

# ***How the Child Protection Industry Stole Christmas***



**Manifesto Club**

**20 December 2006**

## SUMMARY

### **Santas and other adult Christmas helpers must now be CRB checked.**

- **Church guidelines** state that **all adults in mixed-age choirs require criminal records checks.**<sup>1</sup>
- Schools, community centres and shopping centres frequently **ask Santas to be CRB checked** (p5-6).
- At a **children's Christmas party** in Bristol, volunteers who had not been CRB checked had to wear **different coloured t-shirts** (p9-10).
- New regulations from the **British Association of Barbershop Singers** state that every club (including those with no under-18s) must have a CRB checked 'designated person' (p11).
- Guidelines from the **Central Council of Church Bell Ringers** require that at least **two adult members** of the Tower are vetted.<sup>2</sup>

### **The new Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act will make it a crime for adults working or volunteering with children to not be vetted.**

- Both the individual and the organisation they work for could be subject to a **£5000 fine.**<sup>3</sup>

### **CRB checks put off volunteers, and place a financial burden on small organisations.**

- The **Tory shadow minister for children, Tim Loughton**, was prevented from acting as a Christmas elf because he had not been vetted.<sup>4</sup>
- Many volunteers have to pay for themselves to be checked, which generally costs between £7 and £30 in administration charges. Employers pay the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) either **£31 or £36** for a check<sup>5</sup>, and it costs £45 or more to go through an intermediary body.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Diocese of Oxford advice:

[http://www.oxford.anglican.org/files/stem/PCDO/html/PCDO\\_31.htm](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/files/stem/PCDO/html/PCDO_31.htm)

<sup>2</sup> See the guidelines from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers:

<http://www.cccb.org.uk/pubs/guidelines/gdInChildProtection.php#download>

<sup>3</sup> See the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act:

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga\\_20060047\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060047_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Case quoted in Hansard, 28 March 2006

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200405/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60328-29.htm>

<sup>5</sup> The prices are for standard and enhanced disclosures, respectively



## INTRODUCTION

Christmas should be a time when adults and children come together. Traditionally, this has included organisations hosting Christmas parties for kids, a local man dressing up as Santa, adults attending children's nativity plays, and adults and children singing together in choirs or ringing the Christmas bells.

However, new child protection procedures are putting these events at risk. There are now requirements that everybody from Santas to bell ringers to those helping out at children's Christmas parties are criminal records checked. It is likely that vetting requirements will become even more stringent when the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act is put into practice over the next two years.

Vetting is costly and burdensome for volunteers and organisations that work with children. It also undermines relationships of trust between members of a community. With mass CRB checks, relating to children becomes a fraught procedure requiring state permission, rather than a normal part of being an adult citizen.

Other child protection procedures are also spoiling Christmas events. Everything from enclosed grottos to sitting on Santa's knee is now seen as unacceptable in some quarters. In many department stores, a standoffish Santa handing out presents under strip lighting has replaced the atmospheric Lapland grotto.

One Christmas party for children in Bristol used different colour t-shirts for non-CRB checked volunteers, and placed monitors outside toilets to ensure that an adult was never alone with a child (p9). Friends and family were not allowed to help out at a party for blind children in Manchester this year, because they were not vetted (p9). At a party for the children of Unison workers in Carlisle, parents were asked to sign permission forms for their children to be photographed (p10).

Meanwhile, some schools have banned parents from taking photos of nativity plays; and other schools confusingly tell parents either to focus their camera only on their own child, or alternatively to not focus on any particular child (p12-13).

This isn't about 'PC gone mad'. Sadly, these procedures have become entirely normal in schools, churches and community centres across Britain. These rules are often accepted not because people really think that they help protect children, but more because 'that's what you have to do nowadays'. Many organisations say that they are protecting themselves, or complying with council or insurance regulations.

