



Disclosure &  
Barring Service

# Police Performance Information May 2026

## Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 13 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 April:

- on average it took 26 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 11 forces, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Sussex, Durham, Dyfed-Powys, Avon & Somerset, Cleveland, Northumbria, Police Scotland, Cambridgeshire and Herefordshire) 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 increased from 17,839 in March to 21,665 cases in April.
- 40 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units have less than 100 Aged cases, 20 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.

As of April, a total of 1,162 staff is in post at forces against a requirement of 1,301. The vacancy variance is 139 and there are 113 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.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight - the situation due to the IT error in May 25 has partly been resolved, with a further circa 10K Update Service referrals planned to be completed by the end of May. 3 FTE are currently being recruited, however 2FTE are from the unit as career progression therefore another advert will need to be created to backfill.

Thames Valley productivity was impacted by 4 experienced staff leaving the unit. The Unit Manager has reported that they have 1 FTE on maternity leave, 1 FTE on long term sickness absence and 1.90FTE in vacancies with recruitment underway to backfill. The force WiP, days to clear and Aged remains a concern.

Sussex - 2 FTE joined in April 26 and are in training, with a further 2 FTE expected in June 26, whereby the unit will then be fully staffed.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues due to lack of candidates as they have 4.10 FTE vacancies. They are now awaiting vetting on 1.50FTE. Staff are working continual overtime, with two other forces are assisting with less complex work streams.

Hertfordshire productivity impacted by short term sickness and training of new starters. They have 5 FTE vacancies which are in the process of being recruited to.

Cambridgeshire productivity impacted by short term sickness and training of new starters. Vacancies which are in the process of being recruited and posts to be offered to successful candidates in near future

Durham has 4.60FTE vacancies and 1 FTE on LTS. Recruitment is underway and a new Disclosure Unit Manager is now in place. Durham has also had multiple downtime to their PNC connection which has resulted in a reduction in productivity.

Cleveland recruitment campaign is underway to fill 2 FTE vacancies with interviews scheduled for May. Continued above forecasted volumes are impacting the unit recovery.

Avon & Somerset productivity is impacted due to the unit receiving over forecast volumes.

Police Scotland are a small unit of 5.56 FTE increased to 8.56FTE from April with recruitment underway. From current staffing 2.72 FTE are on long-term sick or maternity leave, leaving the unit understaffed at present, overtime is being worked and recruitment is underway albeit in the early stages at present.

Northumbria have 1 FTE vacancy and are expecting to interview in May due to delays with recruitment. Staff are still getting used to new local search system although they are becoming more confident with the system. A system issue which meant cases had to be double keyed has now been resolved which should assist in improved productivity and the aged profile.

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

