



This document is intended to help individuals applying for PVG scheme membership through the Church of Scotland have all the information they require, as well as the Safeguarding Coordinators.

**Top tips for applicants:**

1. Your application consists of three forms: the SG03a PVG Information Request form, the SG03 Self-Disclosure form and the Coversheet. If you are required to obtain an overseas police check, it would be the fourth document of your application. If your application is for a paid role, a copy of your job description should also be sent with the rest of your application.
2. Your three forms must all be dated no more than three months prior to the submission date
3. Once you have completed the SG03a and SG03 forms, please check that you have answered all questions as requested.
4. All documents should be sent by you in one email to [safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk) The documents should ideally be in .docx or .pdf format if possible. Please note we are unable to open documents that are in .pages format
5. If you are not able to email your documents to us, your Safeguarding Coordinator can email them to the Safeguarding Service on your behalf as long as a permission letter from you is included with the application (see question 3 below). Alternatively, the Safeguarding Coordinator can cc (copy) you into the email using the email address you provide on their application form.

**Application checklist**

Before you send your application to the Safeguarding Service, please use this checklist to ensure you have included everything required:

- Coversheet
- SG03a PVG Information Request form
- SG03 Self-Disclosure form
- Job description (*if you are applying for a paid role*)
- Overseas police check documents (*if required, as detailed on the SG03 Self-Disclosure form*)
- Note from the applicant stating they give you permission to send us their information (*if someone other than the applicant is sending the forms on behalf of the applicant*)

**1. What is the process for applying to join the PVG scheme through the Church of Scotland?**

There are four stages to the process.

The first stage is the recruitment process:

- The congregation will carry out recruitment as per Church of Scotland policy and identify those people who require PVG membership.

The second stage is the PVG Information Request process:

- The Coordinator undertakes identification checks and completes a coversheet.
- The completed coversheet should then be emailed to the applicant. The Coordinator can also email the blank SG03a PVG Information Request Form and blank SG03 Self-Disclosure Form to the applicant or, alternatively, the applicant can download these themselves from our website.
- The applicant completes the SG03a PVG Information Request Form and SG03 Self-Disclosure Form.
- The applicant returns the completed coversheet, SG03a PVG Information Request Form and SG03 Self-Disclosure Form direct to the Safeguarding Service [safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk) All completed forms should be sent as email attachments – all in the same email, not separately.
- The Safeguarding Service will process the applicant information and record this in our PVG database.
- The Safeguarding Service will contact Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services (VSDS) to instigate the online PVG application process with Disclosure Scotland.

The third stage is carried out by VSDS and Disclosure Scotland:

- VSDS send the applicant's information to Disclosure Scotland, registering their application to join the PVG scheme (or update their existing PVG scheme membership)
- The applicant will receive an email directly from Disclosure Scotland asking them to complete an online PVG application. The applicant will have 14 days to do this.
- Disclosure Scotland will process the PVG application.
- A PVG certificate will be sent by Disclosure Scotland to the applicant and the Safeguarding Service will receive an employer copy as normal

The final stage is the clearance process:

- The Safeguarding Service will check the details on the PVG certificate
- The Safeguarding Service issues PVG clearance via email to the Coordinator

The applicant must not begin undertaking their new role until the PVG clearance email has been received by the Safeguarding Coordinator.

## **2. Is the application process the same for paid roles as it is for volunteer roles?**

No. There is a cost for PVG applications for paid roles (see question X below).

Also, a job description should be sent to the Safeguarding Service along with the PVG application forms when the application relates to a paid role. Disclosure Scotland are checking job descriptions more frequently than ever, so to minimise delays to applications the Safeguarding Service requires to have a copy of the job description before the applicant's details are submitted to Disclosure Scotland.

## **3. How long does the application process take?**

A typical application takes 4-6 weeks from the date the forms are emailed to the Safeguarding Service, although incomplete paperwork or errors can extend this time by several weeks.

You can help to minimise the time taken for your application to be processed by double checking the information on the forms before you submit them, and by double checking the information you submit to Disclosure Scotland when you follow the email link from them. A simple typo in a date of birth or postcode can cause a delay of 1-2 months.

This is one of the reasons why we have so many forms for applicants to complete – by asking for the same information on multiple forms, we are often able to catch errors before information is sent to Disclosure Scotland.

## **4. Where can I get copies of the application forms?**

All forms can be downloaded by applicants and Safeguarding Coordinators from our website at <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding-service/safeguarding-publications>

Safeguarding Coordinators should not save blank forms to their computer/device but download them from our website for each application.

This is to ensure you are using the most up to date version as we may periodically make amendments to the forms. Applications sent in on old versions of the forms risk being rejected, thereby increasing the time taken for the application to be completed.

## **5. If an applicant is having issues completing the SG03a PVG Information Request Form and SG03 Self Disclosure electronically can someone else complete and submit these on their behalf?**

The applicant must give consent for someone else to complete/submit the documents on their behalf.

Where documents are being submitted by a person other than the applicant (e.g. the Coordinator or family member) due to them having technical issues with the process, written consent from the applicant must be submitted to the Safeguarding Service with the completed documents.

This can take the form of a handwritten letter which is scanned or photographed. Alternatively, the applicant can be cc'd in to the email when the forms are sent to the Safeguarding Service.

This is due to the confidential nature of the information shared on the information request forms. It also serves as a security measure due to the use of electronic signatures.

## **6. Can I request a paper PVG application form and SG03 Self-Disclosure Form?**

If you have difficulty with the online process, please contact the Safeguarding Service. Please note that applications made on paper forms take around 8-10 weeks to be completed.

## **7. Can an applicant complete an online PVG application with Disclosure Scotland if they do not have an email address?**

No – all applicants are required to have a personal email address.

