



Disclosure &
Barring Service

Police Performance Information August 2026

Processing Times

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

Enhanced – 13.1 days

Standard – 1.1 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 July:

- 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, Dyfed-Powys, Avon & Somerset, Cleveland, Northumbria, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and West Yorkshire and Police Scotland were experiencing delays.
- 79% 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 decreased from 11,434 to 8,390, which is the lowest for over 2 years.
- 42 of the 52 Police Disclosure Units have less than 100 Aged cases, 25 of those having 10 or less.



The overall volume sent to forces was 1150 (0.4%) under forecast across July.

As of July, there was a total of 1,176 staff in post at forces against a requirement of 1,303. The vacancy variance is 127 and there are 132 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 productivity is impacted due to the unit receiving over-forecast volumes. The force has now seen a noticeable drop in update referrals through July, therefore returning to more 'normal' volumes. There

were 2 FTE new starters in July, with a further 2 FTE due in September, which will then see the force fully staffed and support force recovery.

Cambridgeshire productivity is impacted by sickness and the training of new starters. Vacancies are in the process of being recruited, with 2 FTE successful candidates currently going through the recruitment/vetting process.

Cleveland recruitment campaign is underway to fill 3 FTE vacancies, with all preferred candidates now going through the recruitment/vetting process.

Dyfed Powys has been impacted by recruitment issues; due to lack of candidates, they have 2.60 FTE vacancies. They are now awaiting vetting on 2.00 FTE. Staff are working continual overtime, which has also been offered out to other departments with 6 staff members now assisting. Two other forces are assisting with less complex work streams.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight's IT issue has been resolved, and they are back to BAU volumes being received. A recruitment campaign is underway to fill 4.16FTE vacancies with 2.81FTE now undergoing employment checks. Aged cases have reduced from 13798 at the end of April to 3457 at the end of July and WiP reduced from 26K to 14.8K for the same period.

Hertfordshire productivity is impacted by sickness and the training of new starters. Vacancies are in the process of being recruited, with 3 FTE successful candidates currently going through the recruitment/vetting process; two other forces are now assisting with less complex work streams.

Northumbria has 1 FTE vacancy, and this candidate is currently awaiting vetting. Staff are becoming more confident with the system; one other force is assisting with less complex work, and overtime continues to be offered to the current staff in the unit.

Sussex Aged cases continue to significantly reduce, from 1,598 at the end of April to 343 at the end of July. 2 FTE commenced in July, with a further 1 FTE due to start in September 2026. The unit now has 5 FTE in training; 1 FTE left post in June, and this is currently being advertised.

Thames Valley productivity is impacted by experienced staff leaving the unit. The force has 6.43 FTE vacancies, with recruitment underway to backfill. Aged cases have reduced from 3,052 at the end of April to 1,393 at the end of July, with WiP reducing from 15.7K to 13.8K.

West Yorkshire has been impacted by above-forecast volumes during 2025/26, which have increased WIP levels and turnaround times. The force has also been carrying vacant posts; however, all 7 FTE have now been recruited, with 3 FTE due to join at the beginning of August and a further 3.86 FTE due in September 2026.

Police Scotland has 2.50 FTE vacancies against a budgeted headcount of 8.56 FTE, with vacant posts at recruitment stage. The unit is also learning the

more intensive manual enquiries process, which it has not done before. This went live in April, having previously been processed separately by another team. At present, overtime is being worked to help mitigate the impact of vacancies and the new work.

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

