



Paralympics Ireland Garda Vetting Policy

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Introduction

Paralympics Ireland is officially registered with the National Vetting Bureau, Racecourse Road, Thurles, Co. Tipperary. Paralympics Ireland currently has one Liaison Officer who is the connection between Paralympics Ireland and the National Vetting Bureau.

The commencement of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Person) Acts 2012 provides a legislative basis for the mandatory vetting of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons or to provide certain services to children or vulnerable persons.

Relevant persons within Paralympics Ireland who undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons will be required to partake in the vetting process. At present there is no cost to the person vetted. Paralympics Ireland have also decided that there will be a requirement to be re-vetted on any change of position (with exclusions; see below) or after 3 years. The vetting process will take approximately 2/3 weeks dependent upon the prompt return of Vetting invitation forms from the applicant and the process time by the NVB. This must be taken into account when recruiting personnel in any capacity. No person may commence their role with Paralympics Ireland until the vetting process is concluded.

The Vetting Unit does not provide *clearance* for people to work with children and vulnerable persons.

Why undertake Vetting?

Not only is Vetting an extra measure incorporated by Paralympics Ireland to enhance our Safeguarding Policy but with the commencement of the National Vetting Bureau Act it is mandatory by law.

It will make our organisation better protected against possible perpetrators of child abuse by being a barrier for an individual who is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable persons. Historically, the Irish Paralympic Team or other teams of athletes under the governance of Paralympics Ireland has contained minors and vulnerable persons who need protection while in our care, either at training camps, competitions or the Paralympic Games. Vetting is an extra measure which greatly enhances the protection that Paralympics Ireland can afford to minors and vulnerable persons when in our care.

Who will be required to be Vetted?

Relevant persons within Paralympics Ireland who undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons.

This will be assessed in line with the Schedule 1 Act which outlines relevant work and activities. This target group includes:

- Paralympic Ireland Staff
- Support Staff – managers, coaches, personal assistants, and other support staff
- Sports science and medical service practitioners appointed by Paralympics Ireland

Paralympics Ireland is responsible for Garda Vetting of individuals they “appoint” but are not responsible to Vet athletes they “select”.

Important Points to Note

- Regarding personal assistants (PA's). If there is a personal relationship (e.g. parent, brother etc.) between the PA and the athlete, Garda vetting is not required. This on the basis that they act as a PA for their relative only, if they plan to act as a PA for other children/vulnerable adults they must be vetted.
- Persons involved in a P.I. event deemed to be engaging in relevant work/activities who are vetted through other/their own organisations must still be vetted through P.I. This is on the basis that their role in the event/competition is separate to their role in their own organisation.
- Regarding persons involved in a P.I. event who are from Northern Ireland who state they are vetted by PSNI through their own affiliate organisation. Vetting by P.I. is not required on the condition that a letter of indemnity from the relevant organisation/body (their VLO) stating their vetting status is provided to P.I.
- If an event/competition is being run under Paralympics Ireland name but held in another organisation's location, vetting protocol and procedures still apply.

Vetting Procedure

The Liaison Officer:

- Has been appointed and registered with National Vetting Bureau
- Will act as the connection between National Vetting Bureau and Paralympics Ireland
- Be responsible for distribution of all vetting application forms, submissions to and information received from the unit, including the coordination of e-vetting on behalf of Paralympics Ireland
- Be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information received from both the individual and the Unit

Vetting Restrictions by Age:

No person under 18 years of age may undergo the Garda Vetting process without the permission of their parent/guardian. No person under 16 years of age may undergo Garda Vetting and therefore Paralympics Ireland will not consider any person under 16 years for any appointment.

The Vetting Process

Applicants residing inside the island of Ireland must:

1. The applicant is asked by Paralympics Ireland to complete the Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 as soon as it is received.
2. This form is returned to Paralympics Ireland Head Office by post along with 2 forms of identification which must be listed on the accepted documents list (see identity document schedule).

