



Vetting Policy – (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland)

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	1 st August 2017	H. Adams	New Document
1.1	Jan 2020	B. Ewing	Updated
Board Approved: February 2020			

Section 1 – Introduction – Responsibility

Rowing Ireland has statutory obligations to obtain vetting disclosures for all persons carrying out relevant work with young people.

Rowing Ireland is responsible for processing applications in through the relevant bodies in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

There are two types of vetting checks available to Rowing Ireland – through the National Vetting Bureau and Access NI; both checks are applicable to members of Rowing Ireland.

(1) Republic of Ireland - Rowing Ireland is a Registered Organisation with the National Vetting Bureau (NVB) with two appointed Liaison Persons and one Clerical Officer.

Legislation and Information relating to Republic of Ireland:

- The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016
- Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 Part 3
- Civil Service Commissioners Act 1956 Child Care Act 1991 – Sections 5; 61; 65 Data Protection Act 1988/2003
- Children’s Act 2001 – Section 258 Private Security Authority Act 2004

(2) Northern Ireland - RI Ulster Branch, as a regional body of Rowing Ireland, is a Registered Body with Access NI (ANI), with one appointed Lead Signatory and a Counter-signatory.

Access NI is a vetting body set up to provide criminal record certificates using legislation. The Access NI Code of Practice must be read by everyone wishing to be vetted by Ulster Branch. It is available [HERE](#)

The legislation makes it compulsory to check individuals - applicants must be over 16 years - working in a Regulated Activity with young people with the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS).

Legislation and information relating to NI includes:

- Part V of the Police Act 1997 + amendments
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (as amended 2014)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Applicants both paid and voluntary must complete an ENHANCED Application via the Access NI on-line system.

Section 2 – Vetting Policy – Why?

Vetting is part of Rowing Ireland’s recruitment and selection process and is a requirement for certain roles working with young people who are under the age of 18.

Within the structure of Rowing Ireland many positions will have unsupervised access to young people and / or information that may be deemed sensitive or personal regarding young people. Vetting is therefore a means to reducing risk of harm to young people within the sport.

Vetting is required by law, with certain differences in each jurisdiction. The legislation together with this Rowing Ireland Vetting Policy means that vetting is mandatory for all members of Rowing Ireland – Board, Staff, Sub-Committees, Branches, Affiliated Clubs and any person seeking to engage with young people.

The vetting process does not provide clearance for people, but provides information that may be relevant for Rowing Ireland to decide the suitability of an individual to carry out a certain role working with or having access to young people.

Vetting is one of the measures to protect Rowing Ireland and its Affiliated Clubs against possible perpetrators of abuse by being a barrier to an individual who is unsuitable to work with young people.

All such positions (paid or voluntary) must be successfully vetted before an individual is legally allowed to take up their chosen position(s) or attend any relevant Rowing Ireland activity or course

All applicants requiring vetting must be aware of this policy - The Vetting Policy – RoI and NI at the time of application.

Section 3 – Vetting Policy – Who?

All persons applying (including volunteers in Affiliated Clubs) for a role that provides an opportunity for unsupervised access to young people must undergo the vetting process. These positions are referred to as regulated positions (ANI) defined within the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 or as undertaking relevant work or activity (NVB) defined in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Adults) Act 2012 to 2016.

Individuals who must be vetted will include but not limited to the following:

- Committee member U18 Club
- Children's Officer / Designated Liaison Person
- Parent duty where the same parent provides duty for two or more sessions in any week
- Coach
- Teacher
- Tutor
- Officials e.g. at junior training camps
- Board Members
- Sub Committees
- Working Groups
- Branch Committee
- Rowing Ireland employees
- Others – as deemed necessary

All the above positions must be successfully vetted before an individual (paid or voluntary) is legally allowed to take up their chosen position(s) or attend the relevant course.

The requirement for vetting must be included in any job description. The terms within this policy may affect the employment position and therefore this policy must be available to prospective employees / members at the time of application. Once an individual intends to apply for any vetted position a vetting application must be submitted for processing.

An appointment to a vetted position is subject to a successful vetting outcome.

Vetting young people under 18 years old

Any individual under 18 years of age in the Republic of Ireland or aged 16 years or over in Northern Ireland and applying for any of the required positions must undergo vetting prior to taking up the position.

Any person under 18 years of age completing a vetting application must obtain the permission of their parent/guardian.

Previous Residence

Any individual who has been resident in the Republic of Ireland and/or Northern Ireland for less than one year (taken from the date of the initial vetting application) will be asked to provide a police check from their previous country and will be required to undergo a recheck after 12 months.

