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**ACCESS
NORTHERN
IRELAND**

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AccessNI disclosure checks for self-employed people and personal employees – revised 14 May 2026

This circular contains important information regarding eligibility for an Enhanced AccessNI disclosure check for self-employed people and personal employees who are in a Regulated Activity position.

Background

- 1 A self-employed person is an individual who works for themselves rather than being employed by an organisation. For example, a private maths tutor who offers one-to-one lessons to students in their homes.
- 2 A personal employee is someone employed directly by a private individual to deliver services either to them or a member of their family. For example, someone may directly employ an individual as a carer – this person would be a personal employee.
- 3 At present, self-employed/personal employees are not eligible for Enhanced checks as such roles are not exempt from The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 – this exemption is a statutory requirement for AccessNI Enhanced checks, allowing for the full criminal record (spent and unspent convictions, cautions, police information etc) to be disclosed.

Summary

- 4 Legislative amendments have been made to The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979 creating eligibility for Enhanced AccessNI checks for self-employed individuals and personal employees working in Regulated and Controlled Activity with vulnerable groups with effect from 17 February 2026.

Detail

- 5 It is the responsibility of the self-employed person or personal employee to apply for their own AccessNI check through an AccessNI Umbrella Body. An AccessNI Umbrella Body is an organisation that is registered with AccessNI to process disclosure applications for other organisations, groups or individuals. They cannot ask the private employer/parent to obtain this on their behalf.
- 6 If a self-employed individual is contracting their services to an organisation (perhaps through an Agency), the organisation may process the AccessNI application on their behalf and in line with their established policies. We recommend that self-employed individuals should discuss this with their contracting organisation.

How does a self-employed individual or a personal employee apply for an AccessNI Standard or Enhanced Disclosure?

- 7 The self-employed person or personal employee should establish if the role is eligible for an AccessNI Enhanced with or without a barred list(s) check. This will normally be the case if the position is undertaking Regulated Activity with vulnerable groups.
- 8 If the role is eligible for an AccessNI Enhanced certificate with or without a barred list(s) check they will need to contact and use an AccessNI Umbrella Body to process the application.
- 9 The Umbrella Body will provide a link to the relevant AccessNI disclosure application and a 6-digit PIN code to complete the application and will guide the applicant through the process.
- 10 The Umbrella Body will arrange to approve the disclosure application paying particular attention to the following sections:-
 - Position applied for - to ensure the correct level of disclosure has been applied for.
 - Position applied for - to ensure they record that the position is a 'self-employed' role. Here are three examples: self-employed coach frequently instructing children; self-employed tutor frequently teaching children; self-employed carer providing personal care to vulnerable adults.
 - Application verification – to ensure two relevant identity documents have been uploaded to the application and to ensure the date of birth and all applicant names have been provided on the disclosure application.
 - Home-based - positions will be selected for those self-employed positions where the self-employed individual works or provides a service in their own home – not the home of the service-user.

11 As the self-employed individual is the disclosure applicant, many of the provisions within the AccessNI Code of Practice do not apply, for example the requirement to have a Recruitment of Ex-Offenders policy or a Security Statement. Consequently, AccessNI does not require Umbrella Bodies to enter into a Service Level Agreement with self-employed clients.

However, AccessNI would advise an Umbrella Body to obtain and retain a written response from a self-employed individual, a response to the following two questions:-

- Please confirm that the disclosure is required for a prescribed purpose.
Yes No
- Is there any reason why you cannot work in Regulated Activity?
Yes No

Further Information and Guidance

12 Further information will be available on the nidirect website before 17 February 2026.

[AccessNI criminal record checks | nidirect](#)

CIRCULAR END
