

Newsletter

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Welcome to the Winter 2017 edition of the AccessNI Newsletter. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read this as it contains useful information and updates about various AccessNI issues.

Most applicants are currently receiving their certificates within a week of making an application. Some applications that have to be passed to PSNI are currently taking a bit longer (around 5 weeks from date of application), but PSNI have recently reduced the backlog and consider a back to normal service (2/3 weeks) will be provided by the end of March.

In this Newsletter you'll find information about our EU project, an update to the monthly Registered Body training sessions provided by AccessNI, information about compliance visits, reminders about the importance of correctly identifying whether and which barred lists should be checked.....

Unfortunately, we don't have any further information at this point about the Update Service (portable certificates), though as soon as we do, we'll let you know.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

Circulars

All AccessNI Circulars are available at the following link:-

<http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/-accessni-circulars.htm>

There have been no new circulars published since the last Newsletter.

Barred list checks

Where an individual is working in **regulated activity**, that individual is eligible for a **barred list check**. The following links provide more information about regulated activity to help you understand whether the post in question is regulated activity;

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/regulated-activity-children.pdf>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/regulated-activity-adults.pdf>

The "barred list" is the list of those people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are not allowed to work with children or vulnerable adults. It is unlawful and a criminal offence for persons on this list to apply for work with these groups. There is a separate list in Scotland, which AccessNI checks too.

Countersignatories completing an application form mark boxes to let AccessNI know which barred lists, if any, should be checked in respect of any applicant. In order to prevent incorrect checks being made it is important that countersignatories;

- Only ask for a barred list check where an applicant is working within the definitions of regulated activity;
- Only ask for a check of the relevant barred list. If the applicant is working with children and not adults, only a check of the children's barred list should be requested, and vice-versa in respect of adults.
- Only check those who work with both groups, for example a domiciliary worker who looks after both children and vulnerable adults, against both barred lists.

AccessNI has recently found a large number of examples where countersignatories have asked for both lists to be checked, where clearly the applicant is working with a single group – for example, asking for a check of the children’s list where the applicant works exclusively in a residential care home with vulnerable adults.

AccessNI will return applications where it is concerned that unnecessary and unlawful checks are being requested. This will lead to delays in processing applications.

If organisations are found to be persistently asking for barred list checks where the position is not eligible, AccessNI will take appropriate action including considering de-registration of organisations.

EU project

Circular 4/2016, advised Registered Bodies of the establishment of a project to determine if applicants from 6 EU countries who are **working with children** in Northern Ireland had relevant information known about them in their home country.

To date some 450 referrals have been made and in 2 cases additional information has been disclosed on the certificate issued. Consideration is currently being given to the disclosure of information in one further case. This information would not have been made available without this project.

One or two issues have arisen as a result of the project;

First, a number of applications have been made for checks of the children’s barred lists, prompting a referral to the appropriate EU country only to subsequently find that the “position applied for” did not involve working with children. In addition to the time and cost involved, it has on at least one occasion, led to information being provided to AccessNI via an EU country that could not be disclosed.

Second, nationals from Spain and Portugal normally have two sets of surnames. Applicants from these countries should be asked to include both on the application form. If they don’t, this is likely to lead to a further enquiry by AccessNI staff and in turn delays in completing the check.

Third, on a few occasions individuals have indicated they are nationals of the EU countries in question, but have provided a name that is more relevant to the UK. Registered bodies should carefully check applications and, if in doubt, query whether the applicant had a previous name when in that country. If enquiries reveal that the applicant left the country in question at aged 10 or under, then an EU check is not required.

AccessNI plans to formally review this project at the end of March 2017 and we will let you know the outcome of this review.

Registered Body training

AccessNI has booked venues to continue its monthly Registered Body training events through to June 2017. These now include one further venue outside Belfast and for the first time an evening event. Please go to the link below for further details of these events and to book a place.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/accessni-training-registered-bodies>

Please note these training events follow a standard format and are **not about new AccessNI developments**. They are designed primarily for new signatories or those new to the AccessNI process or for those who wish to refresh their knowledge of AccessNI. Among the topics covered are;

- The information disclosed on a certificate;
- Eligibility for disclosures;
- The applicant’s on-line process;
- How countersignatories can get the best from case tracking;
- The Code of Practice;
- ID checking;
- Who is a volunteer and qualifies for free checks.

Compliance

By now, many Registered and Responsible Bodies have received an AccessNI compliance visit. The purpose of this is to make sure that organisations registered with AccessNI comply with the statutory based Code of Practice. This is a key part of AccessNI’s work and organisations have found the visits extremely useful, not least the opportunity to talk face to face with a member of AccessNI.

We have nearly visited all 680 organisations registered with us and we are currently considering how to continue with the compliance work once these are finished, through the development of a new compliance strategy.

This strategy is likely to take a more risk-based approach to compliance work and visits. So some organisations might, in the future, be more likely to receive a visit than others, or to receive these more frequently.

Watch out for more information in due course.

Customer survey

Lead signatories will have received an invitation to take part in AccessNI's customer survey. Thank you to all who responded to this, providing valuable feedback on our service and how we can improve on this.

The results of the survey are due to be published by NISRA on **23 March 2017**. You might wish to take a look at the findings at that time. You can find them at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/AccessNI.html>

Pin Notification / ID Validation Forms

Some organisations use a 3rd party to check applicant's ID documents. AccessNI have updated the sample PIN Notification/ID Validation forms on the NI Direct Website. The new version of the forms allow the 3rd party to enter details of the ID Documents used during the check (e.g. Driving Licence / Passport number), the signatory can then cross-check this against the information presented on the e-application. The links to these forms are:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/pin-notification-and-id-validation-form-responsible-bodies>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/pin-notification-and-id-validation-form-signatories>

Organisational Details

All signatories have the facility to update their own contact details on the ANIDS system. Can Lead Signatories please note that if their **organisational address** or **e-mail address** changes, they should contact the AccessNI Finance section at the following email address: accessni-finance@accessni.gov.uk This will allow AccessNI to update the billing details held by Account NI, the financial shared services provider for Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Changes to Lead Signatories

The recent Customer Survey has highlighted an issue whereby a few registered Lead Signatories are no longer employed by that organisation. Before leaving their role, the Lead Signatory has the ability to transfer the role to an existing countersignatory. To do this, use the link:

<https://accessni.nidirect.gov.uk/Customer>

On this homepage select 'Manage Countersignatories'

then choose the option to 'Promote' and select the relevant signatory.

If the organisation has no other signatories, the Lead Signatory should ensure that a suitable person is added to the organisation's account.

If a lead signatory does leave an organisation without appointing a replacement, one of the remaining countersignatories should contact AccessNI for advice.

Finance

All organisations are reminded that AccessNI's payment terms state that invoices should be paid within 30 calendar days.

If any organisations would like to switch from hard copy invoices to electronic copy, the Lead Signatory should advise accessni-finance@accessni.gov.uk with details of the relevant contact email address.

