Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information November 2026

Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 13 days

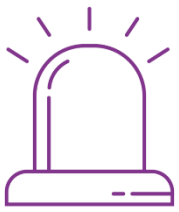
Standard – 1 day

Basic – 0.8 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 October:



- on average it took 24 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 7 forces were experiencing delays: Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Hertfordshire, Avon & Somerset, Dyfed-Powys, Essex and West Yorkshire.
- On average, forces completed 70% of the Aged cases they held at the beginning of the month by the end of the month.
- The number of Aged cases decreased from 7,785 to 6006 (the lowest since December 2022).
- 41 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units have fewer than 100 Aged cases, 24 of those having 10 or fewer.

The overall volume sent to forces was 25,790 (9.2%) over forecast across October.

There are a total of 1,209 staff in post at forces against a requirement of 1,312. The vacancy variance is 103 and there are 180 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 performance is impacted due to the unit receiving over forecast volumes (+11% FYTD). Some vacancies were filled across September / November, and they have also received funding for additional staff to deal with the consistently higher than forecasted volumes.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues and has some further vacancies to be filled. Staff are working overtime along with staff members from other areas now assisting; one other force is also assisting with less complex workstreams.

Essex have experienced higher than normal levels of both short and long-term sickness impacting on performance.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight's recruitment campaign is ongoing. Some staff started in September/October with the force having a number of new starters in training, and the number of Aged cases continues to reduce month on month.

Hertfordshire productivity has been impacted by short term sickness and vacancies. The recruitment campaign is at the early stages, and two other forces are now assisting with less complex workstreams.

Thames Valley productivity has been impacted by vacancies with recruitment underway to fill vacancies. The number of Aged cases continues to reduce month on month.

West Yorkshire performance has been impacted by vacancies, with a considerable number of new starters now within the force at various stages of training. The force will be fully staffed in November, which will aid recovery.

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 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 is appropriate for employment purposes
- offering representations or responses from representations, which can result in further information being required

