

## Criminal Vetting Policy

### *i. Policy Statement*

Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) is a faith-based body that is required to ensure appropriate and adequate recruitment and criminal vetting checks for all persons working or volunteering with children and/or adults at risk of harm.

**As part of the ethos of safeguarding all who come in contact with our mission and ministries, it is mandatory that all relevant volunteers and employees of the individual congregations and Presbyteries are checked, prior to commencing roles and regularly thereafter**

This policy applies to all volunteers, leaders, officers and employees in congregations and associated ministries in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

This Policy applies across the island of Ireland; both jurisdictions require appropriate vetting measures which are further defined for each jurisdiction in the accompanying procedures.

This policy therefore covers both ACCESS NI, the Northern Ireland criminal records checking process and National Vetting Bureau (NVB), the Republic of Ireland criminal records checking process.

*This policy does not apply to Council for Social Witness Care Services staff, or Assembly Buildings employees. See PCI Human Resources Policy, Recruitment & Selection.*

### *ii. Legal & Policy Context*

- AccessNI Criminal Record Checks, Part V of the Police Act 1997
- Schedule 1 National Vetting Bureau (Children & Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland Child Safeguarding (NI) Policy / Child Safeguarding (ROI) Policy / Adult Safeguarding (NI) Policy / Adult Safeguarding (ROI) Policy

### *iii. Core principles*

Criminal vetting checks are a critical part of safe recruitment procedures for all roles that will give access to children, young people and /or adults at risk of harm.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland identify the scope of mission and ministry across the denomination is wide, and there are a variety of relevant roles that are applicable under this policy. For example, this could include;

Ministers (student ministers / active / retired if continuing to engage in a pastoral role)  
Auxiliary Ministers  
Elders  
Deaconesses

Leaders / helpers / volunteers  
Youth / family workers  
Additional pastoral personnel

This is not an exhaustive list of applicable roles; the denomination uses a wide range of designations and job titles.

Each role can be individually assessed if applicable for a criminal vetting check against the relevant criteria.

No one may commence a relevant role until the check process is completed and a Presbytery cannot install a minister/elder until the check process is completed.

“Decisions on the suitability for recruitment rest at all times with the recruiting organisation and the result of vetting should form only one part of the recruitment decision.” (*Chapter 4, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Children First 2015*).

Therefore, PCI understands that a proper appointment procedure is one of the most effective ways of assessing a person’s suitability to work with children and young people, or adults at risk of harm, and may act as a deterrent to potential abusers.

We must do all that we can to ensure that anyone who may be unsuitable for working with children, young people or adults is not given the opportunity to become a leader. The criminal vetting procedure is only one aspect of this full process.

This policy is accompanied by a set of procedures that establish how this policy will function across the denomination and all the identified roles.

#### **iv. Review**

This Policy will be reviewed every three years by Council for Social Witness. Changes will be reported to the General Assembly, with the Assembly being asked to approve any significant policy changes.

If there is a legislative change that requires the Policy to be updated or reviewed within that time period, this will be the responsibility of the Council for Social Witness. Where this is urgent, the General Council can act on behalf of the General Assembly to approve a significant policy change. The Safeguarding Lead will advise them if this is the case.

Accompanying procedure will be reviewed at least every three years by the Safeguarding Development Committee, Council for Social Witness, as well as at any point there are legislative/good practice updates required.

Procedural changes will be reported to the Council for Social Witness, with the Council being asked to approve any significant procedural changes.

It is the responsibility of the Council for Social Witness, to ensure changes are communicated in a timely and effective manner to the denomination.

**Policy end**

**Procedures Commence**