



Disclosure &
Barring Service

DBS Quality Account 2022 to 2023





Contents

Foreword	4	What our staff say about quality	58
Introduction	6	Conclusion	60
Governance arrangements	8	A look forward to 2022-23	62
Quality assurance framework	9	Quality statement from the DBS Chief Executive and directors	64
The purpose and scope of the quality account	10		
Key achievements in numbers	12		
Safeguarding and Quality charter	13		
How we did it	15		
Safeguarding	15		
User experience	31		
Effectiveness and efficiency	43		
What our customers say	54		
What our auditors say	55		

Foreword from the DBS Chairman

I am pleased to present the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) quality account for 2022-23. Safeguarding and quality continue to be at the heart of our work and everything we do is designed to improve the quality of our services, the decisions we make, and our ability to safeguard. Our aim throughout 2022-2023 was to continue modernising the services we provide, the way we work, and the way we interact with our stakeholders.

Our 2022-2023 business plan focused on the actions we needed to take to deliver the ambitions previously set out in our 5-year strategy.

The objectives identified in our strategy, co-produced with our staff, were focused on making significant contributions to improving service quality, the technology we use, our profile and our work with and for our partners, customers, and staff.

Our 5-year strategy identified 3 strategic priorities, Quality, Profile and People, each of which are aligned to one of the 3 quality assurance framework (QAF) imperatives. This, our fourth annual quality account, provides significant evidence of our determination to work with our stakeholders, support our staff development and meet the principles set out in our Safeguarding and Quality charter, in order to achieve our core purpose.

During our 10th anniversary year, our support for both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Homes for Ukraine scheme continued, and we actively contributed to outcomes of both the Bailey Report and Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). In addition, we have strengthened digital identity processes and collaborated with partners in the care sector to develop a best practice toolkit to inform safer recruitment.

I hope you find this assessment of our performance, in terms of quality and safeguarding, informative. On behalf of the DBS board, I would like to thank our staff for their continued dedication to providing the highest quality safeguarding services.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Fairfield".

Dr Gillian Fairfield
DBS Chairman



Introduction

As you read this report, you will find out more about how we at DBS maintain our focus on quality and put customer service and safeguarding at the front and centre of everything we do, helping employers to make the right recruitment decisions.

DBS helps employers make those good recruitment decisions, based on information contained in our DBS certificates. We help to prevent relevant people from working in regulated activities by maintaining the lists of individuals who have been barred from working with vulnerable groups, including children. To achieve these important safeguarding goals to the necessary standard, we work closely with many partner organisations, including police forces and Registered Bodies.

We set ambitious quality and performance standards for ourselves, and we expect the same high standards of all of our stakeholders, to maintain a collective focus on excellence in service delivery.

We use many terms to describe quality and quality improvement. Setting a vision of embracing a culture of quality and continuous improvement relies on the board and Senior Executive Team. Delivering an effective quality strategy depends on the commitment of all of our people to embrace the vision, live the values and act as individual champions for excellence in everything that we do.

Over the last 12 months, we have continued to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We have embraced the changes in the way we work, with all our staff now able to work more flexibly, with a blend of in-office and home working becoming the norm. We continue to embrace technology in the work we do, and this year we have introduced new digital identity online services through our Registered Bodies and implemented a new barring portal allowing barring referrals to be made online.

As vice chairman of DBS and chairman of the Quality, Finance and Performance (QF&P) Committee, I am pleased to introduce our fifth annual quality account, outlining how the many quality improvement initiatives undertaken throughout the year come together as part of our journey of continuous improvement.



Neil Rhodes
DBS Vice Chairman and Non-Executive
Director



Governance arrangements

This is the fifth quality account from DBS and the third in relation to DBS' current QAF.

The Executive Director for Barring and Safeguarding has continued to have overall accountability for the quality account and the QAF, whilst associate directors and heads of service maintain operational governance.

Scrutiny of day-to-day quality assurance activities, encouraging and embedding a culture of continuous improvement and learning is undertaken by a number of forums, including:

- the Disclosure Quality Steering Group
- barring quality summits
- local change and improvement forums in both Disclosure and Barring operational areas

At a non-executive level, effective challenge and support are provided through the following groups and teams within DBS:

- Strategic Leadership Team
- People Strategic Group
- Strategic Plan Oversight Group
- Associate Directors Group
- Change and Transformation Oversight Group

Independent external assurance of DBS' approach to quality and the impact it has on our ability to achieve our vision, purpose, and strategic objectives continues to be provided through a range of audits and assessments. These include those undertaken by the British Standards Institution (BSI), Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE).

Quality assurance framework

The DBS QAF was endorsed by the QF&P Committee in November 2020. It provides a whole system approach to quality assurance and reporting which aims to keep vulnerable groups, including children at the centre of DBS activities.

The QAF is defined as a programme of activity, assessment, and reporting of the quality and effectiveness of DBS systems and services. It:

- establishes ways of analysing and interrogating data on activity that increases DBS understanding of its safeguarding function, effectiveness and user experience
- establishes how DBS will hold directorates to account and gain assurance of the effectiveness of their arrangements
- determines its arrangements for peer review and self-audit
- identifies quality measures from floor to board and includes expert input
- is driven by a comprehensive suite of quality metrics
- shows how the findings from quality measures will feed back into learning

The approach outlined in the QAF evidences whether the right things are being done for the right reasons and in the right way, and enables DBS to use that evidence to secure greater impact, effectiveness and efficiency across the whole organisation.

The purpose and scope of the quality account

The importance of quality is absolute, and business-wide quality assurance is fundamental to the ability of DBS to make good quality decisions on barring referrals and produce timely and accurate certificates, both of which support DBS in making recruitment safer.

To determine if DBS has succeeded in achieving its purpose, this quality report draws together a range of both quantitative and qualitative data, and provides an assessment of quality assurance activity and the impact of that activity during the 2022-23 performance year.

It provides evidence of activity and achievements against deliverables under each strategic objective and the 3 aligned imperatives:

The three imperatives:

Quality
Safeguarding

People
Effectiveness
and efficiency

Profile
User
experience

It provides information on service delivery, evidence of good practice, learning and continuous improvement, as well as indicating areas for improvement.

As well as an internal review, the account evidences external assessment and looks at DBS's approach to quality, through a safeguarding lens, to ensure focus remains on our core function of protecting vulnerable groups, including children.

The report is formally reviewed by QF&P who provide board with assurance of progress against the QAF.



Key achievements in numbers

7.5 million DBS certificates issued

We have processed over 7.5 million DBS checks, which included 54,432 checks to support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Of these 7.5 million, 4,232,872 were Enhanced with Barred List checks, 267,720 were Enhanced, 396,122 were Standard, and 2,642,272 were Basic checks.



57,170 barring referrals considered

8,347 referrals received from employers and keepers of registers, 18,288 disclosure information referrals as a result of Enhanced DBS checks containing relevant criminality information or intelligence, 30,535 automatic barring referrals as a result of cautions or convictions considered so serious a person will be automatically barred of which 98.1% were closed within 6 months.



Quality measures

99.86% quality rate of closures in Barring against a 99.5% target.

Percentage of all criminality and barring information that DBS should place on a certificate included of 100% achieved against a target of 99.98%.



Partnership engagement

560 workshops delivered reaching over 12,000 individuals.



Social media engagement

2k Twitter followers, 1.2k Facebook followers and 3.1k LinkedIn followers.



Customer satisfaction rates

99.6% of all complaints responded to within 6 working days against a target of 89%. DBS was the top-rated public-sector body (national) for customer satisfaction, with a rating of 81.4, compared to the national average of 78.4.

Safeguarding and Quality charter

The DBS Safeguarding and Quality charter was launched in November 2021 and sets out how DBS is committed to safeguarding through the provision of a quality service. It includes a vision for safeguarding and defines both safeguarding and quality within a DBS context:

Safeguarding

- Prevent those who pose a risk to vulnerable groups from working in certain roles
- Protect the public by helping employers make safer recruitment decisions
- Protect the public by bringing expert contributions to the wider safeguarding debate
- Protect and safeguard the welfare and rights of vulnerable groups
- Promote and safeguard civil liberties and reduce the burden of intrusion into the lives of individuals

Quality

The degree to which our services and products meet or exceed the needs of both:

- Our customers and partners who use our information and services to make safeguarding risk assessments
- The public for whom our organisation exists to protect

Safeguarding and quality principles

Note, each of the following principles is represented by a symbol. These symbols are then used throughout the quality account, to indicate which principle the evidence aligns to/demonstrates.



Seek to engage a diverse population, including those who benefit from our services and products, as well as those who use them



Influence by informing and guiding the wider safeguarding debate through our organisational profile, knowledge, and expertise



Meet and strive to exceed partners' expectations, in terms of recommendations, time frames, and performance in the recognition of how this impacts our ability, and our partners' ability, to safeguard the public



Demonstrate how our strategic, business, and financial priorities and planning are informed by, and rooted in, our purpose to protect the public by helping employers make safer recruitment decisions



Nurture an organisational culture where quality is measured by our ability to safeguard first and foremost



Prioritise activities that enhance our ability to safeguard vulnerable groups, safeguard individual civil liberties, and promote employer ability to protect the public



Challenge activities that undermine our commitment to safeguarding and quality, both internally and externally



Focus quality assurance activities on the customer and partner and the impact we have on our joint responsibility to protect the public



Reflect on our work and shared learning, including learning from error and experience and ensuring a feedback loop as a means by which we define 'good DBS practice'



Articulate and demonstrate what we know about the quality and impact of DBS functions on our customers, and how our arrangements maximise the safety of the wider public, as well as vulnerable groups, including children



Communicate our safeguarding commitment and ambition to reach a wide and diverse population in a manner that embraces inclusivity and equality

Imperative: Safeguarding

Strategic Priority: Quality

What we set out to achieve

Objective 1: We will provide high-quality, consistent, timely and accessible services for our customers.

- SO1.1: Respond to legislative change
- SO1.2: Improve quality and inclusivity of products and services for customers
- SO1.3: Identify opportunities to improve products and services for the future
- SO1.4: Embed the DBS Safeguarding and Quality charter in everything we do
- SO1.5: Ensure the services we provide deliver value for money

Objective 2: We will embrace technology to drive improvement in the quality of our work.

- SO2.1: Progress digital services modernisation
- SO2.2: Improve governance regarding data management
- SO2.3: Maintain existing technology
- SO2.4: Complete required technology transformation
- SO2.5: Improve the use of HR and finance data in DBS decision-making

What we achieved

Safeguarding Level 1 Training and Safeguarding e-learning

Safeguarding training takes our staff through some of the fundamentals of safeguarding, and how our work makes a difference. Training is accessed through face-to-face training and refresher training through e-learning. This reporting year, 73.2% of staff have completed either Safeguarding Level 1 classroom training or Safeguarding e-learning. This falls short of the 85% expectation and was impacted by the increase of work in progress across operational business areas and the resulting delay in releasing staff to attend the training. Training leads will continue to monitor completion rates and will liaise with managers to encourage uptake during 2023-24.

