

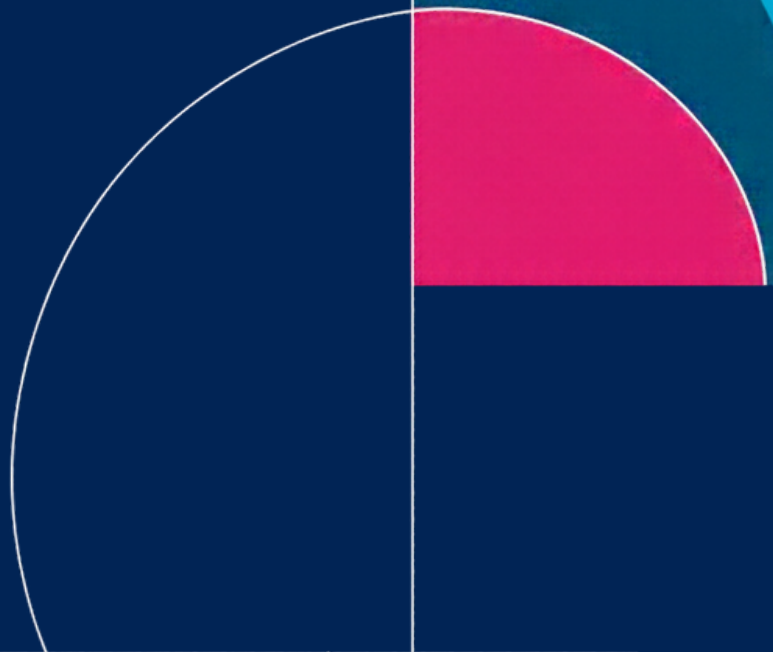


supporting the voluntary
sector working in the
criminal justice system

SECTOR BRIEFING

Vetting for People with Lived Experience of the Criminal Justice System

OCTOBER 2026



Introduction

Clinks is the national infrastructure organisation for the voluntary sector working in criminal justice in England and Wales and is the current holder of the HMPPS/MoJ infrastructure grant. We support, promote and represent over 500 members and advocate on behalf of the estimated 1700 organisations working with people involved in the criminal justice system.

The Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) provides the key interface between the voluntary sector, and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), in order to increase mutual understanding and build a strong and effective partnership. The group is made up of senior leaders from the voluntary sector and meets quarterly with civil servants to provide guidance and feedback on MoJ policy developments. Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are established to explore specific policy areas in greater detail.

Clinks held a webinar in April 2026 on the Risk Assessed Access for Personnel with Lived Experience of the Criminal Justice System Policy Framework, under the remit of the RR3 SIG on Vetting. The session closely examined the Policy Framework, the opportunities it presents, as well as key concerns regarding its implementation and future review. It was also an opportunity to engage directly with HMPPS' Lived Experience Vetting Policy Lead and officials' responses to sector questions are included in this briefing.

This briefing therefore incorporates the views of, and challenges raised by, voluntary sector organisations who contributed to the webinar. It also provides specific feedback from officials in answer to questions raised by the voluntary sector.

To note, a survey on the framework has been disseminated (as of 19 October 2026) and will run until 16 November 2026. This forms part of a six-month implementation review of the policy and associated processes. It has been shared with organisations, networks and individuals who have experience of supporting people with lived experience of the criminal justice system into employment, volunteering, peer support and other approved activities. This briefing will be updated following the conclusion of this process.

Purpose and context

The Risk Assessed Access for Personnel with Lived Experience of the Criminal Justice System Policy Framework creates a specific route for considering whether someone with lived experience of the criminal justice system can work in or access HMPPS settings where past convictions mean they cannot be cleared through the usual vetting process. It explains how applications should be considered, what information and checks may be needed, and how decisions should take account of the person, the role, the setting and any risks that would need to be managed.

The framework applies to directly employed and non-directly employed people, including those working in prisons, probation, youth settings, contracted services and voluntary sector organisations delivering work on behalf of HMPPS. For voluntary sector organisations, this means the framework is relevant where staff, volunteers, sessional workers, supply chain staff or others are being deployed into HMPPS environments and cannot obtain the required HMPPS vetting because of their past offending.

