

**RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS**

**POLICY**

**(for staff and volunteers)**

**This policy has been approved by the Trustee**

**Board of Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid**

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| ***Date:*** | December 2022 |
| ***Signed:*** | Gail Clarke |
| ***Position:*** | Chair |
| ***Policy first issued:*** | December 2015 |
| ***Revised:*** | October 2019 |
| ***Next review due:*** | December 2025 |

**BELFAST AND LISBURN WOMEN’S AID**

**RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS POLICY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Women’s Aid in Northern Ireland is the lead voluntary agency addressing domestic and sexual violence against women and children, recognising it as one form of violence against women. The overall aim of Women’s Aid is to eliminate domestic violence and to challenge the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it.

This policy outlines Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid’s (BLWA) commitment to ensuring no applicant for an employed or voluntary position, nor member of staff is subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of committing an offence.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid complies fully with the Code of Practice, issued by the Department of Justice, in connection with the use of information provided to registered persons, their nominees and other recipients of information by AccessNI under Part V of the Police Act 1997, for the purposes of assessing Applicant’s suitability for employment purposes, voluntary positions, licensing and other relevant purposes. We undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not to discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

2. This policy is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

3. Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid is committed to equality of opportunity (refer to the organisation’s Equal Opportunities Policy), to following practices and to providing a service which is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. We ensure that no applicant, member of staff, volunteer, or service user is subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, age, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, physical or mental disability, political opinion or offending background.

4. Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid welcomes applications from any candidate who can demonstrate they meet the required standard of skills, qualifications and experience as outlined in the essential and desirable criteria provided for each vacant post.

5. We will request an AccessNI Disclosure where considered proportionate and relevant to a particular position. This will be based on whether the role involves carrying out regulated activity, the frequency of that activity, and supervision of that activity. Having considered the relevant legislation, we will determine the need for a Standard Check, Enhanced Check, Adult Barred List Check or Children’s Barred List Check.

Where an AccessNI Disclosure is deemed necessary for a post or position, all applicants will be made aware at the initial recruitment stage that the position will be subject to a Disclosure.

Applicants will also be advised, should their name appear on a Barred List, this WILL automatically result in a withdrawal of any offer of employment or volunteering, and the relevant authorities will be notified. Applicants will be made aware that it is a criminal offence to apply for work in regulated activity when knowingly barred from doing so.

6. In line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid will ask about convictions which are defined as “not protected”, spent convictions, for the purposes of obtaining a Standard or Enhanced disclosure.

7. We undertake to ensure an open, measured and recorded discussion on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be considered relevant for the position concerned e.g. the individual is applying for a Finance Manager role but has a criminal history of money laundering. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of the conditional offer of employment.

8. Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid may consider discussing any matter revealed in a Disclosure. We are only able to discuss what is contained on a Disclosure, and not what may have been sent under separate cover by the Police (without police agreement), with the subject of that Disclosure before considering withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid will hold the offer of employment for 14 days on receipt of Disclosure.

9. We ensure that all those in Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of Disclosure information. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to employment of ex-offenders (e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978).

10. We undertake to make every subject of an AccessNI Disclosure aware of the existence of the Code of Practice, and to make a copy available on request.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily debar someone from working with Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid. This will depend on the nature of the position, together with the circumstances and background of the offences or other information contained on a disclosure or provided directly to us by the police.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Chief Executive of BLWA has responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and procedures. Staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the policy and procedures

**BREACH OF THE POLICY**

Breach of this policy and procedures may result in disciplinary action.

**REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the HR Committee (or earlier if a need

is identified).