

Garda Vetting

Policy and Procedures

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Contents

1.0	<i>Policy Statement</i>	2
2.0	<i>Purpose of Policy</i>	2
3.0	<i>Principles</i>	2
4.0	<i>Scope</i>	3
5.0	<i>Process</i>	3
6.0	<i>Confidentiality</i>	4
7.0	<i>Employment Suitability Guidelines</i>	4
8.0	<i>Appeals Process</i>	5
8.1	<i>Process Review Meeting</i>	5
8.2	<i>Appeals in Writing</i>	5

1.0 Policy Statement

The Diocese of Killaloe recognises that a good recruitment and screening policy can be an effective deterrent for people who would wish to harm children. The Diocese is committed to the highest standards in its recruitment process for all people who are employed, or are volunteers within the Diocese. In keeping with these standards the Diocese require that all personnel with access to children or who hold positions of trust within the Diocese undergo Garda Vetting. Garda vetting is just one of a range of safeguards within the Diocese. Any person who refuses to be Garda vetted cannot be appointed or engaged in any capacity within the Diocese even in a voluntary capacity.

2.0 Purpose of Policy

- Ensure best practices in recruitment and selection procedures whereby eligibility to work/volunteer is contingent upon the successful completion of appropriate Garda vetting checks through the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GVCU).
- To identify circumstances whereby individuals may be deemed inappropriate for employment /volunteering in the Diocese of Killaloe.

3.0 Principles

- Applicants for employment/volunteer positions within the Diocese must be informed at the outset of the requirement for Garda vetting.
- An individual cannot work/volunteer with children unless they have been Garda vetted. Individuals can, in certain circumstances, work/volunteer with vulnerable adults whilst the Garda vetting process is ongoing. However such individuals must be supervised.
- Confirmation of any offer of work is subject to a successful Garda vetting outcome.
- Having a criminal record should not automatically exclude someone from employment/volunteering unless this relates to the offences outlined in 7.0. An objective assessment should be undertaken to determine suitability.
- Garda vetting is coordinated through the Authorised Signatory who is appointed by the Bishop and is trained by the Garda Vetting Unit in the management of vetting applications and disclosures.
- Garda vetting forms can be obtained from Authorised Signatory at the Diocesan office or from the Diocesan website, www.killaloe-diocese.ie.
- All completed forms are stored securely at the Diocesan office for three years.
- The safeguarding Committee have overall responsibility for the Garda Vetting Policy and its implementation.

4.0 Scope

This policy is addressed to all Church Personnel/volunteers in the Diocese of Killaloe who are likely to have access to children/vulnerable adults or hold Positions of Trust within the Diocese.

5.0 Process

The following process applies when Garda vetting an applicant:

- The Parish Priest/Administrator will oversee the distribution of forms at Parish level.
- Applicants will complete a *Declaration Form* together with the *Garda Vetting Form*.
- The *Declaration Form* will be retained by the parish.
- Parish Priest/ Administrator will return the completed *Garda Vetting Forms* together with a list of applicant names in a secure envelope to the Authorised Signatory.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the information on the form is complete and accurate.
- The Authorised Signatory will examine the completed form for any omissions, mistakes or lack of clarity.
- No changes can be made to the form other than by the applicant.
- Any incomplete form is dated and returned to the applicant with a cover letter requesting the form's correction and resubmission.
- The Authorised Signatory then forwards the forms to the Garda Central Vetting Unit.
- Forms are returned to the Authorised Signatory (usually between 4 and 6 weeks) who will inform the Parish Priest/ Administrator of the results of the vetting process.
- The Parish Priest/Administrator informed of the outcome of the process, will then inform the applicant.
- In the event of a negative outcome the Authorised Signatory will arrange a meeting with the Parish Priest/Administrator and the Director of Safeguarding to review the information received from the Garda Vetting Unit and to decide if a review meeting with the applicant is required.
- If the individual being vetted is under the age of 18, they are required to have a completed parent/guardian consent form.
- The certification process and vetting results are not portable for the individual and apply to the Diocese only. Garda vetting covers all aspects of work within the Diocese.
- Vetting is time sensitive; it is only valid at the time it is done. The Diocese of Killaloe reserves the right to initiate Garda rechecking at any time.
- In accordance with best practice, the process remains valid for three years

6.0 Confidentiality

All information in the Garda vetting process will be held in a manner consistent with the confidentiality policy of the Diocese of Killaloe.

The Authorised Signatory and the Diocese of Killaloe is responsible for the security and safeguarding of any records that are kept, under the strict provisions of Data Protection laws. Records are stored in a secure safe and are generally kept for no longer than 3 years once the Diocese is satisfied with the veracity of the results.

7.0 Employment Suitability Guidelines

A conviction, prosecution or case pending will not necessarily bar an applicant from being considered for employment or engagement. The following criteria should be considered:

- The nature of any convictions.
- Number of convictions.
- The frequency of any convictions.
- The post for which the person is seeking employment/engagement.
- The self- disclosure of the conviction/case pending by the applicant.
- Time lapsed since last conviction.
- The steps the applicant has taken to prevent reoffending.

The Diocese of Killaloe considers the following as reasonable grounds to refuse an individual access to employment/voluntary engagement within the diocese;

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

The Diocese of Killaloe is conscious of not initiating policies that prohibit employment or engagement needlessly against rehabilitated individuals. Such cases will be objectively determined on a case by case basis. The final decision for a withdrawal of an offer of work or voluntary placement rests with the Bishop /Parish Priest in consultation with the Director of Safeguarding.

8.0 Appeals Process

While the focus is on protecting children and vulnerable adults, there are also safeguards and due processes for those being vetted, including the right to appeal. In the event of a negative outcome from the Garda Vetting Unit the applicant may be invited to a review meeting to discuss the nature and significance of the information received.

8.1 Process Review Meeting

- The Diocesan Office/Parish will arrange the meeting with the applicant.
- The applicant is invited to bring a support person.
- The meeting has two purposes, to clarify the applicant's identity and to give the applicant an opportunity to discuss the application in the light of the information received from the Garda Central Vetting Unit.
- A written record will be kept of the meeting.
- If the applicant asserts that the information is inaccurate, the onus is on him/her to provide evidence to support this assertion.
- If the applicant provides satisfactory evidence to support this assertion, the Authorised Signatory will contact the Garda Central Vetting Unit with the new information, and any other information as deemed necessary.
- The applicant may also contact the Garda Vetting Unit directly to appeal the information.
- The Garda Central Vetting Unit will conduct further checks in respect of the applicant and write back to the Authorised Signatory who will communicate the response to the Diocesan Office/Parish.
- Based on this information a decision on the application is conveyed to the applicant by the Parish Priest/ administrator.

8.2 Appeals in Writing

Any decisions in relation to employment or voluntary work within the Diocese can be appealed in writing to the Director of Safeguarding, Diocesan Office, Westbourne, Ennis, Co. Clare, within 14 days of issue of the decision not to employ or engage. A decision on the written appeal will be conveyed to the applicant in the shortest possible time frame.

In the event of incorrect information being received from the Garda Vetting Central Unit the applicant can appeal through the Authorised Signatory or directly to the GVCU.