

# 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 that will be based in Darlington. It will be made up of a board of nine public appointees plus a Chair – Sir Roger Singleton. These public appointees will be supported by up to 250 employees, who will be 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.

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 will the ISA work?

The ISA will work in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), an executive agency of the Home Office, to deliver the new scheme. The CRB will provide the administrative arm, which will support 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 will:

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



## The Independent Safeguarding Authority (page 2)

- be independent. Ministers will no longer be involved in making decisions on individual cases. The authority will make decisions based on clear criteria and evidence;
- include a balance of different expertise in the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It will be particularly important that the police and other experts are represented; and
- ensure clear accountability. The ISA will have a statutory responsibility to prepare an annual report accounting for its work. Its performance, efficiency and effectiveness will be 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.

### Will the ISA's decision-making process be regulated in a code of practice?

The Secretary of State has a power to specify in more detail the procedures to be followed by the ISA. The ISA itself will wish to finalise the details of its procedures. There is no statutory provision for a code of practice, but the Authority will want to show that it is independent and fair by telling stakeholders how it will apply criteria and use evidence.

### Is there a risk that cases may fall into the gap between the CRB and the ISA?

The barring process will be designed and implemented as a complete solution. Responsibility and accountability for each stage of the process will be clearly assigned and managed between the CRB and the ISA. The CRB and the ISA will work closely together. The clear split of responsibilities between them will help to minimise the chances of cases being mismanaged.

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