

**Business Plan 2017-18**

*Simpler, faster and more accessible*

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# Chair and Chief Executive’s Foreword

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is first and foremost an organisation responsible for delivering government policy on disclosure and barring functions. We recognise the expectations of Home Office (HO) ministers and the wider government agenda in relation to safeguarding and in carrying out our responsibilities. We are committed to providing faster, modernised services in order to help government achieve its objectives.

This year we will be launching our 2017 – 2020 Strategic Plan which sets out our ambitions over the next three years. This will be supported by yearly Business Plans, of which this is the first.

Our plan for 2017/18 has been informed by the progress we made and the challenges we faced in 2016/17.

During 2016/17, we responded to challenges in processing disclosure certificates in line with our timeliness targets due to a small number of police forces who experienced particular difficulties in meeting their target turnaround time for enhanced DBS checks. Through significant collaboration we start this year in a strong position to deliver against all of our disclosure published service standards. This year, we plan to investigate the feasibility of how police decision making in relation to our work could be carried out in the future.

We have seen a change in the profile of barring casework due to a number of factors. Referral rates have increased substantially, a greater number of people are being considered for barring, and the barring rate has also increased.  As the legislative process allows for an 8 week representation period for cases where we are minded to bar someone, this makes it challenging to meet the performance targets. As a result of this, whilst we will strive to achieve the 2017/18 timeliness target, it will be challenging to do so, but we remain committed to refining our processes to support quality decision making in the fastest possible way. Following implementation of the barring review recommendations in 2016/17, our focus now shifts to embedding this work and continuously improving our capability to make quality barring decisions.

Delivering and embedding our modernised IT solution continues to be an important priority for DBS. It will provide much needed modernisation in our systems and enable us to provide customers with digital channels to access our services. It will improve the effectiveness of services we already offer, allow us to launch Basic certificates and any new services the government requires us to. It will also allow us to develop our core products, improve productivity and help us to better meet customer needs.

We will continue to develop our key relationships with customers and stakeholders, keeping safeguarding at the heart of everything we do. By taking time to understand our key customer groups and maintaining regular engagement with key stakeholders, we will adapt and improve our services to them. We will look to use our data, knowledge and insight to improve the quality of referrals and to ensure those who have a duty to refer do so.

We will work closely with Home Office as DBS Sponsor and continue to support policy development and safeguarding, identifying how we can use the information we have to support the wider safeguarding agenda.

To complement this focus on our customers and stakeholders, we also plan to further develop the DBS itself, introducing ‘smarter working’ initiatives designed to support employees working more flexibly. Continuing the work on our target operating model will help us to build capability and the flexibility to respond to our customers needs. We will also determine our commercial strategy and work to enhance our data and knowledge management capabilities.

The Executive has been strengthened with the appointment of five executives bringing in technology, digital, people, safeguarding and operational skills.

Our Board has been recently strengthened with three new non-executive members with a broad range of skill sets. One brings with them vast experience and specialist skills in safeguarding, one has deep experience in Information technology and business change and the third has an extensive background in accountancy and audit work. We look forward to benefiting from these skills and experiences, alongside the valued support of existing non-executives, to enable the achievement of our plan and priorities for 2017/18.

Bill Griffiths Adele Downey

Chair Chief Executive

# About DBS

**Who we are**

We are responsible for the delivery of disclosure and barring functions on behalf of government. We are a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) accountable to Parliament through the Secretary of State for the Home Office. DBS was established under the Protection of Freedoms Act (PoFA) 2012 on 1 December 2012, operating from two sites, Liverpool and Darlington. We operate disclosure functions for England, Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man, and barring functions for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**How we work**

We are led by a Board, which is responsible for the strategic leadership of the organisation. The Board has collective responsibility for the proper conduct of DBS affairs. This role can be summarised as: direction, monitoring and control, assurance and propriety. The Board comprises Chair, executive and non-executive members.

The functions of DBS are those contained within the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA), Part V of the Police Act 1997, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (SVG) and PoFA. These functions are broadly described as ‘disclosure’ and ‘barring’ functions and are set out below.

We keep and maintain a register of organisations approved by DBS which can submit applications for criminal records certificates.

There are three levels of certificates of criminal records:

**Basic certificate:** This is available for any position or purpose and will contain details of convictions and conditional cautions that are considered to be unspent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (as amended). For applicants residing in or working in England and Wales a Basic certificate is currently issued by Disclosure Scotland on behalf of DBS, but is planned to transfer from Disclosure Scotland to DBS in 2017/18.

