

Newsletter

Issue 18: Summer 2015

AccessNI, PO Box 1085, Belfast BT5 9BD
☎: 0300 200 7888 | www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni

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Welcome to the summer 2015 edition of the AccessNI Newsletter. As I'm sure you can imagine, it has been an extremely busy few months in AccessNI. Not only have we been dealing with the normal flow of disclosure checks during a high demand period, but we have also implemented the IT change that delivers on-line applications, and a range of associate benefits.

We would regard the launch of the new IT solution as a successful venture, delivered on time, within budget and working effectively. I know that many of you are already using the on-line application (82% of Enhanced checks used the on-line facility in May) and you have been pleased with the ease and speed of the process. I am grateful to you for the many comments of support received in AccessNI. I appreciate that some of you may have experienced 'teething' problems with the new system but I know that our suppliers have (and continue) to work to find solutions to issues that arise.

One of the notable improvements that is evident with the on-line applications is the speedier turnaround of checks. It is our intention to maintain this level service. Of course, checks that go to third parties can take longer and I would encourage you to use your case tracking and the latest information on our website to better inform your understanding of the latest position

Things are continuing to change in the service we provide and more details about these changes are included in this Newsletter. I would encourage you to take a few minutes to read through the Newsletter so that you are aware of what's going on and can prepare for these changes.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

Circulars

AccessNI Circulars are available at the following link:-

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/accessni/about-ani/-accessni-circulars.htm>

Circulars issued since the last Newsletter was published:-

5/2014	Fee Increase from 1 December 2014
6/2014	Modernisation – Changes from 1 April 2015
1/2015	Justice Bill 2014 – Update
2/2015	Changes from 1 April 2015.

RB Training

We are planning to re-launch the RB training events after the summer. It is likely that the events will be (again) held at the Dundonald Ice Bowl and will take place on a monthly basis. Please keep an eye on our website for details of dates, etc.

We are happy to bring the training events to your location if that is what you would prefer. We would request though that if a Registered Body would like a training event in their area, the following conditions are met:-

- ☞ The Registered Body provides the training venue (hospitality optional)
- ☞ A minimum of 15 Signatories attend the event
- ☞ The Registered Body gives consent to the details of the event being advertised on the AccessNI website to allow for expressions of interest from other parties

AccessNI Helpline : 1 July 2015

Many of you will know that part of the Government's modernisation agenda across the NI Civil Service is, where possible, to rationalise the number of Helplines / Call Centres into a single service environment. This is effectively the role of the **NI Direct Call Centre**. The Customer Service Representatives (CSR) in this call centre have been trained to provide advice and assistance on a range of government services, including enquiries about:-

- ☞ Landlord Registration
- ☞ Land and Property Services (Rates)
- ☞ General Register Office
- ☞ Driver and Vehicle taxation
- ☞ NI Courts Service



From 1 July 2015, the NI Direct Call Centre will assume responsibility for calls regarding services provided by AccessNI.

Points to Note:-

- Our telephone number remains unchanged, ie 0300 200 7888.
- The CSRs have been trained in the range of functions provided by AccessNI, and have been provided with scripts on how to respond to the mostly commonly asked questions.
- CSRs have been instructed to refer callers asking about the progress of a case to the on-line case tracking tool.
- **It will not be possible to track the progress of paper applications.**
- Much of the information contained on these scripts is also available on the AccessNI website – we would encourage you to search the website first for answers before calling the Call Centre.
- Calls will only be transferred to AccessNI operational staff if the CSR script permits.

The NI Direct Call Centre brings the additional benefits of being available from 8.30 am until 5.30 pm each working day and, with many more operators available, meaning that you should not have to wait too long on the phones in order to get through.

When you call the AccessNI telephone number after 1 July, listen carefully to the recorded instructions and select the option that best meets you needs.



