



Newsletter

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Welcome to the second edition of our Newsletter. You all seemed to find the first Newsletter informative and useful and we plan to continue to provide helpful information through this and other media. Don't forget to e-mail us with comments at accessni@ani.x.gsi.gov.uk

Tom Clarke,
General Manager

Helpline Advice

We know from the recent customer survey that you would like to have more information from the Helpline. However they can't answer every question you might have.

The Helpline staff **can** tell you;

- If an application has been received;
- The date it was received;
- If processing of the application has started;
- If processing is complete and the date a certificate was issued.

Where the application is for a **Basic or Standard disclosure** they can also make an **informed estimate** as to when the certificate will be posted to you.

Where the application is for an **Enhanced disclosure** the Helpline staff **can't** tell you when the certificate will be posted to you. This is because for every Enhanced application, AccessNI must seek confirmation from law enforcement agencies across the UK as to whether there is any relevant non-conviction information. It's a matter for these law enforcement agencies to determine what's relevant and we can't complete a certificate until we have this information. We do remind these agencies about cases that are outstanding, but we are in their hands as to when this information is returned. So please be patient – especially with our staff.

Helpline **staff also can't tell** you whether or not you require an Enhanced certificate for a specific post. That's not the role of AccessNI and you should seek advice from your own legal provision about POCVA if in doubt. You can view this legislation by following the link from the Legislation section of our website.

Completing Application Forms

Since 1 April 2009, **we have returned 13%** of all the application forms received, because they have been incorrectly completed. This is not helping you to get disclosures in a quick and effective manner and is time wasting in having to return forms. If you need help with application forms please ring our helpline. If necessary, we'd be happy to send a member of staff to help you with this process.

We would also ask you to provide as much information as possible when completing Position Applied For (E1) and Organisation Name (E2) on the Disclosure Application Form. We often find that we need to contact Registered Bodies for clarification on these fields and this is adversely affecting our (and your) turnaround times.

We would take this opportunity to thank those Registered Bodies who give us advance notice of peak periods where they will be sending us bigger numbers of application forms than usual. This forward planning helps us and you to organise the work load more effectively.

Improving Customer Services

We've made three improvements to help all our customers. From 1 April, we've established a dedicated customer services team that includes the AccessNI helpline, registration and compliance team, customer service standards and training for registered bodies. This section will be headed by Brian Thomson, who is also AccessNI's finance manager, assisted by Sarah Steenson as customer services manager.

The second change is that, from the 1st April, we introduced delivery of certificates using first class post. This means you will get your certificates quicker.

Finally, we have placed information on the web-site about AccessNI's performance in April 2009 (see AccessNI Performance at our homepage). This gives you details such as the number of disclosures received and processed together with information about whether service standards were achieved and the average time for delivery of certificates. This will be updated every month.

Customer Survey

In the last Newsletter we thanked all of you for taking time to complete the Customer Survey. We've now had an opportunity to analyse this and to take lessons from it. As a result of the customer survey, we will;

- Make sure that Registered Bodies have improved information on "who to contact";
- Remove the pre-recorded information from the Helpline and direct all calls through to an operator;
- Provide improved information to those who can't get through on the Helpline; and
- Generally increase "customer satisfaction" levels.

We intend to run another customer survey in autumn 2009 to give you a further opportunity to comment on AccessNI's services.

Sending Applications to AccessNI

We would like to remind you that Disclosure Applications should be sent to AccessNI using approved mail / courier services. It is **not** possible to hand deliver Applications to our offices at Brooklyn and attempts to do so may be turned away. We have also experienced problems where Applications have been posted by a Registered Body but not delivered to us. We would urge all customers to include a return address on envelopes – this should reduce applications (with personal information on them) being misplaced.

You are reminded of the Address Continuation Sheet now available on our website. Please make use of this when providing details of more than 2 previous addresses – doing so should reduce instances of previous address details not being successfully scanned.

AccessNI Report 2008/2009

AccessNI has now published on the web-site our report for 2008/09 (at home page click AccessNI Performance and then AccessNI 2008/09 Report). As you all know this was our first year of operation and many problems were experienced, but there were also some notable achievements. Please take time to have a look at the document.

