

# AccessNI Newsletter

## Issue 34: Summer 2020

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### Welcome

The current pandemic has, as with many other people and organisations, had a significant impact on the work of AccessNI. The volume of applications fell considerably especially in Spring and while the number of applications have increased over the busier Summer/ Autumn months, the number of applications is currently around 80% of a "normal year".

I am however pleased to say that AccessNI staff worked very hard to ensure this important public service was maintained throughout the crisis without significant delays to the issue of certificates and indeed special arrangements were put in place so that staff in the health and care sectors could begin to start work very quickly without compromising safeguarding.

Looking forward, AccessNI will be undertaking a considerable amount of work on its IT system over the next few months. This could mean at times there may be short periods of disruption to the service. We will endeavor to keep these as short as possible and to give you as much notice as possible if the service will be unavailable.

**Tom Clarke**  
General Manager

### Applicant Survey

Using the Government's Citizen Space service, AccessNI has now commenced a monthly programme to seek feedback from individual applicants in terms of how they found the AccessNI process. The aim is to better understand perceptions from an applicant point of view which might allow us to adjust / improve aspects of our service. We are also using this survey to ascertain to what extent aspects of the Code of Practice are being correctly applied during the application process. The current survey questions are laid out below:-

1. Did your employer / regulator / voluntary group explain to you why the AccessNI check was required?
2. Before completing the AccessNI application form did your employer / regulator / voluntary group ask if there was any reason why you could not work with vulnerable groups?
3. Were you made aware of the AccessNI Code of Practice before you completed the AccessNI application?
4. Did someone check your identity documents as part of the application process?
5. Did you receive your Disclosure Certificate in good time?
6. Do you believe the information on the Disclosure Certificate may have prevented you from obtaining the position?
7. Overall, how would you rate the level of service provided by AccessNI?

The first survey was issued at the end of August to 200 individuals whose Enhanced disclosure has been recently completed. We will endeavour to publish the findings from these surveys on a regular basis in future Newsletters.



### Home-Based Positions AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure E-applications forms

On the AccessNI enhanced disclosure e-application form, the Registered Body is asked the question:-

#### **Will the work be carried out at the home of the applicant? Yes or No**

Care should be taken when responding to this question. Where the role being applied for will always be carried out at the home address of the applicant (this is the individual applying for the disclosure certificate) the Registered Body should 'X' the 'Yes' box. A prime example of a home-based position is 'Kinship Foster Carer' where a child or young person will be cared for in the applicant's own home.

Where the role being applied for, will be carried out at a client's home address – such as 'Domiciliary Care Workers' this is not a home-based position and at the question 'Will the work be carried out at the home of the applicant?' the Registered Body should 'X' the 'No' box.

AccessNI applications for home-based position are always referred to PSNI to allow them to check their records for any relevant information in relation to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who may also be living at, or regularly visiting, the applicant's address. This may make the processing time for these applications slightly longer.

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic many roles are temporarily being undertaken from the applicant's home address but this does not mean they are home-based positions. Where the role would usually be conducted from a work address this is not a home-based position and the question "Will the work be carried out at the home of the applicant?" Should be answered 'No'.

### On-line teaching

Working practices arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic have been far reaching, and many changes have had to be introduced in double quick time in order to ensure continuity of many services. One such change is the use of on-line streaming to deliver teaching, training, instruction, etc to children. Please note that this type of on-line activity with children is regarded as Regulated Activity if it is carried out frequently (once per week or 4+ times in a 30 day period) and, as such, an Enhanced disclosure with a check of the children's barred list should be sought.

### ID Checking during COVID-19

#### **UK Passports**

AccessNI understands that, as a result of Covid-19 and lockdown, there are currently some delays in processing applications and renewals for UK passports. In response to this, AccessNI will temporarily allow expired **UK passports**, that are within 6 months of the expiry date, to continue to be acceptable for AccessNI identity checking purposes. The applicant must be in possession of the expired passport to use it as an identity document.

#### **NI Driving Licences**

Driving licences expiring between 1 February and 31 August 2020 have been extended for an additional seven months from the expiry date. If your driving licence expires between this period, it will automatically be valid for a further eleven months under an EU Regulation which came into force on 4 June 2020.

For some drivers this will remove the requirement to have a medical assessment conducted at this difficult time.

Note the extension does not apply to provisional driving licences that expire in this period. A provisional driving licence can be renewed online.

#### **ROI Driving Licences**

All driving licences expiring between 1 March and 31 August 2020 have been automatically extended by 7 months in total and all learner permits expiring between 1 July and 31 October 2020 (including those already extended) have been automatically extended for a further 4 month period and can continue to be accepted for AccessNI identity checking purposes.

