



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information April 2026

Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 11.7 days

Standard – 1.2 days

Basic – 0.7 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 March:

- on average it took 22 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 9 forces (Avon & Somerset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Sussex, Dyfed Powys, Durham, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, North Yorkshire) were experiencing delays.
- 72% 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 decreased from across March from 44,005 to 17,839 cases. This is mainly due to the completion of the cases that were delayed specifically relating to update service checks, due to the Hampshire IT issue.
- 41 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units have less than 100 Aged cases, 23 of those having 10 or less.



The overall volume sent to forces was 6.5k (2.5%) above forecast above forecast across March. In addition, it should be noted that for financial year 2025/26 forces have received circa 79k over forecast.

Vacancies increased from 96 to 106, with 112 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 received over forecast volumes 9,160 (11%) and closed 4,562 (5.2%) above forecast. Recruitment is currently underway to fill 3.00FTE vacant posts. This should see a positive impact once staff are in place and trained.

Cambridgeshire productivity was impacted by short term sickness and training of new starters. 3.25 FTE vacancies are in the process of being recruited and posts will be offered to successful candidates week commencing 15th April.

Durham has 3.41FTE vacancies and recruitment is underway. Durham has received 1,386 (5.4%) more than forecast this financial year and has also experienced IT system issues.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues due to interviews taking place in January 26 with no applicants passing interview stage. These vacancies have been readvertised, and they are currently holding 3.15FTE vacancies. As Dyfed is a relatively small unit this has severely impacted the force performance.

Hertfordshire productivity was impacted by training of new starters. 5 FTE vacancies are in the process of being recruited and posts to be offered to successful candidate's week commencing 15th April. They have received 1,453 over forecast but closed 2,113 over forecast this financial year.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight are working overtime and other measures have been implemented to try to recover. They have 0.95 FTE (3.32%) vacancies, and 4.41 FTE (17%) of current staff are new starters and/or in training. An error made by Hampshire IT Dept. in early May 2025 saw a considerable increase in Update Service referrals however this has now been resolved.

North Yorkshire have been impacted by recruitment vetting delays and new staff in training. 3.50FTE are awaiting vetting and not expected to commence until May / June 26, which will continue to impact on performance.

Sussex has 5 FTE in training. The unit is still receiving support from within force as part of their recovery, mainly now on overtime hours. The force has received +2,974 over forecast however they have closed 7,505 above forecast this financial year.

Thames Valley has 1.90FTE vacancies with recruitment underway to backfill. They have closed 2,623 cases over 60 days old which is a reduction of 2,000 since January 26.

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