3. Incomplete or illegible forms are returned to the applicant with explanation requesting the forms correction and resubmission.
4. Once received these documents must be seen in person and verified to ensure identity validation. This will require arranging an in-person meeting between the applicant and the liaison officer/contact person. The identity documents initially emailed must be the same as what is presented in person. The P.I. validation document form must be completed along with copies (scanned/pictures) taken of the documents.
5. If this validation is carried out by contact person (staff member) other than the liaison officer, they must return the validation form to the liaison officer and send copies (scanned/pictures) to the liaison officer.
6. Once the document validation process is completed the liaison officer will upload their Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 to the NVB system to begin the vetting process.
7. National Vetting Bureau processes the application and forwards a Vetting Disclosure to Paralympics Ireland.
8. In accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Act, applicants must be informed of the disclosure made in their name. It is up to Paralympics Ireland how that disclosure is presented/communicated to the applicant.

Applicants residing outside of the island of Ireland at the time of application must:

1. Scan and emails completed NVB1, along with proof of identity and address documents from the accepted list (see identity document schedule).
2. These scanned copies can be used to commence the vetting process.
3. Prior to commencement of relevant work/activity or on the first day of commencement the applicant must present in person the original NVB1 form and the original identity documents.
4. The document validation process as stated above can then be completed.

Re-vetting

All individuals will undergo re-vetting after 3 years, in line with the Paralympic Games cycle or as determined by Paralympics Ireland as being required by future circumstances.

Any individual may be re-vetted if information concerning suitability to work with children or vulnerable persons comes to the attention of Paralympics Ireland.

New Personnel – recruitment and selection

Once an individual is officially offered a position they will be given a Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 with an explanation as to the requirement for vetting.

The individual will complete the Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 and return along with the relevant identification documentation to HR personnel or the Liaison Person directly. The above vetting process will then be enacted. In the case of students being placed on work placement with Paralympics Ireland, the student will only require to be Vetted if the Liaison Officer of the responsible organisation does not provide a letter confirming that the student has successfully completed Vetting within the responsible organisation.

Existing Personnel

The Paralympics Ireland Vetting Policy is available on the website for persons required to undergo the vetting procedure.

Existing personnel in the target groups will receive an explanatory email together with a new Vetting Invitation Form in accordance with the proposed time frame.

Any individual will be required to be re-vetted on changing their position within the organisation. Exclusions to this are:

- an individual changing position but remaining within the same sport, e.g. moving from Coach to Team Manager.

Information storage: All paper data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 by the Liaison Officer on behalf of Paralympics Ireland. All manual information is kept in a secure cabinet at the Paralympics Ireland Head Office, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The Liaison Officer is the only key holder for the secure cabinet.

Return of information

The National Vetting Bureau processes the application and forwards a Vetting Disclosure to Paralympics Ireland.

Each disclosure will be examined by the Liaison Officer to determine the suitability of the applicant for the position applied for/presently in situ.

Processing the disclosed information

The assessment of suitability will depend on the nature of the position applied for/presently held, the self disclosure of any prosecutions or convictions and the seriousness, timing and any possible pattern that emerges of any information disclosed. The integrity of the applicant with regard to self disclosure or lack of disclosure on the initial application form will be considered.

On receiving information that may preclude the applicant, the original application form will be checked for each detail to ensure it is correct and that the disclosed information refers to the applicant.

If the applicant has self disclosed the information and this agrees with the disclosure from the vetting unit the decision must be made depending on the type and nature of the offences disclosed.

If the applicant has not self disclosed and information is received from the unit this requires to be checked with the applicant.

Disclosure of certain types of convictions/prosecutions will automatically preclude the applicant from a position working with children and/or vulnerable persons. Examples of offences that will automatically prohibit an applicant are:

- Any offence of a sexual nature
- Any offence against a child or of child abuse or pornography
- An offence that causes gross bodily harm
- Any offence of murder or manslaughter
- An offence of kidnapping
- A series of continuous offending that might cause concern for the well-being of children

- Any charges concerning child abuse that are sent for trial by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Other offences may result in an applicant being turned down by Paralympics Ireland depending on the time and nature of the offence e.g. theft & fraud offences.

All decisions on the suitability of an applicant are a matter for Paralympics Ireland and the National Vetting Bureau will not be involved in such decisions.

Paralympics Ireland Vetting Decision Committee (Decision Committee)

The Liaison Officer retains the right to convene the Paralympics Ireland Vetting Decision Committee in order to adjudicate on the suitability of an applicant to a position with Paralympics Ireland following a disclosure of the applicant or the Garda Vetting Unit.

