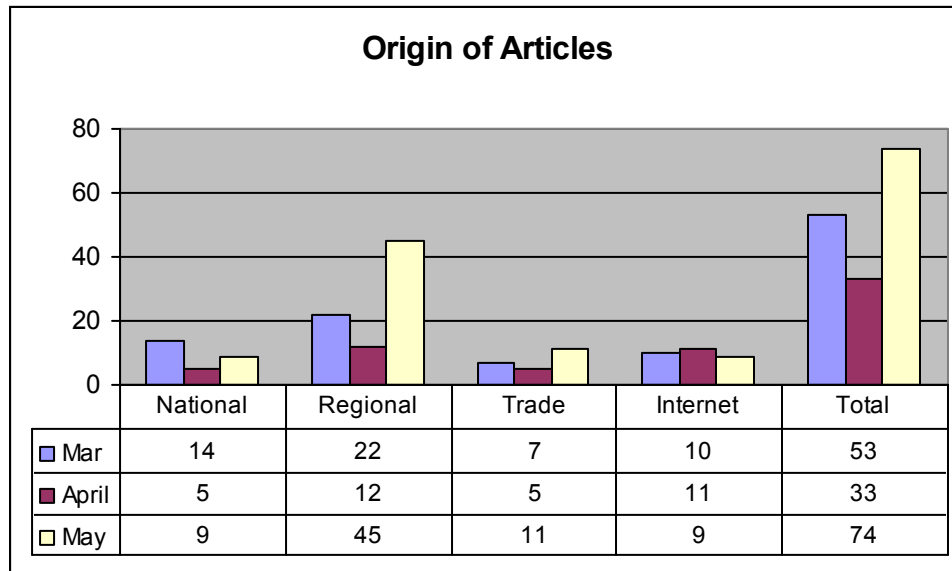


Breakdown of press coverage for the CRB - May 2008.

OVERVIEW



As the graph illustrates CRB press coverage in May is more than double that received in April.

The most significant rise in coverage came from the regional press, where coverage rose from 12 articles in April to 45 in May. This was due to many regional newspapers covering the same story picked up from a national, with a local slant.

The most covered story, regionally related to a threat to work experience placements because of the increasing costs of ISA and the impression that such checks will be compulsory. This was reported in The Guardian's Educational Supplement it was repeated in a further 24 regional newspapers.

Another major news story developed when BBCs 'Newsnight' reported that there was a loophole in the vetting procedures of foreign airport workers who had not undergone thorough checks, due to the lack of overseas criminal information available. The story showed the CRB logo and pictures of a CRB logo despite the fact that the CRB is not involved with these checks as these workers are not eligible for a Disclosure, they are subject to a Basic Disclosure by Disclosure Scotland The next day **The Times** and **The Daily Telegraph** reported this it, followed by 12 similar regional articles.

The Daily Telegraph reported that Ministers knew for 5 years that checks on overseas workers, at airports, did not cover overseas conviction records. A loophole in the vetting procedures means that while British workers undergo

rigorous checks, foreign applicants for airside jobs can have a criminal past that is not picked up. David Davis, the Shadow Home Secretary said,

"It beggars belief that the government knew about this massive loophole and have done nothing about it for years"

This means that foreigners who work airside at British airports may not have been 'fully' vetted.

Western Daily Press followed this up with a similar article and said that the Department for Transport (DfT) said checks for criminal records are being considered as part of a review in December.

Tory Shadow Home Secretary David Davis said the loophole would be a disgrace if it proved to be, *"Commercial interest trumping public safety"*.

He also called for immediate security checks to be carried out regardless of the cost. This story was replicated in a number of regional press.

Shropshire Star & Lincolnshire Echo were among the first to carry articles about the future of work experience placements when they said that small businesses warned that work experience placements could be under threat because of the cost of Criminal Record Checks.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) warned firms may cancel placements as they cannot afford the £64 to have staff checked by the ISA. In A letter to Schools secretary Ed Balls, FSB Chairman John Wright said,

"Our fear is that fewer and fewer employers will be willing to offer work experience placements once this scheme is introduced.....The intentions of the scheme are of course absolutely sound, but there must be a way of protecting young people without diminishing the opportunities of thousands of school pupils every year".

