



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information September 2026

Processing Times

The average time taken to process all applications in August was:

Enhanced – 14.6 days

Standard – 1.1 days

Basic – 0.9 days

Police performance

Of the 52 police forces and law enforcement agencies (e.g. National Crime Agency) that DBS commissions to carry out checks on their behalf, DBS sends 3 million checks per annum to forces.

Of those, in August:

- on average it took 27 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 12 forces, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Sussex, Dyfed-Powys, Avon & Somerset, Cleveland, Northumbria, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and West Yorkshire, Durham and Police Scotland were experiencing delays.
- 73% was the average of Aged cases held by forces at the beginning of the month which were completed by the end of the month.
- The number of Aged cases increased from 8,390 to 9,779.
- 38 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units have less than 100 Aged cases, 21 of those having 10 or less.



The overall volume sent to forces was 5,393 (2.2%) under forecast across August.

There was a total of 1,179 staffing in post at forces against a requirement of 1,303. The vacancy variance is 124 and there are 135 staff in training.

The leaving and starting of staff across the forces is a constant challenge, with successful recruitment campaigns routinely taking three months, police vetting adding a further three months and training then taking at least six to nine months. This means the full positive impact from additional, newly recruited staff is not felt for a considerable period.

Avon & Somerset productivity is impacted due to the unit receiving over-forecast volumes. The force has continued to see a decrease in update referrals through August, therefore returning to more 'normal' volumes. Remaining vacancies are planned to be filled in September, which will then see the force fully staffed supporting force recovery.

Cambridgeshire productivity continues to be impacted by the training of new starters. Vacancies are in the process of being recruited, with a number of successful candidates currently going through the recruitment/vetting process.

Cleveland recruitment campaign is underway to fill vacancies, with all preferred candidates now going through the recruitment/vetting process.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues, due to lack of candidates, and they are also awaiting vetting of a small number of staff. Staff are working continual overtime, and two other forces are assisting with less complex work streams.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight recruitment campaign is underway to fill a number of vacancies with other planned starters now undergoing employment checks. Aged cases and WiP continue to reduce.

Hertfordshire productivity is impacted by the training of new starters. Vacancies are in the process of being recruited, with some successful candidates currently going through the recruitment/vetting process, with two other forces are now assisting with less complex work streams.

Northumbria's planned starter is currently awaiting vetting checks to be completed. Overtime continues to be offered to help force recovery.

Sussex have staff planned to start in September 2026, with a number of new staff in training, further recruitment is also required as staff leave.

Thames Valley recruitment underway to backfill vacancies and WiP continues to reduce.

West Yorkshire has been impacted by above-forecast volumes during 2025/26, which have increased WIP levels and turnaround times. A number of vacancies have been filled in August with remaining vacancies planned to be filled in October.

Police Scotland recruitment process continues with overtime being worked to help mitigate the impact of vacancies.

DBS works with all police forces and law enforcement agencies on a daily basis to ensure checks are completed as quickly as possible. All applications that exceed 60 continuous days with any force are automatically identified by DBS, through scheduled daily reports, issued to forces to complete as soon as possible.

Each of the forces who are experiencing delays are at various stages of recruitment and training of new staff that, once fully productive, will support them in reducing Aged volumes further and achieving SLAs.

Background Information

Why do checks go to the police?

For Enhanced DBS checks only, applications will be sent to a police force if there's a potential match against the names on the application form and police systems. This means that even if an applicant has always resided in one area of the country, their check can be sent to a police force in another area that holds details of a person with the same or similar names to the applicant.

The only exception to this is if the individual is applying for a role that involves working in their own home, such as a foster carer. In this case, even if there is no potential match, the application will still be sent to relevant police forces and law enforcement agencies, so they can carry out a check on other individuals who reside at, or frequent, their home.



Throughout this process the police may need to gather information from other organisations. There are other instances where DBS checks may be delayed, such as missing, unclear, or incorrect information. Any issues on an application form, such as missing or incorrect information, will flag a 'conflict' and the application will come back to DBS to clarify the information by contacting the employer, RB, or the applicant. This will inevitably increase the length of time the DBS check takes.

If there is a match

If there is a match on the Police National Computer (PNC), or against the data held by police forces or law enforcement agencies, we'll send the application to the relevant police forces or law enforcement agencies.

If there is no conflict, the forces will check for any information they hold that is relevant to the specific workforce the applicant is applying to work with, for example, the child workforce. If there is no information, the application comes back to DBS.



If they do hold information, they will assess the information's relevance to the workforce. They will decide if it is relevant and should be disclosed on the DBS certificate. Most of the time, certificates do not contain any 'approved information', as the police have decided not to disclose any information. However, they have still had to spend time reviewing the information before that decision can be taken. These checks can take a bit of time, especially if there are several forces involved.

Factors affecting performance

There are several other factors which can cause delays in forces returning checks within the SLA, including:

- a high demand for our services
- assessment of the information they hold, including in some cases obtaining legal advice on whether it appropriate for employment purposes
- offering representations or responses from representations, which can result in further information being required