Where an individual cannot obtain the relevant HMPPS vetting, a role-specific risk assessment and role-specific risk management plan must be completed before access can be agreed. This is a mandatory process within the policy framework and must be followed by the relevant HMPPS decision-makers and organisations deploying people into HMPPS environments.

For the voluntary sector, the significance of the framework lies in how it may affect the ability of organisations to employ, involve and support people with lived experience in roles connected to HMPPS. Understanding how the framework operates is therefore important not only for compliance, but for ensuring that opportunities for people with lived experience are considered fairly and consistently, with risks managed in a clear and proportionate way.

What the policy framework does

The policy framework creates a 'risk-assessed' route for people with lived experience who cannot be granted HMPPS vetting because of their past offending. It does not create an automatic right to work in HMPPS settings. Instead, each case must be considered in relation to the individual, the role, the location, the duties involved and whether identified risks can be managed safely.

This route is role-specific and location-based. Access can only be agreed where a role-specific risk assessment has been completed, and a role-specific risk management plan has been agreed. The relevant senior local manager, or Local Risk Owner, must accept responsibility for managing the risk and ensuring agreed mitigations are implemented.

The policy groups risk considerations into categories, including circumstances where cases may be considered through individual assessment and circumstances where access cannot be agreed under the framework. These categories include Free, Flex and Fixed categories. HMPPS' position is that some Fixed category offences create risks in certain environments that cannot be mitigated against.

Decisions are intended to be risk-based and must take account of the role, the operating environment, available evidence and any proposed safeguards. Where an application is declined, this reflects a judgement that the risks are not considered manageable within the framework.

For most voluntary sector organisations, the framework should formalise and clarify processes rather than require entirely new systems. It also brings together policy material that previously existed in several places, including older guidance on peer mentoring and additional risk criteria for people with previous convictions working in prison and community settings.

This document sets out the framework as it currently stands and will be updated in line with the conclusions of the implementation review, highlighted above.

Application route and information required

The relevant Vetting Contact Point should submit the application through the EL1 or Standard Plus route. Once initial checks have been completed by SSCL, eligible cases are referred directly to the Lived Experience team for consideration under the Lived Experience Appointment Pathway (LEAP). Applicants do not need to receive a declined vetting outcome before being considered under LEAP. This is intended to identify eligible individuals earlier, reduce stress for the candidate and avoid unnecessary administrative burden.

Applicants will need to make arrangements with their local Vetting Contact Point to provide right to work and identity documents, either online or in person. The Vetting Contact Point records the relevant details and submits the clearance request through the security vetting portal. Submitting the required documents initiates the vetting process and helps ensure that the relevant information is available for assessment.

Pre-appointment questionnaire and initial checks

Applicants complete a questionnaire and upload right to work and identity documents. They may also upload a personal statement or send it separately by email to the PSC Lived Experience team's functional mailbox. SSCL verifies the authenticity and completeness of submitted information so that discrepancies can be identified at an early stage.

Eligible cases are referred to security vetting and, where appropriate, to the Lived Experience team for assessment under LEAP.

PSC review and risk assessment

The Lived Experience team gathers relevant information, using Annex C of the policy framework where further information is needed to support vetting. The relevant business unit reviews the information and undertakes a risk assessment using the workplace risk management plan.

The Local Risk Owner is responsible for accepting and managing the risks associated with the appointment.

The plan is developed with support from appropriate operational and security colleagues so that mitigations are tailored to the role and operating environment. Local operational colleagues, including security staff where appropriate, may contribute to the assessment process in line with local procedures.

Decision-making, approval and refusal

Decisions are based on the risk assessment and the role or environment in question. Some decisions are referred to the Lived Experience Risk Assessment Panel (LERAP), chaired at deputy director level. LERAP is a multi-disciplinary panel that provides oversight and consistency of decision-making across the framework and forms part of the governance arrangements for role-specific risk assessment decisions.

