

PARENT & CARER GUIDE

How to Check a DBS Certificate

A simple, step-by-step guide to looking at someone's DBS certificate and understanding what it tells you.

Since 21 January 2026, many self-employed workers such as tutors, sports coaches, music teachers, personal assistants and carers can get an Enhanced DBS check. The certificate belongs to them, and sharing it is their choice, but you can ask to see it. This guide explains what to look at, what the wording means, and what to do if something is shown.

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.

The levels of check, explained simply

Self-employed workers and personal employees can get one of two levels of check, depending on the work they do and who they do it with. Not everyone qualifies. The DBS eligibility tool at gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check can help confirm what applies.

- Enhanced DBS check: shows spent and unspent convictions, cautions, and any relevant information held by local police.
- Enhanced with Barred List check: the same as above, plus a check of the Children's and/or Adults' Barred List.
- A barred list is a list of people legally banned from certain work with children or vulnerable adults.
- The person applies for their own check through a DBS Umbrella Body. You cannot apply on their behalf.

Step by step: what to look at

- ☐ Ask to see the ORIGINAL paper certificate. Copies, scans and photos are not acceptable.
- ☐ Compare the name, date of birth and address with their government photo ID, such as a passport or driving licence.
- ☐ Check the level: Enhanced, or Enhanced with Barred List.
- ☐ Check the workforce: child workforce for work with under-18s, adult workforce for vulnerable adults, or both.
- ☐ Look at the issue date. Think about how recent it is and whether anything may have changed since.
- ☐ Read every section, including the barred list sections if they were checked.
- ☐ Ask whether they subscribe to the DBS Update Service, so you can check it is still current.

What "None Recorded" means

Each section of the certificate shows either information or the words "None Recorded". "None Recorded" means nothing was found for that section at the time of the check. It is a snapshot of one moment, not a guarantee for the future.

If a barred list section says the person is barred from working with the workforce you are hiring for, they are legally prohibited from that regulated activity. Do not employ them. It is a criminal offence for them to seek that work. If you know a barred person is doing regulated activity, report it to the police.

If information is disclosed

A certificate that shows a conviction, caution or police information does not automatically mean no. Many people have something in their past that has no bearing on the work they do now. Stay calm and give the person a fair chance to explain.

- Have a private, respectful conversation. Avoid making assumptions before you have listened.
- Think about how relevant it is to the role and to who they will be with.
- Consider how long ago it happened and what has changed since.
- Weigh it alongside references, qualifications, experience and your own judgement.
- If you are unsure, it is fine to take time before deciding.

Handling the information properly

- Use what you see only to make your hiring decision.
- Do not photocopy, photograph or scan the certificate.
- Do not share the details with anyone else, including other parents.
- Do not keep any notes about it for longer than you need them.
- Hand the original certificate straight back to its owner.

Where to get help

- Emergency or immediate danger: call the police on 999.
- Worried about a child: contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.
- Worried about an adult: contact your local council's adult safeguarding team.
- Official guidance: [gov.uk/guidance/private-individuals-employing-self-employed-workers-or-personal-employees](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/private-individuals-employing-self-employed-workers-or-personal-employees)
- Find a DBS Umbrella Body: [gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body](https://www.gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body)

Questions to ask

1. Can you tell me, in your own words, what happened?
2. How long ago was this, and what was going on in your life at the time?
3. What has changed for you since then?
4. Is there anything about it that you think is relevant to this role?
5. Can you give me references from people you have worked for since?
6. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Warning signs

- They will only show a copy, photo or scan, not the original certificate.
- The name or details do not match their photo ID.
- The certificate covers the wrong workforce for the work you need.
- They are barred from working with the group you are hiring for.
- They refuse to discuss disclosed information or give answers that do not add up.
- They pressure you to decide quickly or skip checks.

KEY POINT

Always look at the original certificate, match it to photo ID, check the workforce and date, and treat anything disclosed fairly as one part of a wider decision.

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.