**Standard certificate**: This is available to individuals working in roles specified in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975. Standard certificates show unspent and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings (statutory disposals given by a police officer to a young person who admits guilt) held on the Police National Computer (PNC), and subject to filtering.

**Enhanced certificate**: This is the highest level of check available to anyone involved in work with vulnerable groups, and other positions involving a high degree of trust, for example, certain office holders (who are listed in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002). Enhanced certificates contain the same information as the Standard certificate with the addition of relevant police information held by a police force. Additionally where the role is prescribed in legislation it will include details of whether the individual is included in the list of those barred from working with children and vulnerable groups.

We operate a system of updating Standard and Enhanced checks, through the Update Service which we will extend to our Basic certificate.

We reach considered decisions about whether an individual should be barred from engaging in regulated activity with children and/or adults and maintain the children’s and adults’ barred lists.

We bar any individual who has accepted a caution for or been convicted of an automatic barring offence.

We consider for barring any individual who has accepted a caution for or been convicted of an automatic inclusion offence (i.e. an offence that does allow representations) or has been referred to DBS from, for example, an employer or regulatory body, subject to any representations submitted by the individual – provided DBS also has reason to believe that the person is or has been, or might in the future be, engaged in regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

We make decisions as to whether it is appropriate to remove an individual from a barred list.

# Strategic context

DBS was established in December 2012 as a merger of the Independent Safeguarding Authority and Criminal Records Bureau. Our focus during our first strategic plan period from 2013-2017 was to build the foundations of our organisation, and transition to a new supplier who would deliver an integrated and flexible platform to support government in delivering its future aspirations.

Whilst the foundations have been laid over the past three years, our focus in the next three years is to build on these foundations by developing our capacity and capability for change. Over the next three year period, some of the key changes we want to deliver are:

* digital channels across our range of products and services
* providing a faster service for our customers
* developing our relationships with customer groups and stakeholders
* using our data and knowledge to identify trends
* informing government policy through our data and experience
* investigating the feasibility of changing how police decision making in relation to our work could be carried out

We operate in the complex world of safeguarding. Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

We play a key role in providing individuals, employers and other stakeholders with vital information and making decisions in a timely manner and we have reflected this change of emphasis in our plans.

This business plan represents the first year of our new Strategic Plan 2017-20, which sets out our vision and mission for the next three years. These plans reinforce the vital role we undertake in safeguarding the most vulnerable in our society.

**Our vision is to make our services simpler, faster and more accessible**

**Our mission is to put safeguarding at the heart of everything we do**

Underpinned by our vision and mission are our five strategic objectives for 2017-2020. These show our need to focus on operational delivery; transforming our services to our customers and developing our capacity and capability for change, while replacing systems and improving the way we operate.

**Strategic objectives:**

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| 1. Improve safeguarding through delivery of excellent services and sharing of knowledge2. Drives good value for money3. Meets customer needs and exceeds expectations4. Develops a talented workforce to inspire continuous improvement.5. Is a highly valued public organisation |

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| **Our Plan for 2017-18** |

Our priorities for the year ahead are designed to help us achieve our future ambitions; focussing on ‘building on our foundations’ as set out in our Strategic Plan.

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| **1. Improve safeguarding through delivery of excellent services and sharing of knowledge** |
| We play a vital role in safeguarding the most vulnerable in our society through the work that we do. We gather data and intelligence across all our work areas and we know we can improve how we assess and use this data to improve safeguarding.In Year 1 of our new strategy, our focus will be on:* Quality - providing help and support to those who need to make referrals to us for barring consideration. We will focus on making sure that referrals are complete and timely, enabling us to make relevant decisions more quickly
* Stakeholder awareness - identifying any sectors where referrals are not routinely made and ensuring that organisations are made aware of the duty to refer, and given guidance as to how to do so
* Capability - Improving our capability to question, analyse and interpret our data to identify trends in customer behaviour, offending and potential gaps in policy

We will measure our impact on this objective under the following indicators of success from the strategic plan:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE** | **MEASURE** | **IMPACT IN 2017/18** |
| Evidence from policy departments that we have informed policy  | Survey feedback from policy departments during 2017/18 | We will consider the feedback received when setting targets and priorities for future years |
| Improve performance of key quality and timeliness measures | Achievement of all our published service standards  | See performance targets on pages 16 and 18 |

