



AccessNI Newsletter

Issue 49: Summer 2026



Welcome to the Summer 2026 edition of the AccessNI Newsletter.

Introduction

I am pleased to present the latest AccessNI newsletter, highlighting another period of significant activity, ongoing service improvement, and our commitment to safeguarding across Northern Ireland.

This year has seen a substantial increase in applications processed by AccessNI, reflecting growing demand for our services and the vital role of criminal record checking in supporting organisations across society.

Safeguarding has become increasingly prominent in public discourse, with greater awareness of the need to protect children and adults at risk, and stronger expectations around safe recruitment. AccessNI is a key part of the safeguarding framework, providing reliable disclosure services that support informed recruitment decisions and build confidence in the organisations serving our communities.

Our latest customer survey returned positive results, with respondents recognising the professionalism of our staff and the quality of our service. While encouraged by this feedback, we remain committed

to listening to customers, addressing concerns, and ensuring our services continue to meet evolving needs.

During the reporting period, we delivered several important enhancements, including extending overseas criminal record information arrangements to all European Union Member States and introducing Body PIN functionality. These developments have improved user experience and strengthened our disclosure processes.

Looking ahead, we will continue to respond to changing customer expectations, technological developments, and the evolving safeguarding landscape. Our focus remains on delivering a high-quality, customer-centred service that supports public protection.

I would like to thank our staff, customers, partner organisations, and stakeholders for their continued support and collaboration throughout the year.

Best regards
Neville Ferguson
General Manager

Removal Of Supervision Exemption From Regulated Activity With Children - 1 September 2026



The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (SVGO) will remove the supervision exemption from the definition of regulated activity involving children.

These will come into effect on **1 September 2026** and apply to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

As a result, individuals who frequently undertake roles involving teaching, supervision, instruction or care of children, will be considered to be engaged in regulated activity, irrespective of whether they are supervised. These roles will therefore be eligible for an enhanced disclosure with children's barred list check.

The Department of Health owns the SVGO and has noted the future change on its website:

[Regulated Activity in relation to Children | Department of Health](#)

[Regulated Activity \(children\) - supervision of activity with children which is regulated activity when unsupervised | Department of Health](#)

- If, your 'position applied for' will fall with the wider definition, you might consider **holding off until 1 September** before countersigning and submitting the application to AccessNI. You will then be able to seek a check of the Children's Barred List.
- If you have already submitted applications that will fall into the wider definition, you may **request AccessNI to return these applications** to you; you can re-submit on or after 1 September (ticking for a check of the Children's Barred List). Applications can only be returned if they have **not** already been processed by AccessNI.
- If you have already submitted applications before 1 September that will fall into the wider definition and we have issued the certificate, you will **need to submit a fresh application** if you want a check of the Children's Barred List.
- Following the change in eligibility from 1 September, consider whether your existing staff/volunteers now fall into the definition of Regulated Activity. If so, consider requesting an enhanced Disclosure Check with a check of the barred list to establish if that individual is barred.

Payment of Invoices



A recent increase in owed payments has triggered us to remind Bodies that **failure to pay AccessNI invoices promptly may result in your account being suspended.**

If an account is suspended, your organisation will **not be able to submit any further disclosure applications** to AccessNI.

The AccessNI Finance Team often experience difficulty obtaining responses regarding overdue invoices, despite issuing multiple reminders via email and telephone. We are keen to avoid suspending accounts and encourage organisations to make contact if there are any issues or queries.

If you have outstanding invoices or require assistance, please contact the Finance Team directly they will be happy to help.

Additionally, **Lead Signatories must inform the Finance Team of any changes to contact details** to ensure all communications are received promptly.

Email: accessni-finance@accessni.gov.uk

Self-Employed Or Personal Employee Applications

[AccessNI circular 1/2026](#) – AccessNI disclosure checks for self-employed people and personal employees issued to all signatories on 3 February.

When an Umbrella Body is processing an enhanced disclosure application, they should now select the 'self-employed' button for those applicants who are self-employed workers or personal employees.

This 'self-employed' button will only be available on enhanced disclosure applications being processed by an Umbrella Body.



Using AI When Contacting AccessNI

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has provided helpful guidance on the use of AI tools. Please take time to read this information.