Safeguarding learning resource

During 2022-23, 2 safeguarding learning resources were developed and underwent both internal and external review. One digital media demonstrated the end-to-end referral and decision-making process, and

the other demonstrated the importance of making a barring referral at the right time. These resources will be available both internally and externally.

Within 2022-23, 28 new caseworkers were recruited and went through the 19-week Caseworker Training Programme.

External training on the barring decision-making process and Structured Judgement Process was also delivered to Disclosure Scotland colleagues.

Barring operational training - refresher training and learning

Several internal learning support materials were developed during 2022-23 to provide additional support for all Barring and Safeguarding staff. These included:

- e-learning about the test for regulated activity
- supporting team managers in developing different techniques to deliver feedback
- presentation developed on critical thinking skills
- presentation developed on the straight minded to bar process
- refresher training on evidence evaluation, the structured judgement process, appropriateness, and proportionality was delivered to team managers, deputy team managers and mentors

Several other learning opportunities were provided during 2022-23. This included a programme of continuous professional development for staff to upskill and enhance their knowledge and understanding of a variety of safeguarding topics. This was carried out via a range of masterclasses, including:

- North Yorkshire County Council - Role of the Local Authority Designated Officer, attended by 60 staff
- North Yorkshire County Council - Role of the Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Manager, attended by 47 staff

Themed case conferences

4 themed case conferences were also held, which were attended by team managers, caseworkers, heads of service, associate directors and the executive director of Barring and Safeguarding. These focused on specific areas of casework and from these, a 'points to consider' bulletin was produced to support caseworkers in these areas. The topics covered were:

- sexual material relating to children
- use of the straight minded to bar process
- historic sexual offending
- physical abuse of children

Overall, the development of new safeguarding learning resources and provision of quality support services has contributed to an improvement in the quality of barring decisions, as evidenced by the improvement in key performance indicators.

Disclosure training

A significant amount of training has been undertaken in the 2022-23 performance year, to support the high intake of new entrants, at both administrative officer (AO) and executive officer (EO) level, into the Disclosure Production area, as well as supporting a small number of colleagues outside of the Production area.

- Police National Computer (PNC) training for new staff - 75
- PNC training for existing staff - 4
- Unsures training for new staff - 22
- Unsures refresher training for existing staff - 5
- Safeguarding Level 1 training - 64

With the changes implemented in 2021-22 around extending the consolidation period for new entrants, we have seen sustained quality levels in R0 (computer system) PNC when compared to previous years. With the introduction of flexible working and more colleagues working from home, we had seen a reduction in quality in 2021-22, with R0 PNC failing the quality ratios across 5 months. However, since May 2022, despite the volume of new staff entrants, we have achieved the quality ratio targets month on month during 2022-23.

On R0 Unsures workstream, we have improved the quality ratios from 1:1010 errors in 21-22 to 1:1146 errors for the same period in 2022-23 (April to February).

We have developed a quality pack to be delivered at team meetings highlighting the common error trends for PNC and looking at the impact of errors. We have also developed a manager's quality pack to support managers in driving quality discussions at individuals' one-to-ones and to support colleagues in taking the necessary action for those whose capability is not at the required standard.

In addition, Production managers are finalising the review of relevant quality assurance procedures which will help strengthen the guidance and therefore ability for process managers to address quality concerns.

Quality assurance

Barring and Safeguarding Incident Management System

The Quality, Support and Assurance team carry out quality checks on barring casework decisions and rate the decision against the barring and safeguarding incident management system (SIMS).

A root cause analysis is undertaken on a selection of high-risk events (HREs) (an incorrect decision to place an individual on one or both Barred Lists) each month to help understand key issues and identify learning for the individual or wider organisation. 'Lessons learned' bulletins are then produced and communicated to staff, as well as feeding into training to provide a continual learning cycle.



Key performance indicator and second tier check

The tier 1 Key performance indicator is based on the number of incorrect barring outcomes (IBOs) and safeguarding events. Out of the 13,717 eligible cases in 2022-23 that were closed in Barring, 19 incorrect barring outcomes were identified, and no safeguarding events identified. This means that 99.86% of cases were not an incorrect barring outcome.

In the same period, a total of 1,564 casework decisions were checked through the quality assurance process, of which 25 were HREs. This means that 98.4% of case closures were not an HRE, against the second-tier target of 97.5%. A HRE is defined as where there is a high degree of certainty and consensus that an event or seriously flawed decision has the potential to result in harm to a member of a vulnerable group, including children.

In addition to the KPI, there are additional internal quality sub-measures which are monitored and reported on during the year, to provide a 'whole-system' view of casework quality. These are categorised below.

Safeguarding events

Where all lines of defence and quality checking have failed and there is clear evidence a member of a vulnerable group, including children has suffered as a result or where the incident has been a contributory factor to the harm experienced by a member of a vulnerable group, including children.

Risk cases

There is a high degree of certainty and consensus that an event or seriously flawed decision has the potential to have an avoidable negative impact on an individual who is not a member of a vulnerable group, including children.

No risk cases

Where the outcome is considered to be correct, but casework quality issues have been identified which impact upon the defensibility of the decision.

Cases meeting the required standard

Information gathering actions

There is a high degree of certainty and consensus that further information is required to determine the correct outcome of the case.

Procedural events

A procedural error outside of the decision-making process which impacts on the quality/productivity of the service.

Figures and targets

- 99.86% of cases closed that are not considered to be safeguarding events as defined by SIMS: Target (≥99.75%)

- 98.5% of cases quality checked, that are not considered to be risk incidents as defined by SIMS: Target (≥97.5%)
- 94.8% of cases quality checked that are not considered to be no-risk incidents as defined by SIMS: Target % (≥ 90%)
- 82.8% of cases quality checked that are not considered to meet SIMS criteria (cases meeting the required standard): Target (≥ 80%)
- 98.4% of cases that are quality checked that are not considered to be information gathering actions as defined by SIMS: Target (≥ 98%)
- 92.9% of cases that are quality checked that are not considered to be procedural events as defined by SIMS: Target (≥ 94%)



Barring and Safeguarding decision-making root cause analysis

During the year, a total of 23 Barring and Safeguarding root cause analysis (RCA) interviews have taken place. This is a selection of the HREs identified through quality checking, where it is considered the most learning can be obtained.

From these RCAs, a total of 18 'lessons learned' bulletins were produced, which highlight learning and key messages to individuals and the wider organisation. These were all made available through an electronic library to aid accessibility.

In addition, key learning was highlighted from appeal cases and appeal hearings, and 5 'lessons learned' bulletins were produced to support learning, and 17 key judgements were circulated.

Themes from RCA/quality checking include the following:

- Information gathering – what information is available from children's services and the need to obtain up-to-date information
- Signposting caseworkers to the support products available to help with decision making
- Straight minded to bar process – highlighting best practice and when it should be used



Barring quality assurance wrap-around service

During the year, a total of 537 requests for use of the quality advisory and quality wrap-around services were fulfilled, providing advice, signposting, and supporting the decision-making process and colleagues, prior to a final decision being made. The wrap-around service provides advice and information on a one-to-one basis and is available to all Barring and Safeguarding staff.



Barring peer review

Peer review sessions were provided each week to caseworkers across Barring and Safeguarding and were facilitated by the Quality Support and Assurance team. In 2022-23, 45 sessions were held.



Disclosure assurance activities and improvements

During the 2022-23 reporting year, 503,237 quality checks were undertaken. Of these, 496,380 (98.64%) were correct and 6,857 (1.36%)

errors were identified. Of those errors, 6,208 were false negatives (where the certificate was blank when information should have been included) and 649 were false positives (where incorrect information was included on the certificate). All 6,857 errors were resolved prior to dispatch. The majority of errors remain attributable to either Registered Body, applicant, or DBS agent error, which is consistent with previous trends.

When comparing this performance with the previous reporting year, as highlighted in the table below, the error rate has reduced by 0.14%.

No PNC matching errors were found in the 16,800 certificate outcome checks carried out during the reporting year.

	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
Volume of checks	450,622	503,237
Number correct	443,813	496,380
Accuracy rate	98.49%	98.64%
Number of errors	6,809	6,857
Error rate	1.5%	1.36%
False positives	628	649
False negatives	6,181	6,208

Focused, cross-function quality engagement (Disclosure)

Disclosure Production colleagues introduced regular staff engagement away days during 2022-23 for both day and evening shifts, where quality has been high on the agenda. This focus on quality has been understood and well received across Production. Inviting other areas across Disclosure Operations, including the Disclosure, Assurance and Compliance team and the Business Improvement team has highlighted opportunities to strengthen our commitment to continuously improve our processes and procedures to underpin our safeguarding role.

The Disclosure, Assurance and Compliance team delivered presentations to Production staff during the away days and at individual team meetings, explaining the work that their team carries out. These sessions have provided Production staff with insights into how staff errors are found and categorised as well as an overview of the data breach matching process and the importance of matching correctly every time. The sessions also covered the impacts of incorrect matching on customers and other stakeholders with an emphasis on safeguarding, as well as reputational and financial costs to DBS. Similar sessions have also been carried out with disclosure, assurance, and compliance staff through monthly engagement meetings. All presentations and sessions have been well received across

Production and the Disclosure, Assurance and Compliance team, and have helped staff to understand the importance of what they do as well as the impact of each decision they make.

Disclosure Operations quality checking framework

During quarter 4 of 2022-23, a full review of both the quality checking framework and quality checking/validation guides in both R0 and R1 workstreams has been undertaken. The R0 workstream framework was issued in quarter 4 of 2022-23 with changes to the R1 workstream framework scheduled to be published in quarter 1 of the 2023-24 reporting year. This review has seen the framework updated, as well as an improved reporting system put in place which will be rolled out from April 2023.

During quarter 3, a decision was taken to review all disclosure, assurance and compliance procedures which feed into the framework. The review will run from January to December 2023. The process involves support from the Continuous Improvement team, by way of an impartial review on the processes, sitting with staff on each check coupled with our own internal review by higher and senior executive officers.

Quality Steering Group

The Quality Steering Group have continued to meet on a quarterly basis. All meetings have a set agenda with various areas across Disclosure Operations updating the group on the previous quarter's results, ongoing issues, and recommendations for improvements. Any plans to change approaches to quality assurance are discussed and agreed at the group and meetings are documented and minutes taken for audit purposes.

At the start of the 2022-23 reporting year, the terms of reference of the group were reviewed to ensure they still met business requirements. In addition, the attendee list was also reviewed to ensure we have the right people in the group and at the meetings to make the relevant decisions required.

Quality and timeliness metrics

Both Disclosure and Barring and Safeguarding operational directorates have several performance metrics which drive the delivery of timely and quality barring decisions and DBS certificates. A summary of the achievements against targets is detailed below.

