



ACCESSNI PERFORMANCE

1 APRIL 2015 - 31 MARCH 2016

Glossary:

Basic Check	Unspent criminal record information. Cost is £26.
Standard Check	Spent and Unspent criminal record information. The “position applied for” must be exempt from Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation, but not involve working with children and vulnerable adults. Cost is £26.
Enhanced Check	As per Standard disclosures, plus relevant police “non-conviction” information and where eligible, check of lists of those barred from working with vulnerable groups. Cost is £33 (but free to volunteers).

Section 1 - Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out AccessNI's performance in the 12 month period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and where appropriate to compare that with previous years. The style of this document is to present the information through a series of tables and diagrams with text kept to a minimum.

2. At the beginning of 2015/16, a new IT system giving applicants the ability to make applications on-line and for registered bodies to countersign these was introduced. In addition, PSNI made significant and sustained improvements in the backlog of enhanced check cases outstanding with them. Together these changes have had a significant impact in improving AccessNI's overall performance during the year.

3. 2015/16 saw an increase (2.7%) in the number of applications received compared to 2014/15. There was a large increase in applications for basic checks (34%) and also for standard checks (85%). The former is due, we believe, to the fact that these checks can be made simply and quickly on-line, while the latter is part of the 3 year cyclical nature of applications submitted by the Security Industry Authority.

4. There was a reduction of almost 5% in applications for enhanced checks. The key factor here seems to be that volunteer checks reduced from 29.1 % (approximately 30,500) in 2014/15 to 24.6% (approximately 24,100) in 2015/16.

5. AccessNI has met the service standards for all types of checks. In respect of the enhanced checks one of the key contributions to this is the improved position with PSNI. PSNI reduced the backlog of work-in-progress cases from 3,035 in June 2015 to 238 by the end of March 2016. In the same period the total number of cases outstanding with PSNI for 60 days or more reduced from 806 to 2.

6. AccessNI certificates provided a significant level of criminal record and other information on applicants thus contributing to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults across Northern Ireland. Applications from 4 persons not permitted to work with children and or vulnerable adults were detected.

7. AccessNI reviewed 8,563 standard and enhanced certificates before issue to applicants that contained criminal record information. In 1,982 cases, AccessNI removed old and minor convictions and non-court disposals from these certificates in line with the legislation. In addition, from 1 March 2016 a scheme to enable an independent review of qualifying certificates was introduced on foot of provisions in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. In the first month of operation, the Independent Reviewer removed information from 30 certificates after referral.

8. A judicial review was launched during 2015 by an applicant in relation to the AccessNI policy of always disclosing information on an individual's criminal record, where there are two or more convictions. The applicant was successful in their challenge and the matter currently rests with the Court of Appeal.

9. AccessNI's operational costs in terms of staff and non-staff expenditure reduced by 10.8% during 2015/16, with the introduction of the new on-line system. Receipts also increased by over 7% due to the increased price of an enhanced check and the increased demand for basic and standard checks.

10. A further review of the organisations registered with AccessNI has resulted in the number of registered bodies reducing from 645 to 591. This continues our drive to have a more manageable and skilled set of employers and voluntary organisations making such applications. A review of responsible bodies (employers and organisations that can apply for basic checks) reduced their number from 92 to 66.

11. Looking to 2016/17, the key challenges will be;

- revising the targets for the issue of all types of checks as AccessNI's performance has improved;
- delivering the Update Service. The Update Service will enable individuals to apply for a certificate where the information can be updated at a time in the future. This resolves a key issue in that at present a certificate cannot be updated. Anyone with a certificate who is seeking new employment where an AccessNI check is required is normally required to obtain a fresh certificate, even where their current certificate is relatively recent ;

- reviewing the current filtering of old and minor convictions scheme;
- further exploiting the benefits of the new IT system;
- understanding the impact of the current judicial review case should this be lost; and
- reviewing AccessNI's cost recovery model.

