



## Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Vetting
Date:	11 June 2008
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### Relevant Background Information

The Bichard Inquiry was set up by the Home Secretary following the conviction of Ian Huntley for the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham, Cambridgeshire. The Inquiry examined the effectiveness of the police forces' relevant intelligence-based record keeping, vetting practices and information sharing with other agencies. The Report recommended the introduction of new arrangements requiring those who wish to work with children or vulnerable adults to be registered and an enhanced system of disclosure.

The recommendations will be implemented within Northern Ireland under two new systems overseen by independent authorities. These are known as Access NI (ANI) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Previously the system involved carrying out two checks under POCVA legislation.

1. Criminal records checks carried out by the police
2. Checks against the Disqualification from Working with Children List - DWC (NI) List or Disqualification from Working Vulnerable Adults List - DWVA (NI) List.

Access NI became operational from 1 April 2008 and replaces the criminal checks previously carried out directly through the police. The new system will include enhanced disclosures that provide details of convictions and soft information. The later is information held by the Police which does not relate to a conviction but which may be relevant to a person's suitability to work with children or young people.

ISA is not due to become operational until October 2009. The main focus of this new system will be the establishment of a register of those suitable for working with children or young people. A report will be prepared for committee when ISA is due to become operational.

### **Key Issues**

Belfast City Council currently checks employees that have contact with children and young people through the Human Resources Section. Volunteers who work in Community and Play centres are checked through the Community Services Section. There is also support for independent groups who use Council facilities to carry out the checks. Under the new system, there is a charge of £30 per volunteer who is involved in a statutory organisation, including District Councils. Volunteers for independent community groups are not charged for.

Community Services have registered with Access NI to undertake checks of volunteers and to act as an umbrella body to administer the checks for the independent groups. Under this, BCC will only incur the cost of paying for volunteers who will be working in projects directly managed by BCC staff.

Community Services requires the support of temporary staff throughout the year, particularly in summer schemes, who are employed through recruitment agencies. The charge of £30 is currently being passed on to the candidate by the recruitment agency. Given the short term nature of these seasonable posts, this fee has the potential to limit the number of candidates applying for temporary posts. Due to the requirements of the operational service for the delivery of summer schemes, Community Services will cover the £30 charge for candidates who work in summer schemes for this year only. This will enable a longer term policy to be agreed between Human Resources and the Recruitment Agency.

### **Resource Implications**

#### Financial

Estimated cost of £7,000 to cover the costs of Access NI checks for volunteers and summer scheme staff.

#### Human Resources

No implication on the current allocation

#### Asset and Other Implications

There is no impact on any physical BCC asset.

<b>Recommendations</b>
Members are asked to note the content of the report.

<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
POCVA – Protection of Children and Young People BCC – Belfast City Council ANI – Access Northern Ireland ISA - Independent Safeguarding Authority NI – Northern Ireland

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