CRB checked for work/volunteering in an old people's home, or for volunteering with some refugee organisations;

In a document published last week, **An Education in Mistrust**, the Manifesto Club revealed that some sports organisations consider it acceptable to CRB check children as young as 10 years old. The Amateur Swimming Association and Badminton England both said that they had CRB checked under-16s.

Educating in Mistrust

For these young people, the CRB check is their first act of adulthood - a long time before they can drink, drive, vote, or get married. Before the cusp of

² CRB Freedom of Information response, received 11/12/2009

adulthood they are declared a potential risk to others, and in need of monitoring by the state.

For young people, the CRB check undermines what should be a positive life experience - the point at which they are starting to play a role in caring and taking responsibility for others less capable than themselves. It is through early experiences in babysitting or volunteering that teenagers begin to develop a sense of responsibility for others, and a sense of their own adulthood.

The children who have been vetted are precisely those who are stepping up to the next stage of life. Vetting undermines these formative experiences.

CRB checking puts pressure on cash-strapped children's organisations, and means that some schools are considering reducing volunteering programmes for sixth formers. It is also a burdensome process, since many young people do not have passports, utilities bills, driving licenses, or other adult forms of documentation.

Abolish the vetting database

The idea that a 14-year old can be a paedophile is obviously absurd - but it only reflects the mistrustful assumptions on which the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the new Vetting Database are premised. The vetting database needs to be scrapped.

The Manifesto Club calls for:

- the halt to the vetting of under-18s;
- a review of vetting and barring policy as a whole;
- the abolition of the ISA scheme.

Appendix: Manifesto Club's Campaign Against Vetting

- **Vetting Under-18s - An Education in Mistrust** includes interviews with many of the vetted under-18s, and is available from:

<http://www.manifestoclub.com/vettingunder18s>

- **The Manifesto Club** has been campaigning against the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act since October 2006, when it launched a petition signed by individuals including Fay Weldon, Johnny Ball and Alan Siltoe, and hundreds of volunteers, parents and concerned adults. For full details of the Campaign Against Vetting, and previous reports, see:

<http://www.manifestoclub.com/hubs/vetting>