If clearance is approved, the Lived Experience team sends confirmation and updates the case status. If clearance is refused, the Lived Experience team returns the case, and applicants will normally be informed of the reason for the decision within communications. During assessment, additional information may be requested before a final decision is made where this is needed to support a fuller understanding of the role or circumstances.

CASE STUDY

Mr B – vetting outcome

01 Background

Mr B applied for a season project role. He has four convictions for eight offences, including a 24-month custodial sentence, with the last offence occurring in September 2024. These offences, according to the DBS, include possession of controlled drugs, robbery and theft, and drink driving.

Mr B provided a disclosure of his offences but was unsure of the exact dates. He added an additional statement noting that he had several offences but could not recall all dates or outcomes.

02 Declared connections

Mr B declared that his brother was serving a sentence in HMP Y and that he had visited him in 2019.

03 Vetting process

The Lived Experience team reviewed Mr B's disclosure against the DBS. Although the dates differed, the additional statement demonstrated transparency and the team proceeded with checks. The declared connection with his brother was verified and noted in the risk assessment.

04 Issue identified

During further checks, a family connection was identified: Mr B's uncle was serving a sentence in HMP X, the same establishment where Mr B had applied to work. Mr B had had no contact with his uncle since 2005 and did not know that he was in HMP X. The connection and Mr B's lack of knowledge of his uncle's circumstances were documented and sent to the decision-makers, including the governor of HMP X.

Outcome

The decision-makers reviewed the risk assessment and did not approve clearance because the family connection identified during checks was considered relevant to the proposed placement. The case illustrates how information identified through checks can affect a decision even where the applicant was unaware of the specific connection.

Key learning

Applicants should fully and accurately disclose all relevant information they know about family or close connections who are currently, or have previously been, involved in the criminal justice system, including where contact is limited or has ended. They should explain the nature and current status of the relationship and be clear where they do not know a connection's current circumstances. In Mr B's case, he disclosed the information known to him, but did not know that his uncle was serving in HMP X. The learning point is therefore the importance of distinguishing between information an applicant could reasonably disclose and connections identified only through subsequent checks.

Operational guidance for voluntary sector organisations: Key Points

This section summarises key areas of information and the practical implications of the framework for voluntary sector organisations that employ, deploy or support people with lived experience of the criminal justice system in HMPPS settings following officials' responses to questions on the framework.

These points clarify where responsibilities sit, what information may be needed, and how decisions about access, risk management and review are likely to work in practice. They should be read alongside the full Policy Framework and any local HMPPS guidance, particularly where roles, sites or risk factors are complex. Questions raised during the April session, together with responses, are included in Annex 1.

Policy development and consultation

HMPPS has stated that consultation sessions and workshops with internal and external stakeholders, including voluntary organisations, during January 2025 informed the policy before approval and implementation. Details of the full range of organisations and individuals involved, the feedback received, and the specific changes made as a result before publication in March 2026 have not been provided to Clinks.

Who the framework applies to

Non-directly employed people are people who are not employed directly by HMPPS. The policy framework applies across both directly employed and non-directly employed populations. LEAP is a specific pathway for non-directly employed individuals whereas directly employed people are considered through separate processes contained within the wider policy framework. Many of the processes in the policy were already in place and have now been formalised, so the framework is not expected to significantly increase time or capacity requirements. Training and support for vacancy managers and others involved in the process is being developed.

Applications, checks and timescales

Personal statements are voluntary and give applicants an opportunity to provide additional information they feel is relevant, including rehabilitation, personal development or other contextual factors. They can be submitted with the application or emailed to the Lived Experience team during assessment.

DBS requirements are determined by role and operational context. For HMPPS roles, a standard DBS check forms part of the vetting process, with enhanced checks used where a higher level of assurance is required. Feedback about duplication and use of the DBS Update Service has been noted for consideration by relevant operational colleagues.

There is currently no formal KPI or fixed timeframe. Vetting is risk-based, and timescales vary depending on the complexity of the case, the information required and the timeliness of local decision-making.

Applications already in progress should continue under the arrangements that applied when they were submitted unless applicants are advised otherwise by HMPPS. Applications will move onto the LEAP framework at the next annual review.

