



Coronavirus Outbreak

AccessNI Contingency Plan

Reviews

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| 3 rd Iteration | : | 19 March 2020 |
| Drafted by | : | General Manager (ANI) |
| Reviewed by | : | DPs (ANI) |
| Distributed to | : | D/Director ISD Chief Technology Officer AccessNI staff |

1. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to set out how AccessNI plans to deal with an outbreak of the coronavirus which could impact on the service provided.

2. Background

The Northern Ireland Executive has plans in place to deal with the spread of the coronavirus. This plan is based on that wider plan but deals with the specific impact that might arise in respect of AccessNI. It also forms part of the Business Continuity Plan for Information Services Division, DoJ.

This plan is subject to amendment particularly if other Departments make changes in relation to statutory and other requirements to obtain AccessNI checks in relation to regulated activity or other types of work. Specifically, if Departments agree, as a response to the spread of coronavirus, that barred list checks only are sufficient to allow applicants to begin work in certain sectors on an interim basis pending the submission and completion of a full AccessNI check¹.

AccessNI will trigger elements of this contingency plan either as the Government moves to the 'delay' phase of central co-ordination or should AccessNI be directly affected by the virus – e.g., a member of staff contracts it. AccessNI will notify RBs (by email) as aspects so this plan are activated.

3. Current Position

AccessNI undertakes a range of actions in order to provide the current level of service. These include;

- Processing of applications and issue of certificates
- Compliance visits to organisations
- Registered Body training
- Finance function; and
- Business transformation.

¹ AccessNI is currently seeking legal advice in relation to its ability to issue barred list only checks. The Department of Health may write to the Minister of Justice seeking her agreement to emergency measures being introduced.

4. Processing of applications

The most obvious impact will be in relation to the processing of applications and issue of certificates. At present AccessNI has 10.2 (AA and/or agency) FTE staff engaged in processing applications. At full capacity, they can process approximately 3,200 applications per week, split as 600 basic, 100 standard and 2,500 enhanced. Due to the nature of the work, the training required and the appropriate level of checking of work that would have to be introduced, it is not envisaged that staff could be re-deployed from other parts of Information Services Division or the Department to process applications.

If necessary, AccessNI have an additional 4.6 FTE staff who would not normally process applications but could be called on in an emergency situation to do so.

If AccessNI capacity is reduced by the virus, then inevitably, applications will take a longer time to process. To cope with this and ensure essential services continue to run, a priority plan will be put into place. Applications will be processed in the following order:-

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| Priority 1 | Applications for anyone who is directly involved in dealing with the coronavirus, including urgent barred list checks if requested by other Departments and subject to Ministerial agreement |
| Priority 2 | Applications from Business Service Organisation and the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts, |
| Priority 3 | Applications from the 6 sectors where there is currently a (DoH) statutory requirement for enhanced disclosure checks to be undertaken before work can commence, residential homes, nursing homes, nursing agencies, domiciliary care, children's homes and day care in Northern Ireland |
| Priority 4 | Applications for paid employment, including basic and standard checks; |
| Priority 5 | Applications for volunteering positions (not healthcare related) |

AccessNI has capacity for processing of applications to be taken forward by staff in their homes through the use of 3 laptops, 3 iPads and 1 tablet. A

further 7 laptops have been ordered. These can be used on an overtime basis to maintain capacity for a short period. These devices can carry out most but not the full range of processing checks.

AccessNI will work with PSNI to ensure this plan can be delivered in respect of enhanced criminal record checks. AccessNI recognise that other 3rd party partner organisations may be affected by a pandemic, and this could adversely impact on their ability to meet service standards.

AccessNI will inform Registered and Responsible bodies of this plan and when appropriate, post information on nidirect for those applicants applying directly for basic checks to inform them of likely delays.

5. Self-Isolation

If any AccessNI staff are required to self-isolate – for example a member of staff contracts the virus and is required to remain at home, processing can continue through the use of the mobile devices identified above, but at a reduced level – approximately 2,500 checks per week. A small number of checks will not be able to be fully completed (ie, where direct access to the Police National Computer database is required) and would have to wait until access was regained to offices.

6. Compliance visits

Compliance visits to Registered Bodies by AccessNI staff will be reviewed in the light of advice from Government. AccessNI may revert to telephone audits in these circumstances.

7. Registered Body training

Registered Body training events will be reviewed and may be cancelled in light of advice from Government.

8. ID Checking

Given the need to reduce non-essential social contact, AccessNI will review the requirements with regard to checking the identity of applicant. This review will look at reducing the face-to-face aspects of this role, along with the need for

Signatories to obtain original ID documentation – the focus will be on use of video link and web based technologies.

9. Finance and Business Transformation

Both functions would continue as far as possible, even with reduced staff numbers, but in the event of the office having to be closed, the finance function is likely to come to a halt and limited functions could be taken forward under Business Transformation.