

AccessNI Newsletter

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Welcome

In 2018/19 AccessNI, processed 145,900 applications - our largest total ever, with almost 8,000 certificates containing disclosure information. Most targets for turnaround times were met though some delay was experienced in delivering enhanced checks. Some of the successes over the past year include;

- 45% of all certificates issued digitally. AccessNI is the only UK disclosure service where all types of check can be issued electronically.
- The price of a standard and basic checks was reduced on 1 April 2019 to £18. In other parts of the UK the same check cost £25.
- 6 applicants were found on barred lists across the UK, with 1 successful prosecution of an applicant.
- The unique to Northern Ireland Independent Reviewer dealt with over 500 automatic reviews and appeals against disclosure.
- Over 270 compliance visits were made.

We look forward to work with all the organisations registered with AccessNI during 2019/20

Tom Clarke

Working in premises / establishments

regulated by RQIA

We refer to the interim guidance provided in the Winter 2018 Issue 26 newsletter and now provide the below update following discussions with the Department of Health:-

The main purpose of Reg 9(1) is to enable RQIA to check senior managers in and owners of, care homes as "suitable people".

In summary:-

- Staff employed to provide health care or personal care within an adult care home are in regulated activity and should seek enhanced with an (adults) barred list check;
- Others employed in an adult care home would be eligible for an enhanced check (no barred list), on the basis this was previously a specified establishment provided they have opportunity for contact with vulnerable adults and can meet the frequency/intensity test;
- Those temporarily working in a care home, such as maintenance staff are only eligible for an enhanced check (no barred list) where they meet the frequency/intensity test for the same home. That's more likely to arise where the person is employed directly by the care home, eg a gardener rather than, for example a lift engineer who is under contract to a number of homes (but each individual case needs to be considered on its merits).

Please ensure all your countersignatories are made aware of the updated guidance.



ID Checking

AccessNI has had to 'reject' quite a few applications recently due to date of birth and current address details being inaccurate. As well as ensuring all the names of the applicant are included on an application form it is equally important to ensure date of birth is correct. Analysis of applications submitted to AccessNI during 2018/19 indicates that almost 200 checks were for applicants aged 80 years or more, 7 for applicants in their 90's and 2 applicants were almost 120 years old. Whilst we entirely accept that individuals in their later years might well require an AccessNI check the proportion seems high and unlikely, and points to errors on the applications. AccessNI would request that Signatories pay particular attention to the Date of Birth when checking the applicant's ID and cross referencing the ID documentation against what has been entered on to the application. Failure to do so could result in an erroneous check being carried out by AccessNI with the potential that the correct criminal history information may not be disclosed. In a worst case scenario, this could result in a safeguarding risk for your organisations.

Where address details are not correct this could lead to the disclosure certificate being issued to the wrong address and may result in a breach of data protection. In addition it is important to ensure the applicant has provided all previous addresses within the last 5 years.

Disclosure Applications for Contractors/Workers in Schools

Due to a number of recent queries in relation to contractors/workers in school premises, AccessNI wish to clarify that a countersignatory should consider the following requirements:-

- Will the work be conducted during the school day whilst children will be present?
- Will the contractor/worker be working in the **same school** on a frequent basis (once a week on a weekly basis or 4 times a month)?

If the countersignatory establishes that the worker meets both criteria the worker is eligible for an enhanced disclosure with a check of the children's barred list. This is because school establishments are designated as 'specified places' within the new definitions for Regulated Activity with children.

On the *Position Applied For* section of the application form countersignatories should record:-

Contractor/Electrician/Engineer working in the same school on a frequent basis.

CSV Export (Case Tracking)

A change has recently been implemented to the CSV export. Previously where a case was returned by AccessNI to a Signatory this was not visible under the 'Status' column on CSV export. In light of change made 'Returned from AccessNI to Signatory' now appears in the 'Status' column.

