



Localise

Child Protection

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR GARDA VETTING 2009 / 2012

Arrangements for new Staff, Volunteers, Collaborators and Interns



Background

Garda Vetting for the Youth Work sector was formally introduced in September 2006 following protected negotiations and an on-going campaign seeking such services for youth work organisations. There are presently two methods of seeking vetting services in consultation with The Central Garda Vetting Unit (CGVU), namely via the recognition by the CGVU of a number of Authorised Signatories (AS) and the agreement to established a Youth Work Vetting Consortium that now caters for the vetting requirements of organisations that do not have an Authorised Signatory per se. Peace Corps – Localise relays in the Authorised Signatory Status of Catholic Youth Care, CYC, to carry all the Garda Vetting process for us.

Garda vetting is a centralised system, which was designed by the Central Garda Vetting Unit. The CGVU will only deal with the authorised signatories. The CGVU will not make decisions about applicants suitability, each agency is responsible for providing clearance for applicants based on the return of a completed Garda Vetting form from the CGVU and internal procedures. The CGVU will process applications from new staff, volunteers, collaborators or interns; retrospective vetting may come into force sometime in the future.



Garda Vetting in the Context of Localise Staff, Volunteer, Collaborators and Interns Recruitment and Selection Procedures

In 2009, Localise adopted a new procedure for staff, volunteer, collaborators and interns applications. Every applicant must now complete the vetting procedure as follows:

- 1 Application Form
- 2 Character and Personal Reference Forms
- 1 Garda Vetting Form

This documentation is then sent to CYC to follow their regular vetting procedure. References are checked by senior CYC staff. Garda vetting is one component of an overall recruitment and selection strategy.

Who is Involved?

Everyone is involved! Information provision about the Garda vetting is the responsibility of Localise staff, voluntary groups, collaborators and interns. The Localise & CYC Child Protection trainers play a vital role in awareness rising about Garda Vetting. Child Protection trainers must be kept up to date and provided with resources which enable the trainers to provide the necessary and vital information to participants in the training arena.

Who has to Apply for Garda Vetting?

Every adult over 18 years of age who has access to children in a Localise Group as well as all staff members in Localise.

CYC Structure for Garda Vetting

Head of Human Resources and Child Protection Officer are authorised signatories. In the event of a complex decision in the case of an applicant the application will be reviewed by the CYC Garda Vetting standing committee. The members of the standing committee are as follows:

- Head of Human Resources
- Child Protection Officer
- Head of Youth Affairs
- Coordinator of Disadvantaged Projects
- Head and Region

Three members of the standing committee must be present in order for a decision to be made valid.

How does Garda Vetting Work?

- The applicant is sent an application pack containing general information, a Localise application form, character reference forms and the Garda Vetting Forms & procedures.
- On return the forms to the Localise Volunteer Applications Section, the applicant's details are entered into the Localise database, files are to be kept in keeping with Data Protection legislation and confidentiality is mandatory. The Garda Vetting related forms are forwarded to the CYC, where they are scanned by the Child Protection Officer and the Child Protection Administrator for any omissions, mistakes or lack of clarity. In the event of an incomplete form, the form is dated and returned with a cover letter to the applicant for resubmission.
- The applicant's details are entered into the CYC database, files are to be kept in keeping with Data Protection legislation and confidentiality is mandatory. The key holders for the file are the HHR and the Child Protection Office.
- Your Garda vetting form is sent down to the CGVU in batch and on return from the CGVU the form is processed by the CYC CPO and / or the CP Office Administrator. Where there are no convictions attached the applicant receives a standard letter from CYC outlining clearance to proceed in working with children / young people. Where there are convictions attached, the CYC Garda Vetting procedures must be applied.
- As soon as the clearance letter is received by the applicant, a copy of this must be issued to Localise in order to complete the recruitment process

All correspondence is to be carried out in written form to enable and maintain an efficient back up tracking system.

What is a Garda Vetting Review Meeting?

A Garda Vetting review meeting takes place when an application is returned for the CGVU and there are convictions or cases pending attached. The applicant is invited to attend the review meeting and to bring someone along as a support if they so wish. The CYC Child Protection Officer and HHR/ or a member of senior management attends the review meeting. The review meeting has two purposes, firstly to clarify that the applicant's identity and secondly to give the applicant an opportunity to discuss their application. From the outset the applicant must clarify his or her name and date of birth for identification purposes. An interview then takes place following which a decision will be made.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is mandatory. Any personal information relating to an applicant must be treated with the utmost care. Applicants must be treated with dignity and respect at all times. In the case of a Garda Vetting review meeting care must be taken to shield the applicant from public interest. The CYC CPO, CP Office Administrator and the Localise Administrator are responsible for the upholding of confidentiality, all information passed to other appropriate and relevant staff must do so on a need to know basis. Any member of staff who breaches confidentiality in regards to this matter may face disciplinary action. Confidentiality must not be upheld in the event of information coming to light about a child or children at risk. In the event of information of this kind arising from a disclosure by the applicant, a suspicion or information received from another agency, a report must be made to the Localise Child Protection Officer.