Still, one or two village halls were bemused by my questions about CRB checks. Was Santa vetted? 'No. We know him.' Were there any guidelines for appropriate behaviour for Santa? 'No. Like what?' These replies are reminders that these should be strange questions to ask at any time of year, let alone in the Season of Goodwill.

It's time that we questioned these suspicious procedures – and introduced a bit more trust, and some more common sense, into adult-child relations.

**Josie Appleton, convenor, Manifesto Club**

*The **Manifesto Club** ([www.manifestoclub.com](http://www.manifestoclub.com)) is a new initiative that stands for a freer and more humane society. We have written a manifesto based on humanist principles (see Appendix B).*

*We are concerned about the damaging consequences that adult vetting has for the relations between the generations. That is why we have decided to join with other concerned people to campaign against the policing of adult-child relations.*

*We have launched an **online petition** opposing the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (see Appendix A), signed by parents, teachers, volunteers, and individuals including Johnny Ball, Fay Weldon, and Alan Sillitoe. See: [www.manifestoclub.com/vetting](http://www.manifestoclub.com/vetting)*

*We have also published a report, '**The Case Against Vetting**', which charts the growth of vetting, and illustrates its damaging consequences for communities. See: [http://www.manifestoclub.com/files/THE%20CASE%20AGAINST%20VETTIN G.pdf](http://www.manifestoclub.com/files/THE%20CASE%20AGAINST%20VETTIN%20G.pdf)*

*For more information, or to be involved in the campaign against vetting, email [info@manifestoclub.com](mailto:info@manifestoclub.com)*

**Cover image by James Heartfield**

## SANTA CLAUS

Many **Santas must now be CRB checked** – including those volunteering at small-scale community events such as schools, local charities or village halls.

- The **Tory shadow minister for children, Tim Loughton**, volunteered to be one of Santa's elves at the grotto of an animal welfare charity of which he is president - **yet he could not because he did not have a CRB check.**<sup>6</sup>
- Some **schools CRB checked Santa volunteers** in the run-up to Christmas, even if those individuals were well known to the school. One school Friends Association reminded in their 7 November minutes: *'Santas need to be CRB checked.'*<sup>7</sup>
- Many **local organisations and charities** ask for CRB checks. One children's education centre appealed for volunteers for its Christmas grotto: 'We ask that anyone wanting to play the role of Father Christmas to be preferably CRB checked.'<sup>8</sup>
- **Santas employed by department stores**, or who are supplied by an agency, are CRB checked.<sup>9</sup>
- Even one **mother selling Santa letters** on ebay said: 'The magic of Christmas is here. Let me send you a letter to your child from Santa.... I am CRB checked.'<sup>10</sup>

Churches, charities and councils frequently now recommend that volunteer Santas are vetted:

- The **Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service** advises churches: 'use one of your organisation's "approved" children's workers as Santa.... If using someone else, then Father Christmas should always have a suitably dressed assistant present, who is an approved worker.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Case quoted in Hansard, 28 March 2006:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200405/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60328-29.htm>

<sup>7</sup> See the minutes from Friends of William Shrewsbury School, Staffordshire, 7 November 2006: <http://www.williamshrewsbury.staffs.sch.uk/AFWSMinutes.asp>

<sup>8</sup> 'Search for Santa', Lancashire Telegraph, 9 November 2006

[http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/chorley/headlines/display.var.1013091.0.search\\_for\\_santa.php](http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/chorley/headlines/display.var.1013091.0.search_for_santa.php)

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, adverts for Santas: <http://www.gumtree.com/london/50/6744450.html>

<http://www.cardiffswinterwonderland.com/santaPR.pdf>

[http://shop.santa-claus.com/uk/pages/live\\_calls/live\\_santa\\_calls\\_faq.html](http://shop.santa-claus.com/uk/pages/live_calls/live_santa_calls_faq.html)

