

Meeting Notes from Tautoko Network Meeting

April 2018

POLICE VETTING

The Police Vetting Unit is based in Wellington and we acknowledge the assistance and presentation prepared and supplied for this session by Snr Sgt Bruce Mackay who is the manager of the Vetting Service based at Police National HQ.

The statistics which Snr Sgt Mackay supplied put into perspective some of the 'delays' that organisations experience between submitting an application for police vetting and receipt of a response! The Police Vetting team consists of a team of 30 staff and services approximately 10,000 approved agencies. It receives an average of 50,000 applications per month ... and this is increasing by approximately 10% each year. That's 600,000+ annually.

Fees were introduced for the service on 1 July 2017. Police vetting is a 'demand service' not one which the Police were originally obligated to provide or, indeed, receive funding to provide. This meant that funding to cover the role was diverted from other key roles, and from this arose the need to establish a system of cost recovery, particularly given the quickly rising demand trends. A per application fee of \$8.50 applies; exemptions include charities.

For vetting purposes, volunteers are not covered under the Vulnerable Children Act; submit vets as a 'standard check'.

There was some discussion around challenges, particularly for some of our member organisations in the social sector, around the fact that as an organisation they offer 'second chance' through their volunteering programmes for people who may have become isolated from the 'mainstream' community. Police vetting may result in information/disclosure of information which needs to be juggled with that mission statement.

In follow-up with the Police Vetting Unit, Snr Sgt Mackay has advised:

"You are right to err on the side of caution in terms of your view around workplace/employee etc. safety. There are some applicants who through no fault of their own have certain characteristics that manifest themselves as a risk in certain environments. As much as you might want to help everyone who needs a fresh start, potentially putting others in some form of harm's way in order to do so would be pretty hard to explain if anything did go wrong. It's a tough call and unfortunately I can be of no assistance with specific guidelines on how to approach that as we do not make recommendations in relation to vetting outcomes; it is entirely up to each organisation to use any information they have as they see fit and according to their own policies and practices."

Another issue which came up in discussion at the *Tautoko Network* session was around which roles required vetting, and the example of administrative/office manager roles was used. Here's Snr Sgt's notes in relation to that issue:

"In relation to the question around office managers, or similar types of roles, being vetted. Key to this

is the genuine ability of any such person to have a reasonable level of influence over a child or vulnerable person. I'm not sure if I mentioned it before but it comes back to the 'inherent contact, rather than incidental', in other words, if an office worker might see or speak to one of those persons in passing, or on the odd occasion they answered a phone call etc. then that is not going to fit our criteria. In terms of access to information; bank managers and lawyers are examples where an employee is able to access quite sensitive personal information of a client but we do not vet those types of roles because we do not see the individuals as vulnerable in the true sense just because of that access. In reality, if we were to vet everyone who had passing contact with vulnerable people, or reasonably restricted access to some private details, we would simply not cope with the amount of requests we would get. The line has to be drawn somewhere and we are taking a firmer stance on this type of thing nowadays because of the pressures already on the team to keep within service level due to the constantly increasing number of requests we are getting.

That is not to say we don't accept those roles where there is a clear link between what they do and the contact they have with individuals. It will just need a good level of justification to get them accepted."

If you have any other vetting questions that need answering your best first port of call would be either via QueryME@Police.govt.nz or qa.vetting@police.govt.nz.