Section 2 - Applications Received

Disclosure type	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015- March 2016	% change 14/15 to 15/16
Basic (B)	18,792	17,405	23,313	34%
Standard (S)	4,371	3,127	5,781	85%
Enhanced (E)	101,419	105,118	99,993	-5%
Total	124,582	125,650	129,027	2.7%

Figure 1 - Flow of Applications during each year

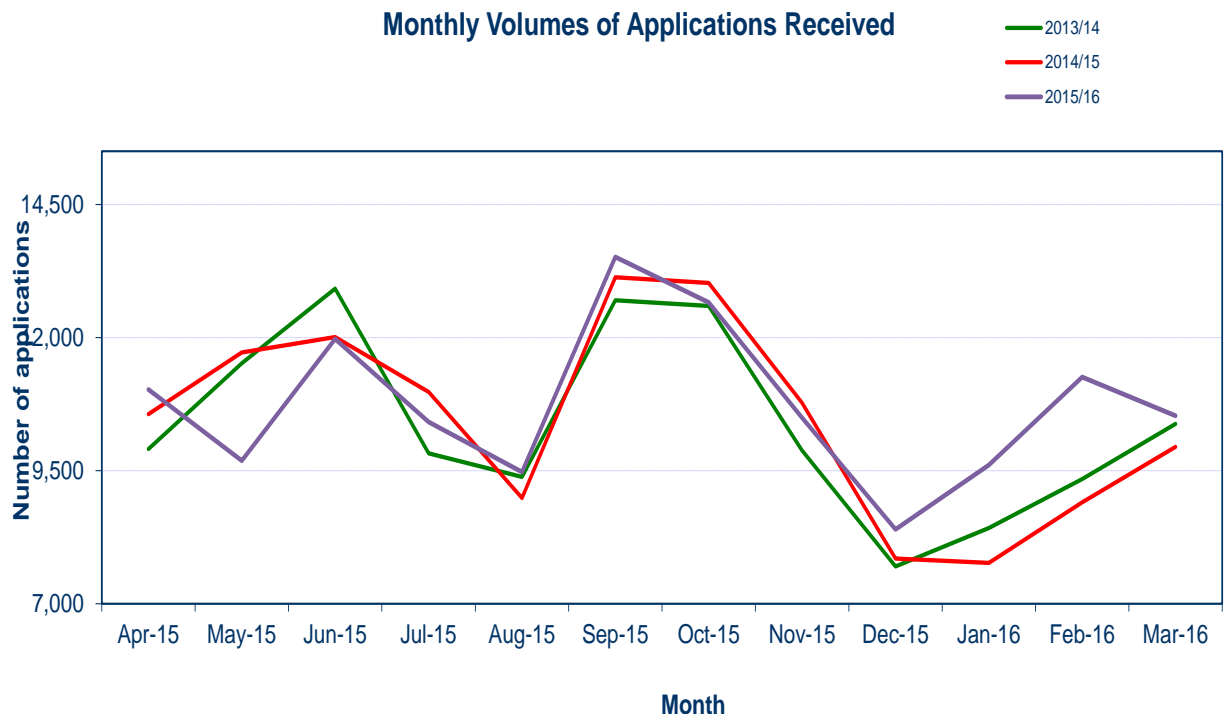
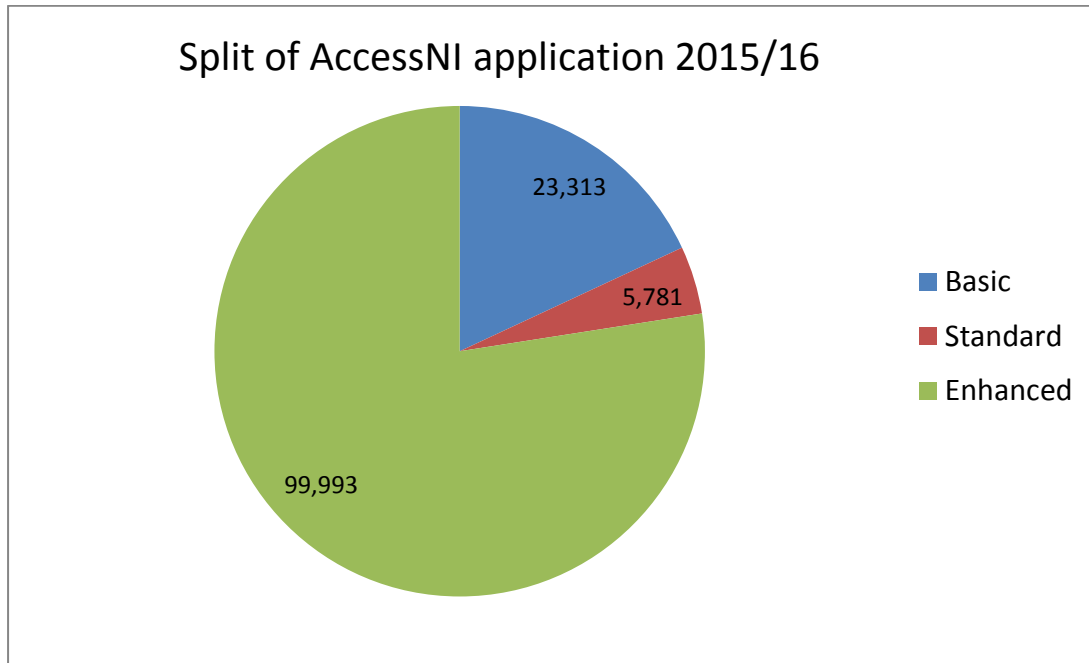


