

Policy statement on the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposal of disclosures and disclosure information

1. Background

All individuals or organisations using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust and who are recipients of disclosure information must comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice. Amongst other things, this obliges them to have a written policy on the correct handling and safekeeping of disclosure information. It also obliges them to ensure that bodies, on whose behalf they are countersigning disclosure applications, that is for whom the Council is acting as an Umbrella Body, has such a written policy and, if necessary, to provide a model for that body or Individual to use or adapt for this purpose.

2. Aim

This Policy has therefore been introduced to ensure that the Council and those bodies for whom it has agreed to act as Umbrella Body complies fully with the requirements of the DBS Code of Practice in relation to the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of disclosure information.

The Council also complies with its obligations under the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of disclosure information and has a separate written policy on these matters.

3. Storage and access

3.1 *Paper Based Disclosures*

A paper based disclosure certificate is never kept on an applicant's personnel file and is always kept separately and securely, in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties, that is, the relevant Countersignatory, nominated staff within Human Resources and the officers involved in making the recruitment decision. The Countersignatories are responsible for ensuring the safe and confidential storage of all disclosure information received.

3.2 *e-Bulk (Electronic) Disclosures*

Disclosure certificates received electronically through the e-Bulk system are stored solely within the e-Bulk system for online viewing only; at no point are copies of the disclosure certificates printed. Online access to the disclosure



certificates is restricted to Countersignatories and the relevant Applicant Managers, with secure password controls in place.

4. Handling

Due regard must be paid to the Data Protection Act 1998 when handling disclosure information. In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, disclosure information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. The Council will maintain a record of all those to whom disclosures or disclosure information has been revealed and recognises that it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

All information relating to offences must therefore remain confidential on a need to know basis. Applicants and employees need to feel confident that details about their convictions will not be disclosed to colleagues.

5. Usage

Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

6. Retention

Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, the Council will not keep disclosure information for any longer than is absolutely necessary. This is generally for a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep disclosure information for longer than six-months, the Council will consult the DBS about this and will give full consideration to the Data Protection and Human Rights issues relating to the individual subject before doing so. Throughout this time, the usual conditions regarding safe storage and strictly controlled access will prevail.

7. Disposal

7.1 Paper Based Disclosures

As soon as the retention period has elapsed, the Council will ensure that any disclosure information is immediately suitably destroyed by secure means, i.e. by shredding, pulping or burning. Whilst awaiting destruction, disclosure information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential waste sack). The Council will not keep any photocopy or other image of the disclosure or any copy or representation of the contents of a disclosure.



7.2 *e-Bulk (Electronic) Disclosures*

Disclosure certificates received electronically through the e-Bulk system are automatically deleted from the system after 180 days.

However, notwithstanding the above, the Council will keep a record of the date of issue of a disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of disclosure requested, the position for which the disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken. This will be maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

8. **Acting as an umbrella body**

Before acting as an Umbrella Body (one which countersigns applications and receives disclosure information on behalf of other employers or recruiting organisations), the Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the body can comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice. The Council will also take all reasonable steps to satisfy it that they will handle, use, store, retain and dispose of disclosure information in full compliance with the DBS Code and in full accordance with this policy. The Council will also ensure that any body or individual, at whose request applications for disclosure are countersigned, has such a written policy and, if necessary, will provide a model policy for that body or individual to use or adapt for this purpose.

