



ANI CIRCULAR : 2/2026

**ACCESS
NORTHERN
IRELAND**

www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni

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AccessNI Umbrella Body Arrangements - Update

Due to enhancements with the AccessNI System, this circular provides information regarding the existing Umbrella Body arrangements and procedures to ensure compliance with the AccessNI Code of Practice and an updated Annex A.

Background

1. AccessNI requires Umbrella Body organisations to have a Service Level Agreement in place with all clients/client organisations who they process applications on behalf of. During AccessNI compliance audits AccessNI auditors will seek reassurance and evidence from Umbrella Bodies to be satisfied that all requirements of the Service Level Agreement are in place.
2. Historically, feedback from AccessNI compliance audits with Umbrella Bodies indicated concerns over recommendations requiring Umbrella Bodies to conduct audits with their client/client organisation(s) to ensure all aspects of the Service Level Agreement were being fully implemented and complied with. Umbrella Bodies faced practical difficulties in undertaking such actions, especially for those with high numbers of clients/client organisations.
3. The main reason AccessNI requires Umbrella Bodies to do this was to ensure the key aspects of the Code of Practice were being applied to organisations that don't have a direct relationship with AccessNI and, in so doing, ensuring that the disclosure applicants' rights (within the Code of Practice) were not being diminished.

Detail

4. AccessNI is keen to continue supporting Umbrella Bodies to ensure that a practical and proportionate approach is adopted with regards to compliance with the Code of Practice.

5. In recognition of the challenges faced by AccessNI Umbrella Bodies following recommendations in compliance audits, AccessNI introduced a 2-pronged approach to compliance with the Code of Practice in 2020 as detailed below –

- a) For client/client organisations requesting **5 or less checks** in a 12 month period, a Service Level Agreement will no longer be a mandatory requirement between the Umbrella Body and the client organisation. Instead, the Umbrella Body should issue a **Service Provision Letter** to their client, and ensure that their client issues the **Applicant Information Leaflet** (as amended for each specific organisation) to the applicant before the AccessNI application is commenced. The purpose of the leaflet is to ensure that the applicant is fully aware of the process they are being asked to undertake, and the protections afforded to them under the Code of Practice.

A template **Service Provision Letter** has been provided in MS Word to allow Umbrella Bodies to amend the content to suit their specific circumstances. All variations of this letter must include the sign-off section at the bottom, which should be signed by the client organisation and retained by the Umbrella Body as evidence that a formal arrangement has been agreed.

The **Applicant Information Leaflet** and template **Service Provision Letter** are available at the following link on the AccessNI pages of nidirect - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/umbrella-body-documents>.

- b) For Umbrella body client/client organisations requesting **more than 5 checks** in a 12 month period, a full Service Level Agreement arrangement is required between the Umbrella Body and the client/client organisations, and the Umbrella Body should ensure their client is complying with the provisions in the Service Level Agreement. This should be done by requiring the client to sign-off on the **Service Level Agreement – Checklist**, which should be retained by the Umbrella Body along with the following documents (as provided by the client), namely:-

- A copy of the client's policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders
- A copy of the client's policy on secure handling, use, storage and retention of disclosure information.

AccessNI provides a template Service Level Agreement to be used. The template includes:-

- an **Applicant Information Leaflet** [Annex A] which, similar to point a) above, must now be given to each applicant prior to them commencing their AccessNI application; and
- a **Service Level Agreement – Checklist** [Annex B], to be completed

by the client organisation and returned to the Umbrella Body for retention as evidence of compliance.

The new template ***Service Level Agreement*** is available at the following link on the AccessNI pages of nidirect <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/umbrella-body-documents>.

In respect of point a) above, Umbrella Bodies can, if they wish continue to issue SLAs with their clients if that suits their particular circumstances (SLA's are often regarded as examples of good relationship management and business practice). If this is the preferred approach by the Umbrella Body, then they must comply with the arrangements set out in point b) above.

6. The above changes were introduced in April 2020 and AccessNI compliance audits with Umbrella Bodies seek to ensure that Umbrella Bodies are retaining the appropriate documentation as evidence of compliance with the above arrangements and the Code of Practice.
7. AccessNI will continue to monitor performance of Umbrella Bodies and may take steps to amend this further, if necessary.
8. If you have any queries regarding the content of this circular please contact the AccessNI Compliance Team on 0300 200 788.

CIRCULAR END

AccessNI Disclosure – Applicant Information Leaflet

As part of the recruitment process for a role in which you have expressed an interest, a criminal record check is required to be completed. In Northern Ireland this check is undertaken by AccessNI, upon receipt of a valid application. A disclosure certificate will be issued at the end of the process, including criminal record and other relevant information.

You can find out more about AccessNI on the nidirect website, or at the following link:-

[AccessNI webpage](#)

Before the AccessNI process is commenced, and if you are applying for an Enhanced check (with a Barred List check), you are required to disclose if there is any reason why you cannot work in Regulated Activity.

The AccessNI application must be made on-line through the nidirect website. You will be required to use your nidirect account to complete your application. The application will be checked and authorised by an approved Umbrella Body before being transferred to AccessNI for processing.

A link to the AccessNI Privacy Notice is available [here](#) or prior to commencing the e-application form.

You should note the following important information about the AccessNI application process:-

1. [Name of Umbrella Body] has been appointed to check and authorise your application.
2. The name of the authoriser is [Name of Signatory].
3. The PIN to be used on the on-line application is [XXXXXX].
4. You will be requested to upload two relevant identity documents to the application; these will be destroyed 90 days after the date the disclosure certificate is issued, in line with AccessNI retention policy.
5. Your employer, and not the Umbrella Body, will be responsible for the decision whether or not to offer you a position.
6. Having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent you from obtaining a position.
7. A policy is in place that sets out the organisation's approach to recruiting ex-offenders – a copy of this can be made available at your request.
8. The AccessNI Code of Practice (for Registered Bodies) and Service Level Agreement (for Responsible Bodies) is available on the nidirect website and can be viewed at:

[AccessNI Code of Practice](#)
[Responsible Body Service Level Agreement](#)

If you have any questions in relation to this process you should, in the first instance, contact the person who asked you to complete the AccessNI application.

Service Level Agreement – Checklist

In order to evidence compliance with the provisions within the Service Level Agreement, this form should be completed by [Name of Client Organisation] and returned to [Name of UB] along with the signed SLA and copy documentation as indicated below.

I confirm that [Name of Client Organisation] will:-

	Requirement	Yes	No
1	Make all applicants (who require an AccessNI check) aware of the AccessNI Code of Practice and provide them with a copy of the CoP (upon request).		
2	Comply with AccessNI guidelines for ID checking.		
3	Comply with provisions in Data Protection Act 2018, and will not retain disclosure information for any longer than is required for the specific purpose.		
4	Ensure that all applicants for relevant positions are notified in advance of the requirement for an AccessNI check.		
5	Clarify with applicants if there is any reason why they cannot work in Regulated Activity prior to them commencing an application for an Enhanced check with a Barred List check.		
6	Notify all potential applicants of the possible effect of a criminal record on the recruitment and selection process, and any recruitment decision.		
7	Discuss any matters revealed in disclosure information with the person seeking the position before withdrawing an offer of employment.		

I further confirm that [Name of Client Organisation] has the following policy documents in place, and that copies of same have been provided to [Name of Umbrella Body]:-

	Requirement	Yes	No
1	Policy on recruitment of ex-offenders.		
2	Policy on secure handling, use, storage and retention of disclosure information		

To be signed by representative of Client Organisation.

Signed: Date:

Print Name: