

FILTERING RULES for DBS CERTIFICATES

What does 'filtering' mean?

Filtering is the term that the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) uses to describe the process which will identify and remove convictions and cautions which should no longer be disclosed on DBS certificates due to changes to legislation.

What may appear on a DBS certificate?

Standard and Enhanced DBS certificates will include details of convictions and cautions (including youth cautions, reprimands and warnings) recorded on the Police National Computer (PNC).

In addition to information from the PNC, an Enhanced certificate may also include information taken from police records that a chief officer of a police force considers relevant to the application and/or details of whether an individual is included on one or both of two lists barring people from working with children and/or vulnerable adults.

Some PNC information will now be filtered and will not appear on the certificate. Cautions and convictions to be filtered out are set out in legislation.

What PNC information will be filtered from inclusion on a certificate?

The rules deciding when a conviction or caution will be filtered are set out in legislation. This states that a certificate must include the following:

- Cautions relating to an offence from a list* agreed by Parliament - see below
- Cautions given less than 6 years ago (where individual **over 18** at the time of caution)
- Cautions given less than 2 years ago (where individual **under 18** at the time of caution)
- Where the individual has more than one conviction **all** convictions will be included on the certificate (no conviction will be filtered)
- Convictions that resulted in a custodial sentence (regardless of whether served)
- Convictions given less than 11 years ago (where individual **over 18** at the time of conviction)
- Convictions given less than 5.5 years ago (where individual **under 18** at the time of conviction)

*The list includes a range of offences which are serious and which relate to sexual offending, violent offending and/or safeguarding. It would never be appropriate to filter offences on this list. A list of offences which will never be filtered has been derived from the legislation and is available here

[List of offences never filtered from criminal record check](#)

This is not the complete list as the legislation also extends to cover similar offences committed under the law of Scotland and Northern Ireland or under laws relevant to the armed services.

When did the rules change in relation to information being filtered?

The changes made to legislation that determines which convictions and cautions can be taken into account by employers and other bodies, and what is included on a DBS certificate, came into force on 29 May 2013.

What are the changes?

The changes made to legislation impact both what an employer can ask an individual in relation to convictions and cautions (for example a self-declaration on an application form of 'do you have any convictions') and what is released on a DBS certificate.

Can an employer ask an individual to declare details of all convictions and cautions?

An employer can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that they are legally entitled to know.

Where a Standard or Enhanced certificate can legally be requested (this is where the position is one that is listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1975 (Exceptions) Order 1975), an employer can only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that would fall under the rules described above. That means only those convictions and cautions that would be disclosed on a DBS certificate.

If an employer takes into account a conviction or caution that would not have been disclosed, they are acting unlawfully under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

When completing the DBS application form, a question will be asked whether you have ever been convicted of a criminal offence. The response to this question should only be in relation to convictions which would not be subject to filtering.

There are a small number of defined positions where details of all convictions and cautions may be taken into account. These positions do not come through the DBS process. Examples are national security and police vetting.

Has eligibility for a DBS check been affected by these changes?

No. Further guidance on eligibility can be found on the DBS website: [DBS eligibility guidance](#)

Good practice

The employer should follow existing guidance and conduct a case-by-case analysis of any spent convictions and cautions and consider how, if at all, they are relevant to the position sought.

It would be advisable for the employer to keep records of the reasons for any employment decision (and in particular rejections), including whether any spent convictions or cautions were taken into account and, if so, why.

Filtering rules for criminal record check certificates

In all cases:

- IF it is the person's only offence, and
- IF it did not result in a custodial sentence

For those 18 or over at the time of the offence:

An adult conviction will not appear on a DBS certificate if:

- 11 years have elapsed since the date of conviction

An adult caution will not appear on a DBS certificate if:

- 6 years have elapsed since the date of the caution

For those under 18 at the time of the offence:

- For convictions, the elapsed time period is 5.5 year
- For cautions, the elapsed time period is 2 years.

A caution or conviction will only be filtered if it does not appear on the list of offences which will never be filtered from a certificate.

If a person has more than one offence, then details of all their convictions will always be included.

Further guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>

[List of offences never filtered from criminal record check](#)

[DBS eligibility guidance](#)