

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

Advice note: refugees volunteering in schools

By definition, refugees have been given leave to remain in the UK and are, therefore, granted permission to work and/or volunteer in schools. As with all school staff and volunteers, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is required.

Asylum seekers are those who have not yet been granted refugee status by the Home Office. They are also entitled to volunteer. Government guidance encourages this:

*'Asylum seekers are encouraged to volunteer whilst their claim is being considered. Volunteering involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. By volunteering for a charity or public sector organisation, asylum seekers can support their local community, and this will also assist with their integration if they are granted leave to remain in the UK.'*¹

DBS checking for asylum seekers and refugees

What are the issues for asylum seekers and refugees? Asylum seekers and refugees are less likely than British Citizens to have sufficient documents in order to get a DBS check (formerly DRB or police check).

It is still possible to do a check for both asylum seekers and refugees although it might take longer and be more intrusive.

Asylum seekers have to hand over their identity documents to the Home Office when they apply for asylum and are given an ID card called an Application Registration Card (ARC) in return. This ID card from the Home Office is not accepted as proof of ID in the UK by the DBS.

Refugees have been granted leave to remain and are allowed to work and receive benefits. They may have a biometric residence permit or UK driving licence plus other accepted documents.

There are two possible methods to do DBS checks for asylum seekers and refugees. The standard method uses documents to check a person's identity.

Document Method:

¹ [Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-work-and-volunteering-for-asylum-seekers)

People will need to have one of the following documents to get a DBS check without being fingerprinted:

- A biometric residence permit – anyone granted leave to remain from 2012 will have one
- A valid passport – naturalised citizens may have one. Travel documents are not accepted
- A UK driving licence with photo card and counterpart (full or provisional)

Where people do not have sufficient documents, it is possible to get a check through the fingerprint method, which would need to be done at a police station. The fingerprint method can be an intimidating process so it's best to avoid it if possible. However, due to the limited number of accepted documents, this is not easy.