

Newsletter

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Welcome to the spring 2016 edition of the AccessNI Newsletter. Over the winter of 2015 and the first part of 2016, we have been able to improve our turn-around times for disclosure checks and this has drawn been positive feedback from both applicants and RBs. This is due in no small measure to the high number of e-applications that are being submitted. In a single week in May we reached our highest level yet with 97% of applications being submitted through the on-line portal.

Some of our Registered Bodies continue to make applications on paper. For AccessNI, handling paper applications is a much more time consuming process, leading to reduced efficiency across the entire disclosure process. For RBs, there are a range of benefits to be derived from on-line applications, including:-

- applications have fewer mistakes
- there are fewer disputes
- costs are reduced (postal/enveloping)
- quicker turnaround times
- the ability for applicants and RBs to track the progress of their case
- employers can know when a certificate is issued whether there is information disclosed

We would encourage all those RBs that use paper applications to consider now submitting their disclosure applications using the on-line portal on the NIDirect website.

Since March 2016 the Independent Reviewer [IR] has been considering information that would have previously disclosed on certificates. In the first 10 weeks, the IR has reviewed 68 disclosure certificates before they were issued, and recommended removal

of information on 60. He has also received 4 requests from applicants to review information disclosed on their certificates, after issue. In all cases the IR has removed the information from those certificates.

In terms of progressing cases, there are no cases with PSNI more than 60 days, and only 1 case over 40 days. Across the UK, only the Metropolitan Police is in a significant backlog position, meaning that if a case needs to be referred to that force, there is a chance that the certificate will be delayed.

Looking forward, we are now in one of our peak periods for the year. You can be assured that we will do our utmost to maintain turn-around times.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

Circulars

All AccessNI Circulars are available at the following link:-

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

No new circulars have been published since last Newsletter issued.

RB Training

Demand for the RB Training sessions at the Dundonald Ice Bowl has been very high. So much so, we have had to put on an extra date in June.

All upcoming sessions are now fully booked until the end of the summer. We will re-commence RB

Training events in September; keep an eye on our website for details.

Please note that RB training is mainly aimed at new countersignatories or for those signatories that want to refresh their knowledge of AccessNI processes and procedures.



Barred list checks

All Registered Bodies will be aware that the Disclosure and Barring Service maintain lists of individuals across England, Wales and Northern Ireland who are not allowed to work with children and / or vulnerable adults (these are known as the “barred” lists). Scotland maintains a separate list that AccessNI checks. When submitting an AccessNI Enhanced application, Registered Bodies must request a check against the appropriate list(s) if the position is regarded as Regulated Activity (under the post 2012 definitions).



Whilst some positions in Regulated Activity will necessarily require a check of both these barred lists, most positions are only working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adults, and rarely both. It is important therefore that only the relevant barred list check is selected.

Registered Bodies are reminded that it is an offence to request sight of information on an AccessNI check if no legal entitlement for access to that information exists. Registered Bodies selecting a check of a barred list for which there is no entitlement could face a legal challenge from an applicant.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Client Services team if you require further information on this matter.

You will find links below about Regulated Activity with children and vulnerable adults

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/regulated-activity-relation-children>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/regulated-activity-relation-adults>

Security features of AccessNI disclosures

AccessNI has recently renewed our contract for the supply of disclosure paper. The paper we use incorporates a number of security features aimed at making it difficult to be reproduced. These features include:-

- Grey-red-grey “split duct” colouration on face and reverse that will display the wording ‘NOT AN ORIGINAL’ at regular and repeating intervals, if photocopied.
- A watermark incorporating the wording ‘DOCUCHECK’.
- The wording ‘Access Northern Ireland’ imprinted repeatedly and running vertically along the length of each sheet.

Further ‘security’ checks that can verify the bona fides of a Disclosure Certificate can be undertaken by contacting AccessNI include:-

- A check with AccessNI against the name / Disclosure reference number / Date of issue
- A check against the Unique Audit Reference (printed along the top of each certificate)

If you are concerned about the authenticity of a Disclosure Certificate you should immediately contact AccessNI.

Right to work

Home Office Immigration Enforcement recently undertook an operation to investigate illegal working across the care sector.

The investigation uncovered evidence that some employers had accepted fraudulent documents for ‘right to work’ checks. These fraudulent documents were subsequently used to obtain DBS checks. This raises safeguarding issues and should act as a reminder to RBs to be vigilant.

As employers, we all have a duty to prevent illegal working in the UK. By conducting effective document checks, we can make it harder for people who are in the UK unlawfully and attempting to work illegally. This also allows us to have greater confidence on the identity of people applying for work.

To carry out a ‘right to work’ check, you must only accept a document listed in the [right-to-work-checks-employers-guide](#). You must do this before you employ a person, to make sure they are legally allowed to do the work in question. You need to carry out a follow-up check on people who have time-limited permission to work in the UK.

GOV.UK have set up an [online tool](#) to help you find out if a potential employee has the right to work in the UK and what documents you should check. They also have useful guidance to help you recognise [fraudulent-identity-documents](#).

Remember, an AccessNI Disclosure Certificate is not an acceptable document for showing permission to work and should not be used to establish if a person has the right to do so. Every AccessNI certificate carries this message on the reverse face

We're working with our colleagues in Home Office Immigration Enforcement and the Disclosure and Barring Service to identify what other measures we can put in place to prevent people who don't have permission to work in the UK from taking up roles that need AccessNI checks. We'll share this information with you as soon as it's available. In the meantime, please continue to be vigilant when checking documents and do keep in mind the need to carry out 'right to work' checks.



Disputes and Case Tracking

In AccessNI we are continually striving to improve the service we provide. In this regard, we have added a new status to the on-line Case Tracking tool - **'Returned to AccessNI'**. This status will appear when a dispute has been raised in respect of a Disclosure Certificate that has been issued and this status will remain in case tracking until the dispute has been resolved.

Track status of applications

Name	Date submitted	Application type	Case reference	Organisation reference	Status	
Black, Paul David	26-Feb-2015 11.05	Enhanced	1000000422	Lisburn123	Returned to AccessNI	View status

Once the dispute has been resolved the status of **'Returned to AccessNI'** will be removed from case tracking. Where the dispute is not upheld and a new disclosure certificate has not been issued **'Date certificate was issued'** will remain the same showing the original date and timestamp the disclosure certificate was issued. Where the dispute is upheld

the date and timestamp the new disclosure certificate is issued will appear in **'Date certificate was issued'**.

ID Checking

Ensuring the applicant for a AccessNI check is who they say they are is a vital part of the disclosure process. If the identity of the applicant has not been verified, then there is an increased risk that accurate criminal history information may not be disclosed, potentially leading to a compromised recruitment decision. It is highly important the applicant includes details of all names when submitting an application.

In response to requests from Signatories, we have published some additional guidance to assist the checking of documentation. You can view this guidance on the NIDirect website at the following link:-

[guidance-on-identity-checking-for-signatories.pdf](#)



Update Service

In their March Newsletter, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) confirmed they would complete the modernisation of the disclosure part of their service provision by November 2016. This, in turn, will enable AccessNI to offer the ability for applicants to subscribe to the DBS Update Service from that time.

This Service gives applicants the ability to apply for disclosures where the information on that disclosure can be updated – unlike at present where the information is only accurate on the day the certificate is issued. This means;

- Applicants may be able to use their disclosure for more than one position; and
- Employers can obtain, on request, updated criminal record and other information without always having to make a new application.

We will provide more information about this important development over the coming months.

Website

In recent months, NIDirect have decided to upgrade their website.

AccessNI has taken this opportunity to change the layout and content on many of our pages. We think

the menu options make the website much easier to navigate both for you and applicants.

We would very much welcome any feedback you might wish to share on your experience using the website. You can send any comments to:-

ani@accessni.gov.uk

Staffing changes in AccessNI

Brian Thomson, head of Client Services, Finance and Administration is moving to another post after working in AccessNI for over 10 years (even before AccessNI began to issue certificates!). Many of you will know Brian and will recognise the tremendous contribution he has made to the development of the AccessNI service during that time. We are very sorry to see him go and wish him all the best in his new role.

Sarah Steenson, AccessNI's compliance manager is moving on also after 10 years in her role. Many of you will have been helped by Sarah over the years or benefitted from her advice and support. We wish her well too and recognise that it will be difficult to replace her detailed knowledge of AccessNI processes and procedures.

