



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information: All Registered Bodies (RBs) and Applicants

The current average time taken to process all applications is:

Enhanced – 11.6 days

Standard – 1.4 days

Basic – 0.9 days

The main reason for delay will be if an application needs to be referred to the police service. Although police performance remains strong, some forces are processing work outside the normal timescales expected.

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 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.

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.

In March:

- on average it took 20 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 48% of aged cases held by forces at the beginning of the month were completed by the end of the month (this is a decrease from 57% in February)
- 5 forces (Derbyshire, Dyfed Powys, Hampshire, Kent and Sussex) (representing 12% of the total checks sent to forces, were experiencing delays



Across March, work in progress increased (from 146.2k in February to 170.7k) as the amount of work sent to forces exceeded their capacity and forces were also impacted by DBS system issues. The number of Aged cases increased across March from 11,241 in February to 13,526.

Despite operating with significant vacancies, those forces (excluding Dyfed) have generally continued to perform well or above the expected output levels with the current staffing they have in place and until those vacant positions are filled and staff start to become productive no significant improvements will be achieved, with the Aged target now more likely being achieved by the end of Q1 2024/25.

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

