
AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO USING THE DBS UPDATE SERVICE

The DBS update service enables those subscribed to it to have their DBS disclosure certificate kept up-to-date. This means that they can re-use their disclosure certificate when they change roles (to work or volunteer with the same workforce i.e. children and/or adults) and the new role does not change the type and level of DBS check required.

When recruiting to eligible roles, you may ask applicants if they are a member of the update service. If they are, with their permission, you may accept the applicant's disclosure certificate and carry out a free, instant online check to find out if any new information has been added since it was first issued.

When should a new check be carried out?

A new check will always be required when an individual applies to work or volunteers in a new role which changes the level of DBS check and/or the type of clearances required.

- John currently works as a nurse in an adult's residential care home. This role is a regulated activity involving the provision of health care to adults and is therefore eligible for an enhanced DBS check with clearances against the adults barred list.

John applies for a new job in his local NHS trust as a nurse in A&E. The new role is a regulated activity involving the provision of healthcare to adults and children. Although the type of DBS check required hasn't changed, the new role will change the type of clearances required. Therefore a new enhanced DBS check should be obtained with clearances against the adults and children's barred lists.

- Lene works as a part-time receptionist in a GP surgery as she works her way through medical school. Her role is eligible for a standard DBS check.

Lene then secures a place on a foundation training programme. During her training, she will be on a number of placements in NHS trusts. These placements will involve providing a regulated activity with adults and children requiring a higher level of DBS check. In this case, a new enhanced DBS check with clearances against the adults and children's barred lists should be obtained.

Purpose of this briefing

If used effectively the DBS update service can be used to strengthen pre-existing safeguarding measures and has the potential to reduce the time and cost spent on recruitment.

This briefing paper aims to provide additional clarity on:

- the mutual benefits of the service and why staff should subscribe to it
- who can obtain an online status check
- how to access the service
- charges for subscription and the use of the service
- understanding the information received when undertaking an online status check
- what happens if an individual's subscription elapses
- where to access the DBS communication tools
- where to find further information.

Mutual benefits of the service

The DBS update service is most beneficial to workers who are being appointed into highly mobile roles, e.g. doctors on rotational training programmes, agency workers or contractors.

It may also be of benefit to specialist doctors who hold a substantive post within one NHS organisation but who may be called upon to provide emergency services, specialty expertise or training in another, or to workers appointed to a trust bank.

Benefits for employees and volunteers

- In the majority of cases, they will only ever require one DBS check saving time and money.
- Individuals can re-use their disclosure certificate when applying for another position or wish to take up a volunteering activity (where the new role doesn't change the level of DBS check required and/or the type of access they will have with children and adults).
- Individuals have more control over who has access to their DBS disclosure certificate and the information held on the update service.
- If in a volunteering role, the fee for a DBS disclosure certificate and subscription to the update service is free of charge. See the definition of a volunteer on page three.

Definition of a volunteer under the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002.

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

For DBS purposes, it is deemed that 'unpaid' means not in receipt of any payment including remuneration, allowance, financial benefit, payment in kind, or other means of support, in relation to that activity.

The applicant must therefore not:

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

Benefits for employers

- No more DBS application forms to fill in, or delays in processing times due to the postal service.
- Access to perform a free online status check that will instantly confirm if the individual's existing disclosure certificate is up to date, speeding up the ability to appoint.
- Access to a two-way link between the Electronic Staff Record and DBS systems. The link has two core functions intended to strengthen pre-existing safeguarding measures.
 1. The provision of automatic updates on the criminal record status of all staff and volunteers who are subscribed to the update service (every 60 days).
 2. The ability to transfer high level information to the DBS barring team if concerns have been raised about a member of staff and, as a result of further investigation, the employer may wish to make a referral to the DBS.

More detailed information can also be found on the [ESR website](#).

When to encourage subscription to the service

Subscription to the DBS update service is voluntary, it will therefore be useful to provide as much information as possible to applicants during the recruitment stage to raise awareness of the benefits.

There are two opportunities for individuals to subscribe to the service.

1. At the point of making an application for a DBS check.
2. Once they have received their DBS disclosure certificate.

If applicants do not have the opportunity to subscribe to the service when they first apply for their DBS check, or if they choose to delay subscription until they are in receipt of their DBS disclosure certificate, it is important to make them aware that they must do so within 19 days from the issue date shown on the certificate (not 19 days from the date they actually receive the certificate).

Any application received on or after the 19 days have elapsed, will not be accepted by the DBS. The individual will need to wait until they next have a new DBS check before they can subscribe to the update service.

Employers should make sure that:

- the correct [workforce and position](#) is indicated in the DBS disclosure application form. Ensuring this is completed correctly is important as this determines the type of information local police forces need to consider including in the DBS disclosure certificate.
- the applicant is directed to the DBS website to [join the update service](#)
- the applicant is provided with the disclosure application form reference number or e-reference receipt so that they can immediately apply to join the update service and [track the progress of their application online](#). This is the 'F' number on the paper application form or an 'E' number on the online form acknowledgement receipt (known as a 'crb003' if using e-Bulk)
- if the individual subscribes to the update service at the point of making an application for a DBS check, the DBS must receive the disclosure application form within 28 days of the applicant joining the update service.