Single Certificate - Justice Bill 2014

Our circular 1/2015 provided an update on the progress of the Justice Bill through the NI Assembly. The details of the circular can be viewed by clicking the following link:-

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/accessni/accessni-publications/circular---1-2015--justice-bill-2014-update.pdf>

The latest position is that the Bill is on track to receive Royal Assent in the summer 2015. Once the Bill receives Royal Assent we will provide further information about implementation.

One of the key aspect so the Bill (once implemented) is that RBs will no longer receive a copy of the Disclosure Certificate.

RBs that are using the on-line applications process will be able to utilise the case tracking tool not only to track the progress of an application, but also to determine those certificates that have been issued with no information disclosed on them – thereby allowing for quicker decision making on these cases.

RBs who continue to submit paper applications will not have access to the case tracking tool, and the additional information provided therein. This means that in all instances where paper applications have been submitted, RBs will have to request the applicant to present their certificate before an employment decision can be taken. It will not be possible for AccessNI to provide this information by any means other than the case tracking tool.

We would therefore encourage those RBs not yet using the on-line applications process to consider now what steps they would need to take to move in this direction. Staff in AccessNI would be happy to assist any RBs in this regard.



Changes to Enforced Subject Access

Enforced Subject Access changes came into effect on 10 March 2015. The changes mean that employers cannot ask an employee or job applicant to request information on their criminal history from the police – it is an offence to do so. If employers need to check criminal history information they must go through AccessNI.

Further information on these changes is available at the following links:-

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/information-access-rights/data-protection>

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2015/03/law-change-outlaws-back-door-criminal-record-check/>



Consultation : Review Mechanism

The Department of Justice recently launched a public consultation on draft guidance for the operation of a review mechanism of AccessNI's criminal records filtering system. The consultation will run from 18 June to 24 September 2015. We would encourage you to look at the consultation and consider making a response as it deals with a major change in the disclosure of conviction information on AccessNI checks. For further information, please follow the link below.

<http://doj.intranet.nigov.net/index/newsroom/news-press-releases/press-releasesdetail.htm?articleId=95606>

Hints and Tips

One of the things that we would like to do over the next few Newsletters is share any hints or tips that we become aware of in order to help you get the most out of the new IT system.

HINT 1 – Reject Button

This is in relation to the **Reject** button that is displayed as one of the options at the bottom of the screen when you open a new case from your work queue.



This option does exactly what it says. It rejects the application; in so doing, it deletes the application from your work queue and effectively closes the application, meaning that the applicant cannot re-commence the application. If a signatory clicks the **Reject** button, the system will automatically send an email to the applicant to let them know that their application has been rejected – no further explanation is provided.

You might use this button, if, for example, someone had completed an application for a position in your organisation and then has sought to withdraw the application.

AccessNI would caution against the use of this button. If you do need to use it, we would advise that you telephone the applicant to let them know that you are going to reject their application.

In all other circumstances, AccessNI would favour the use of the **Return to applicant** button as this gives you the option to provide an explanation as to why the application has been returned, and allows the applicant to re-submit the application, as appropriate.

HINT 2 – On Account

It is possible (for some organisations processing volunteer checks on-line) that they may only get an option to select 'On-account' for the payment method. This is an error in the new system brought about by issues with data migration from the old system.

Rather than clicking the 'On-account' button, we would ask that you contact AccessNI as a simple adjustment

to the account settings is all that is required. If you click the 'On account' button, the system will generate an invoice to you which will either need to be paid or cancelled and a credit note issued (which is an administrative burden for us all)

HINT 3 - ID Checking

Now that individuals can apply for a Basic check on-line, it is no longer possible for them to attend a police station to have their ID verified (as part of the AccessNI application process). Applicants for on-line Basic checks are now required to forward copies of the approved ID documentation to AccessNI.

AccessNI will accept copies of ID documentation electronically. Over the past few months we have found that these Basic checks are more likely to progress quickly through our process if the copy ID documentation is of high quality. We have found that those copies of ID documents, taken using the camera facility on smart phones, often offer excellent high quality images that meet our purposes.

Registered / Umbrella Bodies may wish to consider this approach as part of their ID checking procedures.