PrintWeek carried a further quote from Mr Wright who added that the scheme, *"totally contradicts the governments line on entrepreneurship and the skills agenda"*.

Express & Echo (Exeter) carried the story and added that the FSB says the cost will deter firms from taking on pupils,

"We've no problem with the checks being made but we are again having to pay for it. This is a big turn off for potential employers".

Work experience placements at a cost wrote the Hairdressers Journal International on the same subject. A spokeswoman for the National Hairdressers federation said,

"While no one would argue that under 16s deserve special protection, the reality is that this is an over reaction to a small minority of high profile tragedies. Our solicitors have scrutinised the consultation document and described it as so badly

written it should be referred to the pain English society. We fear this scheme will prove bureaucratic, expensive and unworkable for salons”.

Similar articles were covered in 15 other regional papers and 5 trade magazines.

The proposal for a controversial new staff database, the National Staff Dismissal Register, was covered widely across all sectors, due to the relevance of an online database of workers accused of theft and dishonesty, regardless of whether they have been convicted of any crime, which can be accessed when vetting potential employees without the knowledge or agreement of the applicant.

Chronicle Echo (Northampton) reported that the **‘innocent may be on the crime list’** and **Silicon Republic** (web) followed with a similar article **‘outrage in UK over staff blacklisting database’**.

Major retailers and businesses support the register, however the Trade Union Congress (TUC) is concerned that the system is open to abuse. It states

‘The CRB was set up to assist employers to make safe appointments when recruiting staff to work with vulnerable groups. The CRB already provides appropriate and properly regulated protection for employers. Under the new register, an employee may not be aware they have been blacklisted or have any right to appeal’.

According to the report the Register has been considered by the Information Commissioner's Office and has been accepted as lawful. The article also refers to the link from the organisation which created it and the Home Office, suggesting official sanction.

‘Dishonesty database’ abuse fears INNOCENT people could be blacklisted wrote the Sunderland Echo

Retail register Professional Security (Web), reported that

Shop workers union UDSAW says it has serious concerns about the implications of this register for individuals who have been falsely accused or their employer has a grudge against them. UDSAW spokesman said,

“Employers can already use the CRB check to make sure they are making safe appointments. To blacklist those individuals where there has been insufficient evidence to prosecute is grossly unfair. The system is open to abuse with limited right to appeal”.

In other news, a headline in the Cambridge Evening News read;

Sir’ in indecent act with girl, 14.

A student teacher has been banned from working with children for 5 years after he admitted committing an act of gross indecency on a 14 year old pupil. Craig Beeden, 22 was working in his office when he was joined by the girl and committed the act. He had become close to the girl and began swapping messages and phone numbers on Facebook. Beeden was sentenced to a 3 year supervision order by Cambridge Crown Court and ordered not to contact the girl. He had also previously

pleaded guilty to 2 charges of participating in sexual activity with a child. Beeden is not allowed to enter the girls' village or work with under 16s for 5 years. He must attend a sex offender's programme for 200 hours, sign the sex offenders register and inform the police of any change of address. A spokesman for Cambridge County Council said,

"We feel that the courts have taken appropriate action. Craig Beeden was working full time at the college for less than 3 weeks. He joined the staff with excellent references and a clear CRB check from the University of Bedfordshire. As soon as the allegations were made he was suspended from duty and has not been at the college since".

A **Times** story, **Teachers home computer held 11,000 porn images**, relates how a former head of science came to the attention of police allegedly taking pictures of children in a shopping centre. Police later found he had collected 11,000 pornographic pictures and videos of all age groups including babies. He served seven months in Doncaster prison.

The college were unaware of his past even though he had appeared on **BBCs 'Newsnight'** to discuss the treatment of child pornography offenders. He also set up a web forum for those accused of the offence. Mr Oldfield said that he had never been accused of any kind of physical assault and adopted a political stance which argued for a distinction to be made between different kinds of sexual activity involving children. In April he was banned from the college grounds for staging a one man protest. He has appealed against the decision.

Following the above story **The Times Educational Supplement** reported Paul Holmes MP's call for tighter controls to prevent colleges becoming a soft target for offenders. He said,

"We all know case histories of people with child sex offences where they deliberately go into positions where they can get access to young people. It would make sense for all colleges to have a self declaration at the outset and some sort of internal body to make a decision. There is certainly a loophole".

