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Criminal record checks (DBS check)

Before you are employed as a doctor, begin a new role, or start your foundation training, your employer will check that you received certification from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), or its equivalent in the devolved nations.

📍 Location: UK 🚧 Audience: All doctors 📅 Updated: Wednesday 18 September 2024

What is a criminal record check?

A criminal record check details 'spent' and 'unspent' convictions, cautions and warnings on police records.

Employers need to ensure their employees have the appropriate certification from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), or its equivalent in the devolved nations:

- England and Wales: [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (previously Criminal Records Bureau and Independent Safeguarding Authority)
- Northern Ireland: [Access NI](#)
- Scotland: [Disclosure Scotland](#)

Why do I need to have a DBS check?

Employers have a legal responsibility to check the criminal record history of people seeking to work with children or adults in specific situations.

Before you are employed as a doctor, start a new role, or begin your foundation training, you will be required to have a criminal record check.

In England and Wales an [enhanced with lists check](#) is generally needed for posts that require a significant amount of contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Who will get a copy of my criminal records check?

A copy of the DBS certificate will be sent to you only. It is your responsibility to send a copy of the certificate to your new employer.

Employers will need to see the original certificate on your first day at work.

Who should pay for my criminal records check?

Because criminal records checks are required for employment, it is our position that your employer should bear the cost. However, your employer is under no legal obligation to pay on your behalf, and we are aware of some employers who require employees to bear the cost.

In most cases, employers either pay the fee or reimburse you for the cost. NHS Employers recommends that any decisions on arrangements to pay the fee for criminal records checks should be done in consultation with [Local Negotiating Committees](#).

The cost of an enhanced with lists check is £44.

How often do I need a criminal records check?

There is no defined period of validity for a criminal records check, but guidance issued by NHS Employers is clear that resident doctors in training do not need to secure a new criminal record check for every rotation:

"Doctors on educationally-approved rotational training are regarded as being in continuous employment during the term of training and are therefore required to have a criminal record check, as a minimum, once every three years, rather than each time they change rotation."

The same guidance goes on to state that:

"...evidence of a check having been carried out may be obtained from the doctor's own copy of a disclosure, from the previous employer or host organisation's ESR record, or from other local records. To aid subsequent verification of a DBS check having been obtained, details of the disclosure date and reference number should always be recorded on ESR for the benefit of informing future employers conducting a risk assessment."

How is the system changing?

The Disclosure and Barring Service have introduced the [Update Service](#), which allows for greater portability of criminal records checks in England and Wales.

The service introduces a subscription that allows you to move between employers without reapplying for a criminal records check.

The BMA will work with other unions, employers and the DBS to ensure the new system reflects your needs and working practices.