Clearance and multi-site access

LEAP is not currently designed as national clearance. Clearance remains role-specific and location-based. Where access is genuinely required across multiple prisons within a region, a Regional Risk Management Plan may be considered and would require approval by the relevant Prison Group Director. Different parts of the estate have different approval routes: women's prisons and the youth estate are overseen by dedicated Prison Group Directors and require separate consideration and approval.

Risk management, review and mitigations

The PSC team maintains a central register of individuals working under a role-specific risk management plan. Risk management arrangements are subject to annual review as a minimum and may be reviewed sooner if there is a change in role or circumstances. The Lived Experience team in PSC will contact the prison or probation region when a review is due.

The Local Risk Owner is responsible for ensuring reviews are completed and may restrict access where an individual has not complied with an annual review in a timely way.

Individuals working under an approved arrangement should continue to comply with existing restrictions and mitigations pending completion of routine review activity unless advised otherwise. HMPPS expects individuals who hold security clearance or a role-specific risk management plan to notify changes in personal circumstances that may affect security, safeguarding or risk management considerations. This is not specific to LEAP.

Hate crime is defined in the Policy Framework as offences where hostility was based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity. Organised crime-associated offences and a history of domestic violence are assessed using all relevant available information rather than a prescribed list of offences. Annex B within the Policy Framework provides examples of mitigations that may be considered when developing a role-specific risk management plan, and the specific mitigations applied will depend on the risks identified and the operational requirements of the role.

Next steps: Contributing to the October–November 2026 implementation review

The implementation review of the Risk Assessed Access for Personnel with Lived Experience of the Criminal Justice System Policy Framework is running from 19 October 2026 to 16 November 2026. It provides an opportunity for voluntary sector organisations to share their experiences of how the framework is operating in practice.

The review asks organisations to describe how they have engaged with the policy framework, including whether they have supported, referred or considered individuals under the policy. They will also be asked about any barriers to supporting or referring individuals, and how clear and accessible they found the Lived Experience Appointment Pathway (LEAP).

Following the conclusion of this implementation review, Clinks will publish an updated briefing for the sector.

Annex 1: Questions Posed by the Sector and Answers shared with us

Scope, eligibility and contracted work

01 QUESTION

Where an individual with a fixed exclusion offence is involved in the delivery of HMPPS-contracted work, whether remotely, in the community, or within a contracted organisation's workforce, what is the current obligation on that organisation, and what does compliance look like in practice? Given that the policy is due for review in six months, is there any interim guidance available?

Does "involvement" in HMPPS-contracted work extend beyond physical presence? Specifically, at what point would someone with a fixed exclusion offence be considered to have crossed a threshold in scenarios such as remote delivery into a prison setting, off-site community delivery to individuals referred by HMPPS or probation, creation of resources or content used within HMPPS settings, or a background organisational role within a contracted provider? In each case, who is responsible for making and enforcing that determination?

ANSWER

A key consideration is whether the activity aligns with those that would typically be expected to require EL1 vetting. The LEAP policy is intended to provide an alternative route where EL1 vetting would ordinarily be required but cannot be obtained due to conviction history. Where EL1 would not typically apply, LEAP provisions would not usually be engaged.

In the scenarios raised, this will depend on the specifics of the role, for example access to HMPPS environments, service users, or sensitive information. These are not exhaustive factors, and other relevant considerations may apply. Where EL1 is not required, individuals would not fall within EL1 or LEAP processes. In broad terms, responsibility for assessing suitability and managing any associated risks would generally sit with the contracted provider, in line with their existing responsibilities.

Vetting, DBS checks and process guidance

01**QUESTION**

How will LEAP review and renewal work in practice, particularly where individuals are asked to repeat full vetting even when there have been no changes in personal circumstances?

ANSWER

We are aware, following the session, that discussions have taken place with the individual and operational vetting colleagues regarding review and renewal processes.

02**QUESTION**

What level of DBS is routinely undertaken by MoJ or HMPPS as part of vetting? There are concerns about duplication where multiple checks are carried out, including cases where a second, higher-level DBS has then been completed by HMPPS.

