



DBS Disclosure News

October 2013

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Hello, and welcome to October's DBS Disclosure News, which as you can see, arrives with a slightly new name as we develop our publications. In last month's edition, Adrienne Kelbie talked about the recent changes in the world of Disclosures, which prompts a clear need – and indeed a demand from our customers – to produce regular advice about day-to-day matters that might be important to you.

As DBS Director for Operations (Disclosure) this falls squarely within my remit, and I'm really looking forward to developing this newsletter – and hopefully, I can count on your help and support to do this. If you can spare the time after reading this first edition, do let me have your feedback, including any editorial ideas for future editions. You can write to me here: customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

During summer, we introduced a number of significant changes. Filtering old and minor convictions from the end of May was one change, and another was the Update Service, which launched on 17 June, bringing with it the need to include a 'workforce' on DBS application forms. On the same day, there was also the shift to applicant-only single certificates. This has meant a lot of operational change for all of us, and in truth, we are still feeling the impact of some of these changes as we move into the autumn months.

In particular, some of the country's police forces have struggled to cope with the changes to policy and procedure, and unfortunately, it didn't help that these changes arrived at a time of year when application volumes are high. As a result, a number of forces are experiencing backlogs in clearing applications within their usual processing timescales. We're really very sorry about this, and we're working hard with the affected police forces to reduce the time that applications spend in our system. Please be assured that the police are just as keen as we are to return to more usual service levels and are putting their efforts into doing just this. You can read more about this in this edition.

We will keep you updated about our progress in future newsletters, but meanwhile, there is a reminder in this edition about tracking the progress of individual applications.

Submitting applications electronically using our e-Bulk service will make a difference to turnaround times, and you will also find out immediately if a certificate has been issued 'clear' of any police information.

On a more positive note, we continue to meet our key target to issue 75 percent of all Disclosures within 14 days of receipt, which is the general barometer for customer experience.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to keeping you in touch with all the things that will help you to deliver on your goals at your workplace.

Sue Quigley

Director for Operations (Disclosure)

Are your applications affected by police force delays?

We appreciate your patience over the past few months having worked hard to integrate significant operational changes. Things are settling down, but work remains to be done before we can resume normal service levels. Rest assured though, we're working very hard to do so.

The provisions of the Protection of Freedoms Act introduced on 17 June also created a lot of change for the police forces - as well as an increase in the volumes of received cases. This coincided with our busiest time of the year when incoming volumes were at their peak.

We know this has led to delays with some applications, and these delays will have a direct impact on you. We apologise for this, and hope you can bear with us as we start to see improvements.

To find out if your local force is experiencing delays, please click [here](#).

Find out more about police performance in general by clicking [here](#).

We've been working with the police on recovery plans, and by the end of September, most forces were meeting the 18-day turnaround target, which helps us to meet our various Public Service Standards. While this is really positive news, some police forces are unable to clear all of their backlogs at this stage, but we're in regular contact with these forces who have plans to clear their build up of work.

From November, we expect that some of the affected forces will begin to recover, but we anticipate it may be some months before we see full recovery by all forces. Please do

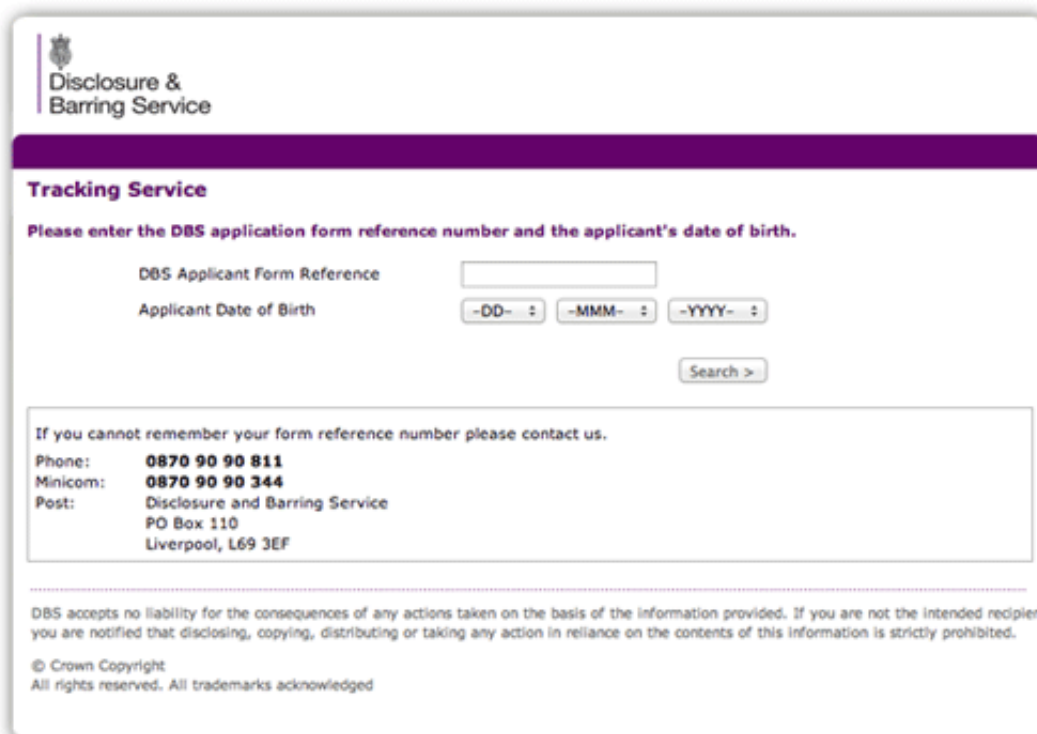
bear with us during this period, and if applicants aren't presenting their DBS certificates it may well be because their applications are held up in processing, so do use the online tracking service to find out what stage they are up to (see below for details).

Online tracking: the quickest way to track an application

We know time is precious, which is why online tracking is a fantastic way of progressing applications.

How do I do it?

You only need the application reference – 'F' number for paper applications or 'e' number for online applications – and the applicant's date of birth.



The screenshot shows the DBS Tracking Service web interface. At the top left is the DBS logo and the text 'Disclosure & Barring Service'. Below this is a purple header bar with the text 'Tracking Service'. Underneath, a purple instruction reads: 'Please enter the DBS application form reference number and the applicant's date of birth.' There are two input fields: 'DBS Applicant Form Reference' (a simple text box) and 'Applicant Date of Birth' (three dropdown menus for day, month, and year). A 'Search >' button is positioned below the date fields. A box below the search area contains contact information: 'If you cannot remember your form reference number please contact us.', 'Phone: 0870 90 90 811', 'Minicom: 0870 90 90 344', and 'Post: Disclosure and Barring Service, PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 3EF'. At the bottom, there is a disclaimer: 'DBS accepts no liability for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of the information provided. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.' and a copyright notice: '© Crown Copyright All rights reserved. All trademarks acknowledged'.

Many people phone our call centre to check the progress of their application; these enquiries account for 40% of all our calls. By comparison, the online tracking service is one click away, available 24/7 and returns an instant result; so no waiting time!

You can [track multiple applications](#) and order blank application forms using this facility. The link can be found in our guide, '[arranging checks as an employer](#)', on www.gov.uk/dbs.

Using our online services, particularly during periods of high demand, will ensure you still get the excellent level of service you have come to expect from us.

Application reference numbers: make a note and pass it on

Our application forms have a unique reference number: an 'F' number on the paper version or an 'e' number within the online form acknowledgement receipt known as 'crb003'.

It's really important that the person who submits the application makes a note of this number, and passes it onto the applicant explaining the benefits.

The benefits

- Applicants can use their application reference number to join the [Update Service](#) at the earliest opportunity. This gives them more time to join as if they wait until their DBS Certificate is issued, they have just 14 days to subscribe - from the date the certificate was issued.
- They can also use their reference number to quickly track the progress of their application using the [online tracking service](#).

Next steps

Make a note of the application reference number when you complete and sign the paper version, or when the electronic online form is submitted and the acknowledgement receipt is received, pass it on to the applicant for their use too.

Please note: Welsh application forms **do not** have a form reference number. For applicants who have applied with a Welsh application form, you may only join the Update Service with your DBS Certificate number.

If you have a Welsh application form and wish to use the online tracking service to track its progress, contact our call centre and we will give you the form reference for online tracking only. It's important to note that this number **must not be** used to subscribe to the Update Service.

e-guide: final preparations

We're thrilled to announce our new e-guide will be launched on our website on 15 November. The aim of the guide we're introducing to replace our training events helps reduce the number of application forms rejected owing to completion errors and omissions.

The launch date will coincide with November's edition of DBS Disclosure News and we will provide a link to the guide and useful hints and tips in our next edition.

Some of you will be lucky enough to get a sneak preview when we send the e-guide to newly registered counter-signatories throughout October. The feedback we receive from those looking at the preview will help us to refine the final product.

We're really excited about sharing this e-guide and hope you'll enjoy using it. We think it's a really useful tool that helps to prevent DBS forms from being returned to you as a result of avoidable errors.

What is a volunteer?

We work closely with our Registered Body (RB) network to deal with issues as they arise. One recurring problem in RB compliance activity is the inappropriate use of free-of-charge volunteer applications. When an RB submits an inappropriate volunteer application, it creates a financial burden on other fee-paying applicants, and is in contravention of the RB Conditions of Registration. We will take action if we believe that inappropriate volunteer applications are being submitted knowingly, or without the RB using reasonable endeavours to ensure that the application is made on behalf of a volunteer, and/or done with the intention to avoid payment.

DBS defines a 'volunteer', as:

'A person engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party other than or in addition to a close relative.'

Make sure that applications meet our definition of a volunteer before selecting the volunteer box as 'Yes' at question x68 on the application form.

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

- Benefit directly from the position for which the DBS application is being submitted.
- Receive any payment (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses).
- Be on a work placement.
- Be on a course that requires them to do this job role.
- Be in a trainee position that will lead to a full time role/qualification.

It clearly states on the application form: *'By placing a cross in the yes box (at section 68) you confirm that the post meets the DBS definition for a free-of-charge volunteer application. Please note that DBS may recover the application fee if box 68 is marked in error and this could result in the cancellation of your DBS registration.'*

Please take a minute to read through the case studies in the following table based on common volunteer errors.

Position applied for	DBS 'volunteer' status	Reasoning
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<p>Students mentoring/tutoring children in schools (three scenarios)</p> <p>Scenario 1 Where there is no benefit to the student except to gain experience, develop skills and enhance their CV.</p> <p>Scenario 2 Where the student receives a qualification or credit towards a qualification as a direct result of their voluntary activity.</p> <p>Scenario 3 Where the student receives a qualification or credit towards a qualification and an opportunity to earn a tax-free bursary or payment.</p>	<p>Scenario 1 Eligible</p> <p>Scenario 2 Ineligible</p> <p>Scenario 3 Ineligible</p>	<p>Scenario 1 This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.</p> <p>Scenario 2 This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and provides a service to a third party - but also provides a direct benefit in kind to the student.</p> <p>Scenario 3 This activity is entirely voluntary and provides a service to a third party; but also provides a benefit in kind to the student and an opportunity to receive a tax free bursary or payment.</p>
<p>Parent helpers in schools</p>	<p>Eligible</p>	<p>This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.</p>
<p>Scout/Guide leaders</p>	<p>Eligible</p>	<p>This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.</p>
<p>Adoptive parents and other household members over 18 years old.</p>	<p>Eligible</p>	<p>This activity is entirely voluntary, is unpaid and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party.</p>
<p>Foster carers and members of the same household over 18 years old</p>	<p>Ineligible</p>	<p>This activity is entirely voluntary but foster carers usually receive payments for these activities. Therefore it is deemed that neither foster carers nor other members of the household are entitled to free checks.</p>
<p>Individuals working abroad on volunteering projects</p>	<p>Ineligible</p>	<p>This activity is entirely voluntary and is primarily aimed at providing a service to a third party. But these persons usually receive payment of a local salary, and lump sum payments above and beyond what could be described as "travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses".</p>
<p>Medical/Teaching/Social Work student on work placement, as part of training</p>	<p>Ineligible</p>	<p>This activity is a mandatory course requirement, is usually paid and is primarily undertaken to benefit the students themselves.</p>

If you need any further guidance, we'll be only too happy to help. Email us at customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

Online Eligibility Tool

We know from our enquiries that guidance is useful when you're deciding which level of check you need to request for job roles.

We've listened to your feedback and busied ourselves developing an online eligibility tool to provide the extra guidance you're looking for. It's still at design stage, but we hope to have a working prototype ready soon - and this is where you come in.

Would you fancy helping us to test the tool ahead of our launch? With your help, we hope to introduce a product that will support organisations and individuals with eligibility queries.

When it's complete, the tool will guide you to a quick eligibility result based on your answers to a number of questions. The tool will provide you with an audit trail with an option to also print.

If you're interested please register here: customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

Eligibility guidance update

The 'DBS guide to eligibility' has been updated on our website. This guidance helps you establish whether the law allows a criminal record check through DBS for a role you are recruiting for (or already have) in your organisation. The guide is available [here](#).

Please take time to read it because the amendments we've included reflect changes in the legislation that enable eligibility for a DBS Certificate.

Don't forget to update hard copies of the guidance that may be in use in your organisation.

It's important to note that this isn't a list of all eligibility criteria or all roles, but it does give you the most commonly submitted duties and roles that we receive applications for.

If one of your roles doesn't appear in the guidance, or you can't see how it would fit into the criteria, please email customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

One final thing to remember - please consider the role carefully before submitting an application to make sure you're legally entitled to see the information.

The Update Service: in your own words

We were curious about what you thought about our Update Service, which has been up and running since 17 June and so far, over 37,000 applicants have subscribed. Here are three professionals' experiences in their own words.

Julie Shaw – Director (Vision for Education)

“This is a service that benefits everyone. From a safeguarding perspective, schools and parents can be confident that we have done everything possible to ensure the suitability of the candidates that we present to their schools.

“The DBS criminal record check is only part of the safeguarding process, but it is a crucial part and it has a high profile. By asking candidates to join the Update Service and by helping them through the process, we have access to ongoing, up-to-date information on the candidate's status. The previous system could only ensure that the information was accurate up to the date the certificate was printed. Now, it is virtually real-time information.

“As with everything new, we needed to understand the service before using it. We used the excellent training material on your website to train our Safeguarding team, who process our candidate applications, and our Branch staff, who carry out the face-to-face interviews, well in advance of the 17 June launch date.

“We had to inform our candidates and existing supply staff about the service, benefits and the process, but we believe passionately that it was worth the effort.

“We also had to adapt some of our procedures and methods of working – but, again, we felt that this was a priceless investment in relation to the safeguarding benefits.

“So far as logging in and checking the status of candidates it is very easy to use. The registration process is also user friendly once the candidate is fully briefed.

“For candidates, there is an obvious cost saving, provided they continue to subscribe to the Update Service and nothing changes in relation to their status. The certificate is always current. This also means that they can now be vetted and cleared by prospective employers a lot quicker and helps them take advantage of any job opportunities.

“Also candidates do not need to complete a new check with new employers or renew the check periodically – but again this only applies if they join and continue to subscribe to the Update Service.

“As an employer, we benefit from being able to offer our clients a safer service. We have amended our procedures to ensure we regularly check that the status of candidates has

not changed. Also we can complete the vetting process more quickly and therefore offer candidates work more quickly.

“As part of our recruitment process we require all our supply staff to join the Update Service if they are having a new criminal record check carried out. We continue to remind and help them through the process until they have successfully registered. At the moment, it is a steep learning curve for candidates but we are more than willing to invest the time to explain the process and support them through it. To their credit, they see the benefit and are willing to commit to joining the service.

“I hope that other Teacher Supply Agencies and other relevant organisations will do the same. I strongly believe that this has the potential to be the most beneficial change to the process of checking criminal records – but in order for everyone to benefit, applicants need to join the Update Service.”

Owen Morgan, teacher

“I have found the Update Service really easy to use. Once I received my new certificate, I visited the DBS website, typed in a few details and I was subscribed!”

Barbara Ball - Disclosure Manager (Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service)

“Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) is a safeguarding charity providing help and training to organisations to protect children and vulnerable adults.

“We serve thousands of charitable organisations and many churches, schools and academies who are significantly benefiting from the Update Service. They employ people (either as paid workers or volunteers) who have obtained a criminal record check for other work and they can now carry it from one role to another - as long as the same level of check was obtained.

“It has streamlined the recruitment process, reducing delay so the employer can fill the vacancy quickly and the applicant does not have to wait until they can start work. Importantly, it also saves employers money as there is no need to pay for another check or renewals.

“We regularly receive enquiries from organisations about the service and have updated our guidance and our website to give them clear information, including a link to your website and YouTube videos.

“We are encouraging employers to obtain the applicant's permission to regularly check their certificate online with the Update Service. It can be done much more frequently than was financially possible with the old system.

“We have always advised organisations to apply for new disclosures at regular intervals

because we are not automatically informed of any subsequent convictions, cautions, warnings, reprimands or relevant police information. This means that without the Update Service it might be a few years before the employer is aware of any significant information which could put children or adults in their care at risk. With the service, the employer can check as often as they want without incurring any additional costs. This has to be good news for all concerned.

“Despite us issuing guidance and updating our website it is fair to say that uptake has been slow, although we have received very positive feedback from organisations that have used the Update Service – they can’t believe how easy it is to access the system online.”

Contacts

Address:

PO Box 110
Liverpool L69 3EF

For Disclosure issues and information, please phone:

Customer Services 0870 90 90 811
Minicom line 0870 90 90 344
Llinell Gymraeg 0870 90 90 223

For Barring issues and information, please phone:

01325 953 795.

As a newly merged organisation, we have two different telephone systems so we’re really sorry that we can’t transfer your call between our offices.

Email:

customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

Websites:

www.gov.uk/dbs

Use our online tracking service to check the progress of DBS applications by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/tracking-application-getting-certificate>