If your organisation already has a local policy in place that requires periodic checks on all staff in positions that are eligible for a DBS check, these arrangements can continue unchanged. The frequency by which any repeat checks are undertaken should be proportionate to risk and determined at a local level.

If such arrangements are in place, staff may be encouraged to subscribe to the update service when their DBS check is next scheduled for renewal.

Who can obtain an online status check?

To obtain an online status check and access information on the DBS update service you must have a legitimate interest in the individual you will be checking i.e. they are in your direct employment, are volunteering or are contracted to work in your organisation.

You should nominate the most appropriate person(s) within your organisation to have access to this information - one of which should be the counter-signatory. This may be done in advance and need only be entered onto the system once, regardless of how many individual checks that person will be undertaking.

To undertake a status check you must be able to answer 'yes' to all of the following questions. If you answer 'no' to any question you cannot carry out a status check.

- ✓ Have you sought the applicant's consent to obtain a status check?
- ✓ Are you legally entitled to require a standard or enhanced DBS certificate?
- ✓ Does the DBS certificate contain information which you are legally entitled to see, such as the barred list information?
- ✓ Is the DBS disclosure certificate at the right level for the position being applied for?
- ✓ If you are legally entitled to a barred list check, is the DBS certificate presented to you for the right workforce i.e. children or adults or children and adults?

This information will be indicated in the 'Position Applied For' section and will have been used by the police force to determine the relevancy of any locally held police information.

How to access the service

Individuals

- Individuals can subscribe to join the [update service](#) by going to the DBS website.
- Individuals who hold a Gender Registration Certificate or do not want to disclose their previous gender/name changes to the employing organisation should contact the DBS sensitive application's team. This can be done by emailing sensitive@dbs.gsi.gov.uk, telephoning 0151 676 1452, or by writing to, Sensitive applications team, Customer Services, PO Box 165, Liverpool, L69 3JD. This will ensure that information about their previous gender/name is not released on the online portal or in the DBS disclosure certificate.

- To track the progress of your DBS certificate application individuals can go to the [DBS online tracking service](#).
- For further information see the DBS [guidance for applicants](#).

Employers

Employers can carry out a status check by going to the [update service](#) link on the DBS website.

After viewing the original DBS disclosure certificate, the authorised person will need to enter the name of their organisation, their own forename and surname and then the following details of the DBS certificate being checked.

- DBS disclosure certificate number.
- Current surname of the DBS certificate holder, as specified on their DBS certificate.
- Date of birth of the DBS certificate holder, as recorded on the DBS certificate.

[Full guidance for employers](#) on using the service can also be found on the DBS website. This guidance was last updated in August 2015.

Charges for subscription and use of the service

- Individuals can choose to join this optional service for an annual subscription fee of £13 which is less than having to pay for a DBS check each time they change jobs.
- Volunteers will be able to subscribe to the service for free, however if they move into paid employment they will need to pay the fee for their annual subscription the next time it is due for renewal.
- Employers do not need to subscribe to the service but must have the individual's permission to undertake an online status check on them. Access for employers is free of charge.



- Payment for subscription to the DBS update service must be done online, via a credit card arrangement. The DBS are looking at extending the scope of the service to accept other methods of payment.

Did you know...

Employers who agree to pay for DBS checks and/or subscription to the update service on behalf of individuals are eligible to claim income tax relief.

Further information can be found in the [Tax Information and Impact Note](#) (dated 31 May 2013 which remains current and correct) on the HM Revenue and Customs website.

Information received when undertaking an online status check

The status check will give one of four responses when you log onto the system.

1. The certificate is clear and there is no new information - which means you can accept their current DBS disclosure certificate and formerly confirm their appointment.
2. The certificate contains information but there is no new information - which means that you must make your recruitment decision based on the information provided in the individual's original DBS disclosure certificate.
3. New information is known - which means that new information has been recorded since the issue of their last DBS disclosure certificate, and you will need to obtain a new DBS check.
4. Details not found - which could mean that the individual has provided the wrong information and you will need to go back and check this with them, or their subscription has not yet been processed or they haven't yet subscribed.

What happens if an individual's subscription is allowed to elapse?

It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that their subscription does not elapse in the same way it is their responsibility to ensure that their registration with a professional regulatory body does not elapse.

If their subscription is allowed to elapse then the account held on the DBS update service will be closed and those who have a legitimate interest in obtaining information on that individual will cease to receive information.

To re-subscribe the individual must obtain a fresh DBS check. It may therefore be in the best interests of the employer to prompt renewal of subscription.

Communication tools

The DBS have produced a number of tools and resources including a series of fact sheets and two [YouTube videos](#) about the update service, one aimed at employers and another aimed at applicants.

There is also a suite of downloadable [posters](#), an [employer presentation](#) and [stakeholder presentation](#) which can be used in any communications with managers and staff.



Further information

This briefing paper specifically focuses on use of the DBS update service, further information about DBS checks can be found on [our website](#).

It is important to note that undertaking a DBS check is one of a number of checks employers must undertake to assess an individual's suitability for a particular role.

Further guidance on wider employment check requirements can be found on [our website](#).

Queries

If you have any further queries which are not covered in this briefing paper, please do not hesitate to contact us at employmentchecks@nhsemployers.org

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