

GUIDELINES ON THE RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

1. INTRODUCTION

University of Suffolk confirms its commitment to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities within the organisation. It aims to create the conditions whereby students and staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of gender, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances, sexual orientation or other irrelevant distinction. The University of Suffolk is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this policy be fully effective.

University of Suffolk Code of Practice on Equal Opportunities in Employment is available on request. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

Our guidelines on the recruitment of ex-offenders are made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

2. THE DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has been set up by the Home Office to improve access to DBS checks for employment-related and voluntary appointment purposes. The DBS will provide a service to employers and volunteering groups of all kinds, called Disclosure, to help establish whether a successful candidate has a background that might make him or her unsuitable for the job or volunteering position in question.

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, University of Suffolk complies with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed

3. DISCLOSURE

A Disclosure is a document containing information held by the police and government departments. Disclosures will provide details of a person's criminal record including convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer (PNC). If the position involves working with children, Disclosures will also contain details from lists held by the Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) of those considered unsuitable for this type of work. Depending upon the level of Disclosure, it might also contain information held by local police forces.

A Disclosure will only be requested after a risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, applicant information will contain a statement that a Disclosure will only be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

We make every subject of a DBS Disclosure aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and make a copy available on request. If individuals wish to query the accuracy of a Disclosure, they will be able to do so through the DBS disputes procedure.

4. RECRUITMENT

Unless the nature of the position allows the University of Suffolk to ask about an applicants entire criminal record we only ask about "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The Exceptions Order to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 sets out those occupations and positions considered exempt from the Act - these are generally positions of trust and which may involve work with children, older people and other vulnerable groups where there is a valid need to see a person's full criminal history in order to assess their suitability for a position.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage by placing details in an envelope marked 'Confidential – for the attention of the Resourcing Business Partner' and returning it with their application. We guarantee that this information is only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

At interview, or separately, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

In considering Disclosure information, we will consider the following:

- Whether the conviction or other matter revealed is relevant to the position in question;
- The seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed;
- The length of time since the offence or other matter occurred;
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters;
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour or other relevant matters; and
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the convicted person.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

We ensure that all those at the University of Suffolk who are involved in the recruitment process have received appropriate guidance in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

5. GENERAL

Our guidelines on the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposal of Disclosures and disclosure information is available on request.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background to your offences.