

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Process in SHS - September 2020

The majority of City, University of London School of Health Sciences undergraduate and postgraduate programmes involve students undertaking placements in health, social care or education practice environments. In order to safeguard the staff and public that the students are in contact with in these healthcare settings, we conduct an enhanced DBS check on all students prior to their first placement.

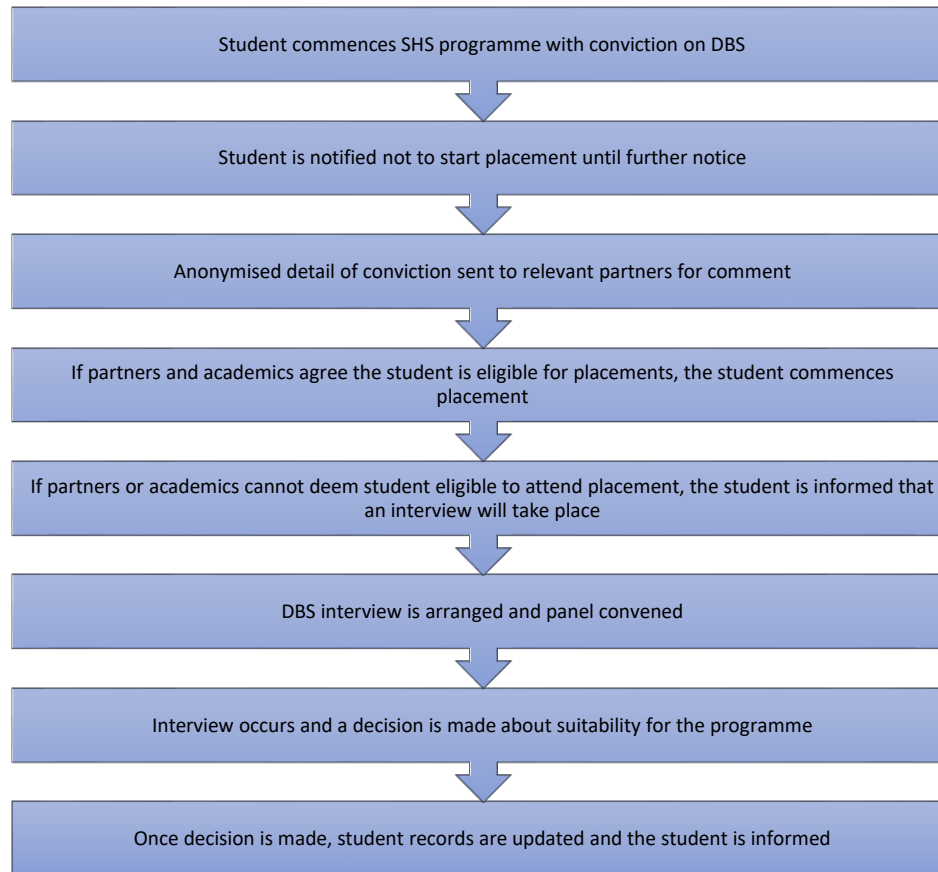
Currently, if a student's DBS check identifies a previous conviction, the student is invited to a DBS interview before a panel of two academics, usually from the field of practice in which the student is aiming to qualify, and the programme director from the programme on which they are enrolled. The current process does not allow for representation from our practice learning partner organisations (PLPs), however the student and their representative are invited to attend. A decision is taken by the panel members about the suitability of the student to continue on the programme, taking into account the requirements and standards of the professional statutory and regulatory bodies that the student is intending to register with on completion of the programme.

During the 2019-20 academic year two of our PLPs raised concerns about the lack of PLP representation on the DBS interview panel. This followed an incident where there was lack of alignment between the decision that the SHS panel made and the decision the PLP would potentially have made had they been party to the information available to SHS about the student's DBS.

We have consequently been asked to revise our DBS processes to incorporate PLPs into the decision making. In considering a revised process, the following principles were central to the planning:

- The majority of students will have convictions that are unlikely to affect their ability to undertake placements, therefore part of the process could involve PLPs as part of a desktop exercise.
- The process should be student focused, therefore the student should be present at any DBS interview in order to offer their explanation of the conviction and for the panel to gain insight into the level of remorse (this may be virtually, i.e. using MSTeams, or in person).
- Should an interview be required, the panel should be limited to as few members as possible in order to meet the requirements. This is:
 - so that intimidation of the student is minimised
 - to aid decision-making
 - to protect the privacy of the student
- PLP panel members should attend in a decision-making capacity
- The process should be as efficient as possible, which may require a PLP from one organisation making a decision on behalf of a number of PLPs across London and Essex

The revised process is outlined below:



Panel will consist of:

- Chair – one senior member of academic staff
- Secretary – member of SHS professional services
- The student
- A student representative (optional)
- Academic panel member – from the same field of practice as the student
- Practice Learning Partner (PLP) representative 1 – from the same field of practice as the student
- Practice Learning Partner representative 2 – may be from a different field of practice (optional)
- PLP panel members will be drawn from a pool of representatives from different partner organisations, agreed by PLPs prior to the start of the academic year
- The panel must consist of at least one academic member and at least one PLP

The panel decision may be:

- Cleared to attend placement
- More evidence or actions required
- Not cleared to attend placement and fitness to practise procedures