<sup>10</sup> [http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/SEND-A-PERSONALISED-LETTER-TO-YOUR-CHILD-FROM-SANTA\\_W00QitemZ320050101848QQihZ011QQcategoryZ33841QQcmdZViewItem](http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/SEND-A-PERSONALISED-LETTER-TO-YOUR-CHILD-FROM-SANTA_W00QitemZ320050101848QQihZ011QQcategoryZ33841QQcmdZViewItem)

<sup>11</sup> See the CCPAS guidelines for Santa Claus:

- **Rotary Club** guidelines state: 'The standard CRB check is recommended for people acting as Santa on a regular basis.... Whenever possible, clubs should invite those Rotaractors who have undergone CRB checks through their employment or profession to act as Santa and his assistants.'<sup>12</sup>
- A development office for **Camden Council** Safeguarding Children Board says: 'Anyone working with children should be checked. If someone is working as Santa, in principle the answer would be yes they would need a CRB check.'

The government still has to spell out the implications of the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act** over the next few months. It is likely that those regularly acting as Santa would have to be CRB checked, since they have frequent and close contact with children.

The implications of the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act** for one-off **volunteer Santas** are less clear.

- A policy adviser for the **Department for Education and Skills** said: 'The very act of being a Santa will not make you covered for a CRB check. If you did it every week, frequently, for example in a school, you would be covered.'

So a person who was Santa for a night could not be CRB checked for that role, because it would not involve regular contact with children. Yet because that person was not cleared, he would have to be supervised by another CRB-checked adult.

- Another policy adviser for the **Department for Education and Skills** said: 'Anybody who isn't eligible for a disclosure must be supervised. If the grotto is in a school, you would expect there to be a teacher close by, close enough to see what is happening. If a father acting as Santa happened to have a CRB check, that would be great. Then he could be left on his own.'

This policy would **leave volunteer Santas in a suspicious limbo**. If they could not be CRB checked, by implication they could not be fully trusted around children. In practice, it is likely that many organisations would do what some are doing already, and only take on Santas who were vetting for another role working with children.

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<http://www.ccpas.co.uk/Press%20releases/20%20Nov%202002.htm>

<sup>12</sup> See Rotary advice for Christmas activities:

[http://www.rotaract.org.uk/info/download/rgbi\\_protection\\_adviceforchristmasactivities.pdf](http://www.rotaract.org.uk/info/download/rgbi_protection_adviceforchristmasactivities.pdf)

There are also new **guidelines covering Santa's behaviour with children**, and many traditional parts of kids' experience of Santa are now being revised.

Some guidelines suggest that **Santa's grotto should not be dark or enclosed**, or that **Santa should never be alone with a child**.

- The **Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service** says: 'Ensure that Santa is in an area which is as well-lit and public.'<sup>13</sup>
- The **Lions Clubs International** advises: 'Specifically for activities involving Father Christmas, ensure that Lions Club members are not left alone with children. Two Lions members need to be present at all times.'<sup>14</sup>
- The **child protection adviser from the Diocese of Guilford** says: 'We would advise that Santa isn't alone with a child. My recommendation is lots of elves, and set it up so it is very open.'
- A **Welsh shopping centre** put CCTV cameras in Santa's grotto, and developed a more open design: 'We've left the Georgian windows clear of decoration so that parents can see clearly what is going on.'<sup>15</sup>

Guidelines differ over whether **Santa should be allowed to kiss children** or have them **sitting on his knee**, but all are wary about contact between Santa and kids.

- A spokesperson for **Selfridges** says: 'Santa doesn't have children sitting on his lap. The kid is sitting next to him, and there is shaking hands but no other contact.'
- The **Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia** advises: 'Father Christmas must not ask/encourage children to sit on his knee.'<sup>16</sup>
- **Rotary Club** guidelines state: 'Santa or assistants should not actively invite children to "kiss" Santa. If a child wishes to kiss Santa this should be on the cheek.... It is preferable for children to shake hands or "blow" a kiss.'<sup>17</sup>
- A spokesperson for **John Lewis** department store says: 'Santa is not allowed to pick children up and put them on his knee. If a parent lifts a child on to Santa's knee, that is okay.'