Figure 2

Split of applications by various types



On-line applications

Prior to the introduction of the new IT system in April 2015, applications for AccessNI checks had to be made on a paper form. The new system enabled receipt of applications on-line. The following table shows the percentage of applications made by paper and on-line during 2015/16.

	2015/16
Paper applications	16.9%
On-line applications	83.1%

Commentary

Although applications increased overall, the number of the more complex enhanced checks fell by almost 5%. While this is the first time that the annual total of enhanced applications is less than 100,000, the requirement for such checks seems stable.

AccessNI has a target to receive 90% of applications on-line by March 2017. Since November 2015, over 90% of applications have been made this way each month.

The increased number of applications for basic checks appears to be driven by applications made by individuals. The ease of use of the on-line system appears to be a factor here.

The volume of “free” disclosures (for volunteers) is 24.6% of all Enhanced checks provided. This is around 3-4% greater than in other parts of the UK, but down on last year’s figure of 29.1%;

AccessNI’s top 25 customers requested 45,293 (35% of all applications).

Top 5 customers in 2015/16 (11.8% of applications) were;

Security Industry Authority	5,279
Ulster GAA	2,578
North Eastern Education and Library Board	2,512
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	2,457
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	2,380

Section 3 - Customer Service Standards

AccessNI service standards are;

- To issue 95% of Basic and Standard checks within 14 days of receipt;
- To issue 70% of Enhanced checks within 14 days of receipt;
- To issue 90% of Enhanced checks within 28 days of receipt

Achieved

Type	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 - March 2016
Basic Check	91%	100%	99%
Standard Check	99%	99%	99%
Enhanced Check	83%	14 days 71% 28 days 91%	14 days 87% 28 days 94%

Average Issue Time (calendar days)

Type	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 - March 2016
Basic Check	9	5	2
Standard Check	8	4	1
Enhanced Check	19	17	6

Commentary

The published service standards were met in respect of all types of checks with significant improvements in:

- The percentage of enhanced checks issued within the target times;
- The average delivery times across all types of checks; and
- Consistency of improvement of service across the complete year.

In relation to the enhanced checks, a significant factor in speeding up the service was the PSNI's improvement in terms of their service to AccessNI.

During 2016/17, AccessNI will review the targets for the issue of all types of checks in line with the improved performance achieved during 2015/16.

Section 4 - Information disclosed on certificates

The table below sets out the total number of checks printed and the number of potential criminal record matches found.

(Percentages in red and brackets are for 2014/15)

Type	Checks printed	PNC	PLX	UK lists	PSNI
Basic	21,555	3,402 15.8% [15.1%]	N/a	N/a	N/a
Standard	5,326	1,345 25.3% [23%]	N/a	N/a	N/a
Enhanced	97,947	8,256 8.4% [6.3]	308 <0.1% [<1%]	4 <0.1% [3]	425 <0.1% [<1%]

Key

PNC – UK criminal records

PLX – Information obtained from GB police forces

UK lists – lists held by Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) of those barred from working with vulnerable groups

PSNI – non conviction information released by PSNI provided on enhanced checks.

Filtering

AccessNI filters old and minor convictions from standard and enhanced certificates in line with the relevant legislation. The following table sets out the impact filtering had on disclosure certificates.

Type	Certs with information reviewed	Certs with information filtered	Certs with convictions filtered	Certs with cautions filtered	Certs with both filtered
Standard	1073	188	99	87	2
Enhanced	7490	1794	693	1088	13
Total	8563	1982	792	1175	15

Criminal record review scheme/Independent Reviewer

On 1 March 2016, the criminal record review scheme commenced. This allows an independent reviewer to examine cases where;

- Prior to issue, all the information on a certificate relates to a time when the individual was under 18 (auto-referral); and
- After the issue of a certificate, where an individual requests a review on the basis that it was disproportionate for that information to have been released (review request).

