



volunteer centre
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Contae Átha Cliath Theas
SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY

south dublin county volunteer centre

garda vetting frequently asked questions



South Dublin County Volunteer Centre as part of their commitment to support and promote volunteering have introduced a new Garda Vetting service for voluntary and community groups within their local area.

The Volunteer Centre can now act as an Authorised Signatory for Garda Vetting purposes for voluntary and community organisations which do not have access to an authorised signatory within their own parent organisation.

1. What is Garda Vetting?

Garda vetting is a procedure that organisations use to certify whether or not an individual, who is being considered for work in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or student placement capacity, has ever been convicted of a crime. Vetting is NOT available to individuals.

2. Do volunteers need Garda Vetting?

Anyone appointed to a role that will give rise to substantial or unsupervised access to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults may need to undergo vetting.

3. Is Garda Vetting a legal requirement?

No - other than for prospective State employees and certain state services, there is no legal requirement for vetting. There are proposals to change the law to make it a legal requirement under a new Garda Vetting Bill that is anticipated in 2010.

4. Why is Garda Vetting important?

Organisations have to take all reasonable steps to fulfill their duty of care and should use safe methods in selecting staff, contractors and volunteers to engage with vulnerable people and groups.

5. How long does vetting take?

Once an organisation has a system in place for managing its vetting requirements, an application takes about 8 - 12 weeks, depending on the level of demand in the Vetting Unit at the time of application.

6. For how long is vetting valid?

It is up to the employer to decide what is appropriate, in the particular circumstances. Generally, 2-3 years would be normal; exceptionally, a position may require repeat vetting on an annual basis.

7. Who conducts Garda Vetting?

Vetting is carried out by the police authorities (An Garda) through a dedicated Central Vetting Unit. The unit deals with requests from organisations to vet prospective staff, contractors and volunteers. The unit is the single point of contact for Garda vetting in Ireland.



8. Is Garda Vetting freely available?

No – to process a vetting application, the employer must be registered with the Garda Central Vetting Unit as an “authorised signatory”, or have an agreement with a registered organisation that is willing to act as an authorised signatory on its behalf. Individuals do not have access to vetting on a personal basis.

9. How do organisations get access Garda vetting?

Garda vetting is accessible to any organisation intending to employ, host or otherwise engage an volunteers in a situation that may give rise to unsupervised or substantial access to children, young people and vulnerable adults. In theory, vetting is available to any employer/host organisation intending to appoint volunteers to work in these contexts. In practice, the Vetting unit only accepts applications from organisations that are registered with it for the purpose.

10. What is an Authorised Signatory?

An Authorised Signatory is a person who has completed the training supplied by the Garda Central Vetting Unit and is authorised to act as the liaison between the organisation requesting vetting and the Garda Central Unit.

11. If an organisation is not registered, what can they do?

Contact the Garda Central Vetting Unit with a request for registration. The Vetting Unit may refer them to an already registered organisation in the relevant area of activity or their local volunteer centre to process vetting for them. This will particularly happen if the organisation does not have large amounts of vetting forms to process.

12. As an individual what information do I need for a vetting application?

You will be asked to provide personal information – name(s), dates, residential addresses and convictions if any – and details of the position on offer. Your signature authorises the Vetting Unit to check this information and share the results with the local organisation.

13. What details are disclosed as a result of Garda Vetting?

Within current disclosure policy, details of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere may be disclosed.

14. What if I have lived abroad?

You must have lived in Ireland for a period of least six months, at any time, to be vetted by An Garda. Periods of residence abroad will not be checked by the Vetting Unit. The Garda Vetting Unit can only check for your residencies in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

15. What if I am asked to certify periods of residence abroad?

Employers may seek verification of certain details from other jurisdictions, such as proof of identity, of good conduct or of non-criminal conviction. This may not be straightforward as every country is different. You should discuss this with the employer at an early stage.

16. What is the procedure for Garda Vetting?

- The individual gets an application form from the organisation;
- S/he completes the form and authorises the process by signing the form;
- The application is sent to the Vetting Unit, where checks and searches are carried out;
- The organisation is informed of the outcome and makes a decision to provide or deny ‘clearance’ for work.

17. Who sees the results of a vetting application?

The results are issued directly to the Authorised Signatory within the registered organisation or volunteer centre and can only be shared with the Garda Vetting officer in the organisation. Under Data Protection law, sensitive personal information carries with it an onus of care – it must be used appropriately and fairly, having regard to the needs of both employer and volunteer.



18. Can I see the results issued by An Garda?

Yes. You should ask the organisations about this in good time as the results are often destroyed once a decision is made by the organisation and accepted by the volunteer. Most organisations (and volunteer centres) have a data access policy that will guide you through the steps to get your results

19. I have already been vetted (by a former employer/college etc) - will this do for a new organisation I want to work/volunteer with?

No. Each time you begin volunteering with a new/different organisation, you must be re-vetted. The information disclosed during vetting is the “property” of the organisation that seeks it in the first instance and therefore (under data protection) shouldn't be passed from organisation to organisation.

20. Can I dispute the findings of a Vetting Application?

Yes. You will be consulted about any disclosure considered significant. If you dispute the findings, the organisation will note your reasoning and resubmit the application.

21. Does An Garda have any input into an employment/volunteering decision?

No. Decisions on the suitability of applicants are the sole responsibility of the organisation. The Garda Central Vetting Unit has no input into any decision made.

22. Should I disclose a conviction for an offence that was ‘minor’ or ages ago?

Yes. You should disclose any conviction in court regardless of location, timing or significance, including what may be considered ‘minor’. Failure to self-disclose is serious, and may be an obstacle to employment. Talk to the organisation if you are in any doubt.

23. Does having a conviction mean I am unsuitable for work?

No. Principles of natural justice apply to vetting disclosures. The significance of an offence in relation to the position, the particular circumstances, self-disclosure, subsequent work record and involvement in rehabilitation or restorative justice programmes may also be considered.

24. Is there any way to access information held by An Garda?

Yes - Under Section 4 of the Data Protection Act 1988, individuals have a right to access personal data about themselves through a request for a Data Protection disclosure. The Vetting Unit handles these requests.

25. What is a Data Protection disclosure used for?

A Data Protection disclosure is issued for the individual's own personal use. It cannot be construed as or used in place of Proof of No Convictions, a Police Certificate of Character, a Garda Reference or Garda Vetting.

26. What is a “Police Certificate of Character”?

The certificate is issued by An Garda, stating whether or not you have a criminal record or have otherwise come to the attention of the Gardaí in Ireland. A Police Certificate of Character is not issued for personal or employment purposes; it may be available to support a visa application, foreign adoption or to set up a business abroad.

27. Where can I get a Police Certificate?

Requests should be sent to the Superintendent for the district where you live (or used to live). The Certificate will issue directly from the District Office. The Garda Vetting Unit does not deal with Certificates of Character.

28. Can I use a police certificate or data protection disclosure instead of vetting?

No. An employer/host organisation should not ask you to make Data Protection request (see above). It is an offence under Section 5 of the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 to require someone to make an enforced access request in connection with recruitment, continued employment, or a contract for services.