### Barred list checks

AccessNI introduced the Barred List Check (BLC) scheme in March 2020 to allow individuals seeking to work in Regulated Activity in Covid-19 related positions to quickly commence work pending a full Enhanced disclosure. In the 4-5 months that followed, AccessNI processed more than 4,900 applications through this scheme. This scheme was stopped on 9 September for the following reasons:-

1. There is very little uptake of the current scheme; and
2. The current quick turn-around of Enhanced applications negates the continuing need of the scheme.

We continue to monitor the position and, if necessary, will re-commence the scheme at very short notice should the need arise.

## Activating and Managing NIDA accounts

Recently AccessNI have been receiving a lot of calls and e-mails from customers not being able to activate their accounts correctly who, on the advice of their organisation, have been advised to contact AccessNI.

It is part of the role of Registered and Responsible Bodies to ensure that their customers understand the account creation process. Below we have provided some useful information and screenshots demonstrating the actions customers need to take; please pass these details onto to anyone experiencing issues.

1. Have you activated your account correctly? There are two stages. Firstly where you select the link on the email and secondly where you need to log into your account which has just been created.

Please follow the steps below:

2. Using this link <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/accessni-criminal-record-checks/apply-accessni-check> please select 'Log into an nidirect account'

### AccessNI: Criminal record checks

#### Apply for an AccessNI check

- Apply online for a basic check
- Apply online for a basic check through a responsible body
- Apply online for a standard check through a registered body
- Apply online for an enhanced check through a registered body
- Costs and turnaround times
- **Log in to an nidirect account**

3. Then select the green button 'Log into an nidirect account' and following the steps below.

### Log in to an nidirect account

Log in to your nidirect account to apply for a criminal record check or to track AccessNI applications.

#### Before you start

To find out how personal information you send to AccessNI will be handled when using this service, go to:

- [AccessNI privacy notice](#)

**Log in to an nidirect account** >

4. At this stage please input your e-mail address and password used to create the NIDirect account and following the steps below.

5. Capture contact details page will show – input your details and select save changes at the bottom

6. Link to a pre-existing account – Did you have an AccessNI account before now? **NO** – please select 'No'

7. Confirm link to a pre-existing account – select **Yes**

8. This will activate your account correctly. Now log out.

You are now ready to start the application by selecting the link relating to the level of disclosure you have been asked to apply for.

## Training

Over the last few months due to the Covid 19 pandemic it was necessary to cancel all arranged AccessNI Registered Body Training.

AccessNI are pleased to announce training will begin again online via WebEx on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020. All places for the first set of training dates were booked up within 30 minutes of being released. AccessNI plan to provide further dates in the near future and will issue an e-mail to all signatories with a link to book a place.

New Training will consist of the following:

- Introduction to AccessNI – duration approx. 40 mins
- Application Process – duration approx. 25 mins
- Responsibilities and Regulations – duration approx. 40 mins
- Disclosure Information + Criminal History Assessment duration approx. 40 mins

To book you must be an active countersignatory with a signatory number and valid e-mail address.



### Positions Applied For

There has been some confusion about the extent to which persons working in premises/ establishments regulated by RQIA can and should be checked.

AccessNI has returned a number of applications for persons working in ancillary positions in such premises, even where RQIA has advised the owner or manager that such checks are required. All staff working in adult care homes on a frequent basis with opportunity for contact with residents are eligible for an enhanced disclosure check. **ONLY** staff who work in regulated activity are eligible for an enhanced check with a barred list check.

Regulated activity includes **persons providing healthcare, personal care, social care work or conveying adults in defined circumstances.**

For other staff, such as receptionists, domestic staff etc, the nature of their duties will determine whether they are eligible for an enhanced check. For example, receptionists who may have access to medical records will be eligible for an enhanced check, but without a barred list check.

Click [HERE](#) for more information about the current definition of regulated activity with adults.



### AccessNI Registered / Responsible Body Review

Registered and Responsible Bodies are reminded that legislation requires a minimum of 20 disclosure applications to be processed in a 12 month period. As we are 6 months into this review period please make sure you are on target to meet this threshold. The next annual review will be in April 2021.

### Referral to Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has developed a flowchart to help you decide if you need to make a referral to DBS.

Click [HERE](#) for the DBS referral chart.

### Independent Monitor Annual Report

The 2019 Independent Monitor annual report is now available to view [HERE](#). The Independent Monitor operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland considering police information disclosed on certificates.

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