

PARENT & CARER GUIDE

Using the DBS Update Service

How to do a free online check that someone's DBS certificate is still up to date.

A DBS certificate shows what was known on the day it was issued. The DBS Update Service lets you check, with the person's permission, whether anything new has come to light since then. For private individuals, it is free to use and only takes a few minutes online.

They can get a DBS check. You can ask to see it.

Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers can apply for their own Enhanced DBS check through a DBS Umbrella Body.

What the Update Service is

The DBS Update Service is an online service run by the Disclosure and Barring Service. People who hold a DBS certificate can subscribe to it, which keeps their certificate up to date and lets others check its status.

You can do a status check on an existing Enhanced, or Enhanced with Barred List, certificate. The person must have subscribed to the service, and they must give you permission to check.

Why it helps you

- You can confirm a certificate is still current without asking for a brand new check.
- It is free for private individuals, such as parents and carers, to do a status check.
- You can repeat the check whenever you need to, with the person's agreement.
- It gives you peace of mind if a tutor, coach or carer has worked with you for a while.

What you need before you start

- ☐ The person's permission to check their certificate.
- ☐ Their DBS certificate number, taken from the original certificate.
- ☐ Their surname exactly as it appears on the certificate.
- ☐ Their date of birth.
- ☐ Your own name, to enter as the person carrying out the check.

Step by step: doing the status check

- ☐ First, look at the original certificate and match it to their photo ID.
- ☐ Go to gov.uk/dbs-update-service and choose the option to carry out a status check.
- ☐ Enter your own name.
- ☐ For the organisation name, GOV.UK suggests entering "private employer".
- ☐ Enter the certificate number, surname and date of birth.
- ☐ Confirm you have the person's permission, then submit.
- ☐ Read the result, and keep a simple note of the date you checked.

What the result means

Remember that a status check only works alongside the original certificate. It tells you whether that certificate is still current, not what is on it.

- Certificate is current: no new information has been found since it was issued. You can rely on it as it stands.
- New information: something has changed since it was issued. The result will not say what. Ask the person to apply for a new check.
- If the check will not go through, re-check the details you entered and speak to the person.
- A new-information result does not automatically mean no. Talk calmly with the person and wait for the new certificate.

How often to recheck, and consent

- A good rhythm is once a year, or before a new term or season starts.
- Recheck if their role changes, for example from group sessions to one-to-one.
- Always ask permission each time. The certificate belongs to them.
- Use the result only for your decision. Do not share it with others.
- Worried about someone? Police 999 in an emergency, NSPCC 0808 800 5000, or your council's adult safeguarding team.

Questions to ask

1. Is it free for me to do a status check? Yes, for private individuals it is free.
2. Can I check without the person knowing? No, you need their permission.
3. Can I sign them up myself? No, the person subscribes to the Update Service themselves.
4. Does the result tell me what the new information is? No, ask them to apply for a new check.
5. Do I still need to see the original certificate? Yes, the status check works alongside it.

Warning signs

- They will not give permission for a status check.
- The certificate number or details they give do not match the original certificate.
- The result shows new information and they avoid applying for a new check.
- They say they subscribe but cannot show you the original certificate.
- The certificate is for a different workforce from the work you need.

KEY POINT

With permission, a free status check at gov.uk/dbs-update-service tells you in minutes whether a DBS certificate is still current.

Working with children or vulnerable adults?

Point them to **self-employed-dbs.co.uk**. Eligible self-employed workers can apply online in around ten minutes and get their Enhanced DBS check processed by a registered Umbrella Body.

self-employed-dbs.co.uk

This guide is general information based on DBS and GOV.UK guidance published September 2026. It is not legal advice. Always check the latest guidance at gov.uk. DBS for Self-Employed is a brand of MJD Ventures Limited.