ANSWER

In general terms, DBS requirements are determined based on the role and operational context. For HMPPS roles, a standard DBS forms part of the vetting process, with enhanced checks used where a higher level of assurance is required. Feedback regarding potential duplication is being noted.

03**QUESTION**

Can the DBS Update Service be used in place of repeating DBS checks, where conviction information is still checked and reported by the Disclosure and Barring Service in the same way, but the process would save time and expense?

ANSWER

We will ensure this feedback is shared with relevant operational colleagues for consideration.

04**QUESTION**

Some broad offence types listed in the LEAP fixed list cover a wide range of scenarios. Will these categories be reviewed?

ANSWER

As discussed within the session, the categorisation has been subject to extensive development, using available evidence, consultation, and senior review. The policy is due for formal review six months post-publication, and considerations of this nature will be captured as part of that process.

05**QUESTION**

Is there a KPI, target, or expected timeframe for how long the vetting process should take from application to outcome?

ANSWER

At a general level, there is currently no formal KPI or fixed timeframe. Vetting is a risk-based process, and timescales can vary depending on the complexity of individual cases.

06 QUESTION

Is guidance available for providers and employers about how vetting works generally, including the areas checked and who to contact about different parts of the process?

ANSWER

As a security function, we are limited in how much detail can be shared regarding specific checks. Additional supporting materials, such as FAQs, are currently being developed to provide more general context for external partners. Where there are perceived delays or specific queries, providers can contact the team via the functional mailbox.

Personal statements, applications and decision-making

01 QUESTION

When in the process do candidates submit their personal statement, and is there a flow chart or clear process explaining this?

ANSWER

Personal statements may be submitted at the point of application or shared via the team's functional mailbox. Personal statements are entirely voluntary. They provide applicants with an opportunity to share any additional information they feel may be relevant to understanding their circumstances, including information regarding rehabilitation, personal development, or other contextual factors. There is no expectation that applicants provide information beyond that which they are comfortable sharing.

02 QUESTION

How does the process work in practice where candidates are told why they failed vetting, there is no right to appeal, but additional information may still be submitted if needed? How will candidates know when to submit additional information?

ANSWER

Applicants will normally be informed of the reason for the decision within communications. In some cases, during assessment, additional information may be requested to support a fuller understanding of the role or circumstances before a decision is finalised. This reflects examples discussed during the session where further context of the job role was needed to support decision-making.

03 QUESTION

Will Standard Plus be retained as a fallback route, given concerns that LEAP decisions will be made centrally and may lead to refusals without an avenue of appeal where people could otherwise work safely with a risk mitigation plan in place?

ANSWER

Standard Plus is not being retained as a parallel route alongside LEAP. LEAP has been introduced to supersede the previous approach and support a more consistent framework. Decisions are intended to be risk-based, taking account of context, available information, and evidence. Where an application is declined, this reflects a judgement that the risks are not considered manageable within that framework. Applications continue to follow existing routes.

Offence categories, exclusions and eligibility considerations

01**QUESTION**

Will individuals who have served life sentences be eligible to return to prison settings?

ANSWER

As referenced in the session, individuals who have served life sentences may be considered under the policy for non-directly employed roles, noting that previous time-based restrictions relating to licence and supervision have been removed. All cases would be considered on an individual basis.

02**QUESTION**

Aside from non-disclosure, what types of high-risk issues might lead to refusal?

ANSWER

We are limited in the level of detail we can provide beyond high-level principles. Full and open disclosure is a fundamental requirement, as it enables a complete and accurate assessment of risk. In broad terms, outcomes are determined through a risk-based assessment considering the individual, their circumstances, their offending history, and the role or environment in question. These are not exhaustive factors, and other considerations may also be relevant.

03**QUESTION**

Are there plans to allow national clearance, rather than regional or site-based clearance, for organisations working across all categories of prisons?

ANSWER

LEAP is not currently designed to operate as a national clearance model. Clearances continue to be issued on a role-specific and location-based basis, reflecting the operational context. At present, there are no plans to move to a national model. As mentioned in the session, regional approaches may be considered where there is an operational requirement, and organisations can contact the team to discuss this further.

