

Your comprehensive guide to DBS checks



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Need to do DBS checks, but get stuck on who needs which one or the stages of applications? This is now your go-to guide on DBS checks! Whether you're an HR professional, an employer, or someone exploring the hiring process, we've got you covered.

At uCheck, we believe that background checks should be simple, clear, and hassle-free. Here's everything you need to know about DBS checks to make your pre-employment screening process a breeze.

What is a DBS check?

A DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check is an official record of a person's criminal history. It helps you make informed hiring decisions, especially for roles involving vulnerable groups, like children or adults in care. Think of it as a safeguard, making every workplace safer and protecting those who need it most.

DBS checks replaced the old CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks in 2012. They're now the standard for verifying criminal records in England and Wales.

Why do employers need DBS checks?

You need DBS checks to make sure candidates are suitable for specific roles. For example, it's legal and ethical to check if someone has been barred from working with vulnerable groups. It's all about creating a trustworthy, compliant, and safe environment for everyone.

Benefits of DBS checks

DBS checks aren't a tick-box exercise. They help businesses, employees, and the wider community. Why are they so beneficial?

- **Make confident hiring decisions**
Get a clear picture of an applicant's criminal history, so you can make more better decisions about their suitability for a role. Instead of relying purely on intuition, you have real data to guide you.
- **Protect vulnerable groups**
If your organisation works with children, vulnerable adults, or other at-risk individuals, DBS checks are vital. They help stop unsuitable candidates from ending up in positions where they could cause harm.
- **Maintain legal compliance**
Certain roles legally require DBS checks, especially those involving regulated activities. By performing the correct level of screening, you're not only safeguarding your organisation but also meeting your legal obligations.



Types of DBS checks



Basic DBS check

What it shows: A Basic DBS reveals unspent convictions and conditional cautions. This means any recent or serious offences that haven't been filtered out by time will appear on the certificate.

When it's needed: Basic DBS checks are often required for roles in industries where safeguarding isn't the primary focus but where trust and reliability still matter. These might include admin, construction, retail, or customer service positions.

Example roles: Warehouse workers, office administrators, delivery drivers.



Standard DBS check

What it shows: A Standard DBS Check includes unspent and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands, and warnings recorded on the Police National Computer (PNC). It gives you a fuller picture of someone's criminal history.

When it's needed: These are often needed for roles in regulated or high-responsibility fields, such as the financial or legal sectors, where there may be a higher risk of fraud or misconduct.

Example roles: Accountants, solicitors, security staff working in sensitive environments.



Enhanced DBS check

What it shows: This goes even deeper than the Standard check. It includes the same information and relevant details from local police records, which are added if authorities believe it's pertinent to the role.

When it's needed: Enhanced DBS checks are vital for roles directly involving contact with vulnerable groups, such as children and adults in care settings. They make sure that no concerning issues have been overlooked.

Example roles: Schoolteachers, healthcare professionals, social workers.



Enhanced DBS check with barred lists

What it shows: On top of the above, this check includes a comparison against the **children's and/or adults' barred lists** maintained by the government. These lists flag individuals prohibited from working with vulnerable groups.

When it's needed: This is essential for **regulated activities** involving children and vulnerable adults, such as roles in nurseries, care homes, or youth organisations. The barred lists add an extra layer of safeguarding to protect those in your care.

Example roles: Foster carers, childcare workers, carers for adults with special needs.



Checks comparison chart

	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Spent Convictions	✗	✓	✓
Unspent Convictions	✓	✓	✓
Conditional Cautions	✓	✓	✓
Cautions	✗	✓	✓
Reprimands	✗	✓	✓
Warnings	✗	✓	✓
Relevant information from local police	✗	✗	✓





The five stages of a DBS check

Stage 1: Application received and validated

Once you upload the necessary details, we check the application for missing or incorrect information. If everything's spot on, it's electronically sent to the DBS for official processing. If there are errors, we'll notify you, so they can be corrected before moving forward.

Stage 2: Police National Computer search

Details from the application are matched against the Police National Computer. For Basic DBS checks, this stage identifies any unspent convictions or conditional cautions.