Localise Policy on Garda Vetting

Localise is committed to providing a safe environment for young people so that they can care in their community and we have set in place a number of procedures in place designed to safeguard every young member involved in our groups. We are also committed to best practice in recruitment and selection procedures which include Garda vetting. Every new staff member, volunteer, tutor and / or student must be Garda Vetted and undertake Child Protection Training.

Localise Procedures for Garda Vetting of all New Staff, Volunteers, Collaborators and Members

Personnel records in relation to Garda Vetting and any documents which have been used or which are intended for use in determining the employee's / volunteer's suitability to receive clearance to work with children / young people from Localise, Garda Vetting Forms and any attached documentation are not subject to employee / volunteer access. Access can only be granted to the AS, HHR and the Administrator of the Child Protection Office. A database will be maintained which will track the application progress and will contain information regarding clearance and reference checks.

Step by Step guide to the Garda Vetting Procedure 2009 / 2012

This procedure is of an extremely confidential and sensitive nature

N.B an Applicant is a person who is applying to Localise to become part of our team as a volunteer, staff member, collaborator or intern.

1. The applicant must be given the following;
 - The Localise Volunteer Application pack
 - Addressed Envelope



All envelopes must be completed and send as follows:

**Confidential
Volunteer Applications Section
22 Lowe Rathmines Road
First Floor
Dublin 6
Ireland**

2. The applicant should complete the Garda Vetting form in complete confidence and then return it to The Localise Volunteer Applications Section.

Note: Help may be given if the applicant seeks assistance from you regarding the application. However, only in cases of literacy issues should you view the applicant's information. Viewing the applicant's information in any other circumstance is a breach of confidentiality.

3. The applicant should be explained the following:

- In case of any queries about the form, this will be returned to the applicant's home address.
- Application takes between three to six weeks.
- A letter will be sent from CYC to the applicant confirming the outcome of the application.
- Any convictions should be declared at this stage.
- In the event of a returned form with attached convictions – CYC , the agent, will deal with each application on a one by one basis, each applicant will be asked to go to CYC headquarters for a review meeting.

Please note:

This procedure is of an extremely confidential and sensitive nature, the applicants information cannot be viewed under any circumstances unless as stated above. Each applicant must send the form to Localise and under no circumstances is a Garda Vetting Form to be left in a file in the office. The relationship is with the Child Protection Office and the applicant all correspondence will be sent to the applicant's home address.

In keeping with confidentiality requirements information will not be passed to any party other than the applicant who may nominate a third party to communicate with the Child Protection Office.

Any applicant who has lived in a country other than Ireland as an adult will be required to provide a police clearance certificate from that state. Information regarding police clearance in the UK can be found on the CYC website www.cyc.ie in the child protection link.



In the case of an application received back from the CGVU with convictions or cases pending, the applicant will be asked to attend a Garda Vetting review meeting, this process delays the applicant's application process, information regarding the review meeting will be communicated to the HRR and the applicant only.

There are three outcomes to a Garda Vetting review meeting they are follows:

- Applicant has satisfied the criteria and may proceed.
- Applicant has been refused.
- Applicant has been advised that their application has been deferred for one year in which time they may apply once again for clearance.

In the case of a successful application the applicant must produce the letter of confirmation to the Volunteer Applications Section of Localise.

Applicants who have been refused clearance have the right to request an explanation, the explanation will be provided by either the HHR or the Child Protection Officer of CYC.

Applicants who deny any convictions / cases pending returned by the CGVU must be provide evidence to the contrary, the onus is upon the applicant to communicate this evidence to CYC.

Any uncertainties regarding applicants who deny identity or convictions / cases pending can be communicated to the CGVU who will assist CYC staff to track information relating to the applicant.

Training must be provided to all Localise staff. Child protection Officers must be adequately equipped to ensure the provision of information in relation to the Garda Vetting procedures.

Any queries must be addressed to the Child Protection Officer and / or the Administrator for the Child Protection Office. All enquiries must be treated in confidence and a record kept of all relevant telephone and written correspondence.

AREAS OF CONSIDERATION RE APPLICANTS

Localise is an NGO organization. We will employ and / or accept applicants which return convictions are not considered to be related to child protection or violence and abuse of adults. Localise will also consider applicants who return multiple convictions that have come about as a lifestyle consequence for example addiction to illegal substances. Each case is to be decided on its own merit



AREAS OF CONSIDERATION RE CONVICTIONS

Convictions relating to the following legislation in the Republic of Ireland jurisdiction and other jurisdictions, will in some cases bar the applicant from the outset, in the interest of fairness however the applicant will be asked to attend a Garda Vetting review meeting;

- The Child Care Act (1991)
- Domestic Violence Act (1991)
- Non Fatal Offences against the person Act (1997)
- Protection for Persons Reporting Act (1997)
- The Education and Welfare Act (2000)
- Children's Act (2001)
- Sex Offenders Act (2001)

N.B. this list is by no means exhaustive, due care must be taken to keep informed about the meaning of legislation and any relevant changes to legislation.

The following areas must also be considered with care;

- Offences against the state
- Offences related to drugs
- Number and frequency of convictions particularly in the last ten years
- Non child protection related offences that may still give cause for concern for example a prosecution and successful conviction under the Domestic Violence Act (1991).

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact the Localise Volunteer Application Section if you have any questions or queries by e-mail on: volunteer@localise.ie or by phone at 01-497-9010.