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| **2. Drives good value for money** |
| We are funded by the fees income from our disclosure customers. We aim to operate on a full cost recovery basis in line with HM Treasury’s “Managing Public Money” In Year 1 of our new strategy, our focus will be on:* Efficiency – review the efficiency of our processes and systems and make changes to improve these, including benchmarking the performance of our back office services
* Effectiveness – developing a product strategy that considers the needs of our customers and how we can more effectively serve these. This may identify features we need to enhance or change which will drive some of our future change programme
* Core enablers – finalising our financial strategy, progressing work to replace our finance system, and realising the benefits our new operating system will bring

We will measure our impact on this objective under the following indicators of success from the strategic plan:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE** | **MEASURE** | **IMPACT** |
| The productivity of our operational staff will improve | Barring Cases closed per staff member per month  | From 5.00 in March 2017 to 5.20 by 31 March 2018 |
| Disclosure certificates per person per day  | From 45.5 in March 2017 to 46-47 disclosure certificates per person per day |
| Unit costs will fall | Unit costs of our core products as reported in our Annual Report  | These will reduce on 2016/17 levels |

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| **3. Meets customer needs and exceeds expectations**  |
| Our customers tell us their number one priority is a speedy service that they can rely upon. They also want to be able to interact digitally with us across our range of services. In year 1 of our new strategy, our focus will be on:* Efficiency – Working closely with the National Police Chiefs Council to assess the feasibility of a new operating model for the provision of police information. This is the part of our process that experiences the most delay and inconsistency and we will be identifying and implementing changes to enhance the speed and value of performance during the future change programme
* Modernisation – delivering our modernised IT system to provide a common IT platform that can efficiently support Barring and Disclosure
* Product development – Developing our online service offering across our products and services including launching Basic certificates
* Customer insight – Continuing to develop our understanding of the needs of customers and involve them in the design of our services, gaining continued insight and feedback to drive continuous improvement. This approach has informed the design of the customer experience for Basic Disclosures

We will measure our impact on this objective under the following indicators of success from the strategic plan:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE** | **MEASURE** | **IMPACT** |
| Increase completion rates for digital user journeys | We will develop a measure during 2017/18 for each digital product | We will establish a baseline with a view to improving on this over future years |
| Increase satisfaction levels for user feedback on information and guidance being clear and easy to find | Customer satisfaction with information and guidance  | Maintain satisfaction score at 85% |

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| **4. Develops a talented workforce to inspire continuous improvement**  |
| We know our people are vital to our organisation, without their talent and commitment we will not achieve our objectives. We will equip our staff with the right skills and knowledge to deliver excellent resultsIn year 1 of our new strategy, our focus will be on:* Capacity – We will implement a new organisational structure known as the target operating model. This will provide for additional capacity at senior levels to ensure we maintain focus and energy on delivering our objectives
* Resilience – We will focus on developing leadership resilience and succession planning to provide more resilience to change
* Flexibility – We will introduce flexible working practices which will focus our work on outcomes rather than processes and we will invest in tools to provide more flexibility in where our people work.

We will measure our impact on this objective under the following indicators of success from the strategic plan:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE** | **MEASURE** | **IMPACT** |
| Increase employee engagement index | Staff Engagement Index  | From 64% to 66% by 31 March 2018 |
| Reduce staff sickness absence | Average working days lost per employee (rolling 12 months basis)  | From 9.34 days (March 2017) to under 9 days by 31 March 2018 |

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| **5. Is a highly valued public organisation**  |
| We are a public organisation whose work affects a significant number of people and organisations. We will work with stakeholders to understand their needs and how we can adapt and improve our service to them.In year 1 of our new strategy, our focus will be on:* Stakeholder engagement – implement a tiered approach to account management to enable us to capture, analyse and assess the insight that we gather
* Communication - developing a new communications framework to ensure we effectively communicate key messages at the right time to the right audience
* Research – developing a programme of research to identify trends in behaviour that we will use to inform policy makers or change our service

We will measure our impact on this objective under the following indicators of success from the strategic plan:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE** | **LINK TO BALANCED SCORECARD MEASURE** | **IMPACT** |
| Maintain customer satisfaction score | Customer satisfaction with the service received from the DBS | Maintain at 89% during 2017/18 |
| Increase satisfaction with key stakeholder groups  | We will develop a measure during 2017/18 | We will establish a baseline with a view to improving on this over future years |

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# Delivering our plan

***Our organisation***

The strength and resilience of our organisation is in its people, their skills and their capabilities and these will be key in the delivery of our business plan.

In the next year, our aim is to further develop our people to inspire continuous improvement. Through the high levels of engagement that we currently enjoy, we will look to introduce further opportunities for flexible working and ensure that our people are recognised for their contribution to the delivery of our strategic plan.

***Risks to delivery***

In delivering our business plan for 2017-18, the risks that affect our success have been identified, and mitigations and actions considered. The actions we plan to take to manage our key strategic risks include:

* delivery of a modernised IT solution and outsourced services to our time and quality standards, including Basic certificates
* improved police performance with a continued focus and monitoring of their timeliness and efficiency
* responding effectively to change in government policy and legislation including the current filtering scheme
* proactively managing the demand for our current and new services to avoid increases in work in progress
* proactively managing our fee strategy keeping our surplus/deficit within limits defined by framework agreement and delegations from the Home Office
* keeping our data secure
* ensuring we have the right people with the right skills in place to support our organisation
* ensuring we have the support from our key stakeholders and the legislative mandate to implement the changes proposed in our strategy

# Our services and achievements in 2016/17

**Barring**

***Background***

DBS manage, maintain and own the Children’s and Adults’ Barred Lists which are used to prevent unsuitable individuals from working in regulated activity with children and vulnerable groups. Information is received from a number of sources, including direct referrals. This information is used to make decisions on whether a referred person should be barred from engaging in regulated activity in one or both sectors and included in the barred list(s).

DBS is committed to ensuring it makes fair, consistent and thorough barring decisions which provide a proportionate response to the conduct that has occurred and the future risk of harm which is posed. There is keen awareness of the impact a barring decision can have both on the person referred, and those with whom they have already, or may in future, come into contact. It is often necessary to make very difficult and finely balanced decisions.

***Our performance in 2016/17***

Over 64k individuals on an Adult and/or Children’s barred list

Over 2k more cases created in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16

Over 12k cases considered in 2016/17

Performance against our published service standards is set out in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** |
| **Focus** | **Measures** | **Performance** | **Performance** | **Performance** | **Targets** | **Targets** |
| Quality | Sample Check Error Rate–Barring Decisions | KPI not measured | 0.30% | 0.78% | ≤0.50% | ≤0.50% |
| Timeliness | % of Barring Cases Concluded in 3 Months | 66.5% | 66.2% | 54.5% | 65.0% | 65.0% |

During 2016-17, the barring function successfully implemented all the recommendations from the independent review commissioned by our Board in 2015. Delivery of the review improvement plan reinforced continuous learning within barring.  This has enhanced decision making, whilst ensuring that knowledge of safeguarding remains current and reflects policy intent.  To that end, DBS procured and worked with independent experts in the fields of safeguarding both adults and children, to review and strengthen guidance and provide training to caseworkers.

In the past year, we filled a number of longstanding caseworker vacancies and fully trained these new starters in the casework decision making process. Referrals increased in both number and relevance, meaning that a greater number of cases progressed further through the decision making process and to the ‘minded to bar’ stage. This combined with lower response levels from external stakeholders to requests for information, affected the timeliness measure – cases cannot proceed to a decision until all relevant information has been received, and where that decision is one of ‘minded to bar’, there is a legal requirement to allow the customer 8 weeks to respond. As a result, it has not been possible to meet the 3 month timeliness target. We have seen a change in the profile of barring casework due to a number of factors. Referral rates have increased substantially, a greater number of people are being considered for barring, and the barring rate has also increased. As a result of this, whilst we will strive to achieve the 2017/18 timeliness target, it will be challenging to do so but we remain committed to refining our processes to support quality decision making in the fastest possible way.

Barring decisions are subject to a rigorous internal process of quality assurance, carried out before the decision is communicated to the customer. During 2016-17, it was necessary, on 6 occasions, to carry our further work before the case could be concluded. This represents 0.78% of the cases sampled. In all cases, feedback is given to the caseworker and noted as part of continuing professional development.

**Disclosure**

***Background***

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is at the heart of DBS’s vision and purpose. Operations (Disclosure) contributes to this by providing the key products of Standard and Enhanced Disclosure Certificates, which also enable employers to make effective employment decisions.

Operations (Disclosure) is committed to delivering excellent customer service and exceeding our customers’ expectations. This starts with our service to Registered Bodies (RBs) via the Relationship Management Unit. The team support and liaise with RBs and Umbrella Bodies (UBs), which represent employers and submit requests for Standard and Enhanced checks. They also make sure that RBs and UBs comply with the highest standards of service and integrity.

