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**NEW DBS CERTIFICATE PROCESS FOR CHURCHES**

I am writing to share the good news that the URC are improving our DBS certificate process.

As you will already be aware, the DBS now only issues copies of certificates to applicants. Registered bodies are no longer sent a copy, and so we previously asked for photocopies to be sent in to Church House for verification.

We are now changing our system to make the process quicker and easier for applicants and verifiers! From now onwards, verifiers can check the original certificates themselves and are only required to send photocopies where certificates are blemished (contain criminal records information).

This means that in the vast majority of cases where certificates are clear, applicants are free to immediately start working in their role, without having to send a photocopy of their certificate or await a clearance letter. All verifiers will need to do is keep a record of the certificates they have seen, so that they know applicants have been cleared to work and when.

In the case of a blemished certificate, a photocopy will need to be sent in to Churches’ Agency for Safeguarding (CAS) so that a risk assessment can take place. Church verifiers should not attempt to assess the information themselves, as they have not had the training necessary to do so.

Please see overleaf for a more detailed explanation of the new process. If you have any questions after reading this information, please do get in touch and I’ll be happy to help.

In the meantime, please check your records to make sure that you have clearance letters for any current workers who have completed the DBS process. A number of certificates have not been sent in to Church House under the previous system, so if you have not received a clearance letter from CAS, please ask to see the applicant’s DBS certificate for verification.

Yours sincerely,

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**A step by step guide to the new URC certificate process**

* Verifiers should advise applicants of the URC’s new certificate process when verifying a DBS application form.
* When the applicant receives their certificate back from the DBS they should first check that the name(s), surname(s), date of birth and address listed is correct. If any detail on the certificate is wrong, the applicant should contact the DBS to inform them of the error and a new certificate with the correct information will be issued.
* If the certificate contains criminal records information, the applicant should check that the information is accurate. If it is inaccurate, the applicant should contact the DBS to raise a dispute so that the information can be authenticated and a new, correct certificate issued.
* If the applicant is satisfied with the accuracy of the information on their certificate (or if a new certificate has been issued as a result of a dispute), they should follow the relevant   
  clear / blemished procedure outlined below:

**Clear certificates**

* Where a certificate is clear, the applicant should present the certificate to their church verifier for authentication.
* The church verifier should authenticate the certificate, and as it does not contain any criminal records information, the applicant can be cleared to work.
* The verifier should record the date they viewed the certificate and that the applicant was cleared to work in the role. Please note: clearance letters will no longer be issued by CAS for clear certificates, so it is essential that verifiers keep careful records for future reference.

**Blemished certificates** **(containing any kind of criminal records information)**

* In the case of a blemished disclosure, the applicant should present the verifier with their original certificate, along with a photocopy for the verifier to send to CAS. The verifier should sign the top of the photocopy to confirm authentication and send it to Churches’ Agency for Safeguarding, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR (all copies will be shredded by CAS and will not be returned to applicants). *Please note, the applicant can choose to only show the verifier the top of their certificate, without having to reveal the criminal records information contained beneath. In this instance, the verifier must place the photocopy into a sealed envelope whilst the applicant is present to ensure confidentiality.*
* CAS will liaise with the applicant regarding the disclosure and will pass the information to the URC’s Safeguarding Officer so that a risk assessment can take place.
* The URC will ask CAS to inform the applicant and their verifier or alternative/ additional contact in writing about the outcome of the risk assessment and whether or not the applicant has been cleared to work in the role. Applicants should not start working in the role until this clearance letter has been received.