

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE



REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Approval

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Authority's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking Policy attached as Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the Authority's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking Policy attached as Appendix A.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order 1975 has been amended in 2023 making the eligibility for a Standard level of DBS check available for all who work in or volunteer for fire and rescue authorities.

- 3.2 In addition, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services report entitled 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services,' (Recommendation 9) states that:

'By 1 December 2024, Chief Fire Officers should 'immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board'.

- 3.3 In light of these statutory changes we have reviewed our existing arrangements in relation to DBS Checking Policy and Procedure. The review has taken into consideration information from the Disclosure and Barring Checking Service, the NFCC National Operational Guidance 'Joint Guidance on DBS eligibility checks for FRA roles,' and information from the regional FRSs with regards to the approach they are taking.

4. DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- 4.1 The revised Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking Policy and Procedure is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.2 The policy statement (section 1) has been amended to reflect our duty of care and asserts how we apply with our responsibilities under the relevant legislation.
- 4.3 Section 3 sets out the scope of the policy in terms of applicable staff and volunteers and contract type.
- 4.4 Section 4 explains the levels of DBS disclosure; the HR Department will maintain an approved list of what level applies to what role.
- 4.5 The Authority's role is presented at Section 6.
- 4.6 In planning and implementation terms it is important to highlight that this policy will impact existing and new employees and the procedure attached at Appendix 1 gives details.
- 4.7 It is proposed that the roll out of DBS checks will commence April 2024 starting with the prioritisation of those individual's that now require enhanced DBS and who have the longest service where a relevant DBS may not already be in place.
- 4.8 Communications to employees regarding the changes to the DBS policy and procedure and level of checks required aligned to role, will be communicated via letter to individuals, in addition to notification via the Comms Forum and article within FireWire.
- 4.9 The costs associated with the implementation and continuation of DBS checks will not be fully known until the scoping out process to determine those role/level of DBS has been completed. However, based on current workforce establishment and initial discussions regarding those roles which may require DBS/change to level of DBS, estimations are approximately £22,215 (approximately £7,405 annually based on a three yearly renewal).
- 4.10 The Fire Brigade's Union and UNISON have been consulted on this Policy and Procedure and to date no issues have been raised.
- 4.11 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the implementation of this and no issues have been identified that would negatively impact any protected characteristic group.

IAN HAYTON
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

KAREN WINTER
ACFO STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES