

Understanding DBS checks for volunteers

Volunteering Together 4 Health

Kiran Rehal

Greater London DBS Outreach Adviser

Kiranpreet.Rehal@dbs.gov.uk

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Disclosure &
Barring Service

Introduction

Our Purpose:

Protecting the public by helping employers make safer recruitment and employment decisions, and by barring individuals who pose a risk to vulnerable people.

Our vision:

Making Recruitment and Employment Safer, by being a visible, trusted, and influential organisation. We will provide an outstanding quality of service to all of our customers and partners. Our people will understand the important contributions they make to safeguarding and feel proud to work within an inclusive and increasingly diverse organisation.

[DBS business plan: 2025-26](#)



Disclosure quiz

1. A DBS check is not a legal requirement. **T**
2. Anyone who works around children or vulnerable adults is eligible for a Standard or Enhanced level DBS check. **F**
3. DBS will tell me if an employee or volunteer has any new convictions after the DBS certificate has been issued. **F**
4. An individual could have police information on their certificate, even if they've never had a conviction for an offence. **T**
5. My new employer cannot accept my current DBS certificate because it has my previous employer's name on it. **F**
6. DBS certificates do not have an expiry date. **T**

Different levels of DBS check

£21.50 Basic DBS check	£21.50 Standard DBS check	£49.50 Enhanced DBS check	£49.50 Enhanced with Barred List(s) DBS check
Unspent convictions and conditional cautions	Spent and unspent convictions and cautions (subject to filtering)	Spent and unspent convictions and cautions (subject to filtering)	Spent and unspent convictions and cautions (subject to filtering)
		Relevant police intelligence	Relevant police intelligence
			Barred List(s) info (optional)

DBS volunteer certificates

To qualify for a free-of-charge volunteer check, the applicant **must not**:

- benefit financially from the position for which the application is being submitted
- receive any payment (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses)
- be on a work placement
- be in a trainee position or undertaking a course of study that will lead to a full-time role/qualification
- be a paid foster carer or a member of a foster care household

The above conditions are why a DBS certificate issued under the free provisions for volunteers cannot be used for paid positions



Criminal records checks for overseas applicants

DBS cannot access criminal records held overseas, but it is possible to submit an application while the applicant is overseas

Offences committed overseas are not routinely disclosed on DBS checks, therefore you should consider that if an individual has spent a significant amount of time overseas, a check from that country should be obtained.

For details on who can apply, how to apply and contact details for criminal record checks overseas, please see:

[Criminal records checks for overseas applicants - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
(www.gov.uk)



DBS Update Service

Organisations and employers can check online, free-of-charge, with the individual's consent – the certificate must be at a level that you are able to check and for the correct workforce.

Those making the check will be advised:

- No new information exists
- If the original certificate contained 'no relevant information'
- New information exists
- There is no record of the certificate in the service

Benefits of the Update Service:

- Re-check when you need to with the individual's consent
- Faster results – you will know instantly if there is no change or if you need to get a new certificate.

Volunteer Update Service subscriptions:

- Volunteers will annually receive an email asking to confirm if they want to continue with subscription.

Regulated activity with children

Role or activity	Once	More than 3 days in a 30 day period	Once overnight with opportunity for contact between 2am and 6am	Anyone carrying out any of these activities would be eligible for an Enhanced DBS check with a Children's Barred List check
Providing healthcare	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Providing personal care	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Teaching, training, and instruction - unsupervised	No	Yes	Yes	
Caring for or supervising - unsupervised	No	Yes	Yes	
Providing advice or guidance on physical, emotional, or educational wellbeing	No	Yes	Yes	
Driving children under arrangement	No	Yes	No	
Moderating a web-based service	No	Yes	No	
Registering to be a childminder (inc voluntary reg)	Not applicable			
Registering to become a foster carer	Not applicable			
Day-to-day managers of staff in regulated activity				

Specified establishments

Where the activity takes place:

- Schools*
- Nurseries
- Children's homes
- Children's centres
- Childcare premises
- Detention centres for children

*including pupil referral units and alternate provision academies in England

Individuals must satisfy all of the following criteria:

- Work there more than 3 days in any 30 day period or once overnight between 2am and 6am; **and**
- Have the opportunity for contact with children in the establishment; **and**
- Work there for the purpose of the establishment; **and**
- It's not a temporary or occasional role or a supervised volunteer role

Further detail is available at: [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#)

