

AccessNI Newsletter Issue 35: Spring 2021

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Welcome

I hope that you find this Newsletter helpful and informative. You may in particular wish to read the article about Allister Woods, the new DBS outreach officer for Northern Ireland.

We're all finding new ways of working at this difficult time. However, we can see that the potential easing of restrictions on home and work life may not be too far away. I would therefore urge RBs to consider, as changes are made by the Executive, that if they need to apply a for large number of AccessNI checks to "catch up" on the past year, that they notify AccessNI in advance so no delays will occur in processing their checks.

I'd like to bring 3 other matters to your attention;

- Post Brexit, AccessNI has continued to seek criminal record information from 12 EU states where the applicant is working with children and is originally from one of those states;
- The Department of Justice's consultation on rehabilitation periods ended on 5 March. We should be able to inform you about the proposed changes to legislation in Summer 2021; and
- To introduce Amanda Jenner who has replaced Brian Thomson in AccessNI as Head of Finance, Compliance and Customer Services.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

New DBS Appointment

DBS are responsible for maintaining the lists of persons barred from working with children and adults in Northern Ireland. In order to raise awareness of this work and to remind organisations, including Registered Bodies, of their statutory duty to refer individuals for consideration of barring, DBS have recently appointed Allister Woods as an outreach officer exclusively for Northern Ireland. You can find out more information about him and his role, together with his contact details [HERE](#) and hear his audio chat regarding his role [HERE](#).

AccessNI would strongly advise you to take time to look at the information provided at the links. In addition to enhancing the safeguarding arrangements in Northern Ireland, by referring appropriate individuals to the DBS you are also protecting your organisation, as failure to comply with the duty to refer could result in a conviction and fine.

The Criminal Records Trade Body (CRTB) is a group of organisations comprising of companies that process criminal record checks across the UK. You can find out more about them [HERE](#). CRTB are hosting a live event on 31st March.

Join us for our next live event

- An introduction to Access Northern Ireland
- Future plans for Northern Ireland, including the NI Government's recent consultation
- An overview of recent changes to filtering & disclosure periods across the UK

With Guest Speakers:

Tom Clarke – General Manager of Access Northern Ireland

Dominic Headley – Director of Dominic Headley & Associates

31.03.2021 @ 2pm

Register your interest today

CRTB
CRIMINAL RECORD TRADE BODY





AccessNI Annual Registered/Responsible Body Review 2021

Due to the COVID pandemic, the annual review of those organisations who processed less than 20 disclosure applications, during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, will not take place as planned.

For the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 the minimum threshold of applications to be processed has been reduced to **5 applications**.

AccessNI will write to all Registered and Responsible Bodies who processed less than 5 applications, during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, over the next few weeks to confirm if their AccessNI registration is still required.

The annual AccessNI Registered/Responsible Body Review will revert to the threshold of 20 disclosure applications to be processed for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

AccessNI Disclosure Application Queues

Some of you will be aware due to the COVID pandemic, disclosure applications were retained in the countersignatory queues for more than 90 days.

The process of **removing incomplete applications after 90 days** was reinstated on the **1st March 2021**.

ID Checking during COVID-19

I refer to the article on ID checking provided in AccessNI Newsletter Issue 33 as detailed below:-

In light of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the need to reduce non-essential social contact, AccessNI is content for you to introduce, as a temporary measure, the checking of ID documents using video link (e.g. Skype) or scanned documents on condition that:

- *The signatory has a copy of the ID documentation in front of them before they verify the documentation during a video link (eg Skype) meeting.*
- *The ID documentation scanned or emailed to the Signatory is of a good, clear quality, and*
- *The applicant's original documentation is verified and checked by a Manager on their 1st day of recruitment to ensure it matches the information on the scanned or emailed documentation used to process the Access-NI application.*

The need to retain copies of ID documentation for 90 days remains.

During COVID-19, it has been agreed that the identity documentation provided to verify an applicant's ID during the video link does not have to be the same as the original documentation provided by the applicant on their 1st day of recruitment.

However the information on the original documentation provided by the applicant on their 1st day of recruitment must match the information provided by the Applicant on their AccessNI disclosure e-application.

All the criminal record disclosure bodies across the UK are considering whether to make this a permanent change and we will keep you informed of developments.

APPLICANT SURVEY RESULTS

In Newsletter Issue 34 we advised you of the monthly programme of “Applicant Surveys” which AccessNI issues to a random selection of Applicants to seek their feedback on how they found the AccessNI process.

From the feedback of over 1,200 applicants to date, two areas of concern have emerged:-

1. applicants are not made aware of the AccessNI Code of Practice.
2. identity documents are not checked as part of the Application process.

As required in the AccessNI Code of Practice you have a responsibility to: -

1. inform ALL applicants of the Code of Practice and provide them with a copy of this document (you may currently provide a link to this document which they don't read, so please ensure to emphasise the Code of Practices to the applicant).
2. identity documents are not always being checked as in accordance with the new identity checking process introduced on 1st May 2018. You can view the process [HERE](#).

Lead/Counter Signatories Accounts – Contact details Updates

Due to the COVID pandemic many of you are working from home and may not attend the office.

Please check your AccessNI account to ensure the correct email address/phone number has been provided to allow AccessNI to correspond and provide important information.

CODE OF PRACTICE

In line with the revised AccessNI Code of Practice, Registered Bodies should note that they must comply with all instructions and legislative provisions issued in AccessNI circulars and guidance literature. Failure to do so may constitute a breach of this Code of Practice.



ACCESSNI SIGNATORY ACCOUNTS

There has been a considerable increase in the number of AccessNI accounts which have been ‘corrupted’ recently.

AccessNI accounts are made corrupt when a lead signatory or countersignatory uses their AccessNI Signatory account to apply for an AccessNI disclosure at any level. An AccessNI Signatory account should only be used to approve an AccessNI disclosure and submit it to AccessNI for processing. **An AccessNI Signatory account should NEVER be used to apply for an AccessNI disclosure.**

When an AccessNI account becomes corrupt it is a time-consuming task for both the organisation and AccessNI to get the account in operation again. Please ensure your Signatory Account is only used for approving applications and submitting them to AccessNI for processing.

Training

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.

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