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<sup>13</sup> See the CCPAS guidelines Santa Claus:

<http://www.ccpas.co.uk/Press%20releases/20%20Nov%202002.htm>

<sup>14</sup> See Lions Clubs International child protection guidelines:

[http://www.lions105d.org.uk/Downloads/vunrbl\\_apr04.pdf](http://www.lions105d.org.uk/Downloads/vunrbl_apr04.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> 'Fears of abuse put Santa on camera', Guardian, 3 December 2004:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/christmas2004/story/0,,1365451,00.html>

<sup>16</sup> See advice from the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia:

[http://www.catholiceastanglia.org/family/files/uplink/ch6\\_volunteers1\\_13.pdf?565682c098e024566ba67dd312a9a25f=68faff7c9e6a41989801f3543078fe76](http://www.catholiceastanglia.org/family/files/uplink/ch6_volunteers1_13.pdf?565682c098e024566ba67dd312a9a25f=68faff7c9e6a41989801f3543078fe76)

<sup>17</sup> See the Rotary advice for Christmas activities:

[http://www.rotaract.org.uk/info/download/rgbi\\_protection\\_adviceforchristmasactivities.pdf](http://www.rotaract.org.uk/info/download/rgbi_protection_adviceforchristmasactivities.pdf)

- The director of the **Ministry of Fun**, which runs Britain's only 'Santa School', says: 'We don't encourage children to sit on Santa's knee. If a child offered, the Santa will go along with it.'
- The **Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service** says: 'There is no reason why children should not kiss Santa on the cheek providing this is initiated by the child and not Santa.'<sup>18</sup>

In part as a result of these concerns, there has been a decline in grottos in recent years.

- Most **London department stores** on Oxford Street now have a walkabout Santa, rather than an enclosed grotto area.
- The **Ministry of Fun**, one of the main suppliers of Santas, says that whereas five years ago it was taking 500-600 bookings for Christmas, it now takes 200-250. A representative says that this is because there are fewer Christmas grottos.

## CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTIES

A host of organisations open their doors to local children for Christmas parties, including businesses, universities and local charities. Over the past few years many of these organisations have introduced a new set of child protection measures. These accounts of three Christmas parties, hosted in different parts of the country and by different kinds of organisations, give a snapshot of how practices have changed.

### **Bristol University, Christmas party for children from the Bristol community, 2 December 2006**

'All of our volunteers are referenced and police checked. Those who aren't CRB checked we have in different colour t-shirts: the CRB checked are in burgundy, those who aren't are in white t-shirts. This is so that if a number of kids are in a room together, those in charge can ensure that there are a mix of those who are referenced and those who aren't. Or if something happens, there is a referenced volunteer present.'

<sup>18</sup> See the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service 'Frequently asked questions': <http://www.ccpas.co.uk/FAQs/FAQ%20Good%20Practice.htm>



All volunteers get child protection training - on the morning of the party, we also give them a child protection pack. This advice includes not to go anywhere alone with a child, not to pick up a child, and not to initiate contact.

There are volunteers on guard on the toilet door, to ensure that there is never a situation where there is one adult alone with children - either they are all children, or there is more than one adult volunteer in the toilet. This is necessary to ensure that you don't have a one-on-one situation between a child and an adult volunteer.

'These measures are necessary these days unfortunately. Part of it is to safeguard the volunteers from allegations.'

**Hayley Lisowski, child protection representative, University of Bristol**  
(guidelines developed by liaising with social services and NSPCC)

**Henshaws Society for Blind People, Christmas party for blind children in Manchester, 2 December**

'The parents are always with the children, and our volunteers are all CRB checked. Before, we had a lot of friends and people to help out at our Christmas party, but we have stopped that now, because we feel that we need to be protecting ourselves. We can't encourage adults to take children dancing or face painting at the party if they aren't CRB checked.

