



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information March 2026

Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 12.1 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 February:

- on average it took 22 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 8 forces (Avon & Somerset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Cumbria, Dyfed Powys, Durham, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire) were experiencing delays.
- 35% of Aged cases held by forces at the beginning of the month were completed by the end of the month, however the average across all forces was 73%. The 35% in total is being heavily skewed by a small number of forces with the issue with Hampshire's IT causing a significant rise in update service referrals.
- The number of aged cases increased across February from 43,712 to 44,005. This is mainly due to the Hampshire IT issue which are specifically related to update service checks.
- 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 February. In addition, it should be noted that combined with Oct – Feb volumes, forces have received circa 73k over forecast.

Vacancies decreased from 101 to 96, with 127 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's productivity is impacted due to the unit receiving over forecast volumes (7,685 10.1%) Despite this they closed the month 5% above forecast (+3,982) applications. Recruitment is currently underway to fill

2.58FTE vacant posts. which should see a positive impact once staff are in place.

Bedfordshire's productivity is impacted by staff absences and 3 new starters who are still in training. An increased uptake in overtime and use of new reports to support workflow should also start having a positive impact. The main improvement over February was the number of cases over 60 days which stood at 334 in January and reduced to 32 by the end of February.

Cumbria has received 3,064 (18.6%) above forecast this year, they are carrying 0.28 FTE Vacancies with 3.76 FTE in training. The unit have completed a trial of their new system, the result of which shows applications are now taking twice as long to complete. Discussions have been held in force around this concern, and their IT team have now created a tool specifically to assist with this. Cumbria are working overtime to try and mitigate the impacts.

Durham has 2.41FTE vacancies and has received 1,354 (5.4%) more than forecast so far this year. They have also experienced system issues which have resulted in a reduction in productivity.

Hertfordshire productivity has been impacted by training of new starters. The unit have received 1,188 (2.7%) above forecast. The main improvement over February was the number of cases over 60 days which stood at 448 in January and reduced to 35 by the end of February.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues due to interviews taking place in January 26 with no applicants passing interview stage. These jobs have been readvertised. They have 3.15FTE vacancies and are working continual overtime, with two other forces assisting with less complex work streams.

Thames Valley productivity was impacted by new systems earlier in the financial year and experienced staff leaving the unit. They have 1.90FTE vacancies with recruitment underway these. They have now implemented an updated recovery plan which should have a positive impact on their aged cases from March 26.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight work in progress (WiP) and Aged cases have risen significantly since their IT issue in May 25. Overtime and other measures have been implemented in the interim. They now have 0.95 FTE vacancies, and 4.41 FTE (17%) of current staff are new starters and/or in training. A solution has been identified which will be implemented in March 26 to significantly reduce their update service WiP/Aged cases.

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

