

Safeguarding Trust Online Survey

Many thanks are due to parishes and individuals who submitted responses to the recent Safeguarding Trust survey, either online or in hard copy.

Parish panels were asked to meet and complete the online survey. Youth leaders, workers, members of diocesan support teams and parents were also invited to contribute their views.

Questions focussed on how the policy works in practice at parish level, the support and training provided by the dioceses and central Church and suggested improvements and additions to resources, protocols and procedures. A report will be available soon.

Total Responses 184

Republic 101 90 parish responses 11 individual responses
Northern Ireland 83 80 parish responses 3 individual responses

Agree or strongly agree

	Republic	Northern Ireland
SGT is straight forward to implement	62%	73%
Clear what is required	81%	85%
Resources easily accessed online	51%	53%
Fully implementing	84%	87%

A sample of the many issues raised.

The website was seen as needing improvement with all forms downloadable in word format. There were mixed views about whether policy documents were also required in hard copy.

It was acknowledged that online made updates much easier with some concern about computer literacy. Administration can be burdensome and recruitment procedures difficult, especially in small parishes where people know each other and some may be related. There are also difficulties in ensuring attendance at training and refresher training as volunteers are involved. There were a number of requests to simplify the policy requirements. Topics for updating included communications and social media and dealing with historical abuse cases. The need for a vulnerable adult policy was referenced.

Some parishes seemed unaware that Garda vetting has speeded up dramatically in recent times and will hopefully be even more efficient with the online vetting application system.

A number of parishes paid tribute to members of the diocesan support teams for their hard work and there was also mention that the survey had proved useful to focus parish panels on what their responsibilities are.

Some suggestions were directly contradictory and some others outside our control but all suggestions will be seriously considered as part of the ongoing review of Safeguarding Trust.



Secretary to the Board of Education NI

Dr Peter Hamill has been appointed as Secretary to the General Synod Board of Education NI in succession to Rev'd Dr Ian Ellis who has returned to parish ministry as rector of Rossorry parish Enniskillen.



Peter started his career as a maths teacher before moving into youth work. From 2003 to 2011 he was Training Co-ordinator for Connor Diocese and most recently worked for the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. His PhD is in the field of education.

Peter's responsibilities include education, safeguarding and he has a special interest in developing children's ministry.

Peter is pictured with the Archbishop of Canterbury Most Rev and Right Hon Justin Welby who visited Belfast earlier this year.

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Newsletter

Spring 2016



Long Awaited Garda Vetting Legislation Commenced

National Vetting Bureau Act (Children and Vulnerable Persons) 2012 to 2016

The Garda Central Vetting Unit has been re-named the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána.

How will it be different from previous Garda vetting procedures?

The legislation, enacted in 2012 and amended in 2016, was commenced on 29th April 2016. The Act provides a legislative basis for the mandatory vetting of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons. It places vetting on a statutory basis, making it a criminal offence for organisations not to "receive a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of that person", for individuals who undertake "relevant work or activities" with children or vulnerable persons.

What is relevant work or activities?

"Any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable persons."

The Act shall not apply where a person gives assistance on an occasional basis 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 person. Each relevant organisation will have to assess the positions involved in accordance with the Act.

Additional information required on application form

Gender
Mother's Maiden Name
Passport Number, if applicable

The identity of the applicant must be validated by the relevant organisation

What will be included in the Vetting Disclosure?

The vetting disclosure will include: Particulars of the criminal record (if any) relating to the person and a statement of the specified information (if any) relating to the person which the Chief Bureau Officer has determined in accordance with Section 15 of the Act should be disclosed, or state that there is no criminal record or specified information in relation to the person.

Certain convictions, to which section 14A of the National Vetting Bureau Act apply shall be excluded from the vetting disclosure made by the Bureau in respect of the person. This section applies to District Court convictions only.

What is Specified Information?

Specified information is information that is considered to give rise to a bona fide concern that the vetting subject may harm, attempt to harm or put at risk a child or vulnerable person or both. If such information is going to be disclosed to a relevant organisation relating to one of their applicants, the Chief Bureau Officer must, in advance notify the vetting subject of the intention to disclose the information. An appeals process is in place in relation to the disclosure of specified information.

Is retrospective vetting required?

Where the person concerned has not previously been the subject of an application for vetting disclosure, the relevant organisation shall make an application in respect of that person not later than 31 December 2017.



