



HEARTWOOD

LEARNING TRUST

RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO THE HEARTWOOD LEARNING TRUST BOARD, THE CENTRAL TEAM,
AND ALL TRUST SCHOOLS/ACADEMIES

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Policy Updates

Date	Page	Policy Updates
January 2025	4	Introduction added inline with other Trust policies
January 2025	4	Purpose and Scope renamed as Statement of Intent inline with other Trust policies; wording updated
January 2025	5	1 - Legal Framework added inline with other Trust policies
January 2025	5	2.1 - Change of pronouns to ensure inclusivity
January 2025	7	5 - Monitoring and Review section added inline with other Trust policies

Introduction

Heartwood Learning Trust is an inclusive and collaborative Church of England multi-academy trust serving church, community and alternative provision schools. This policy is guided by our Christian ethos and the visions of our Trust and its schools/academies. We share a clear vision – to create schools where children and young people thrive, as we help them prepare to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

For us, a place to thrive means much more than a place simply to be comfortable. Instead, our aim is to develop schools and an educational offer which enable each pupil to flourish academically, practically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Statement of Intent

It is a legal requirement that all registered bodies and prospective employers must treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and not discriminate because of a conviction or other information revealed. Registered bodies and employers who are Regulated Activity Providers (including schools) are obliged to have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is available to DBS applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

The aim of this policy is to state Heartwood Learning Trust's approach towards employing people who have criminal convictions. As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of Trust, Heartwood Learning Trust complies fully with the Home Office Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants fairly.

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all job applicants and aim to select people for employment on the basis of their individual skills, abilities, experience, knowledge and, where appropriate, qualifications and training.

Heartwood Learning Trust is an exempt employer as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975) and as such, we have a lawful basis for requesting an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure certificate for all employees. In addition, the Heartwood Learning Trust is a regulated activity provider and for the majority of positions, we have a statutory duty to check that the individual is not barred from regulated work with children and/or adults.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance to us and the scrutiny of any unspent cautions or convictions and those which would not be protected under the Ministry of Justice filtering rules is an essential and non-negotiable part of the pre-employment checking process.

We will consider ex-offenders for employment on their individual merits. The Trust's approach towards employing ex-offenders differs depending on whether the job is or is not exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Trust may amend it at any time following effective consultation with the recognised Trade Unions. The Trust will complete an **Equality Impact Assessment** during the development and implementation of this policy to ensure due consideration has been given regarding equality implications; to support the Trust with removing barriers to equality and preventing discrimination.

1. Legal Framework

- 1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
 - DfE (2024) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
 - Ministry of Justice (2023) 'Guidance on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975'
 - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
 - Ministry of Justice (2023) 'DBS Filtering Guidance'
 - Home Office (2015) 'Revised Code of Practice for Disclosure and Barring Service Registered Persons'
- 1.2. This policy has due regard to guidance offered by the following organisations:
 - National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders ([Nacro](#)), including their Filtering Process Flowchart
 - [Disclosure and Barring Service](#)
- 1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following **Trust** policies:
 - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

2. Jobs covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

- 2.1. We will not automatically refuse to employ a particular individual just because they have a previous criminal conviction.
- 2.2. During the recruitment process, the Trust will ask shortlisted job applicants to disclose any unspent cautions or convictions but will not ask job applicants questions about criminal history that would be filtered or protected, nor expect them to disclose any protected convictions. The successful applicant will be asked to apply for an enhanced DBS certificate, with a Children's barred list check and / or an Adult's barred list check if undertaking regulated activity.
- 2.3. If an applicant has a caution or conviction that is unspent and if the nature of the offence is relevant to their suitability for the job for which they have applied, we will review the individual circumstances of the case having sought a DBS certificate and by using a 'Positive DBS - Record of Decision Form' may, at the Trust's discretion, decline to select the individual for employment.

