

AccessNI Newsletter

Issue 31: Summer 2019

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Welcome to the 'late' summer 2019 edition of our Newsletter. As always we have tried to incorporate articles which we think would be of most interest and practical use to signatories.

AccessNI is now in the middle of our busiest period in the year, receiving in excess of 4,200 applications per week. We are working hard to maintain good turnaround times, but signatories should expect a slight slow down as we work through such high volumes of applications. In other years this peak period extends into early November and we see no reason why 2019 should be any different.

Over the summer we completed a customer survey. I am grateful to those lead signatories who responded to the survey; your feedback is very important in helping us to consider improvements to our service. Whilst a 91% satisfaction rating is encouraging, we recognise that there is still room for improvement and we've already had discussions with the nidirect call centre around how we might improve aspects of the call handling service. We are also in discussions with GB colleagues regarding improvements to ID checking and we have been developing guidance to assist in understanding information disclosed on a certificate (which we hope to publish very soon). Plans are also being developed to re-vamp our RB Training sessions, to hopefully reflect some of the comments we have received.

Please do remember that the survey isn't your only opportunity to provide us with feedback on our service. You can also contact us at any time if you have thoughts or concerns you'd like to share.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

Fraudulent Certificates

AccessNI digital certificates are designed to be used and shared electronically. They incorporate a watermark with the wording *****VALID CERTIFICATE – UNLESS PRINTED***** written diagonally across the certificate. AccessNI has included this watermark as a fraud prevention measure in recognition that a digital certificate is relatively easy to replicate on a word document. It is for this reason it is absolutely essential that Signatories do not accept a paper version of the digital certificate – Signatories should instead ask the applicant to share their digital certificate electronically. AccessNI would ask Umbrella Bodies to share this message with their client organisations to avoid risks that might arise should an applicant attempt to pass-off a paper version of a digital certificate as an original.

Signatories are reminded that digital certificates do not contain any criminality information on them, and this should be evident in that the wording 'Certificate issued (N)' being present in the status of the application on the on-line Case Tracking tool. If the status in Case Tracking reads simply 'Certificate issued' with the suffix (N) not present, information has been disclosed on the certificate and the certificate will not then be available electronically.

Signatories should also note that paper certificates will always be printed on AccessNI disclosure paper – this paper incorporates the pink/grey colouration along with other design security features, including the watermark wording **DOCUCHECK**, visible in a chain effect when held up to light.

New Identity Document

AccessNI has added a new document to the list of 'acceptable documents' for AccessNI applications identity checking as provided at the following link [Here](#).

The Public Service Card (Ireland), with photograph, has now been added to this list of acceptable documents and the relevant AccessNI documentation has been updated accordingly.

A sample of the Public Service Card (Ireland) has been provided below:-



ACCESSNI PIN NOTIFICATION AND ID VALIDATION FORM - UPDATE

The guidance on the AccessNI PIN Notification and ID Validation Form have been updated to indicate that if you have already created a NIDirect account you can use this rather than creating a new one. The new updated PIN Notification and ID Validation Form can be found [Here](#) for Registered Bodies, and [Here](#) for a Responsible Bodies.

Forenames/Surnames on Applications

Signatories should conduct accurate checking of ID documentation to ensure that full and correct information is transcribed on to the e-application. This is an extremely important aspect of the role as short comings in this regard might lead to AccessNI missing key criminal history information that would otherwise have been included in the Disclosure Certificate had the applicant's full name history been provided.

Signatories are reminded of the need therefore to be thorough in their approach not only in checking the ID of the applicant but also in ensuring that all the details have been accurately included in the e-application.

Compliance

In winter 2019 Newsletter an article was included regarding a number of Registered & Responsible Bodies who were using their countersignatory NIDA login details to complete online applications on behalf of their clients. Unfortunately this is still happening. **PLEASE NOTE a signatory account should NEVER be used to complete an e-application.** Using a signatory's account has the potential to corrupt a RB's account and could lead to the loss of all previous information held on the RB account. If a RB continues with this practice, any COST to rectify a corrupt account may have to be met by the RB; this could include the re-registering of your organisation or re-registering of signatories. This can have serious consequences to your organisation as well as time consuming for AccessNI.



Applicant that has no identity documents

On occasions, it can arise where an applicant is seeking an AccessNI check, but they have no means of verifying their identity. In order to reduce the risk of inaccurate criminal history checks, and in such circumstances, it could be necessary for the applicant's fingerprints to be provided so that PSNI can undertake additional searches of relevant criminal history databases. Having discussed the matter with the PSNI these are the steps that may need to be undertaken where fingerprints are required:-

- The disclosure application is completed and forwarded to AccessNI in the normal way.
- Within 1 day of the application being submitted to AccessNI, the Signatory should contact AccessNI (by e-mail to ani@accessni.gov.uk), including the relevant disclosure application reference number, advising that the applicant has no identity documents. The subject header for this e-mail should be marked as **Urgent: Identify Check**
- AccessNI will immediately 'Park' the case and request the Signatory to supply a photograph of the applicant. If the photograph is not supplied to AccessNI within 14 days, this application will be cancelled/deleted.