Bill Ramell the Further and Higher Education Minister argued,

"We have made changes to ensure that all students in FE whose studies bring them into regular contact with children should be assessed for their suitability and this will include a CRB check".

The Times Educational Supplement followed this with;

Colleges seek guidance to keep sex predators at bay Ministers are being urged to help colleges protect teenagers after it was discovered that an adult student had a conviction for viewing child pornography. The call comes as Doncaster College is dealing with an appeal from Nigel Oldfield who has been removed from his course after 4 years after it was discovered he had a conviction for downloading indecent videos and pictures of children on his home computer. Evan Williams, Association of Colleges (AOC) said,

“Colleges take the safety of students very seriously and carry out CRB checks on staff and where appropriate students whose course require checks. Colleges cannot check all students, legally or practically but do work to minimise risk”.

A spokeswoman for the association of college management said,

“Of course the safety and well being of students is paramount but there are individuals who want a fresh start and to put their conviction behind them.”

The story continued under the headline **Legal dilemma in 'unchartered territory'**

Barrister Richard Sykes said that a college would find itself in uncharted territory if an adult offender struck in a college,

“The general position is that one does not have liability for the accusations of 3rd parties. We would largely be in uncharted territory.”

Colleges have a dilemma in choosing between conflicting duties of protecting children and rehabilitating offenders. CRB checks reveal convictions but these can only be used in special cases such as childcare courses. As colleges are self governing, decisions about whether ex offenders enrolling poses a risk is a decision for college management

Exeter.co.uk Express & Echo reported on **Decision to give job to paedophile explained by firm**

A security firm has explained its decision to employ a guard at Exeter Crown Court after it emerged he was a convicted sex offender. When 43 year old Roger Manning was sentenced this month for trawling the internet for under-age girls, it emerged that, in 1981, he had been found guilty of taking a seven-year-old into a field and abusing her. Police in Devon said they were passing Manning's DNA profile to a national database and also sharing it with police in Australia, where he once lived for a decade and worked as a swimming coach, to check it against any unsolved crimes.

Manning, whose case was screened on **BBC's Panorama** on Monday, was arrested last December. He had driven to a sexual rendezvous with a 14-year-old girl called Jessie he had met on the internet, only to discover she was a fictional character invented by detectives from Devon and Cornwall police's Force Online investigation team, who were waiting for him.

The Echo revealed earlier this year that Manning had worked at Exeter Crown Court Her Majesty's Court Service said he was employed at the court from January 9 until November 5, 2007, and had no contact with vulnerable witnesses. Chubb Security said it had carried out the necessary checks a spokeswoman said that Manning was required to have a Security Industry Authority licence, including a Criminal Records Bureau check, as part of his employment. She added:

"We have again reviewed our screening processes and concluded that they are as rigorous as the law allows, and fully compliant with industry standards. If police checks and CRB checks do not suggest any previous criminal conviction... then it is virtually impossible not to believe them to be anything but genuine."

Personnel Today, reported that survey results show that employers are still finding discrepancies, inaccuracies and lies in candidate applications. After references the 2nd most popular method for background checks was the CRB Disclosure.

The CRB service was rated as very or fairly satisfactory by over 85% of the respondents which is highlighter as 'Stat of the Week'. The survey shows the worth of the Disclosure Service as the results the source of the second most misleading information is unspent conviction history.

26% were very or fairly dissatisfied with the speed of the service, of these 75% said that it had led to staff being appointed before their disclosures had arrived or had led to posts being unfilled for unacceptably long periods and 46% had lost candidates who became fed up of waiting.

European Voice reported that plans are afoot in the council of ministers, at the European Parliament is to increase data sharing on violent trouble makers to prevent them travelling to major international events, using the current Schengen Information System (SIS) used to exchange information on suspected terrorists and drug/human trafficking.

The plans come as the commission is preparing proposals for a European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS). It will require member states to provide exhaustive and complete information held in its national criminal database and ensure that the information is shared in a uniform format. There are concerns that courts do not have knowledge of convictions from other countries.

Camden News reported that a tribunal was told that a nurse from Camden Town was sacked by the hospital after a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check revealed convictions for drink driving and criminal damage – and a caution for being drunk while in charge of a child. The nurse thought that she was under no obligation to declare the child-related caution, the main reason for her dismissal, since the guidelines were unclear about ‘cautions’ rather than convictions.

