

Keeping Children Safe

March 2019

This policy exists to make sure that the children are kept safe from harm. Bahá'ís are encouraged not to be suspicious, but the necessary and legal steps must be taken to ensure the safety of children. Sadly, there are a small number of people in our society who have the intention to abuse children, and these people cannot be easily recognised. They can be very charming and convincing people, and may offer to teach the children in order to gain their trust, and the trust of parents. This is why we need to be wise and vigilant.

Anyone in the UK who teaches a class in which there are children, or youth under the age of 18, must be sure to understand the safeguarding policy of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the UK.

This guide has been prepared in question and answer format, addressing common questions that arise in relation to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements. If you have questions that are not answered within this guide, please contact the National Spiritual Assembly's Office for Safeguarding Children (osc@bahai.org.uk) for guidance and assistance.

Who needs a DBS check?

Everyone who is going to have 'substantial access' to a child (that is, someone under 18 years old) must have a valid enhanced DBS disclosure check and their details must be on the National Assembly's Accredited Children's Tutor list before commencing with activities.

Substantial access means:

- they are regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of a child or children. This means that they alone are responsible for that child, even if only for a minute or two.
- they are routinely in a position of authority in relation to that child.

This includes those:

- teaching children's classes
- acting as animators for junior youth groups
- serving as tutors or project coordinators where under 18s are participating.

It does not matter how well known someone is in the community, or how much experience a person has – they still need to have a valid DBS check.

If a children's class or junior youth group is taking place in a home where other adults are present, do these adults need to be DBS checked?

As long as the adults in the home are not involved with the children's class or junior youth group they do not need to have a DBS check.

If the animator or teacher is under 18, do they still require a DBS check?

Yes, the minimum age at which someone can apply for a DBS check is 16. Anyone with substantial access to children (such as a teacher of a children's class or an animator) who is 16 or over needs a DBS.

What if I already have a DBS check from another source?

If you already have a DBS check for work or other volunteer activities, this can be accepted as long as:

- it is a clear 'enhanced' check (paper certificate) and allows you to work with children (Child Workforce) only; and
- you are signed up to the on-line DBS Update Service so that the current status of your DBS certificate can be checked online by the National Spiritual Assembly's Office for Safeguarding Children, and your details can be added to its register of accredited tutors.

How do I sign up to the online DBS Update Service?

Please go to the DBS online Update Service website: <http://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service> and follow the 'How to register' guidance. It is free for volunteers. You must do this within 30 days of the certificate's date of issue. You can also register with the DBS application form reference number but your application form must be received by the DBS within 28 days. You'll get an ID number with your registration that you need to log on to the service. Once you have registered please inform the Office for Safeguarding Children (osc@bahai.org.uk) so that the information can be added to the register of accredited tutors.

How long does a DBS certificate last?

Three years and three months by which time the DBS certificate must be renewed but only if you are actively planning to work or are currently working with under 18's.

The Office for Safeguarding Children sends out a renewal reminder email three months before a certificate's final expiry date. If, on receiving the reminder, you have already signed up for the online DBS Update Service please email osc@bahai.org.uk. With your consent, the Office for Safeguarding Children will check online the current status of your certificate before your details are added to the register of accredited tutors.

Are there any exceptions to the rule that you need a DBS to teach a children's class or junior youth group?

The general rule is that anyone who is going to teach, animate, tutor or host a regular activity must have a DBS certificate and their details on the list of accredited children's tutors before they initiate the class. There is an exception to this general rule: if you are to visit a class occasionally (that is no more than three times a year and for no more than two hours each time), there is no need for a DBS certificate provided you are supervised at all times by someone with a valid DBS certificate.

This would allow a volunteer to visit a class to observe, to gain some practice, or to contribute a special session such as a workshop or craft activity. It does not allow you to start a regular class while waiting for the DBS certificate to arrive.

This does not mean that others without DBS can be teachers or helpers (except in the instance specified in this section).

Must there be two DBS checked individuals always present for a class to take place?

There must always be one person with DBS present. It is best practice to have two DBS checked people present. Adult to child ratios must always be adhered to.

Where an individual teaches a class alone, a DBS checked adult must be nearby or available in case of emergency and a risk assessment must be carried out (see 'What is a risk assessment?')

DBS individuals teaching classes alone should not become the norm, but it can enable a class to continue when, for example, one of the teachers is unavailable for a particular session.

What is the guidance for a youth aged 16 or 17?

A DBS checked youth aged 16 or 17 can serve alone as a teacher or animator but must have a DBS adult in close proximity to call upon when needed. The adult must be on the premises and in very close proximity. The adult must be available to attend quickly in case of an emergency. An appropriate risk assessment must be carried out. Adult to child ratios must always be adhered to.

What is the minimum adult to child ratios?

0 - 2 years	1 adult to 3 children
2 - 3 years	1 adult to 4 children
4 - 8 years	1 adult to 6 children
9 - 12 years	1 adult to 8 children
13 -17 years	1 adult to 10 children

When young people are helping to supervise younger children, only people aged 18 or over should be counted as adults when calculating adult to child ratios.

What is a risk assessment?

Some of the answers set out above referred to a ‘risk assessment’. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your location of work or activity, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

How to assess risk

The Health and Safety Executive recommends that we use the following five steps to assess risk

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record our findings and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

An example of a risk assessment:

Outdoor activities & children with disabilities/special needs

If an activity for sixteen 9 to 12 year olds has a minimum of two DBS adults (preferably one male and one female), then following a risk assessment, this ratio would need to be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered high risk or dangerous, or when catering for children with disabilities and special needs.

**For all activities, please email osc@bahai.org.uk
to request a risk assessment form with examples and guidance.**

**Further guidance notes concerning the safeguarding of children are available on the Resources website at <https://bahaidata.com/welcome/safeguarding/>
The guidance notes can also be obtained by writing to osc@bahai.org.uk**

