

Open the Book Safeguarding - Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do I need to give my Church Leader and Church Safeguarding Officer a copy of the OtB Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Code of Conduct?

Your Church Leader has a responsibility for the recruitment of people who volunteer as OtB storytellers. To ensure they are suitable and known to them as part of the Christian family. They are responsible for ensuring that a DBS check through the church has been carried out for Open the Book volunteers. Church Safeguarding Officers need to know the procedure to follow and the notifications they need to make to Open the Book/Bible Society should a volunteer storyteller be reported to them as behaving inappropriately. They also need to know the reporting procedure should an incident occur and be reported outside of school hours involving a child. For Ecumenical teams they need to know who their Safeguarding counterparts are and how to liaise should an incident be reported about a volunteer storyteller from another denomination. Storytellers have been issued with a small leaflet to remind them of the safeguarding policy and to enable them to record useful contact details for the school and church Safeguarding Officers.

2. The Safeguarding policy says we cannot go into school without a DBS check. We have already been doing Open the Book in school without being checked and don't want to stop.

Speak to your Church Safeguarding officer to arrange for a DBS check to be carried out as soon as possible.

3. Can I start going into school before my DBS check is completed?

The policy states that all volunteer storytellers should receive an enhanced DBS check without a check of the barred list through their church **before** visiting any school in their capacity as a Storyteller.

4. My school is insisting that we are all DBS checked by the school – what do we do?

Explain to the Headteacher that as you are coming in to school as church representatives the church needs to vet and make sure storytellers are suitable for the role and have been

DBS checked. Team members can now own their individual DBS checks and can share it with anyone who asks to see it, provided they register to do so. Note there is a time limit for registering following receipt of the DBS confirmation form and a small charge.

5. I belong to an Ecumenical team – who do I report inappropriate behaviour of a volunteer storyteller to?

Report and seek advice from your own Church Safeguarding Officer. It is important that all volunteer storytellers know who their Church Safeguarding Officer is. This information should be displayed on church noticeboards but if anyone is not sure they should ask their Church Leader.

6. I notice that a child has lots of bruises and seems frightened when we are in school preparing as a team for an OtB assembly/act of collective worship. Who do I report my concern to?

You should know what the school's safeguarding policy is and who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is in school to be able to report your concerns. It is important that all volunteer storytellers know who the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead is. Some schools may ask OtB teams to attend a short training session for volunteers in school on their safeguarding policy and procedures.

7. We normally collect children from the classroom to help with OtB assemblies can we still do this?

Agree with the Headteacher the best method for children to come along to be part of an assembly/act of collective worship. For example: can they come to the assembly place 5 minutes early? If volunteer storytellers collect children, then two volunteer storytellers must go together. Remember you must never be alone with children.

8. What do I do if I find that I am the only person in the team available to do the OtB assembly?

Discuss the situation with the Headteacher or RE Co-ordinator and decide what the best option is bearing in mind that you cannot be left on your own with any children. This includes moving around the school premises.

9. A child asks you to take them to the toilet – what do you do?

Ensure that everyone in the team knows what the school's policy is regarding taking children to the toilet and follow their procedures.

10. A student aged 16 years old wants to be part of our Open the Book team for the purposes of their study course. Can they do this?

DBS checks can only be undertaken for adults of 18 years or older. The team leader must ask permission of the Head teacher and Church Safeguarding Officer for the young person to join the team in school. The team leader must take responsibility for them and personally accompany the young person at all times within the school.

11. I currently have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate – am I still covered by this?

Criminal Records Bureau certificates do not have a set period of validity but your church will do regular reviews or renewals. Some denominations review or renew at 3 years, some at 5 years. Please check with your denomination what their renewal period is. At that point you will need to have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check without a check of the barred list. Unless your church confirms that they have checked the vetting criteria and due to infrequency of visits to school the individual isn't required to be checked.

12. I have a CRB certificate. Do I need to apply for a DBS check now?

No, you only need to apply for a DBS check if any of the information on your CRB check has changed e.g. address or name, in which case you will need to ask your Church Safeguarding Officer for a DBS check to be carried out for you.

13. I already hold a CRB/DBS certificate obtained through my church for working with children. Do I need another one specifically for Open the Book?

No, you don't need another one. In fact, a description of Children's Worker in the "Position applied for" section on the application form will cover you for all occasions you would work with children through church as well as the Open the Book visits to school.

14. My church/denomination/diocese says I don't need a DBS check. What do I do?

Information on the OtB Safeguarding policy has been sent to all national denominational safeguarding teams. The policy and code of conduct are all available on the OtB website. If they have any queries they can contact Bible Society for clarification. Bible Society sought legal advice and consulted the denominational safeguarding teams in the preparation of this policy which made it clear that DBS checks are required for OtB volunteer storytellers.

15. What do we do if a DBS check comes back as not clear?

Your national denominational safeguarding team will be able to advise you on the details of the conviction and then together with the Church Safeguarding Officer they will decide if the person is suitable for the role of a volunteer storyteller. A record should be kept by them of how they have reached their decision.