



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

# HANDLING OF DBS CERTIFICATES

**SECURE STORAGE, HANDLING,  
USAGE, RETENTION AND  
DISPOSAL OF DBS CERTIFICATES  
AND INFORMATION**

## HANDLING OF DBS CERTIFICATES

Storage and access

Handling

Usage

Retention

Disposal

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This Policy document sets out best practice that members of staff should adhere to when involved with the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposal of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates and certificate information.

## **OBJECTIVE**

2. The objective of the Policy is to make sure that the Councils deal with DBS certificates and the information they hold in line with guidance provided by the DBS to ensure consistent levels of security and confidentiality.

## **EQUALITY**

3. The Manager and HR Specialist should make sure that all stages and steps in the DBS Certificate Handling process are free from any taint of discrimination on the grounds of a characteristic protected under the provisions of the Equality Act.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

4. As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils comply fully with the code of practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of certificates and certificate information.
5. It also complies fully with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of certificate information and has a written policy on these matters, which is available to those who wish to see it on request.

## **STORAGE AND ACCESS**

6. Certificate information should be kept securely, in electronic folders held within the Councils' secure network which are only accessible to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.
7. Alternatively, where paper copies of certificate information is held, this should be done so in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.

## **HANDLING**

8. In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, certificate information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. We maintain a record of all those to whom certificates or certificate information has been revealed and it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it

## **USAGE**

9. Certificate information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

## **RETENTION**

10. Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, we do not keep certificate information for any longer than is necessary. This is generally for a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints.
11. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep certificate information for longer than six months, we will consult the DBS about this and will give full consideration to the Data Protection and Human Rights of the individual before doing so.
12. Throughout this time, the usual conditions regarding the safe storage and strictly controlled access will prevail.

## **DISPOSAL**

13. Once the retention period has elapsed, we will ensure that any DBS certificate information is immediately destroyed by secure means, for example by shredding, pulping or burning. While awaiting destruction, certificate information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential waste sack).
14. We will not keep any photocopy or other image of the certificate or any copy or representation of the contents of a certificate. However, notwithstanding the above, we may keep a record of the date of issue of a certificate, the name of the subject, the type of certificate requested, the position for which the certificate was requested, the unique reference number of the certificates and the details of the recruitment decision taken.

## **ACTING AS AN UMBRELLA BODY**

15. Before acting as an umbrella body (an umbrella body being a registered body which countersigns applications and receives certificate information on behalf of other employers or recruiting organisations), we will take all reasonable steps to satisfy ourselves that they will handle, use, store, retain and dispose of certificate information in full compliance with the DBS code of practice and in full accordance with this policy.
16. We will also ensure that any body or individual, at whose request applications for DBS certificates are countersigned, has such a written policy and, if necessary, will provide a model policy for that body or individual to use or adapt for this purpose.