

FIRST RESPONSE ONLINE SUB-COMMITTEE

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks for Chat Now & Online Response Service Applicants

Thank you for applying to be a responder for our Chat Now Service or Online Response Service (ORS).

Increasing numbers of still-suffering alcoholics are reaching out to Alcoholics Anonymous through our online services, and your service in these areas is invaluable.

Both Chat Now and ORS fall under the remit and responsibility of the General Service Board (GSB) and are administered by the First Response Online Sub-Committee (FROSC). The increased importance of safeguarding for possibly vulnerable volunteers and alcoholics alike, and potential liabilities to the GSB mean that we have had extensive discussion on how best to provide this service and keep the charity safe for future generations.

As a result, all members who apply to be a responder for Chat Now or ORS are required to undertake a Basic Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check.

This decision is based on legal advice given to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited to ensure that we meet our Safeguarding responsibilities. This has been introduced to protect the responders, the still-suffering alcoholics who contact us, the Charity, and the Fellowship as a whole.

All applicants will be required to agree to undertake a Basic DBS check to qualify to be a responder, but please be aware that an issue being raised on your DBS Certificate will not necessarily mean that you cannot continue in the service. Only convictions that may have a direct bearing on the provision of these services would be considered relevant, and each case would be considered on its own merits by the Trustee for FROSC and the General Secretary.

The process is as follows:

- By submitting your application form to the FROSC Secretary at secretary.fro.sc@aamail.org, you consent to a Basic DBS check (or relevant equivalent) being undertaken by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited
- The FROSC Secretary will verify your application by contacting your Region, Intergroup or GSR, based on the information given on your application form
- Your application form, including your consent, will be passed to the Office Manager at the General Service Office (GSO)
- A personal link will be sent to you by email, inviting you to complete the DBS form online (See below for members based in Continental European Region)
- You complete the form via the link provided and send appropriate documents to confirm your identity to the General Service Office (GSO) marked 'Private & Confidential for the attention of the Officer Manager' (Proof of identity documentation will be returned to you securely)
- The GSO Office Manager will contact you to arrange a short video call to confirm your identity
- GSO confirms your identity to the Disclosure & Barring Service and a Basic DBS Check is undertaken
- The DBS Certificate is sent directly to you

- You will then contact the Office Manager at GSO with a copy of your certificate (either by post or email)
 - Any issues arising from the DBS Check would be considered by the Trustee responsible for First Response Online and the General Secretary
 - You will be notified by the FROSC Secretary if you can begin service as a responder
 - Any applicant whose DBS check shows an issue which might prevent them from becoming a responder would be contacted by the Trustee for FROSC
 - Copies of the DBS Certificate (or relevant equivalent for applicants from CER), and the application form giving permission to undertake the check, will be held at GSO alongside your personal information. In line with our GDPR Policy, all this information will be held for 2 years after the responder has rotated out of service, and then securely destroyed.
 - If any applicant is unsuccessful and does not take on service as a responder, then the DBS Certificate would be securely destroyed immediately.
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- For applicants in Continental European Region – a member of FROSC will contact you to discuss the best equivalent to a DBS, based on where you live. Ideally, you will obtain a written confirmation from the police in your country of residence of any convictions that are on your police record. You will then send this to the General Service Office (GSO) along with documents to confirm identity – marked 'Private & Confidential for the attention of the Office Manager'. The written confirmation will NOT need to be translated into English.

We follow the recommendations for storage and handling the forms found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-of-dbs-certificate-information>

The only people who will see what is on your DBS Certificate would be the GSO Office Manager, the Trustee responsible for First Response Online, and the General Secretary. No members of the First Response Online Sub-Committee or the admin teams will have access to them.

The cost of the DBS check will be covered by the General Service Board, and you will be able to claim the expenses involved in sending your form and proof of identity, should you wish to do so.

If you have any queries about how this process may affect you, please email the Trustee for FROSC, Holly, at trustee.southwestregion@gsogb.org.uk who will be happy to discuss any of your concerns in confidence.

Thank you for helping us to ensure that we can continue to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic, whilst making sure that we meet all our Safeguarding requirements.