For each individual case three of the four following position holders will make up the Decision Committee:

- Chief Executive Officer/Secretary General (Stephen McNamara)
- President (Lisa Clancy)
- Vice President 1 (Lorcan Claffey)
- Vice President 2 (Patrice Dockery)

The Liaison Officer has the right to disclose information received from the applicant and the Garda Vetting Unit to the Decision Committee, but at all times the identity of the applicant will not be disclosed to the other Decision Committee members by the Liaison Officer.

Communication

When the Liaison Officer is required to communicate with the applicant for any reason the following protocol will be adhered to:

- Communication should initially be by phone or in person if convenient.
- Correspondence between the LO and applicant can continue via email if letters/documentation need to be exchanged.
- The Liaison Officer will verify the person is the applicant
- No messages will be left
- No discussion will take place with any other person, spouse or partner
- The Liaison Officer will give an assurance of confidentiality

If the Liaison Officer is required to verify disclosed details the applicant will be asked:

- Is there anything they remember concerning the time of the offence
- Have they ever been to court
- For any relevant information concerning the disclosed information
- To consider the significance of the disclosure in relation to the position applied for

All responses should be noted by the Liaison Officer and held confidentially. If any of the information is disputed the Disputes procedure in this policy (see below) must be followed.

New Personnel

Where the applicant is suitable for the position applied for, this should be communicated to the individual and the person responsible for the recruitment – this will be done by letter as well, simply stating the applicant is suitable to work with children and/or vulnerable persons.

Where the information disclosed by the Unit and/or self disclosed by the applicant this deems the individual to be unsuitable they should be informed of such. The applicant should be allowed to withdraw their application.

Existing Personnel

An assessment must be made of the suitability of the individual to hold their present position. This decision will be made on an individual basis, based on the nature of the disclosed information and the initial self disclosure by the individual. No decision shall be made unless any disclosed information is verified in accordance with the procedure in communicating with the applicant. This verification shall be carried out preferably by the Liaison Officer. If the individual is deemed not suitable to work with children they will be afforded the opportunity to withdraw from their current position.

Where the individual is deemed suitable for their position this will be communicated to the individual in accordance with the communication procedure and this will be recorded in the vetting file.

Data Security

The data submitted by the applicant and any responses from the Unit is subject to data security.

Paralympics Ireland will only release information concerning the suitability of an individual to a person who needs to know. In the event that an applicant withdraws either their application for a position or from their position, information concerning their suitability for working with children or vulnerable persons will not be released.

In accordance with the rules laid down in the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 the Liaison Officers on behalf of Paralympics Ireland will:

- Obtain and process information fairly
- Keep this information only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
- Use and disclose information only in ways compatible with these purposes
- Keep information safe and secure
- Keep information accurate, complete and up to date
- Ensure that any information is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Retain information for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
- Give a copy of his/her personal information to an individual, on request

Disputes

Disputing Disclosed Information

The National Vetting Bureau has a dispute mechanism in place in event of an individual contesting the disclosed information.

In the case of any disclosure being disputed by the applicant the following procedure will be applied:

- The exact basis of the dispute will be noted by the Liaison Officer on communication with the individual
- The original e-vetting application form will be resubmitted to the unit for a recheck - containing a covering report outlining the basis of the dispute as indicated by the applicant

If on examination of the original e-vetting form there was an error in the completion of the form this should be rectified by the applicant by completing a new application. The original and the new application forms will be submitted together with a request for a recheck.

If following a recheck the applicant still disputes the information, arrangements with the National Vetting Bureau will be made for further identification procedures to be conducted in order to resolve the dispute.

Until all disputes have been settled the individual will not be able to take any position. If the dispute involves existing personnel it is recommended that supervision is put in place until the dispute resolved.

All decisions on the suitability of an applicant following a recheck are a matter for Paralympics Ireland and the National Vetting Bureau will not be involved in such decisions.

Disputing the Decision of the Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer has a responsibility to observe professional standards and will be cautious to recognise their own values and personal ethics in evaluating the seriousness and the relevance of an offence.

Any dispute concerning the decision of a Liaison Officer should be submitted in writing. Advice from 'Children First' Advice and Information Officers from the Child and Family Agency (TULSA) as independent advisors will be taken and this will be communicated to the individual in accordance with the protocol. The outcome of this decision will be final.