Barring metrics

Quality rate of closures

Barring quality rate of closure (incorrect barring outcome (IBO) or safeguarding event (SE)) was a new performance measure for 2021-22, achieving 99.90% at year-end against a target of 99.50% This measure remained in place for 2022-23 and was successfully achieved for the second year, with performance at 99.86% against a target of 99.50%.

Performance against the tier 2 quality rate of closure (high risk event) achieved 98.40% at year-end against a target of 97.50%.

Timeliness

We met 2 of our 3 timeliness targets for Barring. In 2022-23, new timeliness targets were introduced, which no longer exclude 'inactive' time (when information is being sought from external sources, including those we propose to bar).

- 98.1% of Automatic barring cases were completed within 6 months
- 47.8% of cases where we were Minded to Bar were closed within 9 months
- 85.1% of cases where we were Not Minded to Bar were closed within 6 months

Disclosure metrics

Quality

100% of all criminality and barring information that DBS should place on a certificate was included against the 2022-23 target of 99.98%.

Timeliness

The timeliness target to issue 80% of Basic DBS certificates within 2 days was met with an achievement of 85.2%. 94.7% of Standard DBS certificates were issued in 5 days against the 2022-23 target of 80%. 78.4% of Enhanced and Enhanced with Barred List(s) DBS certificates were despatched within 14 days, against the 2022-23 target of 80%.

Registered Body and Responsible Organisation compliance and quality improvements

Registered Bodies (RBs) play a key role in the provision of DBS services, including ensuring Standard, Enhanced, and Enhanced with Barred List(s) applications are completed correctly and that the applicant's identity has been verified. DBS is responsible for ensuring RBs are compliant with the DBS code of practice for registered persons, issued under section 122 of the Police Act 1997 and the conditions attached to registration as set out in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Registration) Regulations 2006).

RBs that submit checks electronically to DBS via an e-bulk system must comply with the e-bulk interchange agreement and ensure that e-bulk systems are built in line with the e-bulk business message specification.

DBS undertakes a compliance programme to ensure the RB network delivers its responsibilities, as failure to achieve this could compromise the integrity of the service. During the year, we have:

- continued to carry out compliance checks on RBs
- increased the number of compliance inspections carried out, without increasing resource levels, by continuing with remote inspections
- provided support to RBs with non-compliant practices in place and achieved our target of 90% of non-compliant RBs being re-assessed as compliant within 4 months, achieving 90% in quarter 4 and 91.5% for the year

As a result of the ongoing work to improve quality, the RB network has reduced to 801.

This year we have extended the compliance programme to include the 90 ROs registered with DBS to submit Basic DBS checks through a web service. The purpose of the compliance programme is to ensure they are complying with the Basic DBS check terms and conditions, processing standards, and web services interchange agreement. All ROs have had a compliance check in 2022-23.

Roll-out of digital identity checking for DBS applications

In January 2022, DBS published digital identity guidelines that enable RBs and ROs to use digital identity technology, offered by certified identity service providers (IDSPs), to verify an applicant's identity. Prior to this, the DBS identity guidance required RBs and ROs to check physical versions of an applicant's identity documents before applying for a DBS check. This process could sometimes result in errors being made on application forms and cause delays to processing. The move to digital identity better meets customers' expectations and provides an improved customer experience, as checks can be processed more quickly and remotely, which is more convenient for the applicant and is expected to be a more robust approach to confirming the applicant's identity.

DBS published its digital identity guidelines in January 2022, and these are aligned to the UK digital identity and attributes trust framework, which sets the rules and standards for digital identity verification in the UK. During 2022-23, 17 IDSPs have become certified IDSPs. RBs and ROs can now use their services to carry out identity checks and we are working with them to provide advice and guidance to support them with the transition to digital identity.

The RB and RO compliance programme includes checks with RBs and ROs to ensure the identity guidance is being followed correctly.

Police quality assurance framework

An updated version of the police or law enforcement agencies (known as Disclosure Units) quality assurance framework reached the final stages of development in 2022-23. A number of workshops have taken place with police forces and representatives from the DBS Police Performance and Standards team, who invited feedback on any changes or improvements required to the framework. This was also discussed at regional and national Disclosure forum meetings with Disclosure Unit managers, and once an agreement was reached, the appropriate changes were made. The objective of the police quality assurance framework is to deliver consistency, a standard process and an audit trail across all Disclosure Units for individual Chief Officer responsibilities when considering information for disclosure of police information for Enhanced checks. It is agreed by the National Police Chiefs Council.



Police model changes and improvements

Changes made to business rules underpinning the quality of the matching algorithm, which determines which referrals are sent to police Disclosure Units, resulted in a reduction of 103,000 referrals in a 12-month period after the changes were made. This change realised the anticipated efficiencies when compared to the previous model, improving customer turnaround times, and reducing costs. Throughout 2023-24, the model will continue to be monitored to identify and explore further opportunities to improve the quality of matching, reduce the volume of referrals to police Disclosure Units and enhance improvements in customer service.



Local Authority designated officer engagement

During 2022-23, Barring and Safeguarding staff revised the approach to sharing information with Local Authority designated officers (LADOs), with a view to strengthening our partnership working in the interests of safeguarding. The Barring team developed guidance for LADOs to help them understand when they could request information and what legislation was applicable. We also considered what further information could be shared to support LADOs in ensuring that safeguarding referrals were made by employers. A helpful discussion was held with the LADO group to reach a mutual understanding of how information could be usefully and safely shared.

Our regional decision-making teams also implemented a programme of engagement with all LADOs, introducing the team via email and inviting contact and a direct communication chain to the team managing Barring referrals in their areas. This has yielded positive results and several Barring colleagues have attended meetings with LADOs to discuss specific issues, as well as a broader education around DBS and its barring function.



Scouts UK

In 2022-23, we engaged with Scouts UK and worked collaboratively with the Scouts safeguarding lead to develop a bespoke presentation which was delivered by caseworkers and the DBS Outreach team to the Scouts safeguarding team. This included a question and answer session with caseworkers, who were able to offer real insight into how referrals are processed and how decisions are made. This has fostered an ongoing relationship, and there have been a number of discussions around information sharing, DBS' legislative function, and what 'good' referrals look like.



Internal audit

The Operations Assurance and Excellence (OAE) and Quality Support and Excellence (QSE) teams continue to undertake audits of the DBS quality management system (QMS), within Barring and Safeguarding and Disclosure service delivery to ensure:

- QMS-documented information adequately defines the needs of the business

- current documented procedures, processes and guidance are practical, understood, followed, and deliver the right outcomes
- the QMS is being operated correctly, efficiently, and effectively considers opportunities for improvement
- information is gathered for management review of the QMS

The 2022-23 Barring and Safeguarding audit schedule was completed in full, with all 27 scheduled audits being completed. A total of 10 non-conformities and 37 opportunities for improvement (OFI) were identified throughout the year.

All OFIs were accepted and of the non-conformities, one was rejected, based on resource outweighing value and 2 await review by the process owner. The remaining 7 were accepted and resolved through the continuous improvement process. In Disclosure, 26 of the 29 scheduled audits were completed.

Whilst it had been anticipated that the team would complete the outstanding audits by year end, this was not possible due to reduced resource and increased demand generally on the team. The outstanding audits have been included in the 2023-26 schedule, to be prioritised in quarter 1 of 2023.

A total of 17 non-conformities and 20 OFIs were identified. The majority of non-conformities related to documented processes requiring updating and publishing. Colleagues in QSE, the Procedures team, and the relevant work areas worked closely to ensure guidance accurately reflected processes and therefore supported staff in carrying out their designated roles.

Throughout the year, enhancements were made to the internal audit procedure such as the introduction of a pre-audit questionnaire, alignment of the audit process across both operational areas and increasing resilience and assurance with the use of independent internal auditors.

Thematic audits

The thematic approach to audits, which was introduced during the 2021-22 performance year, has been adopted as a business-as-usual methodology in 2022-23. Where appropriate, senior managers will commission this holistic method of auditing a specific area of work, rather than the standard approach of auditing a single process. In doing so, we are able to undertake a comprehensive review across all interfacing processes and staff, making observations and recommendations which can be considered fully§ and have a wider impact on quality and efficiency.

Information gathering

A thematic audit of our barring referral information gathering processes was commissioned in quarter 4 of 2021-22, due to a review of barring cases, which identified that some cases could have been progressed more efficiently. During 2022-23, to support improvements in case consideration timeliness, the Barring team worked to review information gathering

processes, following findings from the thematic audit that pointed to a need for more empowerment of staff and more bespoke approaches to information gathering. Guidance has been updated and training in the new processes has been provided to staff. This activity will instil a proactive approach to engagement with information providers at all levels of the organisation. Information gathering teams are working closely with DBS Outreach teams through regular joint meetings and central recording. Outreach colleagues are providing support with targeted awareness raising sessions, to inform agencies of their duty to provide information.

Call-back service

In-year, we also commissioned a thematic audit of our call-back service with a view to identify improvements in the service we offer to our customers. The review has identified some gaps in training and quality control which we are working to address. External customer service training has been commissioned to be delivered in early 23-24 for all front-line staff in Barring.

Throughout 2022-23 we have worked to improve the service and have internally trained up additional call handlers. As a result, average time for us to respond to a requested customer call-back has reduced over the year from 1.9 to 2.8 working days at the beginning of the year to a consistent 1.3 working days in the last 3 months of the year. This is despite a large increase in call-back requests which has been seen from November 2022, whereby call-back requests have almost doubled in volumes for the last part of the year.

Policy team engagement

The DBS Policy team facilitated several workshops with members of the team performing the Home Office instigated independent review into the disclosure and barring regime. This review was announced as part of the government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and covered issues as diverse as access to DBS checks for the self-employed and whether individuals who come into contact with the deceased as part of their employment should be considered to be in regulated activity. Our engagement has helped to make the review as well informed as possible and at the time of writing this report, we await their recommendations.

We worked alongside colleagues from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, on their 'employment adoption sprint' which advocated for the benefits of our newly-launched online identity checking service. In engaging directly with our customers in such a way, we built confidence in digital ID services. We were able to answer questions directly, and ultimately this will increase take-up of the service and improve the standard of identity checks that are being performed for DBS purposes.

The DBS Policy team have collaborated with colleagues from Operations, Transformation, and Legal to ensure that forthcoming changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act are accurately reflected in our disclosure products. By collaborating closely with all internal parties and clarifying

interpretation with the Ministry of Justice (the owners of the legislation) we have taken every available step to ensure that criminal records are disclosed in an accurate and timely manner.

DBS Policy have also worked extensively with colleagues from Home Office and the Fire and Rescue Service to produce updated guidance regarding DBS checks for fire fighters and other service personnel. This scenario-based guidance has been applauded by the Fire and Rescue Service safeguarding lead and will make a real contribution to safer recruitment.

Additionally, the Policy team facilitated a number of internal workshops to help staff develop and maintain knowledge around different DBS services and products, and how customers and organisations access those services. In 2022-23, a total of 23 sessions were delivered covering:

- eligibility for DBS checks
- working with children
- working with adults
- the 'other' workforce

A total of 249 members of DBS staff attended these workshops, with 71% stating that their understanding of DBS products and services had increased.

The Policy team received 741 questions via the policy enquiry service during 2022-23. 90% of these questions received a full response within 24 hours, therefore significantly contributing to the speed and quality of services delivered to customers.



Overall assessment

Imperative: Safeguarding | Strategic Priority: Quality

There is a wealth of evidence contained within this report which demonstrates the focus at DBS is on providing an outstanding level of service to all our customers. We have taken action to improve quality at individual, team and directorate levels, and have continued to work with our safeguarding partners such as the police and registered bodies/ organisations, who we recognise are key to our overall success in meeting our shared safeguarding responsibilities.

Investment in training staff, specifically in the area of safeguarding, supports colleagues in understanding the role they play in delivering quality services to protect vulnerable groups, including children. Although the evidence indicates there is some work to do here, it also highlights the importance DBS place on this aspect of staff development.

General process and casework training alongside the provision of proactive, and dedicated support, such as quality sessions delivered by the Disclosure Assurance and Compliance team and the Wraparound and Peer Support services provided by the Quality Support and Training team further demonstrates the drive and commitment DBS has to ensure quality outcomes. It is also encouraging to see the continued collaboration across teams and directorates in sharing learning and best practice.

The continual review of the frameworks which underpin quality assurance both within DBS and with our partners, has also contributed to our ability to maintain and improve quality as well as strengthened relations with our partners, which again enhance our ability to safeguard.

Equally, the information included in this report highlights the ethos of a continuously developing quality culture, where we hold each other to account to gain assurance of our effectiveness. We use evidence from internal audits to highlight improvement opportunities and not only look at individual process but also conduct holistic end-to-end reviews to ensure we drive a much value as possible to benefit our customers.





Imperative: User Experience Strategic Priority: Profile

What we set out to achieve

Objective 3: We will raise awareness of DBS and the services we offer, keeping people informed through our communications, to increase public understanding and confidence in our organisation.

- SO3.1: Deliver the Marketing and Business Development strategic plan
- SO3.2: Further develop our approach to external and internal engagement

Objective 4: We will be a respected and trusted organisation, working with our partners to plan an influential role in the environment in which we operate.

- SO4.1: Ensure DBS compliance with government functional standards
- SO4.2: Improve the effectiveness of supplier management activities by DBS
- SO4.3: Deliver year 2 of the Partnerships strategic plan
- SO4.4: Approve a refreshed DBS strategy for 2023-2026
- SO4.5: Introduce a new outcomes-based framework for strategic planning
- SO4.6: Deliver the Police strategic plan

What we achieved

Best practice hiring toolkit

DBS collaborated with the Better Hiring Institute, Reed Screening, Skills for Care, Dominic Headley and Associates, and VBA consulting to develop a best practice toolkit to give essential guidance for care sectors to support their making informed, safer recruitment decisions.

The care sector provides support for some of the most vulnerable people in society and the toolkit provides guidance for employers to both obtain and provide effective references and conduct information.

The toolkit aims to raise standards in the care sector, provide a one-stop shop for industry best practice and encourage an increase in information sharing, including making Barring referrals where appropriate.

Partnerships

The Partnerships team had 4 clear aims for 2022-23: to roll-out the regional outreach service to the remaining regions of England, to continually grow and improve its regional, national, and sector-based offering, to enhance

senior stakeholder engagement with partners, and to grow our external events programme in a meaningful way.

The Regional Outreach adviser posts in the remaining 6 regions of England were filled by August 2022, meaning that we now have regionally-based outreach advisers embedded in Northern Ireland, Wales and the 9 regions in England. Consequently, the team has directly reached over 12,000 individuals through a combination of events, workshops, and meetings. Collaborating with stakeholders at all levels, the team continues to improve awareness of DBS and the role it plays in safeguarding the vulnerable.

In terms of national and sector-based engagement, the team has collaborated with a variety of different organisations such as the Scouts, DWP Work Coaches, and Ofsted, to develop and deliver bespoke events for their people. Some of these events are being delivered in a tiered approach both nationally and regionally.

We have facilitated opportunities for organisations to work with DBS to improve safeguarding and explore improvements to the way in which we deliver our products and services. For example, we have collaborated with local authorities facilitating engagement between them and relevant Barring colleagues to overcome issues that were having a negative impact on information sharing (including some technical issues) between the 2 organisations.

We have delivered over 560 workshops this year, each tailored to individual organisations or sectors, focusing on 2 main themes - DBS checks and barring referrals.

One of the latest offers this year has been 'open access' duty to refer,



and disclosure workshops, which run every month and were developed to help smaller organisations who do not have enough staff for an organisation specific workshop. This means we have been able to extend our regional outreach support to many more organisations.

Working with organisations to improve their understanding of the eligibility criteria for DBS checks helps them to understand how and where DBS checks fit into their recruitment and retention processes. By adopting a safe and fair recruitment message, we have encouraged organisations to consider how best to risk-assess and determine the suitability of potential and current employees.

The workshops we run with stakeholders to help them understand when and how to make a quality barring referral to DBS, ensure that they are aware of their legal duty to make a referral when certain conditions are met. This helps those with safeguarding responsibilities to understand not only how and when to make a barring referral, but also the importance of providing good quality, relevant information as part of the referral process. In line with this, we expect to see improvements in the quality of referrals received from organisations who have attend these workshops moving forward.

This year, the Regional Outreach advisers have developed strong working relationships with colleagues across DBS. They have supported colleagues in the Regional Barring Decision Making teams by engaging with organisations to overcome barriers which were preventing them from providing information requested by DBS to support the decision-making process. This has had an incredibly positive effect on case progression, resulting in key information being received more quickly, allowing cases to be considered and either closed or moved to the next stage of the decision-making process. This reinforces the safeguarding benefits of regional teams working closely with outreach colleagues.

During 2022-23, the Partnership and Engagement, and Communications teams have continued to develop the suite of materials used to improve the engagement and education of stakeholders. We have undertaken a full review of our workshop materials to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose and have taken on board the feedback we have received over the past year.

Collaborating closely with stakeholders, we have developed additional content and amended some of our content to ensure that it is as clear and comprehensive as possible. Completed pre and post-workshop surveys provide us with levels of understanding of workshop content and materials. In the barring workshop survey for example, we asked attendees to rate how well they understand the barring referral process, and how they can ensure that DBS gets quality referrals at the right time, about the right people, supported by the right information. The number of attendees that selected 'very confident' or 'extremely confident' increased from 12% before the workshop, to 76% after the event, the remainder selected somewhat confident with no one selecting 'not at all' or 'not so confident'.

Towards the end of the year, the Partnerships team developed and delivered 3 pilot thought leadership events aimed at getting safeguarding experts together to discuss challenges, innovation and where DBS fit

into the future of safeguarding. A ‘regional’ in-person event in Northern Ireland highlighted some challenges specific to Northern Ireland; 2 sector-focused hybrid events offering a choice of in-person or online participation brought out many sector-specific challenges; all 3 events raised common challenges and asks of DBS. The learning from these events will be used to design future event offerings and the outcomes fed into DBS strategic and operational planning where appropriate.

At the 2023 DBS National Conference in March 2023, we wanted to enhance understanding and remove some of the mystery around the barring process to encourage organisations to refer the right people, at the right time with the appropriate level and quality of information. We worked with Barring and Safeguarding colleagues to develop and deliver 2 workshops aimed at helping organisations understand how barring decisions are made. They also focused on the different types of harm that DBS consider and how abuse that occurs outside of the workplace may be an indicator that the person poses a risk of harm if that were to be repeated in the workplace.

Local police force engagement

Throughout 2022-23 our Barring and Safeguarding colleagues continued to work closely with local police forces to develop relationships and further improve the quality and timeliness of information supplied. We continued to offer and host virtual tours of barring for forces to enhance their understanding of our collective safeguarding responsibilities. Participants fed back that the tours are very useful and helped to reinforce the force’s understanding of what information Barring need to make robust, defensible decisions. One of the outcomes of this ongoing engagement is a 69.2% decrease in aged request for information. Over the performance year, the number of outstanding requests over 90 days reduced from 13 cases at the beginning of the year to 4 at the end of the year.

Conflict improvements

Work is ongoing with Customer Services, Relationship Management, and the Police Performance and Standards teams to improve our conflicts process. A number of changes have already been made including improvements to the ineligible application process with the work focusing on the development of ‘right first time’ practices to improve quality and reduce the number of conflicts. Our work with the RBs to inform them what roles may or may not be eligible, including the relevant legislation, and improving the clarity of the role on the application form has helped avoid unnecessary conflicts. The working group aims to provide customers with improved turnaround times by avoiding unnecessary conflicts; by enhancing the quality of application form information submitted by applicants or Registered, and by continuous feedback to Disclosure Units and Customer Service staff.

Culture change and improvements within Customer Services

Within the past year, Customer Service has seen a major recruitment drive at all managerial levels with the direct aim of consolidating the improvements achieved in 2021-22.

Our new managers are tasked to continue the transformation within the area and create a modernised, engaged, and professional environment to ensure we provide the best service in all aspects of our customer-facing roles.

This work has led to Brian McGuinness, Head of Customer Services, reaching the finals of the Institute of Customer Services awards within the ‘Change-Maker’ category.

The quality assurance staff are continuing to search for new ways to improve the qualitative standards across Customer Service and we have successfully integrated Conflicts and Disputes Correspondence into our checking provision in the past year, providing managers with concise reports and analysis on their staffing performance/accuracy for the first time.

Disputes process checks and sensitive applications correspondence quality assurance checks will be integrated into the suite of quality assurance checks in the coming year and telephone quality assurance will be explored within our complaints staffing cohort as they look to transform their service.

Also in the coming year, we have agreement from senior leaders to introduce a redress and complaint tracker, whereby poor service, process, or maladministration that leads to a redress award will be highlighted to the heads of service and senior executive officers of the respective area.

They will be expected to confirm the actions taken to address the failure and ensure any corrective measures are implemented to ensure best practice and aid continuous improvement and evidencing our commitment to sponsor unit and external auditors in our application of these principles.

The quality assurance forum, which was introduced following an audit recommendation, has been a great success. However, after discussion among the group, we believe that the forum has achieved its initial target of modernising/ improving quality assurance and quality assurance engagement, and will be adapted to address business as usual activities within Customer Service and be driven more by individual workstream managers rather than the quality assurance staff.

Barring referral service

During 2022-23, a ‘minimal viable service’ of the new barring portal was built and tested with customers during a private beta phase. In total 68 referrals were received, with feedback being captured and the services technical performance monitored. The feedback received was broadly positive with customers reporting a simplified, quicker experience to make a safeguarding referral to DBS. Additionally, the feedback indicated a strong future need for a document upload functionality for the service.

In early February 2023, the service underwent a Home Office assessment to determine whether it met the required government digital

service standards. The assessment was passed, and approval was given to officially launch to the public.