E Vetting Project

The Church of Ireland is one of the pilot organisations selected to participate in the online Garda vetting application project. All Garda vetting will be processed online only. We expect a more efficient service as application forms will not be submitted unless they are correctly completed online and the checking process itself will be very speedy. Employment decisions remain the responsibility of the organisation.

Incumbents have been sent:

A copy of the service level agreement
Vetting invitation form
Parent/guardian consent form in respect of 16/17year olds.



Process

Each parish must first complete and return a service level agreement, signed by the incumbent or a person designated by him/her before a vetting service can be provided by the Board of Education.

The incumbent or designated person is the 'vetting contact person'.
Each parish is an 'affiliate.'
The 'authorised signatory' is now the 'liaison person'.

The legislation requires a new vetting application to be submitted to the National Vetting Bureau in respect of each employment. Parishes and dioceses will be viewed as separate entities requiring a new vetting application for workers in each setting.

E-Vetting Process

Step 1

The vetting applicant receives a vetting invitation form from the incumbent which is completed, signed and returned to the incumbent accompanied by proof of identity and current address.
The six pieces of information required on the vetting form are:

- The applicant's name
- The applicant's date of birth
- The applicant's email address
- The applicant's contact number
- The role the applicant is being vetted for
- The applicant's current address

Post code for NI addresses

The post code must be included in vetting applications that included addresses in Northern Ireland.

Vulnerable Persons

If a parish provides 'relevant services' to vulnerable persons (adults) e.g pastoral visitation, new workers are required to be Garda vetted.

Step 2

The incumbent inserts name of organisation i.e parish name, on the vetting invitation form. The incumbent validates proof of identity by both photographic and address documentation. The form must be completed, signed and dated by the vetting applicant and the declaration box must be ticked.

Documentation accepted for identity: passport, driving licence or national identity card.

Documentation for current address: recent utility bill or bank/building society/credit union statement or birth certificate. In the absence of this documentation, an applicant has the option of swearing an affidavit/affirmation before a Commissioner for Oaths to verify his/her identity. There may be separate requirements by a Commissioner for Oaths in this regard.

Further information in relation to validation of identity may be found at <https://vetting.garda.ie/Help/FAQ>

Step 3

Incumbent posts the invitation form to the liaison person, Ruth Burleigh, at Church House

Step 4

Ruth reviews the form and if completed correctly emails the applicant a unique pin code and link to www.vetting.ie inviting him/her to complete and submit a vetting application form online.

Step 5

National Vetting Bureau processes the application and emails a vetting disclosure (processed application form) to the Board of Education.

Step 6

Board of Education posts a copy of the vetting disclosure form to the vetting contact person of the affiliate. A copy of the vetting disclosure must be provided by the affiliate to the applicant on request.

The parish will be obliged to retain a copy of the identity documents and the vetting disclosure. Guidelines will be provided in the short term in relation to the period of time for which identity documents and vetting disclosures need to be retained.

Safeguarding Trust Resources

Guidance on the taking and publishing of photographs and recorded images has been updated. A leaflet on the topic may be downloaded from the website

www.sgt.ireland.anglican.org

A sample consent form is also available to be downloaded

A poster for display on parish noticeboards is available on request from the Child Protection Office

Do you need to re-stock?

Children's cards updated 2016

Worker summary cards updated 2015

Information leaflets for parents/guardians

Children's posters are available to download

Select vestry leaflets are downloadable and may also be ordered from the office

All resources are free with the exception of the worker's extract which costs €4.50.



Children First Act 2015

The Children First Act 2015, signed into law in November 2015, places elements of the Children First Guidelines on a statutory basis. The Act provides for a number of key child protection measures including the requirement for organisations to have a child protection policy and to appoint designated persons to receive child protection concerns. Section 28 is the only section to have been commenced (become operational) to date.

Section 28 of the Act removes the common law defence of "reasonable chastisement".

This means that a parent or person having care of a child who administers corporal punishment to the child will no longer be able to rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in court.

A number of significant advances recently have supported this change, including the enshrinement of Article 42(a) (Children) in the Constitution providing that "the state recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall as far as practicable by its laws protect and vindicate those rights".

Minister O'Reilly in signing the Commencement Order for the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement stated that this "measure represents a significant advancement as regards the protection and rights of children we are removing something that has its roots in a completely different era and societal context".

Tanya Ward of the Children's Rights Alliance believes public opinion may now change, as has happened in other countries where corporal punishment was banned. However, a flood of prosecutions is not expected. Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, provides an online resource offering advice on positive parenting, Parenting24seven <http://www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven>.