Applications for Kinship Foster Carers

There have been a number of queries recently in relation to Kinship Foster Carer applications. Where applications are for enhanced criminal record checks for kinship foster carers please ensure the name of the child to be fostered is included in the "position applied for" box on the application form. The reason for this is PSNI are concerned that on a number of occasions they had found information they reasonably believed to be relevant and ought to be disclosed as a result of processing kinship foster applications. Significant time and resource was spent in compiling the information for disclosure only to find late in the process that it related to the child in question and therefore should not be disclosed. Providing this information at the time of application will prevent unnecessary delays with the issue of the disclosure certificate.

AccessNI Disclosure Certificate Applications

Where an organisation holds both Registered and Responsible Body status please ensure applicants are provided with the correct PIN number for the level of disclosure required. PIN numbers pertaining to Responsible Body must only be used for basic disclosure certificate applications and PIN numbers for Registered Body must only be used for standard and enhanced applications. In addition when providing applicants with a link to the disclosure certificate application required please ensure the correct link is provided. AccessNI receives many queries where applicants are experiencing difficulties applying for a disclosure certificate as the PIN number provided is incompatible and/or the incorrect level of disclosure has been applied for.

New Independent Reviewer



On 1 April 2019, the Department of Justice appointed, after a public appointment competition, a new Independent Reviewer of criminal record certificates for AccessNI. Caroline Conway, who replaced the previous Reviewer Simon Pountain, has already got to grips with her new role, processing 40 reviews for AccessNI applicants in the month of April alone. If you want to know more about the work of the Reviewer click on the link below;
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/criminal-records-filtering-review-scheme>

Event Booking

It is now possible for Signatories to book a place on an AccessNI training event online. The web page is available at [Book a place](#).

To book a place you will need to provide the following information

- Your name
- Signatory number
- Registered body / organisation name
- Your email

You will receive an email confirming your attendance, along with a subsequent reminder email closer to the time of the event.

Demand for AccessNI Training events remains high. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend a training event please remember to cancel your attendance – this will ensure that other Signatories will be able to take up your vacated slot. You can do this by simply clicking on the link in the event confirmation email, or you can call our office. Your compliance in this regard would be very much appreciated.

System Enhancements

Signatories may wish to note that the following system enhancements have been implemented in the last quarter:-

- Incompletes : an exercise has been undertaken to tidy-up work queues on the AccessNI on-line solution. This means that cases older than 90 days will be automatically deleted from the system if they have not been submitted to AccessNI.
- Declarations : all Signatory declarations within the AccessNI solution have now been updated to include a statement confirming that the applicant has a right to work in the UK.

Submission of AccessNI Applications during 2019/20

Any organisation registered with AccessNI that is anticipating the submission of a significantly increased number of applications in the financial year 2019/20, should get in touch with AccessNI prior to submitting the applications. An increase in the number of applications could be due to new positions being created in an organisation, a recruitment drive or as a result of the implementation of a 3 or 5 year re-checking policy. If the increase in applications is less than 250, you do not need to notify AccessNI in advance.

Customer Survey

The annual Customer Survey will be issued on Monday 10th June 2019. This is an important exercise as it allows us to gauge your views on how we are performing. The survey is on-line and should only take 12 minutes to complete. I would encourage each of you to take the time to provide this important feedback as it does help inform the direction of any changes we might wish to consider.

AccessNI Fees

From 1 April 2019, the fee for a Basic or Standard check reduced from £26 to £18. At the same time, the fee for Registration increased to £195 and the fee for adding a Signatory increased to £13. No change was made to the fee for Enhanced checks, although AccessNI continues to monitor the out-workings of our financial model.

Paper Applications

Circular 2/2019 was issued on 8 April and advised of our plans to remove the option to apply for an AccessNI check using a paper application form. The timetable to effect this change is as follows:-

Date	Action
1 July 2019	Remove ability to download paper applications from the nidirect website
1 October 2019	Cease to accept paper forms as a valid means of application.

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