- Upon receipt of the photograph, (**PSNI are content with a scanned photo, as long as the photo can be seen clearly**), AccessNI will forward case number, applicant's name, address, phone number and photograph to PSNI Protective Disclosure Unit (PDU).
- PDU will contact the applicant and arrange for fingerprints to be taken at a particular police station. This will allow police to undertake a speculative search on the police systems in order to seek clear identity **of the subject and details provided**. If this reveals someone who has previously come to the police's attention then action may be taken by the PSNI. Once PSNI have completed the identification aspects the prints will be destroyed by the PSNI.
- PSNI will inform AccessNI of outcome.
- AccessNI will continue to process case and, depending upon the outcome of the fingerprints search, will decide if the case needs to be further referred to any police force.
- Upon completion of all searches, the disclosure certificate will be issued in normal way.

This process is subject to alteration depending upon the specific circumstances to each individual case.



Access NI Customer Survey

The AccessNI Customer Survey took place from a three week period from 11th to 28th June 2019 — this is the first such survey since spring 2016. The results are available on the NIRSA website [Here](#).

AccessNI would like to thank all lead signatories that took part. The survey was issued electronically to almost 700 organisations registered with AccessNI, generating a 35% response rate.

The survey covered a range of issues relating to our customers experience of using AccessNI and included questions on the online application process, disclosure certificates, contact with AccessNI, AccessNI finance, AccessNI communication, our complaints procedure, AccessNI website, Compliance Audits, RB Training, and finally overall satisfaction.

On the whole, most respondents were satisfied with all of the aspects of the service provided by AccessNI. Overall satisfaction with the service provided remains high, with 91% of our customers satisfied — although this figure is less than the satisfaction rating in the 2016 survey (94%).

The published survey helpfully provides a comparison to the ratings received 3 years ago and allows us to note where there has been a material change, and to consider what action is appropriate to address noted shortcomings. Customer views are broadly similar across the different organisation types, Responsible Bodies, Registered Bodies and Umbrella Bodies.

AccessNI will reflect on individual comments left by our customers on the survey returns and, with the assistance of the Stakeholder Forum, consider any issues that could be take forward.

As is our normal practice, AccessNI will use email shots, Newsletters and Circulars to advise signatories of any changes that we have decided to progress.



Kinship Foster Carer Applications

You may recall AccessNI wrote to Lead Signatories at the various Trusts on 15 May 2018 requesting the name of the child to be fostered be inserted in the “position applied for box” on the application form. Unfortunately, a number of applications are still being received without the name of the child to be fostered which has led to applications being returned to AccessNI by PSNI - a subsequent unwanted delays. In future can you please ensure the description “Kinship foster carer (insert name of child)” is set out in the position applied for box; if this is not correctly completed, the applications will be returned to the RB unprocessed.

List of specified offences

Specified offences are serious crimes that will always appear on an AccessNI check no matter when the crime occurred or the offender’s age when convicted. AccessNI will not filter an offence if it appears on the list of specified offences. The published list is available on the AccessNI pages of the NIDirect website [Here](#).

For further assistance, to improve your understanding of the meaning of an offence, AccessNI suggests using Google search..

New Training Dates

New dates have been released for signatory training. The web page to book is available [Here](#)

Training dates are as follows:-

10 October 2019 @10am	Dundonald Ice Bowl
14 November 2019 10.30am	Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen
12 December 2019 @10am	Dundonald Ice Bowl
9 January 2020 @2pm	Dundonald Ice Bowl
13 February 2020 @10am	Downpatrick—Russell Gaelic Union RGU 100 Old Course Road
12 March 2020 @10am	Dundonald Ice Bowl

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.

Making a Complaint to AccessNI

A new policy has been developed to ensure consistency of approach in AccessNI in handling of complaints.

If you are not happy with the service you have received from AccessNI and you wish to make a complaint, we will attempt to address your complaint in a professional and timely manner. There are 2 types of AccessNI complaints:-

- General complaint – maladministration, delays in receiving information or a certificate, incorrect information or guidance issued by the Department or the attitude, behaviour and/or conduct of staff.
- A dispute – this is where the accuracy of some or all of the information disclosed on the AccessNI check is challenged.

Please see details of the policy document provided at the following link [Here](#).

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.

PLEASE NOTE AS FROM 1st OCTOBER 2019 ACCESSNI ceased to accept paper forms as a valid means of application.

Contacting AccessNI

A high percentage of calls to AccessNI are dealt with by NIDirect however should you need to speak to someone within AccessNI lines are open Monday to Friday from 08:30 – 10:00, 10:15 – 12:00, 13:30 -14:45 and 15:00 -16:00. Outside these times AccessNI staff will be making enquiries and dealing with call backs in respect of previous calls received. If these times do not suit you can email details of your enquiry to ani@accessni.gov.uk and a response will be received.

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