

## **THE NEW VETTING AND BARRING SCHEME**

The new Vetting and Barring Scheme [VBS] is being introduced in response to a recommendation from the independent Bichard Inquiry, established following the Soham murders by caretaker Ian Huntley. Sir Michael Bichard's enquiry into these tragic events found that there was more that could be done to protect children and young people by preventing those who have already shown that they pose a threat to children from working in schools and other situations where they can be in a position of trust.

The CRB was introduced in 2001 but a development of the CRB process will require those working with children and vulnerable adults to register under the Vetting and Barring scheme. This will apply to all new entrants from November 2010, but those who are already doing such work, and in particular those who have never been subject to CRB checks, there will be a phased registration between 2011 and 2015.

This will be a major undertaking and already some myths about the VBS have appeared in the media. These follow below with some factual corrections. Whilst two of them relate specifically to school situations, the examples are helpful of current debate.

Further information about the VBS can be found at [www.isa-gov.org.uk](http://www.isa-gov.org.uk)

### **EIGHT MYTHS ABOUT THE VETTING AND BARRING SCHEME, PUBLISHED RECENTLY IN THE MEDIA**

#### **MYTH No.1**

- If a person visits schools without being vetted, the schools' head teachers will be prosecuted. *Sunday Times, 19 July (Daisy Goodwin, columnist, News Review page 4).*

#### **FACTS:**

- If a person goes to a school to e.g. see a school play, that person is a visitor and has no duty to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA);
- If a person goes to schools to work with children e.g. to teach pupils about writing plays, read as an author from their own book, talk about fire safety or volunteer in the classroom, that person is working for schools. If they do that frequently, they will have to ISA-register.

#### **MYTH No.2**

- "charging volunteers £64 each to be vetted seems impertinent".  
*The Independent, 18 July (first leader article, page 38).*

#### **FACT:**

- Volunteers doing unpaid work will not pay the £64 application fee. (They might pay a small administration fee, depending on which body they apply through.)
- The fee is set to recover the costs of the Scheme.

### **MYTH No.3**

- "Some ... have suggested that clearance is required for two school visits a year"  
*(website of Society of Authors, whose members include Philip Pullman etc., on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July)*

### **FACTS:**

- a person must only ISA register if their work in schools is frequent (once a month, repeatedly) or intensive (3 or more days in one month).
- If a person visits schools without working for them, there is no requirement to ISA-register.

### **MYTH No.4**

- Authors should not be required to ISA-register because "visiting writers are not left alone with children". *The Independent, 18 July (first leader article, page 38).*

### **FACTS:**

- anyone familiar to pupils from work in schools can become trusted by pupils, even if their work takes them into each individual school only once, because the perception in each school is: "that person works in lots of schools, and so must be trustworthy";
- We need to be sure that trust is well-placed, in case pupils contact or encounter these individuals outside of school, unsupervised. While the vast majority would never abuse their position, we believe parents want anyone working regularly with their children to be checked.

### **MYTH No.5**

- "hearsay, rumour and unfounded suspicion are ... known as "soft information" and this will be the currency of the new procedures brought in by the ISA"  
*Henry Porter, The Observer, page 21, Sun 19 July.*

### **FACTS:**

- This refers to "relevant police information", which is intelligence which has not necessarily led to a conviction or caution;
- A chief constable must have good reason for believing information is relevant, in order to be entitled to pass that information to the ISA.
- People will have a chance to challenge the accuracy and relevance of any such information considered by the ISA.
- ISA recommends that any allegation from an individual should go first to police or social services, not directly to the ISA.

### **MYTH No.6**

- " a measure like this will not truly increase the safety of children"  
*The Independent, 18 July (first leader article, page 38).*

### **FACT:**

- The VBS will make it much harder for anyone who is known to pose a risk to children, to gain access to children through paid or unpaid work.

**MYTH No.7**

- Being ISA-registered means a person does not pose a risk, even if someone else finds evidence of a risk: "she's got the bit of paper, so I must be wrong". Independent, 18 July. (Deborah Orr, columnist, page 15)

**FACT:**

- being ISA-registered means the ISA knows of no reason why the person should not work with children generally. The Government still recommends that employers should check an applicant's employment history and follow up references.

**MYTH No.8**

- If you can't make life completely safe for every child, there's no point doing anything new. (*Various commentators*)

**FACT:**

- The Bichard review after the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman made clear recommendations, which led to the Vetting and Barring Scheme. The Government believes it is right to take proportionate measures to protect children and vulnerable adults. Any case of abuse is one too many.