



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information February 2026

Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 14 days

Standard – 1.5 days

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 January:

- on average it took 25 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 11 forces (Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Sussex, Thames Valley, Cumbria, Dyfed Powys, Durham, North Yorkshire, Northumbria, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire) were experiencing delays.
- 23% 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 70%. The 23% 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 December from 38,485 to 43,712. This is mainly due to the Hampshire IT issue which are specifically related to update service checks.
- The 11 forces experiencing delays hold 94% of all Aged cases.
- 37 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units having less than 100 Aged cases, 21 of those having 10 or less.



The overall volume sent to forces was 14.6k (5.8%) above forecast above forecast across January. In addition, it should be noted that combined with Oct – Dec volumes forces have received circa 77k over forecast.

Vacancies slightly increased 99 to 101, with 131 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 staffing is not felt for a considerable period.

Northumbria - No Vacancies in the unit. From April 25 to January 26 Northumbria have received 2,002 (3.3%) applications above forecast. They

are currently focusing on Quality Assurance Framework compliance therefore applications are taking longer to process, also applications with PNC matches are also taking longer to process due to the amount of information held on those records which requires review.

Cumbria has received 2,713 above forecast this year, they are carrying 2.11FTE Vacancies however, 2FTE will commence on 9th Feb 26 with 1.76FTE already in training. Increased levels of sickness in the unit and a career break have also impacted productivity. 1FTE additional post has been authorised for the 26/27FY budget due to increased demand continuing into 2026/27. Cumbria are also working overtime to help minimise the impact.

North Yorkshire - 2FTE currently in training and 2.50FTE vacancies, staff identified but are awaiting start dates as vetting remains an issue. In the meantime, the unit are working overtime.

Bedfordshire - have been impacted by staffing sickness and experienced staff being utilised to train new starters impacting on productivity. They are currently carrying 0.13FTE in vacancies.

Cambridgeshire - are similar to Bedfordshire again impacted by sickness across the unit and experienced staff being utilised to train new starters. They have 2.90FTE vacancies in the unit and plan to recruit these in early 2026.

Hertfordshire - have received 1,202 (3%) above forecast. The unit has 2.51FTE vacancies. Again, impacted by sickness across the unit and experienced staff being utilised to train new starters.

Durham - has 3.41FTE vacancies with a further 2FTE currently on LTS with 3FTE, impacted by sickness across the unit with some staff returning at the end of January 2026. Durham has received 1,126 (5.2%) more than forecast and has also experienced IT system issues and a plan for an additional IP address (system address for connection) is in place but will take around 3 – 4 months to be implemented with DBS relevant suppliers. Durham has also had multiple losses to PNC and lengthy outages on their local systems which has been needed for essential upgrades which has resulted in a reduction in productivity.

Dyfed Powys - has been impacted by recruitment issues. sickness across the unit as well as 3.15FTE vacancies, as Dyfed are a relatively small unit this has severely impacted the force performance. Dyfed have now recruited 1FTE who commenced in Dec and is now undergoing training. Staff are working continual overtime, another force is assisting with certain less complex workstreams and overtime being offered to staff outside of the Unit.

Thames Valley - productivity was impacted by the introduction of a new IT system, vacancies and the embedding of new operational practices which led to an increase in aged cases. The unit is still reporting that a new system upgrade implemented at the beginning of the financial year is still slowing down productivity and applications are taking longer to process.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight – significant increases in WiP due an IT issue, and staff attrition have all been contributing factors to a decrease in turnaround times and increases in Aged cases. 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. We are continuing to work with Hampshire and our IT supplier on a potential solution to resolve this and hope to have a solution implemented by mid to late February.

Sussex - Gold Group was instigated in September the force is showing positive signs of improvement monthly not only with a reduced WiP, but also in days to clear and Aged cases. We have seen a 45% reduction in WiP over the last 9 months, a reduction in average turnaround time which is the lowest it has been all year and a 59% reduction in Aged over 60 days. The force has also filled a further 4FTE vacancies and all commenced employment in Nov taking new starters up to 7FTE since Sept, all of whom are in training so we should see more positives in terms of performance at the end of quarter 4 2025/26 financial year.

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