Vetting and Barring Scheme

You will all have received our letter of 23 March informing you about the various dates for the implementation of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS). We also included a question and answer sheet to give more information about the Scheme.

We now have available a new section on our web-site entitled "Vetting and Barring Scheme" where we will post information as it becomes available to us. We've included contact details for the ISA's lo-call helpline service in "latest news".

More detailed guidance will be published later this summer and again, we'll keep you informed about this.

We will also provide more information about how AccessNI intend to enable you to phase your existing workforce into VBS from July 2010 to July 2015.

In the meantime, please do not contact AccessNI with detailed questions about VBS, especially about whether posts will be engaged in regulated or controlled activity. These are not questions for AccessNI to answer and further information about where you can get help with this will be available shortly.

Consultation about AccessNI Re-print Policy

Introduction

This document seeks views from Registered and Responsible Bodies about a policy in respect of re-print of certificates. At present AccessNI meets almost every request for a re-print and provides this either to the applicant or Registered body, without penalty or charge. In excess of 100 requests for re-prints are currently received each month.

Need for a policy

AccessNI's current policy around re-prints was suitable for a time when the organisation was still in its infancy, no certificate was especially old and at one time there was considerable delay in the return of certificates. The situation is of course now much changed. Some certificates are now over a year old, and currently certificates are being returned promptly. Therefore AccessNI, in common with the other disclosure services in the UK, needs to have a clear policy about the re-printing of certificates.

Policies elsewhere

Disclosure Scotland has a policy where they will consider requests for copy disclosures where these have not been received by applicants or Registered Bodies. These are considered on a case by case basis. However only on an exceptional basis will such a request be granted and only within 2 weeks from the recorded issue date.

The Criminal Records Bureau will not produce duplicate certificates on the basis that a Disclosure is produced for a specific job, once an employment decision has been made on that vacancy, the Disclosure will have no further relevancy.

Why do we need a policy?

AccessNI believes there is a clear need for a re-print policy for the following reasons;

- To provide clear advice to applicants and Registered bodies;
- To minimise expense to AccessNI and in turn to paying customers;
- To ensure safeguarding standards are maintained;
- To maintain the policy that a disclosure is only valid on the day on which it is issued;
- To minimise the transit of personal information in the post; and
- To reduce the time applicant's details are retained within AccessNI's electronic systems.

Options

AccessNI has considered a number of options for a potential policy. These are;

- Provide re-prints on request.
- Provide no-reprints
- Provide re-prints within a specific time-frame after the production of the original;
- Provide re-prints at a cost.

Consideration

AccessNI takes the view that it should no longer provide re-prints on demand. If a certificate is not received by an applicant or Registered Body within 4 weeks of application this should be queried with AccessNI. If a certificate has been issued, but not received it should be permissible to provide one re-print. However where a certificate has been lost it should not be the responsibility of AccessNI to make good that error. AccessNI does not believe that it should charge for a re-print of any certificate at the present time.

Given this AccessNI considers that re-prints should be made available, but only within a specific time-frame from the date of the original certificate. AccessNI already has a policy for disputes to be raised within 90 days of the issue of a certificate and this should carry forward into its policy around re-prints. This also provides sufficient time for the checking of AccessNI invoices in relation to certificates and for queries to be raised.

Policy

AccessNI therefore suggests its policy should be;

To provide one re-print of any certificate to an applicant or Registered/Responsible body, free of charge, within 90 days of the Date of Issue of the original certificate. Outside this period, AccessNI will not provide re-prints. AccessNI will re-produce this policy on the rear of Disclosure Certificates.

Consultation

You are asked for your views on;

- Should AccessNI have a clear re-print policy?
- Do you agree with the options identified?
- Do you agree that the “suggested policy” is the correct one?

The consultation will also be made available on the web-site for members of the public to respond.

Period of consultation

AccessNI intends to provide a period of 6 weeks for consultation on this issue, to end on 3 August 2009, with a view to introduce this policy on 1 September 2009, subject to the outcome of this consultation. To respond to this consultation, you can;

Write to the General Manager,
AccessNI,
Brooklyn,
65 Knock Road,
Belfast BT5 6LE

or e-mail to: accessni@ani.x.gsi.gov.uk, clearly heading your e-mail *Re-print policy consultation*.