3. Jobs that are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

- 3.1. The vast majority of the roles we are seeking to recruit are covered by the **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975** (roles in regulated positions and in Further Education provision). In these cases, the Heartwood Learning Trust will require shortlisted applicants to disclose all unspent convictions or bind overs in addition to any criminal history that would not be filtered. Even in these circumstances, however, we will not refuse to employ a particular individual unless the nature of the conviction has some relevance to the job for which the individual has applied. Again the individual circumstances of the case will be reviewed by seeking a DBS certificate with a Children's barred list check and/or an Adult's barred list check if undertaking regulated activity and completing a Positive DBS - Record of Decision Form.

- 3.2. As a result of amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act in 2013 and 2020, cautions and convictions that meet specified criteria should not be disclosed by applicants and must not be taken into account by potential employers. We encourage all applicants to use the flowchart provided by Nacro ([Appendix A](#)) and to seek legal or impartial advice before completing their self-disclosure. We will not take into account any criminal history that would be protected or filtered, even if it is subsequently disclosed on the DBS certificate.
- 3.3. The Heartwood Learning Trust will, once we have selected the person to whom we wish to offer employment, make a joint application to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for an enhanced certificate (with the relevant DBS barred list(s) check if the post is in regulated activity). Where the individual is a member of the DBS update service in the relevant workforce and at the required level, the Trust will, with the individual's permission, carry out a status check on any current certificate.
- 3.4. The Heartwood Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that all information provided about an individual's criminal convictions, including any information released in disclosures, is used fairly and stored and handled appropriately and in accordance with the provisions of the UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data held on file about an individual's criminal convictions will be held only as long as it is required for employment and/or safeguarding purposes and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised person.

4. The Process

- 4.1. As a Regulated Activity provider (RAP) almost all paid employees at the Heartwood Learning Trust are in regulated activity and therefore subject to an enhanced DBS certificate with check(s) of the relevant DBS barred list(s).
- 4.2. In relation to volunteers an enhanced DBS certificate with a barred list check will be undertaken if the volunteer engages in regulated activity. The Trust/School/Academy will undertake a volunteer risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check for any volunteer not engaged in regulated activity. (Except for those simply assisting with day-time school trips).
- 4.3. For those positions where an enhanced DBS check is required, the application form and application pack will contain a statement that an enhanced DBS certificate (with barred list check(s) where relevant) will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position and an explanation of when in the recruitment process criminal information will be requested and considered.
- 4.4. All shortlisted applicants are required to complete a criminal record self-disclosure form to be returned no less than 1 day prior to the interview date. This information is to be sent to the relevant Headteacher/Principal, Recruiting Manager or to HR dependent on the role applied for. Failure to return the self-disclosure form will result in the offer of interview being withdrawn. We guarantee that the self-disclosure information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment and selection process.
- 4.5. The criminal record self-disclosure form will include information for shortlisted applicants on the importance of seeking legal advice and the contact details of organisations that can provide impartial advice.
- 4.6. We ensure that all those who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received

appropriate guidance on the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (exceptions order 1975) (as amended 2013 & 2020) and know how to access advice and support from HR, and relevant registered bodies.

- 4.7. At interview, or in a separate discussion, the recruitment selection panel will ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or related concerns that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that would not be filtered could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- 4.8. All potential employees are guided to the 'Revised Code of Practice for Disclosure and Barring Service Registered Persons' and a copy will be made available on request.
- 4.9. We undertake to discuss any relevant matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. This discussion and completion of the 'Positive DBS - Record of Decision Form' will be undertaken by the Headteacher/Principal and countersigned by the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.10. If the DBS check reveals any matching information against the DBS barred list(s) or any criminal conviction which precludes them from working with children and/or adults, the applicant is deemed non appointable. In this circumstance, we would notify the Local Authority Designated Officer.

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1. This policy will be reviewed every **two years** by the Trust's **Director of HR** and approved by the **Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee**.
- 5.2. The next scheduled date for review can be found on the cover page of this document.

Filtering process flowchart (as applied to standard/enhanced DBS checks)

