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Welcome to the Summer 2017 edition of the AccessNI Newsletter. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read this as it contains useful information and updates about various AccessNI issues.

2015/16 was a busy year for AccessNI processing over 136,000 checks, up 6% on last year. Over 97% of applications are now submitted on-line and AccessNI remains the only UK disclosure service where all applications can be made on-line. It is also the only UK service that runs checks on EU nationals from a number of countries coming to work with children in Northern Ireland.

AccessNI met all its targets for the issue of certificates where these did not have to be referred to police. Some 8,000 certificates contained information about the applicant and the number of disputes about such information dropped by 75%.

However, we are aware that at the present time, where an enhanced application has to be referred to PSNI there are significant delays. We are working closely with PSNI to reduce the backlog of applications and some progress has been made within the past couple of weeks.

AccessNI continues to work to make the service more efficient and modern and we hope to make some important announcements before the end of 2017.

Please don't hesitate to contact us by telephone or e-mail if you have any queries.

Tom Clarke
General Manager

Checking all Applicant Names

Recently, AccessNI became aware that information was not disclosed on a number of certificates where the applicant had a criminal record. This was solely due to the applicant not providing all their forenames on the application form.

It is essential that all applicants' names are recorded correctly on the AccessNI application form and RBs should check applications against the information provided on identity documents to ensure consistency.

There are several documents that can reveal all of an applicant's forenames. A birth certificate will have this information. If in doubt about an applicant's name you should ask to see a copy. Individuals also need a birth certificate to apply for a UK passport for the first time, and either a birth certificate or a passport to obtain a Northern Ireland driving licence. However, please note the forenames on a passport only have a maximum of 30 characters and it is possible that all forenames might not appear on this.

For Irish passports you also need to provide a birth certificate, but you can have your passport in a different name from your birth

Certificate, if you can provide proof of usage of that name. In certain circumstances where the name on the passport is the Irish variant of the applicant's name, the English variation may be recorded too.

Don't forget that if you check the personal details provided by an applicant you can add a forename, this is done by selecting the "edit application" button at the bottom of the summary screen. This situation may occur where the applicant hasn't included a forename but it is evident from the identity documentation they do have an additional forename.

Your help with name-checking is appreciated and it will help us to provide you with accurate information on certificates.

EU Project

Following a review of this project at the end of March 2017, it has been agreed to extend this to nationals from a further 3 EU countries to add to the 6 where information is already sought, if the applicant wishes to work with children.

The additional countries are France, Slovakia and Italy and referrals commenced from 8th May 2017.

It should be noted for French nationals, if place of birth is Paris, Lyon or Marseille then a district code is also required and should be added to the town of birth field on the application. The district is displayed on a passport or identity document in the following format "Paris 1er", "Lyon 2eme" – this reads as either "Paris 1st", "Lyon 2nd". It is only the number that requires to be recorded on the application.

In addition, the parent's forename and surname are also required for French nationals. We recommend that the application is processed as normal, but that this information, using the case reference number and name of applicant is separately emailed to AccessNI (ani@accessni.gov.uk).

Registered Body Training

Further dates have been organised for Registered Body training events from August to December 2017. These dates also include events outside Belfast and two evening events. Please see the attached link for further details of the training dates and to book a place:-

nidirect.gov.uk/articles/accessni-training-registered-bodies

Please book a place early to avoid disappointment as these events book up quickly. This training follows a standard format and is designed for new signatories or those new to the AccessNI process or those who wish to refresh their knowledge of the AccessNI process.



Compliance Strategy Update

A new Compliance Strategy will be rolled-out in 2017/2018. There are a several strands to this but the main objectives are to:

- Streamline Audit Processes & Techniques
- Enhance existing training programme for organisations

AccessNI will provide information about the strategy when the details are finalised.

➤ Registered / Responsible Body Review

AccessNI has completed the 2016/17 Annual Review of the Registered/Responsible Body network. This review relates to bodies listed with AccessNI for more than 12 months that did not reach the minimum volume of 20 applications between April 2016 and March 2017.

