

1. A History of Vetting

A pre-employment checking service for adults working with children has been in operation in Northern Ireland for over 20 years. It was originally The Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (PECS) and was administered by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). The early service was free, voluntary and used mostly in the education sector.

The DHSSPS developed the service and it became known as the Protection of Children check (POC) and later the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults check (POCVA).

In England and Wales, a similar service had already been enacted into legislation by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), which incurred a fee.

In **2006**, the terrible events in Soham of the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman brought about the Bichard Inquiry, which among other things looked at the vetting of those working with children and how and what information was shared in this process. (Note: The Bichard Consultation 2002 document).

As a consequence of the Bichard Inquiry, the Northern Ireland Office commissioned a consultation exercise into the vetting process (policies & procedures) in Northern Ireland. The result of the consultation was the creation of Access NI in 2008, which is a non-departmental government body, with the responsibility of administering vetting in Northern Ireland.

Legislation was put in place to set the limits and requirements around the process, and barred those who were 'disqualified from working with children or vulnerable adults' from applying for jobs defined as a 'Regulated Activity'. Please click [HERE](#). In 2008, Access NI opened their doors for vetting and the Catholic Church was one of the first bodies to register with them to carry out appropriate Enhanced Disclosure Checks.

During the following years, Government legislation has been continually reviewed and updated to ensure Children and Vulnerable Adults, as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 are protected and to assist organisation's in safer recruitment.

To this date, the Catholic Church Northern Dioceses has processed over 21,5000 vetting checks with Access NI. Our process strictly adheres to the procedures as laid down by Access NI and the relevant legislation. Our primary underlying ethos is the protection of the vulnerable and when the right to check exists either as a requirement or an option we always apply for the appropriate disclosure from Access NI.

From the 01 April 2015 vetting applications have been accepted by Access NI 'on line'. This option has simplified the application process considerably and a step by step guide can be downloaded at

2. Guidance on Creating an Account and Processing an Access NI Online Application.docx

Further developments in the vetting process are due to take place during 2018 and 2019 including 'portable certificates', which will allow applicants in possession of a portable certificate to use it for other posts. This positive change will help address the long-standing issue of applicants having to get vetted and re-vetted for every regulated activity they undertake, either paid or volunteer.

The Northern Diocese Vetting Office intends to continue to enforce the highest standards of vetting allowed, to help support in some small way the overall comprehensive approach to safeguarding the vulnerable within the community of the Catholic Church.