Regulated activity with adults

If done once, the following activities are regulated activity with adults:		Anyone carrying out any of these activities would be eligible for an Enhanced DBS check with an Adults' Barred List check
Providing health care	By or under the direction/supervision of a regulated healthcare professional	
Providing personal care	Washing and dressing, eating, drinking and toileting, oral care and care of skin, hair and nails	
Social Work	Provided by a social care worker to an adult who is a client or potential client	
Assistance with the day-to-day financial running of the adult's own household	Managing cash, bills or shopping	
Assistance with the conduct of an adult's affairs	Power of attorney, deputies appointed under Mental Health Orders	
Conveying an adult	Must be for health, personal or social care due to age, illness or disability	
Day-to-day managers/supervisors of those who carry out regulated activity with adults		

Work with adults which is not regulated activity – the rules

Step 1: The adult must be 18 or over, **and** receiving a listed health or social care service, **or** receiving a listed activity set out in legislation: [Adult Workforce Guide v11.0 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/adult-workforce-guide-v11-0.pdf)

Step 2: The employee must do **one or more** of the activities below:

- Train, teach, instruct, provide assistance, advice, or guidance
- Care for, supervise, provide treatment, or therapy
- Moderate a public interactive electronic communication service
- Work in a care home
- Drive adults under contract arrangements

Step 3: Carry out the work often enough:

- More than 3 days in any period of 30 days, **or**
- Anytime between 2am and 6am, **or**
- Once a week on an ongoing basis

- Someone who needs support/care assistance to develop capacity to live independently
- Any form of health care, including treatment, therapy or palliative care of any description
- Any service provided specifically for adults because of their age, any disability, physical or mental illness, with some exceptions (dyslexia/alexia/dysgraphia)
- Those in prison, on remand, on probation
- Those in receipt of a Direct Payment

Standard level checks

Eligibility for **Standard checks** is often profession based. The exceptions to this rule are:

Any work that relates to providing health services where that work means there is also contact with the patients

Any work that relates to providing care services to vulnerable adults*, where that work means there is also contact with the patient

- *as per sec.59 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006*

This is separate to the Enhanced level checks and should not be considered a lower-level check.

For more information visit: [Standard DBS check eligibility guidance](#)

Charity Trustees

The level of check that trustees are eligible for depends on what type of charity they support:

Children's Charity

(a charity is a children's charity if the workers or volunteers include those who carry out work that falls into the legal definition of **regulated activity** with children as part of the charities main activities.)

Adult's Charity

(a charity is an adult's charity if the charity workers or volunteers include those who carry out work that falls into the legal definition of **work with adults** or **regulated activity** with adults.)

All other charities

Enhanced

Basic

Resources

DBS eligibility information is available in the [DBS eligibility guidance](#).

This provides links to:

- The DBS online eligibility tool
- Eligibility guidance for Standard DBS checks
- Eligibility guidance for Enhanced and Enhanced with Barred List(s) DBS checks – this includes the Department for Education’s definition of ‘regulated activity with children’ and the Department for Health’s definition of ‘regulated activity with adults’
- Department for Education statutory supervision guidance
- DBS guidance leaflets

Information on Basic DBS checks can be found in the [DBS Basic checks](#) guidance.

Useful links

- [DBS guidance leaflets](#)
- [DBS check process explained - video](#)
- [DBS eligibility guidance](#)
- [Eligibility guidance for Enhanced DBS checks](#)
- [DBS barring referral guidance](#)
- [DBS barring referral form and guidance](#)
- [How to make a good quality barring referral](#)

DBS Discussions: Safeguarding in Focus



A new podcast from the Disclosure and Barring Service where each episode features a subject matter expert from DBS discussing topics relevant to employers, HR professionals and safeguarding leads.

Find links to all listening platforms here:
[Disclosure and Barring Service - Listen on YouTube, Spotify - Linktree](#)

How to contact us

Regional Outreach:

Email: DBSregionaloutreach@dbb.gov.uk

Partnerships Team:

Email: DBSEngagement@dbb.gov.uk

Further information - Disclosure:

Helpline: 03000 200 190 | Email: customerservices@dbb.gov.uk

Further information - Barring:

Helpline: 03000 200 190 | Email: Contactus@dbb.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/dbb

X and Facebook: @DBSgovuk

LinkedIn: Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Greater London: Kiran Rehal
Kiranpreet.Rehal@dbb.gov.uk

Please get in touch for bespoke support:

- Questions about DBS checks, eligibility, and regulated activity
- Support with making barring referrals and the 'Legal Duty to Refer'
- Delivery of training and workshops directly to your team or network
- Support your training programmes that require DBS information
- Provide us feedback so we can improve our DBS products and services

Evaluation

Please access the below link or QR code to complete a **short evaluation form**:

[Disclosure workshop evaluation](#)

Your feedback is very important to us in the DBS Partnership team.



Thank you for listening.
Any questions?