Policy aims, evidence and review**01****QUESTION**

How does HMPPS reconcile the stated aim of inclusion with the framework's strong emphasis on risk restriction and exclusion, and what metrics will determine whether it genuinely increases lived experience employment rather than formalising barriers?

ANSWER

We recognise the significant contribution that people with lived experience make across prisons, probation and wider rehabilitative services. Individuals with lived experience bring unique skills, insight and credibility that can enhance engagement, improve outcomes and support the delivery of effective services. LEAP was introduced to provide a clearer national approach to considering lived experience appointments across prisons and probation settings. The intention of LEAP is not to create additional barriers, but to provide a clearer, more transparent and better-governed framework through which lived experience opportunities can be considered and supported across HMPPS.

02 QUESTION

What evidence demonstrates that the specific exclusions in Annex A improve safety or reduce risk, and why was the Cambridge Crime Harm Index chosen over other possible approaches more suited to employment and equality aims?

ANSWER

Where comments relate to the scope of the policy or the evidence underpinning its development, the six-month review scheduled for October 2026 will provide the appropriate opportunity to consider any new or alternative evidence. To help ensure the review remains constructive and evidence-based, any matters raised as part of the review process should be supported by relevant evidence, data, operational learning, or specific examples.

03 QUESTION

What is the rationale for dividing offences into fixed, flex, and free categories, and why was a fully flexible, individualised assessment model not adopted, given that fixed exclusions appear to conflict with the principles of rehabilitation and proportionality?

ANSWER

The framework recognises both the value that people with lived experience bring and the responsibilities HMPPS has in relation to safety, security, safeguarding and public protection. Whilst some offence categories remain ineligible for consideration under the framework, many applications are considered using individual assessment, contextual information, available mitigations and local operational factors. The Fixed, Flex and Free model provides a clearer and more transparent structure for consideration than was previously available.

04 QUESTION

How was the risk to existing lived experience staff considered during policy development, who was consulted, and what protections, if any, will be in place for existing staff who may now lose their roles as a result of these exclusions?

ANSWER

The framework is not intended to retrospectively affect individuals who are already working under approved arrangements. Existing approvals continue to be managed under the arrangements through which they were granted and will transition to LEAP through normal review processes. The intention of the framework is to provide greater clarity and transparency, rather than to remove opportunities from individuals who are already working successfully under existing arrangements.

05 QUESTION

How was the consultation process for this policy managed, who was involved, and how was feedback from voluntary sector organisations, women's organisations, and lived experience staff incorporated?

ANSWER

The Policy Framework was developed through engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders including operational colleagues, policy leads, security professionals, rehabilitation providers and voluntary organisations across numerous consultation sessions in January 2025. This engagement informed the final framework prior to its approval and implementation. Feedback received during development was considered as part of the policy development process and informed the final framework.

Governance, consistency and safeguards

01**QUESTION**

How will HMPPS ensure that Local Risk Owners make consistent decisions across different prisons, probation regions, and contracted services, given the discretion built into the framework and the potential for unconscious bias to influence outcomes?

ANSWER

A key benefit of the framework is the introduction of national oversight and governance arrangements. Through Local Risk Owners, Risk Management Plans, annual reviews and LERAP oversight, decisions are supported by a consistent process whilst continuing to recognise that individual circumstances, operational environments and local risks may differ across establishments and services. The framework seeks to provide consistency in process and governance rather than identical outcomes in every case.

02**QUESTION**

What safeguards are in place to prevent bias or stigma from influencing decisions, given that the framework does not provide an appeal process for applicants who believe a decision was unfair?

ANSWER

The framework incorporates governance, oversight and review arrangements to support effective implementation and ensure it continues to operate effectively. LEAP introduces greater transparency, clearer governance, defined responsibilities and a more structured pathway for considering lived experience appointments.

Implementation, training and resources

01**QUESTION**

What training and support will be provided to vacancy managers, Local Risk Owners, and prison-based staff responsible for risk assessments to ensure they can apply the framework proportionately and consistently, including training on gender, trauma, and intersectionality, and what resource is available to deliver this?