On 30 March 2023, the new barring portal was delivered and made accessible from the DBS website. The version that was released was our minimal viable service, which enables customers to complete an online form and then post or email their supporting documentation. Moving forward, the service will be continually improved through iteration based on customer feedback. The next planned major milestone for the service is to deliver an upload functionality, removing the need for customers to post or email their documents. This will be a significant further step towards meeting the needs of our customers and help improve the quality of referrals we receive.

Improvements in website navigation

The DBS Commercial Development team has been supporting the strategic aim for DBS to be more visible, trusted and influential through commercial development techniques. Over the last 12 months, activities have included using digital content optimisation techniques to increase navigation and visibility of key Basic digital service, barring, and sensitive applications content on the DBS website, alongside creating an analytics dashboard.

Whilst there will have been other factors, such as the partnership work highlighted earlier in this report, the work of the commercial development team has led to an increase in the visibility of our content and engagement on GOV.UK. Across the 3 campaigns, we've had over 70,000 users visit relevant GOV.UK pages, over 150,000 page views on over 50 DBS pages, and more than 2,000 hours of engaged time.

The Basic digital service campaign has seen over 45,000 users start a Basic DBS check and a 34% increase in the average time spent on the

information page. From a barring perspective, we've seen a 33% year-on-year uplift in traffic to the guidance page, a 25% increase in dwell time and over 2,000 documents viewed or downloaded. We've also seen that as the percentage mix of online referrals increase, the overall volume of referrals increases. The demonstrable increase in referrals links our work to the subsequent safeguarding benefit of potentially preventing relevant individuals from working in regulated activity. The Sensitive Applications page has seen a 90% increase in traffic as well as an increase in related link clicks and document views. 100 users also went on to start a Basic check via the Basic digital service after finding the relevant content via the campaign.

The analytics dashboard provides a consistent and sustainable way of measuring campaign activity across a variety of channels, and results can be compared over time to monitor and measure effectiveness in supporting the strategic aim of DBS to become more visible, trusted and influential.

Social media

Social media is an essential communication channel for DBS and enables the organisation to effectively communicate and engage with our customers, partners, and the public.

Over the past year, significant work has been undertaken to establish and embed our existing social media channels and they have continued to grow. As of May 2023, our follower numbers were:

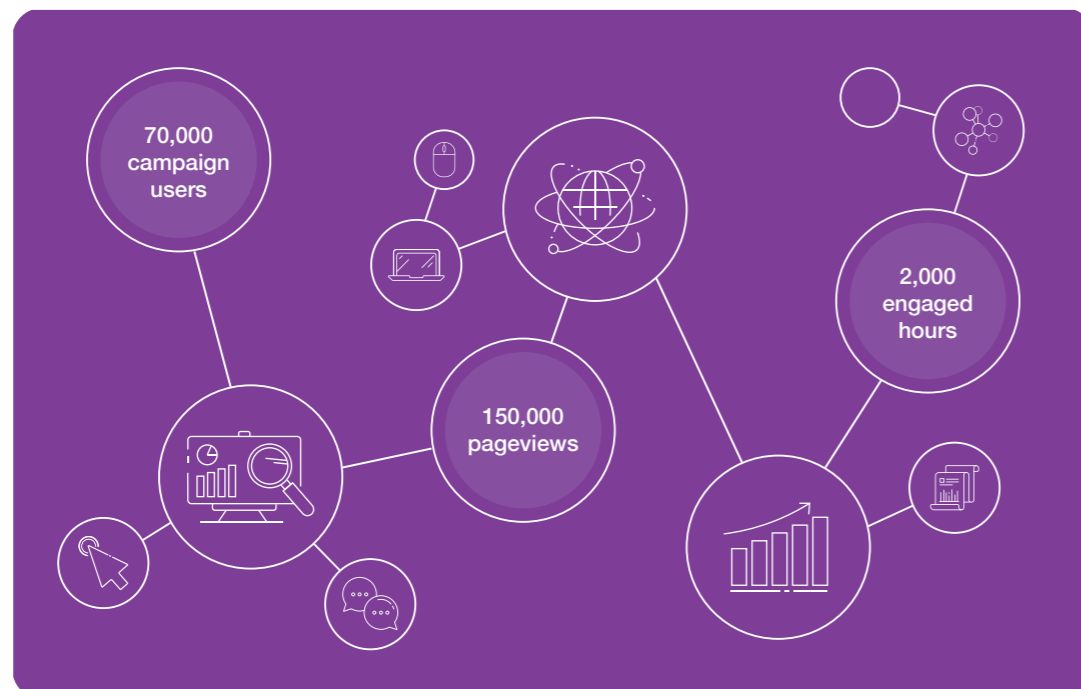
- 2k followers on Twitter
- 1.2k followers on Facebook
- 3.1k followers on LinkedIn

We have had an independent review carried out of our channels in order for us to continue to develop and grow them. We will be implementing the recommendations during the 2023-24 financial year.

Barring correspondence improvements

The user research focus groups started during 2021-22 have continued into 2022-23, with various demographics of participants looking at different aspects of our barring letters with a view to DBS gauging how readable and understandable they are for our customers. The feedback provided during these sessions is being used to plan a series of iterative improvements which will make our letters easier to read.

During this performance year, we have also collaborated with a specialist supplier to develop an easy-read leaflet to accompany our minded to bar letters. The aim is that this leaflet will make our messaging easier to understand for people with learning disabilities, which in turn will better enable them to respond or seek out appropriate help to support them in providing a response to barring correspondence.



Equality, diversity, and inclusion

The DBS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategic plan was approved by the DBS board in March 2021 and focuses on 2 themes: Customer and People. In terms of year 2 of the EDI plan, the aspiration was to be 'integrated' by the end of 2022-23. To support us in achieving this, this year we have filled our newly created EDI manager role and will recruit to fill the existing EDI advisor role during 2023-24. Key activity during 2022-23 is detailed below.

Engagement

The EDI team have continued to strengthen their relationships with colleagues across the organisation, in both operational and support functions. The impact of this collaborative approach remains evident with a more joined-up approach across Policy and Customer Services in terms of responses to EDI related customer enquiries.

EDI Network

We launched our EDI Network in June 2022, an employee-led group, committed to shaping and promoting EDI matters within DBS and supporting colleagues to access information and advice. It currently consists of 18 Members and 12 Friends. Members have met 4 times since October, coming together to review the Terms of Reference and develop a calendar of events. There is also a seat on the Employee Forum for a Member, helping to ensure a joined-up approach and that relevant topics are discussed at both forums.

Strategic Leadership Team EDI champions

Work has continued to progress the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) EDI champion role in DBS, with good progress being made in the areas of disability, race, and neurodiversity. The Gender Reassignment champion role is currently vacant, and this combined with other champion roles has been discussed, conducting research across other government departments and external organisations to ensure our model is fit for purpose. This work will continue in 2023-24.

During this year, the EDI network co-chair has met with SLT leads to ensure a joined-up approach to the work, and here are some key updates:

- Sue Smith, Disability, Illness and Injury - The 'Just Ask' group have supported work to highlight the need for clarity around carers leave, and the need for development of a specific carers policy, together with work to enhance the workplace adjustment passport
- Martin Skeats, Neurodiversity - A working group has been established of colleagues with lived experience and has met with Human Resources and Organisational Development colleagues to work together as part of the Future of Work project; the group have already started to co-create practical suggestions on tweaks we can make to existing processes to make DBS more inclusive for all, as well as supporting thinking on

Future of Work

- Paul Whiting, Race - The DBS race champion continues to work with HO colleagues attending the HO Race Delivery Board, reviewing their proposed updates to their strategic priorities, which align with our DBS priorities. These include:
 - › increasing representation at all grades and in all regions, particularly the Senior Civil Service
 - › improving the 'personal experiences' of colleagues in the Home Office
 - › ensuring that we all better understand the communities and public that we service and work among, to improve the way in which we deal with race issues in our policies and operations

EDI training

Work has been ongoing during 2022-23 to source a training provider to deliver equality impact assessment (EqIA) training. This provider has now been identified, with training expected to commence early 2023-24. This training programme will upskill colleagues in project and policy roles to ensure EqIAs are being completed effectively, whilst also supporting the 2-year DBS policy review cycle.

Workplace adjustments training for line managers was delivered in 2022 by the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, with positive feedback received.

Discussions about wider EDI training have been ongoing during 2022-23; this will form part of the DBS Academy offer with the aim to select a provider that will offer a fresh and engaging solution to our EDI training offer.

Accessibility

The DBS Accessibility policy was launched in August 2022 and outlined our commitment and expectations for both customers and staff. This has also been accompanied by 'how to create accessible and inclusive content' sessions delivered and recorded by our Communications team to support staff in ensuring documents are accessible for all. The policy will be reviewed during 2023-24.

Recruitment

Following work carried out in early 2022, DBS has seen an increase in representation, particularly within our Disclosure area, where we saw 19% of successful candidates disclosing that they were from an ethnic minority. Further work is due to commence to better understand and analyse the different stages of our processes and this should be known in early 2023-24.

Our Human Resources services team have attended several careers fairs and have worked with external organisations to support people into work. Our upcoming refreshed focus on strategic workforce planning,

DBS Academy-supported talent pathways, and the increased use of apprenticeships will continue to be steered towards making DBS a more inclusive and effective work environment.

Embedding EDI in our strategy and planning

As part of the DBS 2020-25 midpoint refresh exercise, work was done to incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion into our vision and values, strategic priorities, and desired outcomes. Board approved these inclusions along with the 7 EDI-focused milestones that have been committed to in the 2023-24 business plan. These milestones will contribute to delivering greater accessibility and ease of use of our products and services, and further embed equality and inclusiveness across our organisation in the way we work.



Overall assessment

Imperative: User Experience | Strategic Priority: Profile

The evidence under this imperative highlights the wide range of general and tailored collaboration events and opportunities for partners and stakeholders to attend. These serve the purpose of both, increasing knowledge and awareness of DBS' role and responsibility as well as supporting attendees and organisations in gaining a greater understanding of their own safeguarding duties.

Supporting employers to make effective recruitment decisions is at the heart of the DBS purpose and working with our partners to develop the best practice hiring toolkit is clear evidence of this. Safer recruitment and robust vetting is the first 'line of defence' in preventing those who may be unsuitable from working with vulnerable people and DBS has demonstrated we are committed to embedding this safeguarding culture as part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities.

Work to introduce improvements in digital optimisation techniques has contributed to making DBS more visible and increased navigation to key digital services. Supporting this is the launch of the Barring Referral Service which represents the achievement of an important milestone. There has been a positive reaction from referring parties, however, DBS recognises the need to continue working with our third party suppliers, to ensure the deployment of an upload functionality. This will be a vital component to further improve the customer journey and more importantly ensure safeguarding referrals and decisions can be made in an effective and timely manner.

