

PARENT & CARER GUIDE

Home Carers for Older or Vulnerable Adults

A practical guide for families hiring a self-employed carer to support a parent or relative at home.

Finding the right carer for someone you love is a big decision, and it is normal to want reassurance. Since January 2026, eligible self-employed carers can get an Enhanced DBS check with an Adults' Barred List check, and you can ask to see it. This guide explains how to check it properly and how to set up care that feels safe for everyone.

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 has changed for self-employed carers

Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers and personal employees, including carers, can apply for an Enhanced DBS check. Where the role involves regulated activity with vulnerable adults, this can include a check of the Adults' Barred List.

Not every role qualifies. It depends on the work done and who it is done with. The DBS eligibility tool on GOV.UK can help: gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check. Care agencies are regulated separately (in England by the Care Quality Commission), so this guide is about carers you hire directly.

- You cannot apply for a check on the carer's behalf.
- The carer applies themselves through a DBS Umbrella Body, such as self-employed-dbs.co.uk.
- The certificate belongs to them. Sharing it is their choice, but you can ask to see it.

How to check their DBS certificate

For a status check you need their certificate number, surname as shown on the certificate, and date of birth. GOV.UK suggests entering "private employer" as the organisation name. If the result says new information exists, ask them to apply for a new check.

If a certificate shows the person is on the Adults' Barred List, they are legally prohibited from this work. Do not employ them. If you know a barred person is doing this work, report it to the police.

- ☐ Ask to see the original paper certificate. Copies or photos are not acceptable.
- ☐ Check the name and details match their government photo ID, such as a passport or driving licence.
- ☐ Look at the issue date.
- ☐ Check it covers the adult workforce, and includes the Adults' Barred List check.
- ☐ Ask whether they subscribe to the DBS Update Service.
- ☐ With their permission, do a free status check at gov.uk/db-update-service.
- ☐ Do not photocopy it, share it, or keep details longer than you need to decide.

Lone working and access to the home

Most home carers work alone, often when no one else is around. A little planning protects your relative and the carer too.

- Agree clear visit times and what happens if the carer is late or cannot come.
- Keep a simple visit log or diary that family can read.
- Decide who holds keys. A key safe with a code you change regularly can help.
- Never share alarm codes or bank details beyond what the role needs.
- Drop in unannounced now and then, especially in the early weeks.
- Keep in touch with neighbours or friends who visit regularly.

Money and medication boundaries

Set clear rules from day one, in writing if possible. Good carers welcome clear boundaries because they protect them too.

- Agree how shopping is paid for and keep all receipts.
- Carers should not borrow money, accept large gifts or be added to bank accounts.
- Never share PINs or online banking passwords.
- Agree exactly what help with medication is expected, and keep a record.
- Store medicines safely and check supplies match what has been taken.
- Talk to the GP or pharmacist if you are unsure what help is appropriate.

A certificate is only one part of the picture

A DBS check tells you about the past. It cannot tell you everything. Combine it with references, relevant training, experience, recommendations and your own judgement. Keep talking to your relative about how visits are going, and listen closely to anything that worries them.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call the police on 999.
- Worried an adult is being harmed or exploited? Contact your local council's adult safeguarding team.
- Find a registered DBS Umbrella Body: gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body
- GOV.UK guidance: gov.uk/guidance/private-individuals-employing-self-employed-workers-or-personal-employees

Questions to ask

1. Do you have an Enhanced DBS certificate for the adult workforce, with an Adults' Barred List check?
2. Can I see the original certificate and your photo ID?
3. Are you on the DBS Update Service, and may I do a status check?
4. Can you give me two references from recent care work?
5. What training do you have, for example in moving and handling or medication?
6. How do you record visits, spending and medication?
7. What would you do if you arrived and my relative was unwell or had fallen?

Warning signs

- Reluctance to show an original certificate, or offering only a photo or copy.
- Names or details that do not match their photo ID.
- Asking for PINs, bank cards or to handle large sums of cash.
- Discouraging family visits or trying to isolate your relative.
- Missing money, unexplained purchases or changes in medication supplies.
- Your relative seems anxious, withdrawn or reluctant to talk about the carer.

KEY POINT

You can ask to see an original Enhanced DBS certificate with an Adults' Barred List check, but always combine it with references, clear boundaries and regular contact.

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.