

Further guidance on CRB checks for Umpires, Umpire coaches and assessors and Officials.

Background

In March 2009 England Hockey issued its Safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Hockey Policy, Procedures and Good Practice Guidance. Following its distribution to all clubs and associations we have received some queries related to the need to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check Umpires, Umpire coaches and assessors and Officials. This statement is intended to clarify the position and provide further guidance.

The starting point for assessing who should undertake a CRB check is the definition provided by the CRB:

“A position whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children”

England Hockey then used further sources to interpret that definition for a hockey context. Those sources included:

- The CRB's Code of Practice
- Recommendations from the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport unit
- Legislation on related issues
- Best practice within the safeguarding discipline
- Consultation with umpires
- Knowledge of how hockey works.
- The policies of other National Governing Bodies of Sport

It is only guidance as the ultimate decision on whether a CRB check is required is the responsibility of the club or association as employer (for paid or unpaid roles) and requires detailed, local knowledge of the role. However England Hockey is issuing this guidance to ensure consistency across our sport and ensure that our members are given recommendations to help them meet their duty of care for young people.

Understanding England Hockey's Safeguarding Policy

Our policy issued in March 2009 recommends:

“All umpires and officials that regularly work with, or are in a position of trust, in relation to young people under 18 in a paid or unpaid capacity should complete an enhanced CRB disclosure through England Hockey”

This guidance reflects widespread best practice and should be adopted by all employers. Clubs and associations also agree to adopt the Safeguarding Policy when they affiliate to England Hockey as they form part of the sport’s rules and regulations.

To aid interpretation of England Hockey’s recommendation we include below a definition of “regularly” and “work with”.

As stated above the CRB defines “working with” as:

“A position whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children”

One relevant definition of “regular” can be gained by using guidance from the Independent Safeguarding Authority:

“when the activity is frequent (once a month or more) or ‘intensive’ (takes place on three or more days in a 30-day period)”

These definitions need to be considered in a hockey context and therefore we have sought below to give further guidance having referred to the sources mentioned above.

Interpretation

England Hockey encourages a common sense approach to interpretation. It is important that the right people are CRB checked rather than a blanket policy that focuses on numbers.

Factors to consider:

- Are you a club umpire regularly umpiring with the same team which contains young players? If so this would seem to meet the definition of “regularly working with” and would put you in a position of authority over the young people. A CRB check should be undertaken.
- Are you a neutral umpire appointed by a league or association? Unless you are umpiring alongside young umpires, EH would not consider a CRB check is necessary.
- Do you coach, assess or mentor young umpires, formally or informally? This would be a role where a CRB check is undertaken.
- Do you regularly umpire school or age group hockey matches? This would again be a role where a CRB check should be carried out.

These examples are not intended to cover every situation but give members additional guidance when they consider whether a role requires a CRB check. Some roles such as a coach or mentor within a Regional Young Umpire Programme will confer a status over young people that automatically require a CRB check.

Any assessment should also bear in mind that in some circumstances umpires can be seen as holding a position of authority which may make young people more vulnerable.

Action required

As legislation and definitions are not sports related England Hockey has interpreted the additional guidance that is available. CRB checks are only a part of a good recruitment process that should be applied equally to paid and unpaid volunteers. As most volunteers have been involved for some time there is a need to introduce these checks retrospectively for these individuals to ensure all appropriate roles have been checked. CRB checks have already identified individuals who are unsuitable to work with young people in hockey and are an important part of the process but in all cases we would recommend a considered risk based approach that takes into account the role against the factors outlined above, rather than blanket rules applied generically to certain roles. We believe that following the England Hockey Safeguarding Policy and this additional guidance will protect our sport from those who pose a risk to young people.

If further guidance is required please contact childwelfare@englandhockey.org