



## Volunteer Pre-engagement Checks

When recruiting volunteers, there are a range of checks you can undertake to ensure you are getting the right person for the role, the right person for your organisation, and the right person to work with your clients.

### Key Interview Questions

There are a range of subjects you can cover during an initial interview. Questions regarding the required skills or experience are always included, but questions regarding a potential volunteer's motivation can be just as important. Why is the volunteer interested in this role, and why your organisation? Do they have the required time? Are there other requirements that they need to be aware of?

### Reference Checks

Reference checks are usually done over the phone but can also be done via email or post. Be clear what information you are seeking before you contact the referee. Be careful to ask questions that do not breach the Human Rights Act or Privacy Act. It is advisable that you do more than one reference check, and ensure that at least one referee is someone other than a friend or family member of the applicant.

### Criminal History Checks

Many organisations choose to conduct criminal history checks on potential staff and volunteers, particularly when these roles involve access to vulnerable clients, money, or valuable goods. This process helps ensure a safe and trustworthy environment for both the organisation and the people it serves.

It is important to balance the need for security, with providing fair and inclusive opportunities for volunteers, considering factors such as the nature of the role, the level of risk involved, and any legal or ethical obligations.

Some organisations have policies outlining which

types of criminal history are acceptable or not. This decision typically depends on factors such as the individual's background, the number and nature of their convictions, and how recently the offences occurred.

The [www.police.govt.nz](http://www.police.govt.nz) website has some great information about considerations to make to assist in this decision. There is also useful information to be found at [www.justice.govt.nz](http://www.justice.govt.nz), particularly regarding the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004, and what information you will or will not be provided.

It is important to remember that any information obtained about a potential volunteer is private and must be kept confidential, including criminal records and information obtained through a reference check.

You need to take care not to discriminate against someone whose criminal record is not relevant to the voluntary work they have applied to do, e.g. a conviction for careless driving need not preclude someone from a gardening role.

### In Summary

Taking time to complete 'pre-engagement' checks regarding a potential volunteer can save you time further down the track.

Most importantly, doing checks allow you to make an informed decision about whether a person is suitable not just for the role but for your organisation. You may do one or all of the above checks, but to do no checks could be hazardous in many ways. It is worthwhile to seek information from more than one source to get a broader picture of the person you are looking to engage.