



# A public private information management partnership is enhancing public safety in Scotland

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**Brian Gorman**  
Head of Disclosure Scotland

Developed in collaboration with BT, the Disclosure Scotland service is proving to be a valuable tool for making safer recruitment decisions and in helping to protect children and vulnerable people

## Marketplace

The Dunblane tragedy and the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman gave added impetus to plans for changes in legislation to protect young and vulnerable people. The resulting Cullen enquiry recommended changes in the ownership of firearms and proposed a system for accrediting organisations attended by the young. Similarly, the Bichard Report made recommendations focusing on the police, social services, and education establishments to protect children and the vulnerable nationally.

The Government responded with new legislation that allows more organisations to carry out criminal record checks on prospective members of staff. The provision of criminal records is a critical factor when recruiting staff for positions of trust, such as those involving the care of the young or in sensitive environments such as financial services and airports.

## Business opportunity

Historically, in Scotland, an individual's criminal record, held by the police, was only available to select organisations. No statutory basis existed for disclosing such information and this limitation thus excluded many organisations that worked with children and vulnerable people. To manage criminal record check applications,

Scottish Ministers needed a system that could securely deliver appropriate certificates as required by the 1997 Police Act. In response, Disclosure Scotland was established in 2002 as part of the Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO), which is a police shared service and an Executive Agency of the Scottish Executive.

Following a competitive public private partnership negotiation process, BT was chosen to design, develop, and support the Disclosure Scotland system under a 12-year agreement. Brian Gorman, Head of Disclosure Scotland says: “BT's key strength lies in its ability to integrate products. Disclosure Scotland has to integrate with many systems – we needed a partner who had the knowledge and background to achieve this.”

Disclosure Scotland carries out criminal record checks for employment and other purposes under Part 5 of the Police Act 1997. It issues certificates on behalf of Scottish Ministers that contain details of convictions and related information (or indicates that no such information is held).

# Case study

## Disclosure Scotland

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### BT solution

The Disclosure Scotland system consists of bespoke and off-the-shelf software components, integrated with UK-wide criminal record systems. Systems development began in February 2002 and the first stage – a registration service – was launched in April the same year. This was closely followed by the Standard and Enhanced service in May and the Basic Disclosure service in July 2002. The online Basic Disclosure service was launched in January 2005.

BT and the SCRO manage the service jointly. BT personnel based in the Disclosure Scotland offices have responsibility for business services and the end-to-end case processing capability. BT also provides helpdesk support services. BT staff are not responsible for searching the criminal history systems, nor for determining which criminal record information is included on the disclosure certificates. Other BT responsibilities include:

- Development and support of Disclosure Scotland IT systems
- Call centre functionality
- Issuing and receipt of applications
- Verification and authentication of applicants

### Offices worldwide

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- Processing of fee payments
- Printing and issuing of disclosure certificates

The Disclosure Scotland system consists of several key elements that together help ensure a reliable and efficient service. These include:

- Authentication – carried out using electoral roll information and details from driving licences, passports and utility bills
- Document image processing – encompassing document scanning and data capture technology, enabling automatic capture of data from paper applications
- Bespoke online portal – enabling members of the public to apply for Basic Disclosure online
- Case processing – including access to several external systems, such as the Criminal History System and the Police National Computer
- Workflow – a workflow engine routes cases through a series of queues (or stages) to control end-to-end processing
- Payments services – provided by BACStel, BT Buynet Merchant Services and TeleSmart Direct Debit
- Telephony services – dealing with over 20,000 calls per month, including general queries via the customer contact centre

There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement with BT regularly reviewing the Disclosure Scotland IT infrastructure and systems. Brian Gorman says: “We’re a partnership, working together to achieve a successful outcome. Because BT understands the business we’re in, they can contribute to its success.”

### Results

Disclosure Scotland provides three levels of disclosure to individuals and organisations.

**Basic Disclosures** contains details of convictions that are ‘unspent’ under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 or states that there are no such convictions.

**Standard Disclosures** contains details of all convictions on record, whether ‘spent’ or ‘unspent’. Even minor convictions, regardless of when they occurred, are included.

**Enhanced Disclosures** include all of the details contained in a Standard Disclosure, and may also contain non-conviction information held locally by the police, where this is considered relevant as well as checks against barred lists for individuals disqualified from working with children and/or vulnerable adults.

The system is available 24\*7 and is robust enough to handle a high demand for disclosure certificates. It also facilitates communication between Disclosure Scotland and the SCRO and other organisations. Since its launch Disclosure Scotland has enabled a far wider range of organisations to access criminal history information, particularly those who work with children and vulnerable adults.

The number of criminal record checks carried out in Scotland between 2001 and 2005 increased by over 500 per cent. To date, over two million checks have been made through Disclosure Scotland with more than 600,000 disclosures carried out annually. Applications are normally processed well within the 14-day service level agreement, with response times often being as short as three days. Nearly 3,000 organisations are registered to apply for Standard and Enhanced Disclosure including Manpower, the Department of Transport, Scottish Power, and BT.

Brian Gorman concludes: “The partnership with BT has been successful over the last four years. They showed us their ability to manage and change with legislation that affects the service we supply. I have every confidence in BT to do that in the future and am looking forward to a continued partnership with them.”

### Main BT products and services

- BT consultancy, systems integration, and operational management of the Disclosure Scotland system in a 12-year public private partnership in conjunction with the Scottish Executive.