Re-vetting individuals

Rowing Ireland require individuals to be re-vetted as follows:

- Re-vetting is required 3 years after a Certificate is issued whilst working on an on-going basis (employee & volunteer) within Rowing Ireland
- Re vetting is required where a Rowing Ireland member (employee or volunteer) has been suspended from the sport and then returns
- Re-vetting is required where a Rowing Ireland member leaves the sport voluntarily and then returns
- Any existing Rowing Ireland member (employee or volunteer) may be re-vetted if information concerning an individual's suitability to work with children comes to the attention of a Club, Branch or Rowing Ireland. The individual's permission must be sought if re-vetting is part of an investigative process.
- Re-vetting may be required as a requirement within Rowing Ireland's Complaints and Disciplinary Process. The individual's permission must be sought.
- Re-vetting is required if an individual comes from another sport to work with young people in the sport of rowing – even if they have a Certificate from elsewhere.

Section 4 – Vetting Policy - Process

If you are required to be vetted by Rowing Ireland you will be asked by the CEO, Committee Chairs or Secretaries, Club Children's Officer, Club Liaison Person etc to make an application and directed to the Rowing Ireland Vetting Policy – ROI and NI for information and to the forms for Garda Vetting and Access NI Vetting.

NI applicants both paid and voluntary must complete an ENHANCED Application via the Access NI on-line system.

Vetting charges

At present there is no cost to volunteers undergoing vetting in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland. Access NI makes a charge for individuals being vetted for employment purposes. These charges are detailed on the Access NI website.

Republic of Ireland - National Vetting Bureau

- Rowing Ireland have two Liaison Persons (LP) registered with the NVB:
- National Children's Officer – Tom Fennessey
- Administration Officer – Denis O'Regan

The LP is responsible for ensuring the application forms are up to date and available, for processing online applications and dealing with information/disclosures as returned from NVB. The LP is also responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of disclosed information and for using such in the best interests of young people and in accordance with this Vetting Policy.

All applications to the NVB are processed by the LP through the NVB on-line application system on receipt of consent and identification verification from an individual seeking to be vetted through an E-Vet ID Form. The requirements of the process are mandatory by legislation.

Northern Ireland – Access NI

Ulster Branch is the Registered Body for vetting in Northern Ireland and has one Registered Signatory and a Counter Signatory:

- Registered Lead Signatory - Brenda Ewing
- Counter Signatory – Currently being changed

The Signatories are registered with Access NI (ANI) and act as liaison between ANI and Rowing Ireland. The Signatories are responsible for ensuring the identification forms are up to date and available, for processing online applications and dealing with information/disclosures as returned from ANI.

The Signatories are also responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of disclosed information and for using such in the best interests of young people and in accordance with this Vetting Policy. RIUB is certified Compliant with Access NI.

Vetting Policy - Recruitment of ex-offenders NI [HERE](#)

Vetting Policy – Notes for NI Affiliated Clubs [HERE](#)

Processing time

The time taken to complete the vetting process is dependent on the prompt submission of accurately completed forms / ID checks carried out / on-line submission completed by Rowing Ireland plus information checking by the National Vetting Bureau and Access NI.

Return of Information

Applicants with no disclosures on their Certificates should advise whoever requested them to be vetted, e.g. RI CEO, Club Children's Officer etc

Applicants with disclosed information on their Certificates are required to contact the Signatory in order that a decision can be made regarding their status. The RI Risk Management in Recruitment Sub-Committee should be given the details to deal with. Until a decision is made the applicant is not eligible to undertake their role within Rowing Ireland.

Rowing Ireland is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of disclosed information and for using such in the best interests of young people and in accordance with this Vetting Policy.

Processing Disclosure Information - Assessing suitability/ Risk Management

Rowing Ireland Risk Management in Recruitment Sub-Committee is responsible for making the decision regarding an applicant's suitability to be in the role. The information disclosed by the NVB and Access NI is used. All information will be anonymised and details will only be shared that are needed to reach a fair and reasonable outcome.

Certain cases may be referred to the Rowing Ireland Disciplinary Officer to be dealt with through the Rowing Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

All cases are dealt with on an individual basis.

Consideration is given to the nature of the disclosed information received from the respective vetting body and the initial self-disclosure, if any, by the individual. Disclosed information must be verified and confirmed by the Applicant before any decision is made.

Any assessment of suitability depends on the relevance of any conviction/disclosed information to the position or role applied for, the self-disclosure of such information, the seriousness of the offence/disclosed information, the timing of the offence and any possible pattern of offences.

The integrity of the applicant with regard to self- disclosure or lack of disclosure on the initial application form is considered important.

If the applicant has self-disclosed the information and this agrees with the disclosure from the vetting body a decision will 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 vetting body this will be checked with the applicant.