All relevant bodies will now have been informed of the outcome of these reviews and any actions they are required to take. A number of bodies have been de-registered as they were unable to provide evidence of meeting the minimum volume of applications in 2017/18.

AccessNI would like to point out that organisations should **NOT** be processing disclosure applications to assist them to meet the required threshold of 20 applications per annum. Disclosure applications should only be processed where they are required for recruitment purposes or where the re-checking policy requires the disclosure application.

Changes to Lead Signatories

Lead signatories leaving an organisation should ensure that a Counter-signatory is promoted to the position and their own details as signatory are removed to make them inactive. This enables a smooth transition ensuring their Registered Body details are accurate and up-to-date and there is no interruption in the processing of their disclosures.



➤ On-Line Application

While over 97% of AccessNI applications are made on-line, a few applicants continue to use the previous paper route, with all of its limitations. AccessNI encourage Registered Bodies to make all applications on-line and to assist applicants to make applications in this way.

The benefits of using e-applications include:-

- Quicker turnaround times
- Reduced scope for error in certificates
- Reduction in postage and enveloping costs
- Access to the full benefits of the on-line case tracking tool, including ability to download information in relation to cases submitted.

If you have any concerns about using the on-line process please send us an e-mail to ani@accessni.gsi.gov.uk and a member of the team will contact you to discuss these.

➤ Case Tracking

All Lead Signatories / Counter Signatories should ensure they are utilising the on-line case tracker facility to aid internal record keeping.

As information contained on the case tracker is removed 90 days after a certificate is issued, Registered Bodies are encouraged to use the case tracker CSV file export if they require to keep a permanent record of the fact that an application has been made and/or a certificate issued.

One of the key features of the tracker is that in the absence of receiving a copy of the applicant's certificate, RBs can find out whether the certificate has any information in it namely:-

- If the tracker shows the certificate has been printed, there is a date and an (N) then the certificate is clear and a decision can be made without seeing the certificate, but
- if there is a date printed but no (N) then the certificate contains information and the organisation should seek sight of the disclosure in order to make an informed decision.

A sample letter is included in the link below that you can use to request sight of the information. This can be adapted to suit your organisation.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/sample-letter-requesting-accessni-certificate>

Please note, Counter-signatories can only see their own cases and only the Lead Signatory can export all data as they can see all cases.

➤ Status of Application – 3rd Party Search

When the status of an application indicates “3rd party searches”, this means AccessNI has referred the case to police to determine whether they have information that is reasonably believed to be relevant and ought to be disclosed. AccessNI may refer a case to police where:-

1. AccessNI has potentially matched the applicant to a criminal record.
2. AccessNI has potentially matched the applicant to non-conviction information held on police systems.
3. The position applied for is a home-based role (e.g. foster carer).
4. To enable a check to be made with An Garda Síochána if the applicant has a Republic of Ireland address history.

Retaining Certificates

In cases where the Registered Body must see the certificate in order to make a decision, it must be returned to the applicant once that decision has been made. While in the RBs possession, the certificate must be held securely and the RB is required, under the AccessNI Code of Practice, to have a written security policy regarding the storage of information.

DOJ Website

AccessNI presence on the DOJ website is currently being updated. The update is designed to make it easier for customers to find information, including regulated activity, filtering and AccessNI performance reports. The website also provides access to AccessNI legislation documents. The link for this is:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/about-accessni>

➤ AccessNI Emails

Recent communications have identified that AccessNI e-mails are being delivered to the “junk e-mail box” of some organisations. All organisations check that their IT system allows “.gov.uk” email addresses to be received in their mailbox.

➤ Finance

All organisations are reminded that AccessNI’s payment terms state that invoices should be paid within 30 calendar days.

If any organisations would like to switch from hard copy invoices to electronic copy, the Lead Signatory should advise accessni-finance@accessni.gov.uk with details of the relevant contact email address.