ANSWER

Since implementation, the Lived Experience Team has delivered briefing sessions and engagement events for both internal and external stakeholders and will continue to support those responsible for applying the framework.

02**QUESTION**

What is the expected timeline from application to decision at each stage of the process, and how will HMPPS ensure that the administrative burden does not discourage employers from hiring lived experience candidates, particularly in smaller voluntary sector and women's organisations?

ANSWER

Timescales are dependent on the complexity of the case, the information required, and the timeliness of local decision-making. As additional information is often required from applicants, employers and local HMPPS business units to support thorough and proportionate consideration of individual circumstances, timelines can vary significantly.

03**QUESTION**

What are the expectations for candidates' personal statements, at what stage are they required, how do they differ from disclosure statements, and will guidance be issued to ensure consistency and avoid placing an additional emotional burden on applicants with a history of trauma?

ANSWER

Submission of a personal statement is entirely voluntary. Applicants may choose to provide additional information, such as details of their rehabilitation journey or other relevant personal circumstances, if they wish. Personal statements can be submitted with the application or emailed directly to the Lived Experience team during the assessment process. There is no expectation that applicants provide information beyond that which they are comfortable sharing.

04**QUESTION**

How will HMPPS monitor for disproportionality in approvals and declines, including racial, gender, offence-type and regional disparities? Will anonymised data on decisions and reasons be published to enable external scrutiny, and what steps will be taken if the framework is found to discourage lived-experience applicants or create disproportionate barriers to progression?

ANSWER

The framework incorporates governance, oversight and review arrangements to support effective implementation and ensure it continues to operate effectively. Where matters are raised as part of the review process, they should be supported by relevant evidence, data, operational learning, or specific examples so that future policy considerations are informed by a robust and balanced evidence base.

05 QUESTION

Why were the HMPPS policy for directly employed people and the policy for independent organisations and non-directly employed people combined, given that this has created a policy that appears complex, confusing and unclear?

ANSWER

The new framework establishes a national process that applies across directly employed and non-directly employed roles, helping to ensure decisions are made fairly, transparently and consistently.

06 QUESTION

What planning, training and support are in place to help HMPPS staff manage the significant additional workload created by the proposed process?

ANSWER

Supporting guidance and communications will continue to be developed to help organisations understand their responsibilities and navigate the new arrangements effectively. Since implementation, the Lived Experience Team has delivered briefing sessions and engagement events for both internal and external stakeholders and will continue to support those responsible for applying the framework.

Routes into LEAP and transition arrangements

01 QUESTION

Do candidates with lived experience still have to submit a traditional vetting application first, or can they go straight to LEAP? If they must submit a traditional vetting application, do they have to wait to be turned down before beginning a LEAP application?

ANSWER

The relevant Vetting Contact Point should submit the application via the EL1/Standard Plus route. Once the initial checks have been completed by SSCL, eligible cases are referred directly to the Lived Experience team for consideration under the LEAP process. Applicants do not need to receive a declined vetting outcome, helping ensure eligible individuals are identified and supported through the appropriate pathway as early as possible, and reducing the stress and administrative burden for the candidate.

02 QUESTION

What about applications that are currently pending through the old model? Should they be resubmitted?

ANSWER

Applications already in progress should continue under the arrangements that applied when they were submitted unless applicants are advised otherwise by HMPPS. Applicants will be moved onto the LEAP framework at their next annual review, helping to ensure a smooth move to the new nationally consistent approach.

03 QUESTION

What is the role of LERAP? Is it an oversight body, or is it the ultimate decision-making body in every case?

ANSWER

LERAP is a multi-disciplinary panel providing oversight and consistency of decision-making across the framework. It forms part of the governance arrangements for role-specific risk assessment decisions.

Risk management plans, reviews and multi-site access**01 QUESTION**

Who will be responsible for the prison aspects of the risk assessment and review process? Is it the security department, and will this be up to individual prisons to decide?

