**Procedure for Handling Recruitment and AccessNI Checks for Applicants with Conflict-Related Convictions**

1. **Purpose**

To ensure a fair and consistent approach to recruitment while complying with legal obligations and best practices concerning conflict-related convictions.

1. **Scope**

This procedure applies to all recruitment processes where AccessNI checks are required, including Basic, Standard, Enhanced, and Enhanced with Barred List checks.

**3. Responsibilities**

* **Hiring Managers**: Ensure fair recruitment practices and assess convictions only when materially relevant.
* **POD Department**: Manage recruitment processes and provide guidance on AccessNI checks.
* **Applicants**: Disclose relevant information when required.

**4. Recruitment Process**

4.1 **Volunteer Role Advertisement & Application**

* Ensure all volunteer role advertisements focus on skills and experience, and qualifications if relevant.
* Do not request disclosure of criminal records at the application stage unless the role falls under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979.

4.2 **Selection Process**

* Shortlist candidates based on merit, without considering conflict-related convictions at this stage.
* Conduct interviews focusing on skills, experience, and suitability for the role.

4.3 **AccessNI Check**

* 1. After identifying a preferred candidate, initiate an AccessNI check if required for the role: **Basic Check**: Shows unspent convictions.
  2. **Standard Check**: Includes spent and unspent convictions for regulated roles.
  3. **Enhanced Check**: Includes additional relevant information from the police.
  4. **Enhanced with Barred List Check**: Required for roles involving regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

4.4 **Assessing Conflict-Related Convictions**

* 1. If an AccessNI check reveals a conflict-related conviction: Determine if the conviction is **materially relevant** to the role.
  2. Consider the **nature of the offence**, time elapsed, and whether it impacts role responsibilities.
  3. The **seriousness of the offence alone is not a reason** for disqualification.

4.5 **Applicant Engagement & Review**

* 1. If a conviction appears relevant: Inform the applicant and provide an opportunity to explain.
  2. Allow submission of supporting evidence (e.g., references, rehabilitation details).
  3. Conduct a review meeting with the applicant if needed.

4.6 **Decision & Appeals**

* If the conviction is **not materially relevant**, proceed with the appointment.
  1. If the conviction is **deemed incompatible** with the role: Clearly document the reasons.
  2. Offer the applicant an opportunity to appeal through an internal review panel.

**5. Confidentiality**

* Ensure all criminal record information is handled confidentially and in compliance with data protection laws.
* Access to records should be limited to designated POD /Volunteer services personnel and relevant hiring managers.

**6. Monitoring & Review**

* Regularly review recruitment practices to ensure compliance with legal requirements and best practices.
* Report on volunteer recruitment decisions involving conflict-related convictions for transparency and fairness.

**7. Compliance with Legislation** This procedure aligns with:

* The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
* The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979
* The Police Act 1997 (as applied to NI)
* The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
* The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act