## **8. Can an Existing member applicant complete an online PVG application with Disclosure Scotland if they have forgotten or do not have access to their PVG membership number?**

If an existing PVG scheme member does not have a note of their PVG membership number they can obtain this by calling Disclosure Scotland on 03000 2000 40.

## **9. Can a PVG Applicant approach Disclosure Scotland direct to complete an application?**

No – all PVG application requests must come via the Safeguarding Service.

## **10. What happens if an applicant fails to complete the online PVG application within 14 days?**

The process will start again with all forms having to be re-submitted.

## **11. How should Identification Checks be undertaken?**

ID checks are required for all applicants.

The Safeguarding Coordinator should meet with the applicant and view three forms of ID. Where it is not possible for the two people to meet in person, a video call should be arranged between the two and the ID documents should be shown on the camera.

It is never acceptable to carry out the ID verification from photos or scans of documents.

The Safeguarding Coordinator will then complete a coversheet, on which they will note what ID has been seen.

Disclosure Scotland require that three forms of ID must be verified. We can no longer accept applications that include the old-style coversheet that only asked for two forms of ID.

These ID documents combined must verify the applicant's name, date of birth and current address. At least one document must be photographic, and must be a different document from the one that confirms their current address.

A full list of acceptable forms of ID can be found on the PVG Information Request Coversheet form.

Safeguarding Coordinators must not oversee applications of family members. If the congregation does not have another coordinator who can carry out the ID verification and complete the coversheet, the Safeguarding Coordinator should reach out to a coordinator in a neighbouring congregation and ask them to oversee their relative's application. Where this is not possible, the Session Clerk can carry out the ID verification and complete the coversheet.

## **12. Who requires an overseas police check?**

As per the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Act (2018) Police Checks are required for anyone who:

- Was born anywhere other than the UK and left their birth country when they were aged 18 or over and/or
- Has lived anywhere other than the UK for at least six months (in a single period) at any time in the past 10 years

The police check must be dated within six months of arriving in the UK.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply for any police checks required. The UK Government provides advice about this [on their website](#).

Once received, the police check(s) must be emailed to the Safeguarding Service along with the SG03a PVG Information Request Form, the SG03 Self-Disclosure Form and the Coversheet.

If the political situation in the relevant country means you are unable to obtain a police check, please contact the Safeguarding Service for advice.

**12b. Are there any exceptions to the requirement to obtain a police check?**

If an applicant is applying for PVG to work with children only and a police check is required from their country of nationality, Disclosure Scotland will check their criminal history information in the following countries and the UK through the PVG process. A separate police check from their country of nationality will not be required.

Germany  
Lithuania  
Netherlands  
Portugal  
Romania  
Hungary  
Greece  
France  
Ireland  
Italy  
Spain  
Poland

Please note that this relates only to applicants who are nationals/citizens of the country/ies on the list.

It does not relate to UK citizens who lived in any of the countries on the list.

**13. I'm already a member of the PVG scheme through another organisation. They didn't ask me for an overseas police check – why does the Church of Scotland need me to get one?**

The requirement for overseas police checks does not come from Disclosure Scotland and the PVG scheme legislation. Rather it comes from the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Act. This act functions as Church law, and must be followed by the Safeguarding Service with no exceptions.

**14. Can an applicant start their role while their PVG application is being processed?**

No – an applicant must not be put in to post until clearance from the Safeguarding Service is received by the Safeguarding Coordinator.

**15. Can an applicant carry out a modified version of their role - under the supervision of someone who has PVG clearance - while their PVG application is being processed?**

No - an applicant must not be put in to post until clearance from the Safeguarding Service is received by the Safeguarding Coordinator.

**16. Does the applicant have to pay for the PVG scheme application?**

If the applicant will be carrying out a voluntary role, there is no charge to join the PVG scheme.

If the applicant will be carrying out a paid role, they will have to pay online by credit or debit card as part of the Disclosure Scotland online application process. They will be issued with a payment reference number and receipt which can be used to re-claim the cost from the recruiting congregation.

**17. Will applicants receive paper copies of their certificates?**

Yes, paper certificates will still be sent to applicants.

**18. I already have a basic disclosure certificate. Why have I been told to join the PVG scheme?**

The PVG scheme differs from basic disclosure checks. Basic disclosure checks are available to all. They are one-off checks that look at an individual's record and reports any unspent convictions.

The PVG scheme, in contrast, is an ongoing check which continually monitors the records of its members. You can only join the PVG scheme if you are undertaking regulated work.

**19. I'm already a member of the PVG scheme through another organisation. Do I still have to join through the Church of Scotland?**

Yes. PVG applications are organisation-specific. We require you to apply for a PVG scheme update so that the Church of Scotland can be added as an interested organisation.

Scottish Government website has an excellent summary of how the PVG scheme works at <https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme>

**20. What happens when I stop volunteering with the Church of Scotland?**

When a volunteer or worker steps down from any post that involves regulated work, they must complete an SG22 Leaver's Form which will be signed and submitted by the Safeguarding Coordinator.

The volunteer/worker must also contact Disclosure Scotland directly to inform them that they are no longer carrying out regulated work for the Church of Scotland. This is a legal requirement.

Safeguarding Coordinators should not contact Disclosure Scotland about anyone's PVG membership other than their own.

**21. I cannot edit documents when using Apple devices, what can I do?**

We do not have any Apple specific Safeguarding forms available. The documents could be able to be opened and edited in Pages, if applicants have this application downloaded, and then click 'Save as' to save them as a PDF to enable them to be sent to the Safeguarding Service for processing. If applicants are able to download Google Docs, they may also be able to open and edit the documents in this application.