A NHS spokesman added, *“There is no legal requirement to carry out retrospective checking of staff who commenced employment before 2002. When she applied for a permanent post with the trust in 2005, she was checked according to the CRB checking procedures and appropriate action was taken.”*

A letter to **The Herald** (Plymouth) spoke of the lack of organisation at a recent children’s fun run. The organisers of the event had left the care of the children in the hands of the schools who had wanted to take part.

The Sentinel (Stoke-On-Trent) reported that Council chiefs are pressing ahead with plans to have all Council members CRB checked as part of a new code of conduct. Gavin Webb a councillor for Uttoxeter refused to have a check as he has already had one, against his wishes for his day job. He is critical that CRB checks only reveal what people have been caught for.

The Tameside & Glossop Advertiser reported Councillor David Buckley has finally put in a CRB check a year after it was introduced. Town hall chiefs made the checks

mandatory after Audenshaws Councillor Peter Wrights criminal past was revealed. Councillor Doreen Dickinson said,

Solicitors Journal stated that the Institute of Professional Will Writers (IPW) has won backing from the office of fair trading for its consumer code which requires members to provide a satisfactory CRB check.

Burton Mail (Web) reports a Fleet of handy vans will be carrying out household tasks, risk assessments, security checks as well as giving benefits advice and energy advice to the old and vulnerable in Derby.

The Argus, stated that Police targeted bouncers in crackdown. The operation uncovered 20 unlicensed doorman and 2 people suspected of immigration offences.

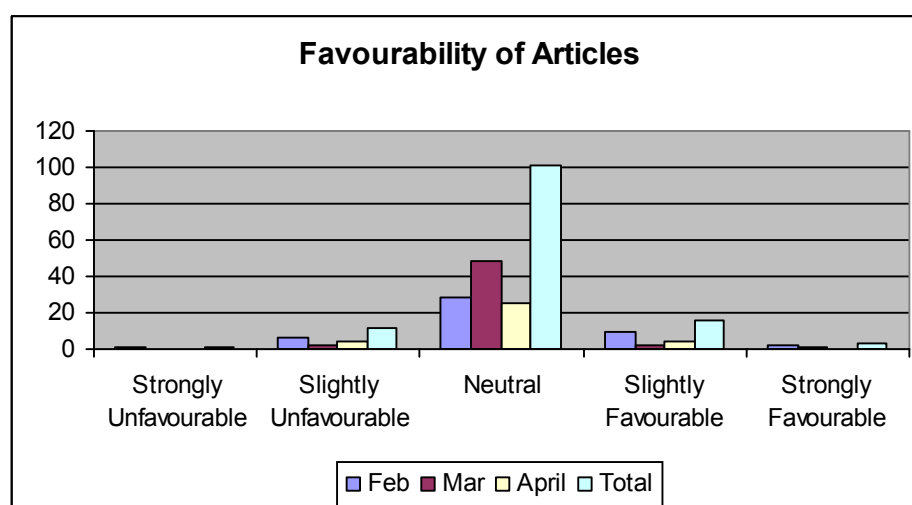
ABC Magazine (Sussex) reported that what makes a 'good' nursery includes ensuring staff are CRB.

Gay Times wrote an article about the process for adopting as a single sex couple including the stringent adoption procedures, the various checks, including CRB disclosures, length of time and lack of communication before the matching process begins.

Esher News & Mail wrote about an article about 'Stay Cool', a heating & ventilating company. The company has been vetted and approved by Surrey Trading Standards to be a recommended installer, an approval system that local companies can apply for. Part of the approval process is to carry out CRB checks on all employees.

Share skills with schools wrote the **Littlehampton Gazette**, in an article about a volunteer recruitment drive for a number of primary schools. People with skills and experience of gardening, cookery and skipping are among the people required to assist school teachers in various projects.

SUMMARY



The graph above shows the continuing trend of neutrally favourable articles about the CRB in the press. It also illustrates that there has been more favourable articles, both slightly and strongly than unfavourable coverage.

This could be due to the factual basis of a lot of the coverage, particularly with regards to the ISA leaving less room for opinion and bias.