The information disclosed is used for only the specific purpose for which it was obtained as part of a recruitment or appointment process within Rowing Ireland.

On receiving information that may potentially result in exclusion from taking up the regulated position any original documentation is checked to ensure it is correct and that the disclosed information refers to the applicant.

Disclosure of certain types of convictions/prosecutions or specified information automatically disqualify the applicant from a position working with children.

Examples of offences that will automatically disqualify 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 charge brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions (for Ireland and Northern Ireland) concerning abuse of a child
- All decisions on the suitability of an applicant are a matter for Rowing Ireland. The NVB and ANI are not involved in such decisions.

Disclosures - Communication with Applicant

If Rowing Ireland is required to communicate with the applicant for any reason, the Signatory will do so by the following protocol:

- Communication may be by phone, letter marked 'Private and Confidential' or in person if convenient
- The LP/Signatory verifies the identity of the applicant
- No messages are left
- No discussion takes place with any other person, spouse or partner
- The LP/Signatory gives an assurance of confidentiality

If the Signatory is required to verify disclosed details the applicant is asked relevant questions, for example:

- Is there anything they remember concerning the time of the offence?
- Have they ever been to court?
- Is there any relevant information concerning the disclosed information?
- Does the applicant have an understanding of the relevance of the disclosure to the position/role applied for?

All responses are noted. If any of the information is disputed the disputes procedure in this Rowing Ireland Vetting Policy (Section 6) must be followed.

Disclosures – seeking external advice

If a decision is required that is not clearly dealt with in this vetting policy external advice must be sought. In this case any identifying information on the disclosure will be removed. External advice may be sought from other regulatory bodies, e.g. Participation Unit from Sport Ireland or Child Protection in Sport Unit from NSPCC.

Disclosures – Suitability

Where the applicant is suitable for the position currently held or applied for, this is communicated to the individual by issuing a letter accepting suitability to work within Rowing Ireland.

Disclosures – Un-suitability

Where the information disclosed by the vetting body and/or self-disclosed by the applicant deems the individual to be unsuitable for the regulated position they are informed of such preferably in person.

However, this is not always possible. In the case where an individual cannot be informed in person, they will be requested to contact the Signatory as a matter of urgency.

The applicant is allowed the opportunity to withdraw from seeking any role or position.

Section 5 – Record keeping / information storage / disposal

Rowing Ireland will store vetting ID documents for the time necessary for the vetting process. All data submitted by the Applicant and any responses from the Vetting Bodies are subject to data security.

Rowing 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 young people will not be released.

In accordance with the rules laid down in the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 and Access NI Code of Practice the signatory on behalf of Rowing Ireland will:

- Obtain and process information fairly with permission
- 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

Once a decision is made regarding the suitability of an applicant the outcome is recorded on the database record as accepted or withdrawn. The status 'withdrawn' relates to an applicant who has been deemed ineligible for Rowing Ireland or where an applicant has withdrawn their request for vetting.

No information regarding the content of any disclosure is recorded on the database. The disclosure document, decision process and outcome is securely kept in a locked cabinet with access only by an LP.

Data in the Republic of Ireland is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 by LP on behalf of Rowing Ireland. All information is kept in a secure cabinet, with restricted access in Rowing Ireland Head Office. The LPs are the only key holders for the secure cabinet.

Data in Northern Ireland is stored as per the RI Ulster Branch Policy for Secure Holding, Use, Storage and Retention of Disclosure Information. See Appendix 2. Access NI Audit confirms compliancy.

Once the retention period has elapsed, Rowing Ireland will ensure that any Disclosure information is immediately destroyed by approved secure means.

Vetting Policy – Storage, Retention and Disposal of Disclosure Information [HERE](#)

Section 6 - Disputes

With the National Vetting Bureau and Access NI

Rowing Ireland cannot dispute the information disclosed by Access NI or NVB. Any individual disputing the disclosed information will need to follow the procedure for the relevant Vetting Body. The applicant will not be permitted to take up a position while any disclosure is under dispute.

If there was an error in the completion of the form this should be rectified by the applicant by completing a new application.

With the Decision of Rowing Ireland

All decisions on the suitability of an applicant are based on the information released by the relevant Vetting Body, and subject to the direction of this Policy with due attention to the fair and lawful treatment of applicants whilst also accounting for the paramount principle in the protection of young people within sport.

The LPs and Signatories have 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 any offence. Any dispute concerning the decision of an LP or Signatory should be submitted in writing to the CEO of Rowing Ireland.

Advice from independent advisors according to the jurisdiction will be taken, as guided by this Vetting Policy. This will be communicated to the individual in accordance with the protocol. The outcome of this decision will be final.