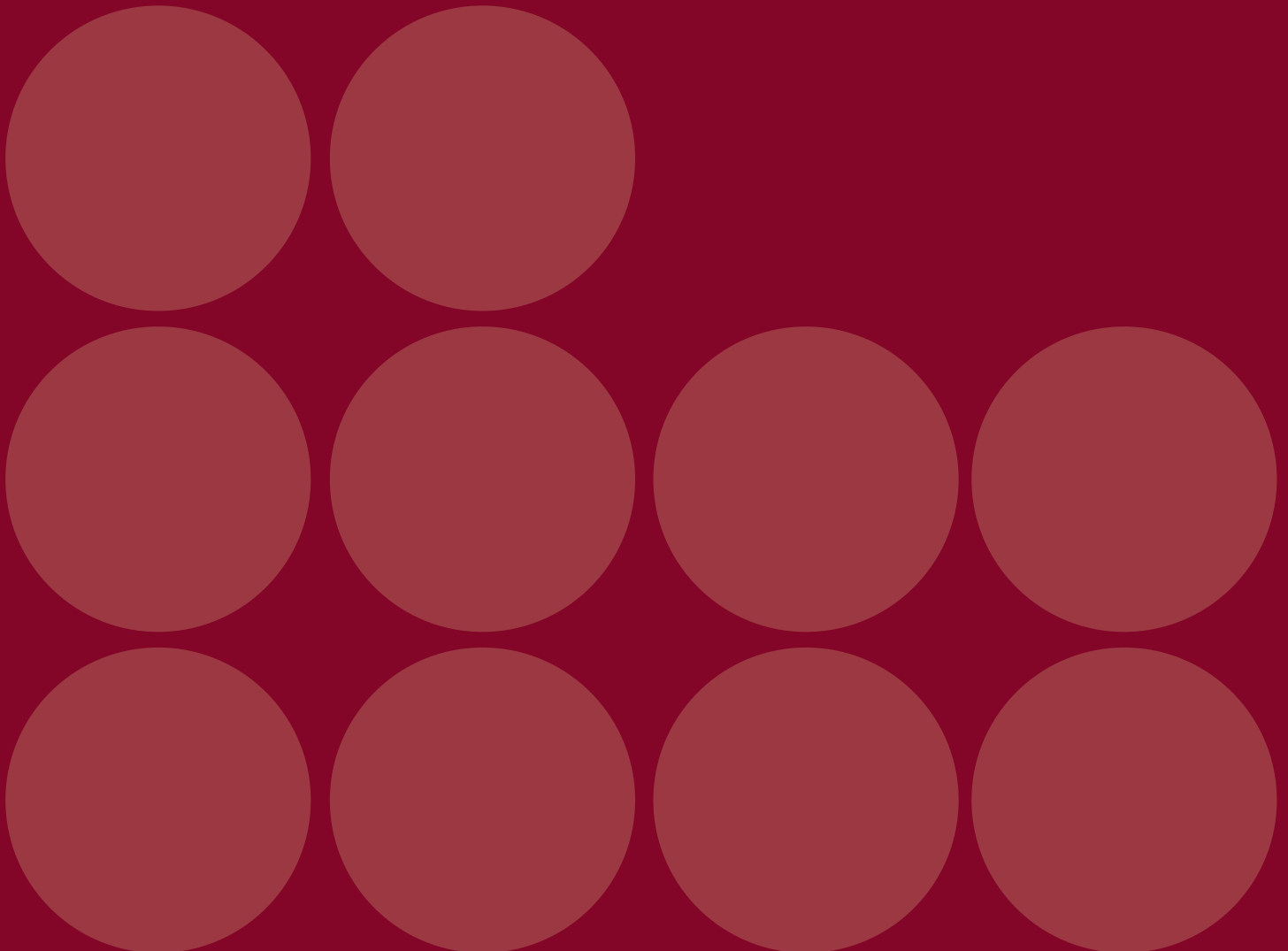




Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) Update

The electronic newsletter for stakeholders

November 2008



ISA Decision Making (IDM)

As part of the transition to the new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS), the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) is due to take over decisions on new referrals to the existing barred lists (List 99, PoCA, PoVA in England and Wales) from the Secretaries of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH).

Since 31 March 2008, the ISA has advised Ministers on barring, but once secondary legislation in Parliament is completed, ISA Decision Making (IDM) becomes a reality, meaning employers in England and Wales (under PoCA or PoVA), and employers in England (under List 99) must send new referrals under these schemes to the ISA, which will take the barring decisions. There will be local variations on these arrangements for List 99 in Wales and Northern Ireland. Where the ISA asks organisations for information on a case, they must provide it.

The Parliamentary debates around the necessary secondary legislation to enable the start of IDM began earlier this month in the Commons (03.11.08) and in the Lords (06.11.08). The Foreign Offences Order and the Transitory Provisions Order were discussed by MPs and Lords. Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Sarah McCarthy-Fry told the House on Monday 3 November:

"We aim to bring the transitory order into force by 19 January 2009, and ISA decision making would start from that date."

More information about the start of IDM will be updated as soon as it is available and posted on the ISA website <http://www.isa.gov.org/>

ACPO ensures police are fully briefed

A series of Association of Chief Police Officers briefings for police forces regarding the VBS, outlining the impact of the Scheme on police and detailing how they will interact with the Scheme's operational partners, the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the ISA, began on 12 November.

Police forces already supply information from the Police National Computer and other sources, some of it 'soft intelligence', to caseworkers working on the existing PoCA, PoVA and List 99 cases. They will have new relationships with the ISA in the months ahead and there will be new information sharing protocols and some changes in work patterns as the VBS starts up.