Our social media presence has continued to grow throughout 2022-23 which undoubtedly increases the profile of DBS and our national safeguarding responsibility.

We have also invested further in the development of our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, with the data presented highlighting some key steps taken on our journey, as well as acknowledgement of the further work needed to deliver our aspirations in this important area.



Imperative: Effectiveness and Efficiency

Strategic Priority: People

What we set out to achieve

Objective 5: We will develop a talented and diverse workforce that understands how their contributions help to achieve our objectives.

- SO5.1: Respond to the Employee Engagement Survey 2021-22 findings
- SO5.2: Create social value by supporting local community initiatives where this contributes to achievement of DBS objectives
- SO5.3: Enhance organisational development capability
- SO5.4: Continue the development of the DBS Academy as per phase 2 of the agreed plan
- SO5.5: Deliver revised pay business case for submission to the Home Office
- SO5.6: Enhance organisational capability to respond to changes in business needs for the future
- SO5.7: Deliver year 2 of the EDI plan (people)

Objective 6: We will build a flexible, vibrant, and contemporary workplace where our staff will be able to do their jobs using modern ways of working that are smart and which promote OneDBS.

- SO6.1: Modernise ways of working for DBS
- SO6.2: Deliver year 2 of the Wellbeing strategic plan

What we achieved

Value for money

The DBS strategic priorities capture the core themes that underpin everything we do and cut across all our strategic objectives. One of those priorities is value for money.

DBS aims to achieve optimal value from how we work, where we work, and who we work with, for our customers and stakeholders. During 2022-23, we have developed a new value for money framework which will be introduced in 2023-24. The framework reflects the approach taken by the National Audit Office, which monitors government spending, and looks at the inputs (activity), outputs (results), and outcomes (the difference made to customers and the wider public). The framework also focuses on the '4 Es' highlighted overleaf and will align with the planned DBS outcomes framework which will set out a range of measures relating to DBS performance and impact.

- Economy: Minimising the cost of resources used while having a regard to quality – ‘spending less’
- Equity: The extent to which services are available to and reach all people that they are intended to – ‘spending fairly’
- Efficiency: The relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – ‘spending well’
- Effectiveness: The relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – ‘spending wisely’

Innovation

Since its introduction in October 2021, the innovation function has continued to mature as a department and continues to develop a culture of Innovation throughout the organisation. SLT have embraced the process of innovating in the strategic space and have recently generated several ideas that would have a positive impact on our quality and the future of DBS - many of which will be delivered within the business plan for 2023 to 2025 and positively impact the safeguarding arena. These include automation of workloads where historically we have seen labour-intensive processes. Moving to automate these processes gives us the capacity to focus more on quality. We have been innovative in our approach to the introduction of new technology. Understanding where new technology can add value to our existing processes and drive efficiency and working with suppliers to understand what the future can deliver for us. Delivering technology enhancements in this way involves all our teams and ensures we always have systems fit for purpose that can grow as we do.

Our staff-powered innovation lab has been fully trained now and have tackled several internal topics to improve the way we work as an organisation. Driving the ideas that are developed at the lab is key to delivering change that impacts the organisation’s service provision using those that are close to the delivery.

We aim to grow the culture of positive challenge throughout the organisation over the next few years and showcase that with the delivery of new technology, new processes, and ways of working that support the vision of DBS to enhance safeguarding, drive efficiencies and effectiveness and deliver for the user.

Continuous improvement within Barring and Safeguarding

In Barring and Safeguarding, 51 new change and improvement (CI) initiatives were submitted, and 55 closed. Suggestions for improvements came from 9 different teams. This is consistent with the volumes seen in 2021-22 and demonstrates that our continuous improvement process and culture are now fully embedded, and that, as a result, the directorate is delivering improved safeguarding processes.

Driving effective change and investing in continuous improvement while delivering our core decision-making function has, once again, been a challenge. However, with 41% of ideas being generated by decision-making areas of the directorate, it shows staff are aware and understand the benefits of investing in improvements. One example of a change

which successfully contributed to our ability to safeguard was in relation to barring referral cases being received with missing nominal information, meaning cases were unable to be automatically created. Missing addresses contributed significantly to activities which were escalated to barring staff to deal with. Changes were made to the process which ensured a more efficient approach, dealt with by more appropriate staff, was introduced.

Looking ahead we are seeking to further refine our CI process, challenge ourselves to improve how we articulate benefits, and develop our engagement with colleagues to ensure everyone feels able to contribute and be involved in change within the directorate.

Disclosure Business Improvement team

DBS has a dedicated Business Improvement team who are supporting corporate projects and enabling the Disclosure directorate to transition to new ways of working, by developing new skills, implementing new processes, and promoting the adoption of new technology. Throughout the year the team have collaborated with Production and Disclosure colleagues to review quality assurance activities, develop, and introduce process and system improvements, as highlighted earlier in this document. In addition, the team drive forward new ideas from staff across the directorate, working closely with the transformation, innovation and technology colleagues to champion innovation and explore new ways of working. The continuous improvement leads attend the Disclosure directorate continuous improvement forum in which new ideas of business improvement are discussed and progressed. During 2022-23, 20 CI initiatives were raised from 5 different areas of the business with 8 completed and delivered, 3 on hold and 9 in progress.

The team responded to poor data quality in identification documents in R1. Collaborative working with Barring and Safeguarding, Quality Assurance, and Registered Bodies colleagues enabled the team to design a new automated check that would identify incorrect identification documents when used to validate identity in barring referrals and the Basic DBS check. This new check was introduced in February 2022, and has been successful in identifying on average 10 applications a day which have incorrect information, this eliminates the need for DBS, the applicant, or organisation to dispute the incorrect application. This also enhances data quality in the R1 system for the profile matching element, which both Barring and Safeguarding and Disclosure teams utilise.

Legal team service improvements

The DBS Legal team continues to play a vital role in supporting the organisation in the exercise of its functions. Our internal team has expanded, and training has been developed to enable new members to quickly settle into their roles and become valuable contributors to DBS’s strategic objectives. Our expanded resource, which includes both internal and external resources, means that we are better able to support the wider business and increase early engagement in DBS projects. We now enjoy improved working relationships with the wider business, as a result of

developing our proactive and collaborative approach.

The team is constantly driving efficiencies in its work. We have introduced instruction proformas in a number of important business areas. These support the provision of clear instructions, with relevant documentation up front. Our improved instructions support increased legal assurance and support to the business. The early provision of relevant information and documents assists us to provide timely and appropriate support and advice. Moving forward, we anticipate being able to make further improvements from the wider application of this approach.

The Legal team has improved its contract management records and activity enabling more efficient and timely contract renewals which assist DBS to achieve the best value possible from its contractual arrangements. We are making good use of new software packages enabling more efficient allocation of work to internal lawyers and external advisers alike. This has improved our ability to quickly access information, guidance and precedent documents enabling us to further improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the legal services we provide. We have also proactively engaged with Home Office and DBS colleagues to obtain approval of additional software that enables us to provide external stakeholders and partners improved, secure access to documents and information, promoting a cohesive service to DBS.

The Legal team continues to support the organisation's robust defence of a range of legal challenges, including those made against core business decisions. In doing so, we make a direct and positive contribution to safeguarding and help to minimise risk and improve outcomes across the wider business.

Sustainability

Our ambition at DBS is to move towards becoming a more sustainable and greener organisation. This ambition is supported by our board-approved Green strategic plan and Green policy.

Progress to date includes reducing our footprint through such measures as our move to more remote working, reduced printing, business travel and a move towards electronic scanning of barring records. We have also worked with our landlords to reduce our energy consumption by installing energy-efficient solar panels, increased cooling capacity, and intelligent lighting. We are working closely with our partners, to ensure their commitment to improve our sustainability and are building sustainability requirements into our procurement activities with new partners.

We have introduced the role of 'green champions' to help promote sustainability across the organisation. We have created a new role of sustainability manager to bring subject matter expertise and to drive delivery of, and demonstrate our commitment to, our green agenda.

DBS is committed to creating social value and has promoted initiatives that benefit our local communities, through the use of staff volunteer days.

We continue to explore the options available for the most appropriate, effective, and efficient working environments for our business and our people. We will identify new ways to increase our sustainability, reduce our

carbon footprint and better contribute towards supporting the communities where we live and work.



Business continuity and disaster recovery

Our business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR) arrangements served DBS well during the pandemic, enabling us to continue to provide our services with minimal disruption. We considered lessons learned from the pandemic and implemented actions to take forward.

Since then, we have further strengthened our BCDR capacity by creating a new role of BCDR Manager to bring additional subject matter expertise and to develop our new BCDR management programme. This includes a revised BCDR policy and plan, workshops, and revised business impact analysis, learning and development, revised “denial of” plans, directorate plans, and the creation of a bespoke BCDR SharePoint site.

Our BCDR arrangements were tested again in the last quarter of 2022-23, with 3 separate service disruptions resulting in the need for 3 BCDR Silver Response Groups to be stood up simultaneously over the last 3 months of 2022. These related to Industrial action, critical systems disruption, and a gas leak at our Liverpool site.

Each of these incidents was closely managed in accordance with our BCDR policy and plans, with minimal service disruption as a result, enabling us to continue to provide our services. Lessons learned from each incident were considered and any actions needed as a result were put into place to improve future incident handling.

Organisational change

The skills and capabilities set out in our recent organisational re-design have continued to be embedded. Each director within DBS is responsible for continually reflecting upon and reviewing their services and capabilities in line with the organisational design principles. DBS has continued to recruit towards establishment figures, and where required, there has been creative support for the very small populations of roles where market conditions mean we experience a degree of recruitment or retention challenge.

A range of initiatives and strategic projects have continued to progress that are designed to support DBS on its journey through the life of the DBS strategy. The innovation agenda, the DBS Academy, the Wellbeing delivery plan, the future of work programme, the reward and recognition process and our employee engagement agenda are all key examples at a corporate level of good work underway to improve the experience of employees and to therefore affect organisational effectiveness. Similar positive activities are happening at a directorate level including open-door sessions, wellbeing clubs, social eventing, deputy pools, process reviews and more.

DBS is committed to living the values, becoming the OneDBS described in our strategy more and more every day.

Reward and recognition

Following the launch of the reward and recognition scheme in July 2021, an initial evaluation took place, which resulted in some updates to the scheme, implemented from July 2022. This included revisions to the value of the voucher and exceptional performance awards, and the frequency of the

reward and recognition panel. The scheme has seen a continued increase in usage. During the 22-23 financial year there has been an increase of 177% in the use of the R&R platform to recognise colleagues, with 1,387 ‘thank you’ messages posted to the wall, and 1,034 vouchers issued. A total of 72 exceptional performance awards have been made.

Employee engagement survey

In 2022-23, we issued our latest employee engagement survey. The response rate improved, with over 700 colleagues completing the survey. There was no movement in our engagement index, with us remaining at 58%. While we would have liked to have seen an improvement, we acknowledge that we have experienced some significant challenges over the past 12 months, specifically around pay and IT. These are known issues which SLT continue to look at as a priority.

