

Garda Vetting Policy

Process for obtaining a disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau and handling of a criminal record or other specified information

Introduction

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, commenced in April 2016, requires that all persons undertaking relevant work with children and vulnerable adults be vetted, and outlines certain offences and penalties for failing to do so. No person shall be permitted to undertake such relevant work on behalf of Christ City Church without having first received a satisfactory vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau.

For positions involving regular, significant contact with children and/or vulnerable adults the procedures outlined under our Safer Recruitment policy must also be followed; a Garda Vetting check in isolation is not a suitable basis on which to appoint those staff or volunteers.

Requirement for Garda Vetting

Schedule 1 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 outlines the categories of 'relevant work' or activities as they apply to children and vulnerable adults.

In the context of the ministries undertaken by Christ City Church, the following extracts from the Act form the basis for our requirement to vet staff and volunteers. This will be reviewed as the need for new ministries, activities and roles arises and any subsequent changes to the legislation are introduced.

Relevant Work or Activities Relating to Children (Schedule 1, Part 1)

4. Any work or activity which consists of care or supervision of children unless the care or supervision is merely incidental to the care or supervision of persons who are not children.

5. Any work or activity which consists of the provision of educational, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities (whether or not for commercial or any other consideration) to children unless the provision of educational, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities is merely incidental to the provision of educational, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to persons who are not children.

7. Any work or activity as a minister or priest or any other person engaged in the advancement of any religious beliefs.

Relevant Work or Activities Relating to Vulnerable Persons (Schedule 1, Part 2)

7. Any work or activity as a minister or priest or any other person engaged in the advancement of any religious beliefs.

The following roles are currently subject to obtaining a satisfactory disclosure:

- Elder, Deacon, Pastor or Assistant Pastor
- Pastoral Care Worker
- Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Designated Liaison Person
- Children's Worker or Manager
- Worship (Music Ministry) Leader
- Prayer Team Leader or Member
- 'City Group' (community house group) Leader



Roles Not Requiring Vetting

There are many roles within Christ City Church not subject to the Garda Vetting process, i.e. audio/visual operators, refreshments servers, setting up for events, musicians, greeters and any other role not involved in direct ministry or teaching. It is noted that the activities for which these roles are required requires only incidental contact with children and vulnerable persons and are provided to the general church community, which is open to all.

Provision for this is made in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, Part 1, Section 3, Paragraph 1 (excerpt – omitting sub-paragraphs a & b):

This Act shall not apply to any of the following, namely:

(c) the giving of assistance by an individual—

(i) on an occasional basis, and

(ii) for no commercial consideration,

at a school, sports or community event or activity, other than where such assistance includes the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children or vulnerable persons.

Transferring of Vetting Information

Christ City Church does not accept historical vetting information obtained within another organisation under any circumstance. Each new employee or volunteer must be vetted via the process outlined within this policy.

Re-vetting

Christ City Church requires all existing staff and volunteers to undergo re-vetting every 3 years from the date of receiving the last disclosure. This requirement may be revised to comply with sections of the various Acts not yet enacted.

Vetting of Individuals Under 18 Years of Age

If the individual is under the age of 18 years but over 16 years, they may be subject to the Garda Vetting process as the role requires. However, this will be subject to consent of a parent/guardian, for which a completed, signed form must be provided with the subject's inviter form.

Vetting Process

A nominated Garda Vetting Officer is responsible for overseeing the Garda Vetting process. They will:

1. Assess the position or role of the candidate to ensure that it is within the scope of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
2. Provide the necessary forms to the candidate and ensure that they are returned, completed in full.
3. Verify the identity of the candidate by checking the original documents provided (photocopies or facsimiles are not acceptable). See the 'Identity Verification' document for further details.
4. Transfer the information provided into the e-Vetting system so that the candidate may be issued with an invite to complete the process online.
5. Keep copies of all documents provided, securely, as outlined in 'Record Keeping and Confidentiality'

On receipt of the returned disclosure, the Garda Vetting Officer will examine it to see if any criminal record or other specified information has been provided. Where this is 'nil' the offer of employment or a voluntary role may be issued in line with any other recruitment procedures that apply.



If there is a serious conviction or relevant specified information disclosed (see criteria below), the candidate will be invited (in writing) to attend a panel meeting where they may access the information returned by the Bureau and explain any circumstances surrounding it.

The panel will consist of:

- The Garda Vetting Officer
- The Designated Liaison Person
- A representative from the senior leadership team

A written record will be made of the meeting and any outcomes that result.

The panel must ensure that the following principles are upheld:

- All candidates have a right to fair and equal treatment, regardless of their background
- All candidates are treated with respect and dignity
- All information is handled with the utmost confidence
- Disclosure of a conviction does not automatically disqualify the candidate from obtaining the position

The personal details on the disclosure should be clarified to rule out any potential mistakes by the Vetting Bureau. If any information contained in the disclosure is contested by the candidate, information should be provided as to how to appeal to the Vetting Bureau.

One of three potential outcomes will result from the meeting:

1. Considering all information gathered, the applicant may be offered the position
2. Further clarification will be sought from the Vetting Bureau, which may result in a second review meeting
3. The applicant is deemed unsuitable for the position by nature of their history of offences

A written explanation of the outcome must be provided to the applicant. This and all subsequent correspondence must be kept on file.

The focus of all such decisions must be primarily on the protection of children and vulnerable adults, whilst maintaining safeguards and due process for the individual being vetted. The individual may appeal a decision in writing, within 14 days of the decision being issued.

Criteria for the Withdrawal of an Employment Offer or Volunteer Role

The following are considered reasonable grounds by Christ City Church to withdraw an offer of paid employment or a voluntary role:

- The individual has been convicted of, or charged with, a sexual offence
- The individual has been convicted of, or charged with, an offence that relates to the abuse, ill treatment, or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult
- The individual has been convicted of, or charged with, the ownership, production, or distribution of child pornography

The following types of offence are considered highly relevant, but will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the above procedure:

- Offences against the person, e.g. assault, harassment or coercion
- Breaches in trust, e.g. fraud or theft
- Offences against property, e.g. arson or armed robbery
- Domestic violence
- Offences against the state

Document History

Version	Author(s)	Date Revised	Comments/Changes
1.0	Caroline Anderson	22/09/2015	Initial version
2.0 (draft)	Stephen Sharpe Leanne Vaughan (reviewer)	18/07/2017	New proposed redraft. Major changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added process for disclosure of criminal record • Clarification of process • Removed blanket requirement for paid staff