The briefings feature Home Office officials, DCSF, ISA and CRB representatives alongside senior police officers giving presentations and answering questions. The full list of ACPO dates are:

Wednesday 12 November – Birmingham

Tuesday 25 November – York

Friday 21 November – Bristol

Thursday 4 December – London

Monday 24 November – London

Friday 5 December – Manchester

Direct marketing spreads the Scheme message

Two direct marketing campaigns using flyers, posters and emails are being targeted at more than 40,000 representative and intermediary bodies and then more than 250,000 individual employers and voluntary organisations.

These organisations are being contacted to give them advance notice about the requirements of the new law, which says people working with children or vulnerable adults will need to be ISA-registered, starting from next year. It introduces them to the role of the new ISA organisation and spells out how it will work closely with the CRB to process applications and assess if prospective employees or volunteers pose a risk, and spells out what the fee is and who pays it.

The objective of the linked campaigns is to raise awareness and get organisations thinking and planning now for the steps they will need to take to comply with the new law from next year and consider any resource implications they may face, particularly in HR terms. The success and penetration of both campaigns will be evaluated with market research after their completion, to inform marketing campaigns next spring and summer in the run-up to 'go live.'

Information line to feature live operators

The VBS information line, which has been operating for some months with an automated service, giving some outline information and recording details of anyone wanting news updates, is soon to feature live operators, able to answer more detailed questions.

Growing interest will be generated in the Scheme, due to activity like the direct marketing campaigns mentioned above to thousands of organisations, and detailed guidance on the Scheme and details of the ISA's Decision Making Process (DMP) explaining how it will make decisions on who will be ISA-registered and who will be barred, become available shortly.

Existing material already available from different areas across the Departments from the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) list that is emerging and growing as a result of work at consultative meetings, will also be able to be drawn on by the live operators of the phone service.

This service is expected to come on line before Christmas and you can call the lo-call rate number 0300 123 1111, which will continue to feature the useful automated service in the meantime.

Peter Snow stars in new DVD

A new DVD introducing people to the principles of the VBS and the role of the new ISA organisation featuring BBC news veteran Peter Snow is nearing completion and will be issued shortly to stakeholder groups to act as an awareness raising and training tool.

The film, which runs at just under 15 minutes, features the Newsnight star describing the VBS in straightforward language, providing an easily accessible digest of the Scheme, what it is for, who it applies to and what you need to do to get registered. The film also features interviews with ISA caseworkers (for security reasons portrayed by actors) explaining how they will be making decisions, and the ISA Chairman Sir Roger Singleton. Sir Roger spells out the importance of the ISA's independence and how it will benefit from an expert board and highly trained staff, to ensure robust decisions are made.

Work is underway to embed some useful written materials about the Scheme within the DVD, which can be viewed on a computer and printed off. The free DVD will be available to order from the VBS information line on 0300 123 1111.

Scheme Guidance

A cross-departmental group has been set up to produce detailed Scheme Guidance to enable employers, voluntary organisations and registered bodies to both understand and implement the Scheme as it is rolled out. So what will the VBS Guidance cover and when will it be issued?

The Guidance will cover generic information about the Scheme – such as the application process, coverage of the Scheme (including what constitutes regulated activity and controlled activity), rollout and phasing, the ISA decision making process, individual/employer rights in respect of disputes, appeals and key definitions of the Scheme. The Guidance will also cover sector-specific information and all of this will be ready by spring 2009, six months ahead of the Scheme 'go-live' date.

However, while we are working to deliver full Guidance, to satisfy the immediate need for information, we will be issuing some top-level leaflets (i.e. something short and simple) on the Scheme on the website in the next week or two. The Peter Snow DVD described above will also act as a useful information and training tool in advance of the detailed Guidance.

Speak up

Does your organisation want to know more about the VBS; the role of the ISA, what the implications of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will be on your workforce or volunteer staff? If so, the government departments responsible for the VBS, that is the Home Office, the DCSF and the DH, plus the operational partners the CRB and the ISA, have a roster of speakers available to attend your key meetings, events and conferences.

The speakers can provide your audiences with a simple overview of the legislation and explain what is involved and who needs to do what and by when. Ideally, in the run-up to the Scheme 'go live' date, they want to reach as many people as possible. Therefore, with enough advance notice, and if you have a potential audience of 100 people or more, we can in most cases guarantee to have a speaker for your event.

As the delivery and policy teams providing the speakers do not want to miss out on any opportunities, but naturally have finite resources, meetings of under that number will also be given serious consideration on a priority basis. If you have an event or key meeting planned where you would like a speaker, please let us know in an email subject headed 'speaker request' to scheme.info@homeoffice.gsi.uk

ISA's Stephenson House

The ISA team at Stephenson House in Darlington is moving closer to full capacity. A major recruitment campaign is about to commence to identify a further 70 caseworkers. It is expected that the full complement of staff, including Operations, People & Development; Performance and Stakeholder Management and Finance and Corporate Resources will be close on 250.

In addition, the Executive Team is now complete. Joining Chief Executive Adrian McAllister in the Executive Team, we now have Anne Hunter (Director of Operations), Janet Gauld (Head of Performance and Stakeholder Management), Debby Bonnard (Head of People and Development) and Deborah Lewis-Bynoe (Head of Finance and Corporate Resources).

And finally don't forget....

To keep checking our website at www.isa-gov.org for all the latest news, details of free information sessions, downloads, legal guidance and all other tools that you'll need to help ensure that we are all ready for the introduction of the Scheme in October 2009.