During the past 12 months, we have been able to make good progress in delivering our action plan developed from the 2021-22 survey. Of the 31 actions developed, 24 were completed and the other 7 were put on hold due to refreshing the DBS 2025 strategy. Those 7 actions will roll over and will be completed during the next financial year. Some of the highlights include holding our first OneDBS employee conference which focused on why we do what we do, the launch of DBS Confidential, giving staff the opportunity to report issues of concern to them to an independent third party anonymously, and also completed several actions relating to learning and development.

DBS Intranet

During 2022-23, we started to develop our new Intranet, a site that will see us replace our strategy hub. Using the learning and user experiences from the hub, the Intranet will become a one-stop shop for news, information, policies and documents needed by all staff. Colleagues have been involved in the development and testing and the site will go live in June 2023, at which point, the hub will become defunct.

Academy developments

During 2022-23, DBS continued its journey to transform the learning and development function with the launch of the DBS Academy. In the lead-up to the launch of version one of the academy in December 2022, we implemented an interim portal to share, promote, and encourage the use of learning opportunities. Launched in May 2022, the interim portal has now reached over 780 colleagues with over 19,000 site visits.

Live events on a variety of topics including policy, wellbeing, digital skills, workplace adjustments, mentoring, pensions, finance, and knowledge harvesting have been accessed by colleagues across DBS, contributing to employee experience and building capability in order to realise the organisational strategy.

The academy continues to grow with the launch, in March 2023, of a brand-new people manager programme for all line managers in DBS to build organisational capability in this area, and a talent development

programme, Catalyst, aimed at potential higher executive officers (HEOs) and senior executive officers (SEOs) to provide the skills in order to progress in DBS and beyond.

There is much more planned for the academy in 2023-24 and beyond.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an area of focus for 2023-24, with growth expected. During 2022-23, we have had 4 active apprentices, with an additional 5 waiting to commence learning. These are accountancy or taxation professional, Level: 7, Project manager (integrated degree), Level: 6, Business Analyst, Level 4 and Team leader/supervisor, Level: 3. There were no completions during 2022-23.

Barring and Safeguarding deputy pool

In 2022-23, the Barring and Safeguarding leadership team ensured the directorate continued on our learning-based journey by sponsoring a staff development and talent management directorate delivery plan milestone. A cross-directorate working group, with associate director sponsorship, delivered a development programme which allows staff at AO to HEO grade the opportunity to gain experience and skills at a higher grade across all operational areas within the directorate. This was achieved by staff deputising and undertaking/supporting project work. The approach was further enhanced through the provision of opportunities to undertake professional learning, with some staff achieving recognised accreditation such as ISO 9001:2015 Internal Auditors which has subsequently supported the effective operation of our quality management system.

In addition, we have delivered an IT solution via SharePoint and Microsoft Teams to create a deputy pool community, providing a place for directorate managers to post development opportunities available to all directorate staff to view and express an interest in. This site is also available for all staff within DBS to view so we can share our progress with the wider DBS community. This deputy pool community also includes a private MS Teams 'chat' for deputy pool members, at their request, creating a community of like-minded individuals wishing to share their experiences or gain insight into their colleagues' development journeys.

The directorate is aligned with the DBS Academy and working with Academy colleagues with a view to extending the approach across DBS. There are also plans to consider expansion of the deputy pool to include higher grades within the directorate to enhance the development opportunity for SEO and above grades.

The creation of the 'deputy pool' demonstrates and supports all 3 imperatives of the QAF: safeguarding, effectiveness and efficiency, and user experience. Staff undertaking developmental opportunities understand the wider scope of directorates' function, gaining valuable insight into customer journeys, develop skills required in different roles, and also gain experience of working at a higher level. In addition, having staff with an increasingly diverse and stretching skill sets builds resilience in the directorate allowing the directorate to 'flex' resources, to both adapt to fluctuating demand,

or support demand where we may experience short or longer-term staff shortages at differing grades. In doing so we increase our ability to safeguard.



Overall assessment

Imperative: Efficiency and Effectiveness | Strategic Priority: People

The evidence provided under this imperative highlights the range of activity across both operational and non-operational areas to increase the effectiveness of our people, process as well as our social and financial responsibilities. When considered alongside the information included under the safeguarding and user experience imperatives, it demonstrates DBS is also achieving this, not by compromising, but improving quality outcomes and our ability to safeguard.

Innovation techniques continue to be explored to increase organisational effectiveness, and continuous improvement opportunities are suggested, examined, tested, and implemented by colleagues across the organisation both within and across teams and directorates. This highlights further effectiveness in terms of exploiting collaboration opportunities as well as highlighting that our staff recognise the importance of being flexible and responding positively to change in order to support their ability to efficiently and effectively protect those in society who DBS serves.

We have once again, invested in our staff through the DBS Academy, central and local development opportunities, wellbeing and reward and recognition with increased offerings and take-up in all areas. The creation of the 'Deputy Pool' and the launch of the People Manager programme demonstrates are positive examples of DBS investing in supporting the development of our own talent.

Advancements in BCDR management have also ensured that despite some significant service disruption, particularly in the latter part of the performance year, DBS was able to continue to provide all our safeguarding services, again evidencing the effectiveness of our approach to maintaining quality outcomes.

It is disappointing to note there was no movement in our engagement index in terms of the responses to our employee engagement survey. However, as can be seen in the narrative provided, we acknowledge there have been some significant challenges throughout the year. The ongoing action plan seeks to address matters raised by staff. It is important to note, however, that the employment engagement survey is one source of employee feedback. Additional feedback, specifically in relation to quality and safeguarding is set out in the 'What our staff say about quality' section of this report.



What our customers say

Complaints

DBS received 3,351 complaints in 2022-23, which represents an increase of 1,218 when compared to an intake of 2,133 in 2021-22.

Complaints in relation to the Update Service were the primary reason, due to technical problems with the platform.

95.9% of the complaints resolved in 2022-23 were handled at the initial stage and a further 0.32% at the second stage. The remaining 3.78% remain open at the end of March 2023.

Our target was to respond to 98% of all complaints within 6 working days, and this target was met with an attainment of 99.64%.

Customer satisfaction

DBS launched a customer satisfaction survey on 1 April 2022. Of those who responded, 67% agreed DBS is an effective safeguarding organisation. 77% agreed DBS checks provide information to support safe and fair recruitment practices, and 59% thought DBS provides information and guidance that is clear and easy to understand.

Feedback from outreach work

The number of attendees that selected 'understood' or 'fully understood' increased from 12% before the workshop, to 76% after the event. Comments included:

"This was a very informative and useful session. I certainly feel more confident around what the criteria is and when to make a referral. It has also allowed me to reflect on previous safeguarding concerns and what other things I will consider when undertaking them in future."

"I gained a greater understanding of the different levels and settings that required a DBS check. The resources that were provided as part of the learning will be a valuable resource to check against when deciding what type of DBS check is required."

"The interactive parts, such as the True or False Quiz and What Level of Check Do You Think is Required, was extremely helpful for our Recruiting Managers who always want to request the highest level of check for safeguarding purposes, not understanding there is legislation that has to be met in order to request these".

What our auditors say

DBS recognises external audit and or assessment as crucial to ensuring the highest of standards are achieved and maintained across our organisation. These 'third party' reviews give impartial assurance of our performance as well as opportunities to strengthen organisational practice

ISO 9001:2015

ISO 9001:2015 is an international standard that establishes the criteria for a 'quality management system'. Compliance against the standard results in formal certification. When undertaking the audit, the British Standards Institute (BSI) auditor is looking for positive evidence to verify that elements of the scope of certification and the requirements of the ISO management standard are effectively addressed by the organisation's management system. Throughout 2022-23, BSI carried out 4 'ongoing surveillance' audits: two in Barring and Safeguarding and 2 within Disclosure service delivery and the Fraud Detection and Investigation team.

At the conclusion of each of the 4 audits the BSI auditor confirmed:

"The organisations management system continues to demonstrate effective compliance with the requirements of ISO 9001:2015. Local controls were robustly implemented, seemed appropriate for the organisation and their effectiveness was clearly demonstrated throughout the assessment. Senior Management continue to utilise the quality management system as an effective process for managing the business and fulfilling its strategic objectives, in alignment with its strategic directive which continues to be the safeguarding of vulnerable groups through supporting employers to make safer recruitment decisions."

There were no non-conformities raised and only one opportunity for improvement (OFI) against the Disclosure Service Delivery and Fraud and Investigation team certificate was observed, relating to recording and monitoring of employee competency. The auditor observed appropriate actions had been taken, however, the approach to updating the monitoring system needed to be more proactive. Corrective action will be taken to resolve this OFI immediately.

Following the quarter 1 surveillance audit in Barring and Safeguarding, the BSI auditor noted:

"The adoption of the new thematic approach, developed to support the 2022 internal audit strategy, makes a transition from compliance auditing to one focusing on continual improvement. This transition not only demonstrates the ongoing maturity of the management system, but also the commitment by the senior management team to embrace the quality management system and the promotion of continual improvement activities

which form a keystone to the provision of safeguarding services”.

He further highlighted that DBS’ approach to audit and the quality management system is one other organisations should aspire to.

Government Internal Audit Agency

The Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) is an executive agency of HM Treasury, established in 2015. The GIAA is the government’s primary provider of internal audit services, providing objective, independent insight and assurance, enabling organisations to achieve better outcomes with public money. The GIAA assess against 4 categories. These categories and their meanings can be found in the table below.

During 2022-23, the GIAA have undertaken 8 audits assessing the overall adequacy and effectiveness of DBS’ governance, risk management, and control framework. These audits were conducted in the areas of data management, information security, key financial controls, Metis reporting, service integration and management (SIAM) function, supply chain management, workforce planning, and assurance framework.

The audits for data management, Metis reporting, SIAM and workforce planning all received a final outcome of ‘moderate’ and the audit of the assurance framework received a final outcome of ‘substantial’. Any actions agreed to meet GIAA recommendations following audits are tracked by DBS SLT, and at the time of writing this report, we are awaiting the final engagement reports for the remaining assessments.

Substantial	The framework of governance, risk management, and control is adequate and effective.
Moderate	Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management, and control.
Limited	There are significant weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management, and control such that it could be or could become inadequate and ineffective.
Unsatisfactory	There are fundamental weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management, and control such that it is inadequate and ineffective or is likely to fail.

 **Customer Service Excellence**

Following DBS re-accreditation against the Customer Service Excellence in December 2021, the Centre for Assessment completed a surveillance review in February 2023. The purpose of the review was to ensure that DBS continues to meet all 57 elements of the standard. The review was conducted remotely and involved answering the assessor’s questions as well as providing evidence of improvements made to the customer journey in the last 12 months, such as changing the way in which DBS gathers insight from customers, improving the accessibility of DBS services and developing outreach partnerships to raise awareness of the work undertaken by DBS.

