

The Independent Safeguarding Authority

This factsheet explains what the Independent Safeguarding Authority is.

What is the Independent Safeguarding Authority?

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) is a non-departmental public body based in Darlington. It is made up of a board of nine public appointees plus a Chair – Sir Roger Singleton. These public appointees are supported by up to 250 employees, who are trained and experienced in making decisions about which individuals are likely to pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults.

What is its aim?

The main aim of the ISA is to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. It will do this by placing these people on one of two ISA Barred Lists. The ISA will make decisions about who should be on these lists as part of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS).

When this new Scheme is introduced in managed phases, it will change existing vetting systems. Until then, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH) are taking steps to improve existing safeguarding arrangements. They are doing this, for example, through the recently published *Safer Recruitment Guidance* and DH's White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*.

What are its objectives?

The objectives of the ISA are:

- to make sure that barring decisions are taken by people who have the relevant experience and expertise; and
- to promote confidence that decisions on barring are taken fairly, without bias and independently from government or any other interested party.

How does the ISA work?

The ISA works in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), an executive agency of the Home Office, to deliver the new Vetting and Barring Scheme. The CRB provides the administrative arm, which supports the ISA's primary function of making barring decisions. It will do this by developing and delivering the administration and application processes necessary.

The ISA:

- is overseen by a publicly appointed supervisory board. As a non-departmental public body it reports its performance figures direct to Parliament every year;
- takes all the barring decisions that were formerly taken by the Secretary of State. The ISA employ expert staff to help with this decision-making process, while administrative functions are dealt with by the CRB;



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- is independent. Ministers are no longer involved in making decisions on individual cases. The authority makes decisions based on clear criteria and evidence;
- includes a balance of different expertise in the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It is particularly important that the police and other experts are represented; and
- ensures clear accountability. The ISA has a statutory responsibility to prepare an annual report accounting for its work. Its performance, efficiency and effectiveness are scrutinised closely by both government and stakeholders.

What else is the CRB responsible for?

The CRB provides access to criminal records information through its Disclosure Service. The CRB's mission is to 'help protect children and vulnerable adults by providing a first-class service to support organisations recruiting people into positions of trust'.

To deliver its service the CRB has established a number of strategic partnerships across both the public and private sectors. These are with:

- the police – to provide information that is held on the Police National Computer and held locally by the forces;
- Capita – the CRB's private sector partner, which operates an administration infrastructure and call centre; and
- Registered Bodies – the primary contact point for checking Disclosure applications, validating information provided by the applicant and establishing their identity.

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