Employer-supported volunteering: Safeguarding case studies

Some ESV opportunities may involve contact with children (0-18 years old) or protected adults (18+ years old), or roles involving power or influence over these groups. These may be considered **regulated roles**, and require compliance with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme.

It's not always straightforward to determine when an employee volunteering role requires formal safeguarding checks or constitutes a regulated role, particularly in short-term or group ESV activities.

To support volunteer-involving organisations and employers to navigate these grey areas, we've created a couple of fictional case studies that explore common ESV scenarios and the safeguarding considerations that may raise. These case studies are intended to be illustrative, and are not a substitute for formal advice.

This resource has been created as part of **Scotland's Employer-Supported Volunteering Framework**.

Case study 1: Individual employee volunteer supports a community Wellbeing Hub

Background

The Community Wellbeing Hub is a voluntary organisation offering weekly social activities, gentle exercise classes, and wellbeing support for adults with learning disabilities and long-term health conditions. Because these activities are designed specifically for individuals who require additional support, they meet the definition of a protected adult.

The Hub relies on volunteers to run its programmes. Volunteers who carry out activities with protected adults as a necessary part of their duties, whether this be daily, weekly, monthly or just for one day means a PVG scheme disclosure is required before someone can begin.

Volunteer role

Employee Ewan, aged 27, applied to volunteer as an Activities Assistant during his ESV time. The role involved:

- Helping set up and support small group activities
- Assisting participants to move safely between rooms
- Providing encouragement during wellbeing sessions
- Offering general practical support under staff supervision

Because these tasks involved *regular, purposeful* contact with protected adults, the Hub correctly identified the role as regulated.

PVG Application Process

As part of their standard onboarding steps, the organisation:

1. **Explained the PVG scheme** and why it was required for the role
2. **Completed a role assessment** to confirm it met the threshold for a regulated role
3. **Submitted Ewan's PVG application** through Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services (VSDS)
4. **Waited for the PVG scheme disclosure** before allowing Ewan to begin voluntary duties

Ewan completed the online form quickly and received support from the Hub if he had questions. VSDS processed the application, and the PVG scheme disclosure returned with **no concerns**.

Starting the Role

Once the PVG disclosure arrived:

- Ewan was officially welcomed onto the team
- He received a full induction, including safeguarding, communication, and boundaries
- Staff paired him with an experienced volunteer for his first session
- Ewan settled into the role smoothly and participants responded well to his support

Ongoing Good Practice

The Hub continues to meet its responsibilities by:

- Keeping accurate PVG records
- Ensuring only PVG checked individuals carry out regulated tasks
- Providing regular supervision and training
- Monitoring roles in case duties change and require review

Ewan enjoyed the role and helped out on several occasions during his allocated ESV time.

Learning Points for Organisations

- A PVG check must be completed **before** a volunteer begins a regulated role.
- Clear role assessment helps confirm whether PVG membership is required.
- Good communication and onboarding make the PVG process smooth for volunteers.
- PVG membership alone does not replace safeguarding policies — it is one part of a wider safeguarding approach.
- PVG involvement does not always mean concerns; in most cases, it is simply a routine safeguard to support safe volunteering.

Case study 2: Employee Volunteer Group Supporting a One-Day Children's Event

Background

A Scottish Charity hosts an annual Youth Activity Festival, a one day event designed for children aged 5–12. The event includes sports, arts and crafts, supervised outdoor play, and confidence-building workshops. Although the festival runs for only one day, many of the roles involve direct, unsupervised contact with children, triggering the criteria for a regulated role under the PVG Scheme.

A group of 12 employees from an organisation volunteered to support the charity as part of the company's annual corporate volunteering programme.

Volunteer Roles

Employees were assigned to a variety of roles including:

1. Group Activity Leaders

- Supervised small groups of 8–10 children during workshop rotations.
- Provided direct support at workshop stations which included, teaching, instruction, and behavioural guidance.
- Escorted children between activity zones without the presence of charity staff.

2. Registration & Safeguarding Assistants

- Welcomed families and checked children into the event. Supervised children once signed in and parent had left.
- Ensured safety protocols were followed, were responsible for children's safety and welfare whilst at the event.

3. Pastoral Support Helpers

- Provided reassurance and support to children who were anxious, upset, or separated from their group.
- Escorted children to the First Aid point where necessary.

4. One-to-one Inclusion Support

Two volunteers were matched with children who required additional support due to behavioural or learning needs.

Why the Roles Required PVG Checks

Although the activities were limited to a single day, the nature of the tasks meant volunteers were:

- **Responsible for children without close supervision** from the charity's staff.
- **Providing care and guidance**, including emotional support.
- **In positions of trust**, expected to protect the welfare of young participants.
- **Working one-to-one** with children, teaching, giving them guidance.

These roles involved both an activity and contact with children, it was going to be a necessary part of the volunteers' role to undertake these tasks. It was also an event that was planned in advance and was decided who would carry out what roles for the event.

To ensure compliance, the charity and employer jointly coordinated PVG checks for all 12 volunteers **six weeks prior** to the event.

Implementation and Safeguarding Measures

Pre-Event

- All volunteers completed:
    - PVG Scheme membership applications
    - A half-day safeguarding training session
    - An event-specific briefing covering child protection, escalation procedures, boundaries of behaviour, and confidentiality

During the Event

- Volunteers were issued with named ID badges and allocated to supervised charity team leads.
- Clear codes of conduct were reinforced, including:

    - Never being alone with a child behind closed doors
    - Using only designated, open, visible spaces
    - Reporting any concerns immediately

Post-Event

- A debrief session was held to review the event's success and capture learning points for future years.
- No safeguarding incidents occurred.

Outcome

The volunteering day was highly successful:

- Over **240 children** attended, all safely supervised.
- The charity reported that the level of support allowed them to run more activities than in previous years.
- Employees expressed increased confidence in safeguarding responsibilities and a greater understanding of why PVG checks are essential—even for short, one-day engagements.

Key Learning Points

- A **role can be regulated even if it is carried out only once**, if the activities meet the criteria for a regulated role.
- Organisations must **assess the duties**, not the duration, when determining PVG requirements.
- Early planning ensures PVG checks are completed in time for the event.
- Joint preparation between employer and charity strengthens safeguarding culture and compliance.

Knowledge Gateway

The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

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This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**