

Frequently asked questions

A quick guide to Disclosure and Barring Service checks

What is a DBS check is and who can get one?

Employers may ask for a DBS check if you apply for certain roles. This is a check of your criminal record which is processed by the DBS or Disclosure and Barring Service, previously known as the CRB or Criminal Records Bureau.

A **Basic DBS check** will show unspent convictions only.

An **Enhanced DBS check** can show both spent and unspent convictions as well as cautions, warnings and reprimands. It can also check the children and vulnerable adults 'barred list' to see if you are prohibited from working with vulnerable groups.

Who can request a basic DBS check?

If you want a check of your own criminal record to give to an employer, you can request a Basic DBS check.

Enhanced DBS checks can only be requested by organisations that are registered and listed with the DBS. These will be organisations in areas of employment regarded as having a significant health and safety risk to vulnerable customers or clients, for example individuals working with children or in healthcare.

It is a legal requirement in the UK for regulated activity employers to refer safeguarding concerns to the DBS.

I'm self-employed. How can I get an Enhanced DBS check for myself?

From January 2026 you'll be able to access an Enhanced DBS check for yourself as the law is changing to bring parity between those who are employed by an organisation and those who work in private practice. We'll be updating this information sheet when we have more information about this.

I'm a BACP member. Can BACP request an Enhanced DBS check for me?

We can't request checks for members as counselling and psychotherapy aren't currently listed as professions which must be subject to an Enhanced DBS check. Even if you were to apply for an enhanced DBS check for any self-employed work when the law changes in 2026 it will still not be mandatory to have one.

Some professional bodies act as umbrella organisations for self-employed members, why can't BACP?

We can't act as an umbrella organisation for our members because we're not on the list of registered organisations that can request Enhanced DBS checks on individuals.

We can't currently apply to be a registered organisation because counselling and psychotherapy aren't listed as professions which must be subject to an Enhanced DBS checks.

I work in Scotland. Do I need to join the Protected Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme?

Important changes to disclosure requirements came into effect on 1 April 2025 under the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020, which affect anyone working with children or protected adults in regulated roles.

From this date, membership of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme is now a legal requirement for anyone in a regulated role. This includes counselling and psychotherapy, which can be described as prescribed welfare services.

If you work in Scotland with children or protected adults, or live in England and commute to Scotland to carry out your work, you must now be a member of the PVG Scheme. The requirement is based on where the work takes place, not where you live.

If you live outside Scotland but provide counselling or psychotherapy remotely to people in Scotland, you do not need to join the scheme.

You can find out whether your role requires PVG scheme membership by using the [mygov.scot online checker tool](https://mygov.scot/regulated-roles).

For more information, you can visit [Disclosure Scotland's website](https://disclosure.scot.nhs.uk/) or read the [mygov.scot regulated roles guidance](https://mygov.scot/regulated-roles)

Further information

DBS customer services

Email: customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 200 190

Minicom: 03000 200 192

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, Saturday, 10am to 5pm

Apply for a Basic DBS check:

[England and Wales](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[Scotland](#)

Document updated: 9 December 2025