ANSWER

The policy requires sponsorship and approval through the relevant Local Risk Owner, such as the Governor, Regional Probation Director or Deputy Director. Local operational colleagues, including security staff where appropriate, may contribute to the assessment process in line with local procedures. This ensures decisions are informed by those with the best understanding of local operational requirements and risks.

02**QUESTION**

If an individual is employed by a non-contracted voluntary sector organisation, how will clearance be monitored and reviewed if it is not linked to an underlying contract?

ANSWER

The Personnel Security Countermeasures team maintains a central register of individuals working under a role-specific risk management plan. Responsibility for implementing and maintaining agreed mitigations sits with the relevant Local Risk Owner sponsoring the arrangement.

03**QUESTION**

Why does a change in marital status for a candidate require notification and possible reassessment of risk?

ANSWER

This is not specific to LEAP. HMPPS expects all individuals who hold security clearance or a role-specific risk management plan to notify HMPPS of changes in personal circumstances that may impact security, safeguarding or risk management considerations. A change in marital status is one example of a change in circumstances that may be relevant.

04**QUESTION**

How does approval for access to multiple prisons work? Should approval be secured at one prison before approaching another, or is a regional risk management plan required, and if so, when should this be applied for?

ANSWER

Where access is genuinely required across multiple prisons within a region, consideration may be given to a Regional Risk Management Plan. Regional arrangements would require approval by the relevant Prison Group Director. Different approval routes apply across different parts of the estate. For example, women's prisons and the youth estate are overseen by dedicated Prison Group Directors and face their own distinct risks, so applications requiring access across these areas would require separate consideration and approval. Organisations requiring access to multiple establishments should discuss their requirements with the Lived Experience Vetting Team at the earliest opportunity so that the most appropriate approval route can be identified.

Where access is only required to one prison but may expand to others in the future, an application should be submitted for that single site only. Arrangements are now in place for additional sites to be added to the existing plan, where appropriate, via the Lived Experience team in PSC without the need for a new application.

05**QUESTION**

Who in a prison will be tasked with completing the risk management plan?

ANSWER

The Local Risk Owner is responsible for accepting and managing the risks associated with the appointment. The plan will be developed with support from appropriate operational and security colleagues, ensuring mitigations are tailored to the role and operating environment.

06 QUESTION

Do risk management plans have an expiry date? If so, what is it, and what is the difference between an extension of a risk management plan and an annual review?

ANSWER

Role-specific risk management arrangements are subject to annual review as a minimum and may be reviewed sooner if there is a change in role or circumstances. Regular reviews help ensure arrangements remain proportionate and appropriate over time.

07 QUESTION

How will the annual review process be managed? Is the onus on the prison or the individual, and if there is a delay by the prison in carrying out a review, will the individual be able to continue in their role pending the outcome?

ANSWER

The Lived Experience team in PSC will make contact with the prison or probation region when a review is due. The Local Risk Owner is responsible for ensuring reviews are conducted and may restrict access to their site where an individual has not complied with an annual review in a timely manner. Individuals working under an approved arrangement should continue to comply with all existing restrictions and mitigations pending completion of routine review activity unless advised otherwise. Reviews provide an opportunity to consider any changes in circumstances and ensure arrangements remain effective and proportionate.

Definitions

01 QUESTION

What does “hate crime” mean, how are “organised crime associated offences” defined, and what is a “history of domestic violence” and why is that an exclusionary factor?

ANSWER

Hate crime is defined within the Policy Framework as offences where hostility was based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or transgender identity. Organised crime associated offences and a history of domestic violence are assessed using all relevant information available rather than by reference to a prescribed list of offences. Each case is considered on its individual circumstances, and professional judgement is applied throughout the assessment process.

02 QUESTION

There is no reference in the body of the policy to Annex B. How will Annex B be relevant and applied in the context of vetting?

ANSWER

Annex B provides examples of mitigations that may be considered when developing a role-specific risk management plan. The specific mitigations applied will depend on the risks identified and the operational requirements of the role.



supporting the voluntary
sector working in the
criminal justice system

OUR VISION

Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

OUR MISSION

To support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

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