'Since this summer, we stopped having people supporting children through Henshaws if they are not CRB checked. Our volunteer coordinator here is now constantly sorting out CRBs for people. Sometimes the checks take so long to come through that volunteers are losing enthusiasm and moving on before they even begin.

'Santa is the husband of one of the members of staff, and is CRB checked. Before the children would queue up to see Santa, but now Father Christmas goes around tables and gives out presents. At least now they don't have to sit on his knee - we are aware of these issues.'

**Wendy Thompson, team leader, children and family services, Henshaws**

**Carlisle City Council Unison branch, Christmas party for Unison children, 10 December**

'When we first organised our Christmas party seven years ago, we had it in a community centre and did everything ourselves. Now we have it at the Sands Centre, and they take care of health and safety issues.'

'All our volunteers are employees, and they are all CRB checked. Parents stay with children and look after them at the party. Volunteers can't take children to the toilet.

'Last year we put up posters saying that photographs would be taken at the party, and if parents wanted they could opt out. This year we went further and asked parents to fill in a form when they apply, to say if they don't want their kids to be photographed.

'People know us, and we have seen these kids grow up. Parents sometimes ask why we need these forms. This is just in case, we are being proactive, to make sure that we are covered for anything.'

**Paula Norris, Carlisle City Council**

## CHURCH ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Church activities for young people have become highly regulated, and many choirs and bell ringing groups now require adults to be vetted.

### **Choirs**

Some churches now require all adults in mixed-age choirs to be vetted.

- **The Diocese of Oxford** states that when churches set up an 'all-age group (such as a choir or an orchestra) where adults and children will be taking part together', **all the adults require CRB checks**.<sup>19</sup>
- The **House of Bishops** recommends that 'all adults who may come into regular and direct contact with children during their activities...such as...choirs', must be CRB checked.<sup>20</sup>

This can apply even when there are no under-18s actually in the choir.

- **One barbershop singer** says: 'Many male voice choirs do not have any members under 18 and of those that do, almost all attend with a family member. Yet a British Association of Barbershop Singers policy is coming into force which states that every club (including those with no under-18s or with a child attending with a parent) must have a CRB

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<sup>19</sup> See the Diocese of Oxford advice:

[http://www.oxford.anglican.org/files/stem/PCDO/html/PCDO\\_31.htm](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/files/stem/PCDO/html/PCDO_31.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in 'Mixed-Age Group Activities', Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service:  
<http://www.ccpas.co.uk/Articles/Mixed%20Age-Group.htm>

checked "Designated Person" who is responsible for any minors and who will be identified as their contact. This is following guidance from the NSPCC.'

As a result, some choirs are reluctant to admit young people.

- One **Cambridge student gospel choir** decided: 'Under-18s raises a Child Protection issue...this a nightmare to sort out, requiring CRB checks etc, so is decided that we won't take non-uni people who are under 18.'<sup>21</sup>

### ***Bell ringing***

For young people to ring the Christmas bells, they and their fellow ringers have to comply with stringent procedures from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.<sup>22</sup>

- 'At least **two adult members** of the tower (preferably one of each sex) complete the declaration and **CRB check** procedure, and at least one of these should always be present when young people attend ringing.'
- Each young person's parent must sign a '**permission to ring**' form.
- Tower captains must inform the young person's parents 'if there is any plan to use a video camera as a training tool.... The **videotape should be erased** after the teaching session, preferably in the presence of the parent or the Tower Captain'.
- The young person should undertake to ensure that they **do not wear clothing that is 'overtly provocative'**.
- Parents must be informed that when the young person is learning to control a bell 'it **may be necessary to raise one's voice**, or make physical contact (eg by taking hold of the learner's hand to take control of the bell rope)'
- '**Two adults (if possible of different sexes) should normally be present** whenever young people are taking part in ringing or being transported to or from ringing events.'

These rules make it more difficult for bell ringing groups to bring on young people.

- One bell ringer says: 'In the past, young bell ringers would turn up an hour early to get extra instruction from another bell ringer. Now that is very difficult as there always has to be two adults present.'