For Standard and Enhanced checks, this stage flags any spent convictions, reprimands, or warnings that aren't subject to filtering rules.

Stage 3: Barred List search (if applicable)

The application data is compared with the relevant barred lists (children's and/or adults') to verify that the applicant isn't legally restricted from the role.

This crucial step is especially relevant for employers in education, care, or regulated industries.

Stage 4: Local police checks (Enhanced only)

This is only for Enhanced DBS checks. The DBS sends the applicant's credentials to local police forces. Local authorities review their records to determine if there's any additional relevant information.

This might cover records not listed on the Police National Computer but deemed important because they relate to safeguarding concerns.

Stage 5: DBS Certificate

The final disclosure includes all the necessary information. The physical certificate is posted directly to the applicant's home address.

While the employer won't receive the full certificate, you'll get an email notification from uCheck with the result, and a summary report will be available on our platform for reference.

Most checks fly through all five stages in just a couple of days, but **Enhanced checks can take slightly longer, especially if local police involvement (stage 4) requires additional investigation.**



Legal requirements for DBS checks

There are important legal obligations to consider with DBS checks. Here's how you can stay compliant while being fair to applicants and respectful of their data.

When you can and cannot request DBS checks



When you **CAN** request a DBS check:

- Basic DBS checks are fine for most jobs where there's no direct contact with vulnerable groups.
- You should only request Standard and Enhanced checks if the role is eligible under specific guidelines, such as those in regulated industries or involving vulnerable individuals.



When you **CAN'T** request a DBS check:

- A Standard or Enhanced DBS check can't be requested for a role that doesn't directly involve significant safeguarding responsibilities.
- Over-checking applicants can create an impression of bias or discrimination, which could result in complaints or even legal action.

1. Confidentiality matters

Employers must handle DBS information responsibly. Sensitive data, such as criminal records, should only be seen by those directly involved in hiring decisions.

2. Avoid over-checking

You can't request a DBS check just because you're curious! Make sure the role meets the legal criteria for the level of check you're requesting.

3. Updates from the DBS Service

You may offer employees the option to use the DBS Update Service. It allows them to keep their DBS certificates current for certain roles, making checks faster and easier.



How often should you redo DBS checks?

With DBS checks, it's not just about getting it right at the start of someone's employment. Regularly rescreening your team is an important step to guarantee your compliance, safety, and overall peace of mind.

How often is rescreening needed?

There's no one-size-fits-all answer, but sticking to these guidelines can help you stay on track:

- **Every three years:** Most authorities recommend a three-year rescreening cycle to keep employee records up-to-date and make sure no changes have gone unnoticed.
- **After role changes:** If an employee moves into a new position with different responsibilities (for example, from admin to a role working with vulnerable groups), a new check might be necessary.
- **Following an extended absence:** Career breaks, sabbaticals, or secondments can mean a person's circumstances have changed. Rescreening keeps everyone aligned when they return.

Why is rescreening important?

- **Stay compliant:** Employment laws and regulations are constantly changing, and rescreening can help you meet current requirements.
- **Ensure workplace safety:** Roles evolve and so do risks. Especially in sectors like healthcare or education, regular checks are essential for maintaining a safe environment.
- **Build trust and transparency:** Showing your employees that you prioritise integrity and fairness fosters a sense of mutual trust across your organisation.

Did you know?

In December 2024, a convicted murderer was caught working with children for nearly two years after being barred. Regular rescreening would have flagged this oversight and protected those at risk.

You're better off with uCheck

At uCheck, we make background checks as easy and stress-free as possible. Whether you're hiring your next team member or reviewing your current staff, we've got you covered.

Choose uCheck to keep things running smoothly:

- Get back hours in your day thanks to speedy checks.
- Save yourself money by only paying for checks you need.
- Access brilliant support via phone, email, or live chat.

Why make your life complicated when you can keep it simple with uCheck?

Give us a call on **0300 140 0022** or email us at **info@ucheck.co.uk**, and we'll be happy to support you every step of the way. With uCheck, you'll always be in good hands.