During 2017/18 DBS will launch Basic certificates, and Relationship Management will be responsible for the service to Responsible Organisations (ROs) that will submit these checks on behalf of individuals.

Over 4 million Disclosure applications are submitted every year. The timely and accurate processing of applications is paramount in Operations (Disclosure). Our Production and Operational Performance teams work closely together to deliver this, using accurate forecasting and management information to maintain a high quality service. Quality checking takes place throughout the process, both “in-flight” and once a decision has been taken but before the certificate is despatched.

Disclosure Certificates could not be delivered without input from Police Disclosure Units (PDUs). There are 52 PDUs funded by DBS and employing over 1000 staff. These staff use the Quality Assurance Framework (statutory guidance for chief police officers) to identify and consider the relevance of police intelligence to disclose. Operations (Disclosure) has a team dedicated to supporting the PDUs so that they can deliver a consistent, high quality service that represents good value for money

We recognise that our customers will sometimes need guidance about the Disclosure and Barring process and that things sometimes go wrong. Customer Service and Investigations aims to help in both these cases, by responding to more complex queries and dealing with complaints and disputes, within agreed timescales. We provide clear, correct information and guidance to help resolve our customers’ queries and we strive to get it right first time, every time. We also investigate allegations of fraud in the application process – whether for registration or for Disclosures.

***Our performance in 2016/17***

Over 1 million subscribers to the update service since launch

Over 800k applications for volunteer positions processed annually

Around 4.3m certificates issued annually

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** |
| **Focus** | **Measures** | **Performance** | **Performance** | **Performance** | **Targets** | **Targets** |
| Quality | Sample Check Error Rate: Disclosure Certificates | 0.01% | 0.01% | 0.00% | ≤0.02% | ≤0.02% |
| Timeliness | % of Disclosure certificates Issued in 8 Weeks | 95.2% | 94.8% | 94.8% | 95.0% | 96.0% |
| % of Disclosure certificates issued 3 Weeks\*\* | 85.3% | 86.9% | 85.8% | 86.0% | 87.0% |
| % of basic applications processed in 2 weeks | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 90.0% |

\*\* added to published scorecard for 2016-17

Of the three published service standards, the Quality target was met with no errors being made for the full year against a ≤0.02% target (taken from a sample of Disclosures issued). The remaining two timeliness targets were narrowly missed with 94.8% of Disclosures being issued in eight weeks against the 95% target and 85.8% of Disclosures being issued in three weeks against the 86% target.

This was mostly due to the significant backlog of applications at the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Throughout the year, significant progress has been made to reduce Disclosure Work In Progress and the number of aged cases at MPS. Whilst this is really positive news for our customers, it has had a negative impact on our published service standard (PSS) achievements.

Looking ahead, this means that we will be starting the new reporting year in a stronger position in terms of work in progress and aged cases and this, coupled with process improvements at the Police and Operations (Disclosure), will support achievement of improved PSS targets in the 2017/18 reporting year. MPS have reduced the number of outstanding cases that are older than 60 days from 38K in March 2016 to 600 by March 2017. As a result, we expect to see MPS processing the majority of new cases within the Service Level Agreement turnaround times.

# Budget Information 2017-18

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Revenue** | **2017/18****£000s** |
| Income |    | 174,385 |
| **3rd party**  |
| Supplier costs | 34,384 |
| Police costs | 34,973 |
| **Other direct costs** |
| Pay costs | 36,187 |
| Accommodation | 4,893 |
| IT | 30,003 |
| Depreciation | 19,856 |
| Other costs | 13,261 |
| Cost of capital | 828 |

The budget above sets out our estimated costs to deliver our services and priorities this year, and process the levels of disclosure applications and barring referrals we anticipate receiving during the year.

We continue to strive to identify efficiencies and deliver a value for money service. This year, we plan to freeze fees at the same levels as 2016-17 despite absorbing inflationary increases in some of our underlying costs. This means that the fees charged for Enhanced and Standard Disclosures have remained the same for over 4 years since DBS was established

The development and deployment of our modernised IT solution will also provide us with further opportunities in subsequent business plans to achieve efficiencies from modernising our services. We also plan to target the delivery of 5% efficiency savings over the course of 2017/18.

These efficiencies will allow us to consider how we enhance our functions and amend our current products and prices to meet Home Office and customer needs over the remainder of our strategy.