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<sup>21</sup> See the minutes of the Cambridge Revelation Rock Gospel Choir  
<http://www.srcf.ucam.org/rev/minutes/may03min.html>

<sup>22</sup> See the guidelines from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers  
<http://www.cccbr.org.uk/pubs/guidelines/gdlnChildProtection.php#download>

- A bell ringer from southwest London comments: 'Many ringers are related, so what if you are taking your godson or nephew to ringing, it seems absurd that you can't be alone with him. Some will comply with these rules to the letter, some won't. Still, the tension is there all the time; you are twitchy all the time about whether you are doing the right thing. Everyone feels themselves to be a potential criminal.'

### **Church volunteers**

Other adult volunteers who help out in church over the Christmas period are also supposed to be vetted. Even **sidespersons**, who help to prepare the church for Christmas services, must have a CRB certificate.

## **CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PHOTOS**

There is now a range of guidelines covering photography of children's events. Different schools and churches take different approaches, with some banning photos completely and others only allowing them in certain circumstances. Here is a selection of the bizarre and contradictory rules:

- Photography is **banned completely**.  
Eg, a school in Manchester<sup>23</sup>; schools in Scotland<sup>24</sup>
- Photography is banned but there is an **official DVD** for parents to buy.  
One parent (and amateur photographer) said 'the school technician will be selling stills and a DVD for about a tenner'.<sup>25</sup>
- Parents are only allowed to **photograph their own child**.  
One parent said: 'I took a DV camcorder to the school nativity play and was told by the Head Teacher that it was ok as long as I only filmed my own child.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Paedophile fear prompts Nativity camera ban, Manchester Evening News, 18 December 2003:  
[http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/76/76177\\_paedophile\\_fear\\_prompts\\_nativity\\_camera\\_ban.html](http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/76/76177_paedophile_fear_prompts_nativity_camera_ban.html)

<sup>24</sup> 'Ban on Nativity Photos attacked', Scotsman, 17 December 2002  
<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=686&id=1402652002>

<sup>25</sup> See discussion on Ephotozine  
<http://www.ephotozine.com/forum/viewanswers.cfm?qid=41676&page=1>

<sup>26</sup> See discussion on Ephotozine  
<http://www.ephotozine.com/forum/viewanswers.cfm?qid=41676&page=1>

- Parents are allowed to photograph so long as they **do not focus on any particular child**.

The child protection adviser from the Diocese of Guilford says: 'It is suggested that parents do not focus on any particular child.'

- Photography is permitted **at particular points** in the nativity play.

Another church child protection adviser says: 'Sometimes churches have a tableau at the end of a performance, where parents can come up and take photos.'

- Photography is permitted but there is an **announcement** at the beginning of the event, or parents must sign permission forms.

Surrey County Council advises: 'Remind parents/carers with a verbal announcement at the start of the event that any images must be taken for personal use only and remind them that such images must not be put on the web/internet.'<sup>27</sup>

Some churches are having problems keeping photographic records of their events for children.

- **Virginia Simpson**, education officer of the **Churches Conservation Trust**, says: 'It can be difficult to get permission to take photos in advance. Otherwise you have to send all the photos to the school, and ask permission, which can be a long slow process. Or all you can use is photos of the backs of children's heads. Who wants a photo of the back of the head? We have even had to resort to taking photos of the children of regional staff.'

Any explanations for how parents' nativity photos could be used by paedophiles are decidedly **far-fetched**. One concern appears to be that photos could end up on a child pornography website, with the head pasted on to a naked child's body.

- The **youth officer for the Peterborough Diocese** says: 'You can take one child's head and add it to another. We know that it is possible. We can clearly extrapolate to find out what could be done.'

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<sup>27</sup> See Surrey County Council, Guidance on Nativity Plays:  
<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/education/sbdb.nsf/searchresults/3509900187395c6480256df6004e5132?OpenDocument>

This is **not about protecting children**.