The table below sets out the position in relation to March 2016.

Type	Referred/Received	Information removed	Information retained
Auto-referral	32	28	4
Review request	2	2	0

Commentary

Almost 1 in 6 applicants for basic checks have criminal record information held against them. However, when records that do not have conviction information are discarded and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978 rules are applied, the actual number of certificates issued with conviction information is likely to be around 2.8%. We therefore estimate that just over 600 basic checks were printed with conviction information on them.

1 in 4 applicants for standard checks have criminal record information held against them. With the application of filtering of old and minor convictions and non-court disposals, we estimate around 19% of certificates are issued with disclosure information or just over 1,100 standard checks;

1 in 12 applicants for enhanced checks have criminal record information held against them. With the application of filtering of old and minor convictions, we estimate around 6.4% of certificates are issued with disclosure information or approximately 6,250 enhanced checks;

4 persons who applied for enhanced checks were found to be on one of the Disclosure and Barring Service's lists of those barred from working with children or vulnerable adults.

Of all certificates found to have information prior to issue, 23% have information filtered from them.

The new criminal record review scheme will reduce further the level of criminal history information disclosed. Information about the nature and details of information not disclosed by the Independent Reviewer will assist the proposed review of the filtering scheme.

Section 5 - Income and Expenditure

AccessNI operates a cost recovery model requiring the income derived from the receipts generated from disclosure applications to offset AccessNI expenditure. The table below sets out the difference between the actual income and expenditure on staff and non-staff costs including notional costs such as depreciation.

Achieved

	April 2013 - March 2014 (£000s)	April 2014- March 2015 (£000s)	April 2015- March 2016 (£000s)	Percentage change for 14/15 against 15/16
Expenditure	£2,881	£3,263	£2,911	-10.8%
Income	£2,765	£2,894	£3,113	+7.6
Out-Turn	-£116	-£369	+£202	

Commentary

The improved financial position is due to;

- The increase in income chiefly through additional basic and standard disclosures being sought and a reduction in volunteer applications for enhanced checks; and
- Reduced costs due to the quicker than anticipated reduction in staff numbers.

- Reduced costs through use of psn network, rather than dedicated communication lines and lower IT running costs with new supplier.

AccessNI plans to review its cost recovery model during 2016/17.

Section 6 - Telephone Calls

In common with many other Government service providers, AccessNI uses NiDirect to field initial telephone calls. Up to July 2015, AccessNI had its own dedicated Helpline team, but transferred call handling to NiDirect after that date. NiDirect only pass calls to AccessNI where they are unable to answer them from the scripts provided by AccessNI. The following table sets out how calls were dealt with between July 2015 and March 2016.

Received	Dealt with by NiDirect	Transferred to AccessNI	% transferred
15,584	6,084	9,500	61%

For 2016/17, AccessNI have set a target to have no more than 50% of calls transferred to AccessNI.

Section 7 - Correspondence Handling

AccessNI has a published Service Standard to respond to 100% of correspondence within 2 weeks. Against this, the following was achieved:-

	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 – March 2016
Correspondence	100%	99%	100%

Commentary

During 2015/16 AccessNI received 5,155 items of correspondence (4,978 e-mails to the AccessNI mailbox and 31 letters) – the average response time was 2 days.

Correspondence increased by 63% on 2014/15. The reason for this increase is linked to PSNI delays in returning checks and issues raised by Registered Bodies in relation to the new IT system.

Section 8 - Disputes

	Total Upheld April 2014 – March 2015	Substantive	Cosmetic
Disputes	212	32	180
% of applications Processed	0.163%	0.025%	0.138%

	Total Upheld April 2015 – March 2016	Substantive	Cosmetic
Disputes	45	13	32
% of applications Processed	0.0348%	0.01%	0.0248%

Commentary

A substantive dispute is where the applicant questions the conviction or other information provided on the certificate. The figure of 0.010% for substantive disputes is equivalent to 1 in every 10,049 certificates issued.

A cosmetic dispute is where there is incorrect personal information about the applicant on the certificate, e.g., an address line is incorrectly recorded. The figure of 0.0248% is equivalent to 1 in every 3,110 certificates issued.

The reason for the improved results in relation to disputes is due to the majority of applications being received on-line. This provides more accurate and legible information to AccessNI. In turn, an increased number of certificates are printed with accurate personal and criminal record information.