Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy

1. Policy Purpose and Scope

This policy defines the structural requirements for requesting, assessing, and securely managing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal record checks. This policy applies to all employees and volunteers operating within our service provision, including **Befriending Service** and **Community Transport**. Our objective is to ensure robust safeguarding for our clients while maintaining a fair and open recruitment process.

2. DBS Eligibility Criteria and Check Levels

In accordance with the GOV.UK DBS Workforce Guidance, we assess eligibility based strictly on the specific duties of each role. Blanket background checks are strictly prohibited

- **Community Transport Drivers:**
    - **Level Required:** Enhanced DBS Check with an Adults' Barred List check.
    - **Legal Rationale:** Driving adults to, from, or between healthcare appointments (e.g., hospitals, GPs, dentists) on behalf of the organisation falls under the legal definition of **Regulated Activity ("Conveying")**. This check is mandatory regardless of how frequently the individual drives.
- **Befriending Service:**
    - **Level Required:** Enhanced DBS Check (without Barred List).
    - **Legal Rationale:** Regular, targeted support provided to adults who require assistance due to age, illness, or disability qualifies for an Enhanced check. If a befriending role expands to include formal personal care or the legal management of a client's money/affairs, a Barred List check will be added. [1]

3. Fair Recruitment and Ex-Offenders

- **Equal Opportunities:** We adhere directly to the GOV.UK Sample Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders. Having a criminal record does not automatically disqualify an individual from volunteering or working with us.
- **Proportionate Risk Assessments:** If a DBS check reveals a conviction or caution, a formal, confidential risk assessment is executed by the Management Team before a recruitment decision is finalized.
- **Assessment Factors:** The panel evaluates the nature and relevance of the offence, the applicant's age at the time of the offence, the time elapsed since the event, and the context surrounding the situation.

4. Information Security, Storage, and Retention

We handle all certificate data in strict compliance with the GOV.UK Handling of DBS Certificate Information Code of Practice:

- **Access Control:** DBS information is stored in locked filing cabinets or secure, password-protected digital servers. Access is strictly limited to authorized safeguarding officers.
- **Retention Limit:** Physical copies or electronic scans of DBS certificates are never kept for longer than **six months** following the final recruitment decision.
- **The Secure Register:** We maintain a permanent, secure tracking log containing only the date of the check, the unique certificate number, the level of the check, and the final pass/fail outcome.
- **Disposal:** Expired certificates are permanently destroyed using confidential cross-cut shredding or secure digital erasure tools.

5. Continuous Suitability and the Update Service

To streamline repeat checks and maintain continuous safeguarding compliance, we encourage all active drivers and befrienders to enrol in the online GOV.UK DBS Update Service. With the individual's formal written consent, we will perform free, annual status updates to ensure their certificate remains valid without requiring fresh applications.

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