- After education chiefs in Edinburgh banned photography at nativity plays, they conceded that they 'did not know of a single case in the UK where paedophiles have been found with pictures of nativity plays'.<sup>28</sup>
- **Ray Wyre, an expert in child sex offenders**, argues: 'These restrictions on parents filming their children are making life more difficult for law abiding citizens, while hardened sex offenders will always spot the loopholes. We cannot allow our society to descend to the lowest common denominator, where we think of everything in terms of how a child molester might see it.'

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<sup>28</sup> 'Ban on Nativity Photos attacked', Scotsman, 17 December 2002:  
<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=686&id=1402652002>

## APPENDIX

### **A. Letter of concern about vetting.** To sign, see [www.manifestoclub.com](http://www.manifestoclub.com)

*'We believe that the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill is a misguided response to a small number of tragic, but fortunately rare, incidents involving the abuse of children. The bill will mean that up to a third of the adult working population — those who come into contact with children through their work or volunteering — will be subject to continuous criminal records vetting. This could include babysitters and private tutors, as well as those who merely have access to information about children. The massive expansion of vetting is driven by suspicion and paranoia. The Criminal Records Bureau has already carried out 10 million checks since 2002, and it is now common practice to vet anybody from 16-year-olds teaching younger kids to read, to parents helping out in school, to the visitors to foster carers' homes.*

*'Such child protection procedures do little to protect children from the small number of individuals who would do them harm. Instead, they damage adult-child relations and undermine the capacity of adults to contribute to children's welfare. Vetting calls into question the informal ways adults in a community collaborate in rearing children: from the local enthusiast running a football team, to the volunteer who helps out at school. Adults become more concerned with covering their backs than passing on their insights to the next generation.*

*'Children become a "no-go" area: local sports teams and youth groups are struggling to find volunteers; some teachers are scared to put a plaster on a child's knee; and there are worrying cases of adults passing by injured or endangered children. We call for a more rational approach to adult-child interactions.'*

This was first published as a letter in **The Times, on 16 October 2006**, signed by:

JOHNNY BALL, children's television presenter and mathematician; FAY WELDON, author; EILEEN MUNRO, Reader in Social Policy, London School of Economics; HEATHER PIPER, educational researcher, Manchester Metropolitan University; ED STRAW, former chairman of Relate; PROFESSOR SIMON WESSELY, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London; PROFESSOR BILL JORDAN, School of Applied Psychosocial Studies, University of Plymouth; JOHN FITZPATRICK, lawyer and academic; DR BRIAN SHELDON, Emeritus Professor of Applied Social Research, University of Exeter; FRANK FUREDI, Professor of Sociology, University of Kent; JIM CAMPBELL, Lord Mayor of Oxford; STUART WAITON, director, Generation Youth Issues; PETER WILD, head of Behaviour Support Service, Birmingham; ROBERT HANN, coach, Sligo Olympic Handball Association; DAVID GREEN, director, Civitas; CLAIRE FOX, director, Institute of Ideas; MARY KENNY, writer and journalist; KATE COPSTICK, former *Playschool* presenter; JUDITH GILLESPIE, Scottish Parent Teacher Council; PROFESSOR RAYMOND TALLIS, physician and writer; COUNCILLOR RUSSELL EAGLING, London Borough of Camden; BARB JUNGR, singer; BILL DURODIE, Senior Lecturer in Risk and Security, Cranfield University; CHRIS WOODHEAD, former Chief Inspector of Schools.

## **B. Manifesto Club Principles**

- 1. We are committed to freedom, free speech and genuine tolerance.***
- 2. We support experimentation in all its forms - scientific, social and personal.***
- 3. We support individual self-determination.***
- 4. We uphold a human-centred perspective.***
- 5. We believe in a universal humanity that transcends difference.***
- 6. We continue to be inspired by the legacy of the Enlightenment.***

***To read the full manifesto, go to [www.manifestoclub.com](http://www.manifestoclub.com)***