The assessor spoke to several members of staff from across the organisation to discuss the work being undertaken in their area. He concluded that DBS remains fully compliant with the standard and continues to demonstrate that they are ‘compliant plus’ against the 15 criteria ratings previously awarded. DBS was also deemed to have achieved the “compliant plus” rating against one further element, bringing our total to 16 – the highest number we have ever achieved.

UK Customer Satisfaction Index

DBS continued to participate in the UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) as part of the public service (national) sector. The UKCSI is based on 26 measures which are categorised in 5 dimensions of customer service - experience, complaint handling, customer ethos, emotional connection, and ethics. The public services (national) sector average score for overall satisfaction was 75.1 (out of 100) In the UKCSI published in January 2023. DBS scored 78.4 in the same index.

 **Institute of Customer Service awards**

The Head of Customer Services at DBS, Brian McGuinness, was shortlisted for an Institute of Customer Service award in 2023, The Customer Service Changemaker Award. Being a finalist at such a prestigious event is testament to DBS’s commitment to improving customer experience and putting the customer at the heart of all they do.

What our staff say about quality

Quality walkarounds

During 2022-23, DBS continued with what is now an established programme of quality walkarounds (QWRs). One of the organisation's key engagement tools, QWRs were undertaken at least once in each of the 5 DBS directorates, with a total of 26 taking place. QWRs have helped to increase awareness of issues, emphasised the shared ownership of providing quality services, as well as resolving issues raised during the discussions.

The DBS quality assurance framework describes a programme of activity, assessment and reporting to evaluate the effectiveness of our systems and services and QWRs are an integral part of that. The findings provide data which helps individuals/teams and directorates to reflect on our performance, ask if we are maximising our ability to meet our objectives and our purpose, celebrate where we are, and take corrective action when needed.

It has been clear throughout the performance year, that all staff, whatever their role, recognise their contribution to safeguarding. They have clearly articulated the positive impact sharing knowledge and working together has on the organisational ability to provide a quality service. Staff agreed the organisation is achieving its vision and believe that we can continue to improve.

In addition, staff at DBS recognise how vital technology and equipment are in supporting their ability to do their jobs effectively and deliver quality safeguarding services. There is a desire to improve on existing technology and proactively become more digital both to improve the way we work internally as well as enhance the customer journey. Our customers and those we serve to protect, remain at the heart of staff's dedication to quality and desire to continually improve.

What quality looks like to our staff:



“Getting it right the first time, not wasting time or money.”



“Accuracy and timeliness are important, but safeguarding needs to underpin everything.”



“Designing/delivering user-centred content that meets user needs.”



“Focusing on both user needs and business needs.”



“Collaborative working and creating an environment where everybody's perspective is gained.”



“Building confidence in our products.”



“Converting information into intelligence and insight, understanding how often data is being used.”



“Having a good knowledge of what's going on, and where to get good data.”



“Getting the decision right, and all of the supporting work that goes with that.”

Conclusion

In the 2021-2022 annual quality account we committed to continue to improve the quality and inclusivity of our services and embed both the Safeguarding and Quality charter, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion charter in everything we do. The information provided in this 2022-23 quality account evidences activities which have contributed to that continuing aspiration. Equally, we acknowledged technology is an enabler to supporting quality services and we needed to modernise digital services. We have achieved this through the launch of the barring referral service and improving the visibility of the Basic check and sensitive application digital services. Again, DBS recognises there is still work to do in this field and is committed to delivering our technology roadmap.

Business plan achievements

In 2022-23, we achieved 81% of our business plan milestones (51 out of 63). 7 milestones were removed following SLT review and board approval, and 5 were deferred into 2023-24. Of those that were deferred, 4 were under Quality, and 1 under Profile.

Performance standards

We achieved 6 out of our 11 published services standards for timeliness, quality, and people. We exceeded the barring quality rate of closures, achieving a rate of 99.86% against a target of 99.5% and also exceeded the percentage of all criminality and barring information that DBS should place on a certificate, once again, achieving a rate of 100% against a target of 99.98%.

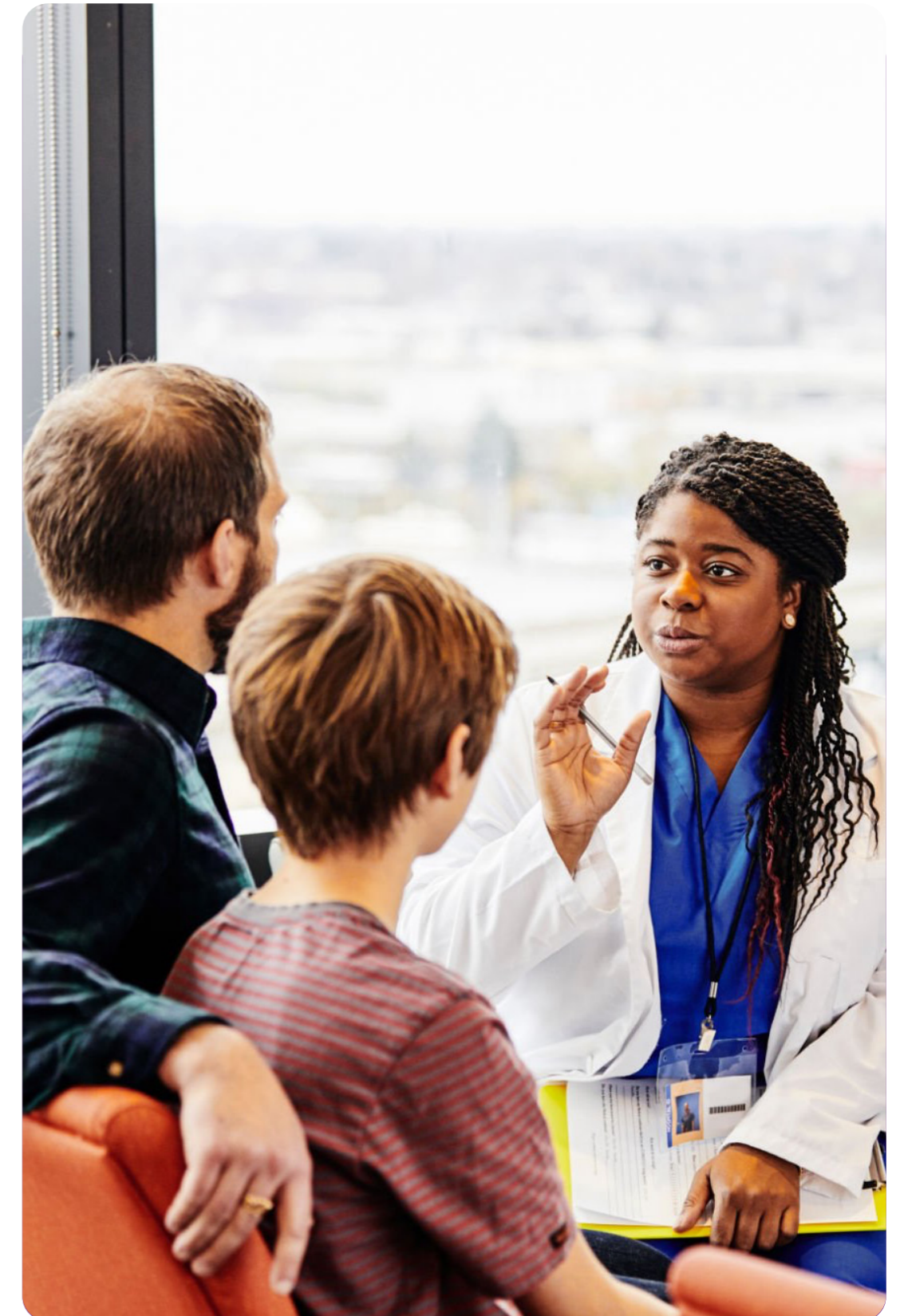
Safeguarding and Quality charter principles

The Safeguarding and Quality charter sets out DBS' commitment to safeguarding through the provision of a quality service and describes the aspiration of safeguarding and quality to become a tangible and recognisable feature of DBS culture that extends from floor to board.

There is clear evidence throughout this account that both safeguarding and quality have been at the heart of all activities undertaken across the 2022-23 performance year, with all 11 principles of the Safeguarding and Quality charter being demonstrated. In particular, the actions of all colleagues have highlighted quality assurance activities are focused on ensuring we have a positive impact on our customers and partners and meet our responsibility to protect the public. Equally, we have invested in nurturing an organisational culture where our ability to safeguard informs how we measure quality.

We are improving our reach in terms of communicating our safeguarding commitment and exploiting opportunities to engage a diverse population. These are areas which DBS can continue to expand in. Alongside

continuing to use our experience and knowledge to influence the wider safeguarding debate and, when necessary, challenging any activities which undermine our ability to safeguard.



Look forward to 2023-24

As highlighted in the chairman's foreword, in the latter part of 2022-23 and early part of 2023-24, DBS undertook the planned review of the DBS 2025 strategy. In May 2023, the refreshed strategy, which included a refreshed vision and new strategic objectives, was launched.

In addition, DBS is developing an 'outcomes framework' which will align with the refreshed strategy and inform how we measure our performance and ability to safeguard.

In July 2021, the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding, Rachel Maclean, announced her intention to commission an independent review of the Disclosure and Barring regime, as set out in the Home Office's strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. The report on the review was published in April 2023. A formal response from Home Office is expected in 2023-24 and DBS will support in delivering any required actions.

Similarly, the government responded to the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in May 2023 and DBS will work alongside Home Office and relevant partners and stakeholders as required throughout 2023-24.

Finally, in terms of our day-to-day activities, DBS will continue to put the most vulnerable in society, those who we strive to protect, at the centre of all our actions, whether that be directly through our operational areas or indirectly through our support services. We will continue to develop and improve our services to enhance our contribution to the national safeguarding agenda.



Quality statement from the DBS Chief Executive and directors

At our core, we are a safeguarding organisation and recognise that quality is central to all that we do to achieve our purpose and vision.

We are each personally committed to meeting the challenges of providing quality services, whilst achieving value for money and maintaining our safeguarding influence and reach, as well as supporting our colleagues to deliver quality outcomes for our customers, partners, and those who we strive to protect.

The objectives and milestones in our co-created strategy are focused on developing our people, investing in technological improvements, increasing diversity and inclusion as well as delivering the highest standards and quality of products and services. All of which underpinned by the quality assurance framework and the acknowledgement that to improve we need to continually assess, seek feedback, reflect, and embrace innovation and change. As a strategic leadership team, we are confident we are meeting our responsibility for high support and high challenge. We continue to hold ourselves and each other to account in the pursuance of delivering the best outcomes possible. Equally, the DBS associate directors and heads of service, alongside managers and all staff maintain and demonstrate their responsibility for ensuring a culture of quality is embedded throughout the organisation.

In preparing this quality report, directors have taken steps to ensure what is included in the report is consistent with internal and external sources of information, including the annual report and accounts and model publication scheme.



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