



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information January 2025

Processing Times

The current average time taken to process all applications in December was:

Enhanced – 14.5 days

Standard – 1.4 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 December:

- on average it took 26 days for the police to return a check that had been sent to them
- 4 forces (Dyfed Powys, Hampshire, Kent and Sussex) were experiencing delays. These represent 11% of the total checks sent to forces
- 42% of aged cases held by forces at the beginning of the month were completed by the end of the month, excluding the 4 red forces this figure is 68%
- The number of Aged cases increased in December from 20,789 to 22,099. The 4 forces experiencing delays hold over 90% of all Aged cases.



The number of Aged cases increased as is usual (seasonal) across December, such an extreme change in Aged volumes occurs every year and is due to seasonal high levels of leave and Disclosure Unit closures across the associated seasonal Bank Holiday dates. Seasonally, the Aged position then improves across Q4.

Across December forces were sent 29.4k above forecast for the month.

Vacancies remained at 82. 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, the full positive impact from additional / newly recruited staffing is not felt for a considerable period.

We are closely monitoring the four red forces who are experiencing significant delays.

The process Sussex implemented in late November whereby less complex cases can be completed quicker as well as tackling Aged cases, continues to have a very positive impact on their work in progress. Combined with help

from within the force the volume of checks Sussex are now completing has doubled compared to pre-late November.

Kent has implemented an IT change which will see the number of nugatory referrals reduce and have plans to restructure the Unit to improve efficiency and performance. Further significant improvements in Kent's Aged and WiP will not be seen until at least end of Quarter 4 of 2024/25.

Dyfed Powys whose performance was significantly affected by a force wide IT system being implemented which negatively impacted on the time the Disclosure Unit takes to complete checks are in the process of recruiting additional DBS funded staff. Overtime is being worked in the interim and another force is supporting by completing less complex cases.

No further significant improvements in Aged volumes will be achieved until the four forces have filled all vacant positions and staff are fully trained. This is expected to be towards the end of the financial year.

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 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