If you use AI to help you to draft written correspondence to AccessNI about disclosure applications, complaints or other enquiries this guidance will help you to use AI tools safely and effectively:-

Protecting your personal information

Do not share sensitive personal data with AI tools. This includes:

- your full name, date of birth or address
- your AccessNI application reference number
- details of criminal convictions or cautions
- passport, driving licence or National Insurance numbers
- information about other people

Instead, use placeholders like [my name], [the employer] or [the case worker].

AI tools may store or use the information you provide. Sharing personal data could put you at risk of identity theft or fraud.

Checking AI-generated content

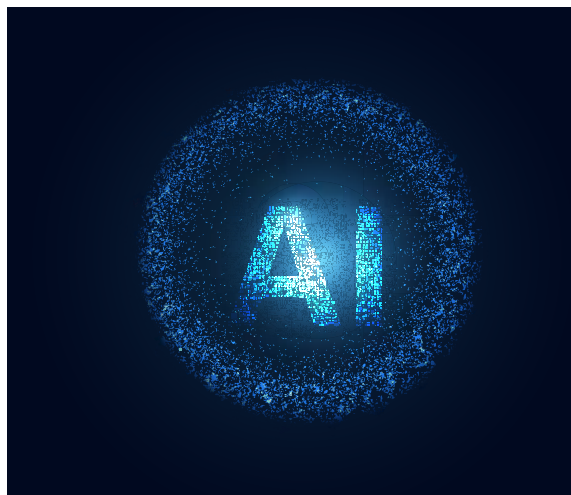
You must check everything an AI tool writes for you.

AI tools can:

- make mistakes or include incorrect information
- invent facts that are not true
- misunderstand what you meant to say
- use the wrong tone

Make sure any text you send to AccessNI:

- is accurate and reflects what actually happened
- is in your own words and sounds like you
- does not include made-up details or exaggerations
- clearly explains your situation



If your correspondence contains unclear or inaccurate information, AccessNI may need to contact you for clarification. This could delay our response or any investigation into your case.

What AI tools cannot do

Do not use AI tools to:

- create false information or misleading statements
- get legal advice (speak to a legal professional instead)
- make decisions about your application
- contact AccessNI on your behalf

If you need help

If you're finding it difficult to write to AccessNI or express your concerns, you can:

- email AccessNI at ani@accessni.gov.uk requesting AccessNI to contact you – remember to provide your contact details
- book an AccessNI surgery slot, when they become available, to discuss your problem with AccessNI staff
- ask a friend, family member or professional to help you.

We're here to help. Contact us if you have questions about your application or need support with your correspondence.

Additional EU Countries – AccessNI Check



From 1 July 2026, AccessNI extended its arrangements for seeking overseas criminal record information to include all 27 EU Member States, for individuals applying to undertake Regulated Activity with Children. These arrangements do not apply to Regulated Activity with Adults.

AccessNI checks for Republic of Ireland applicants will continue to be processed for positions of Regulated Activity with both children and adult groups.

AccessNI has also engaged with Home Office officials to explore the potential for similar arrangements with non-EU countries. However, any extension would be dependent on agreements being reached between the UK Government and the relevant country, as this is a reserved matter. In the meantime, organisations should continue to follow the existing guidance when considering applications from foreign nationals -

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/checking-job-applicants-employees-and-volunteers>

Applicants With Only One Name

During your staff/volunteer recruitment, you may occasionally find that an applicant only has one name, they don't have both a forename and a surname. This generally applies to applicants from overseas.

The applicant should create their nidirect account with a FULL STOP at the forename section of the nidirect account and they should insert their one name at the surname section. This information will prepopulate on the AccessNI disclosure application in the same format – this is acceptable and will be processed by AccessNI.



A Standard Disclosure Application – Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)



Senior Managers in certain financial services organisations may be required to obtain an AccessNI Standard disclosure certificate through an Umbrella Body as part of the requirements for seeking approval from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to perform a Senior Manager Function. This requirement is reflected in Sup10C.10.17 of the FCA Handbook.

Where a Standard disclosure certificate is required for an FCA approval application, and the check is not related to recruitment by the business or self-employment purposes, this meets the eligibility criteria set out in the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979, paragraph 2(1)(e).

The position applied for section should be recorded as “Senior Manager Approved Person for FCA approval”.

Youth Sports Referee

AccessNI has reviewed previous guidance provided to Registered Bodies in relation to the roles of referees at youth sporting events.

Where a Referee frequently officiates at games for Children/Young People under the age of 18 they are often required to teach (or give direction to) the children/young people on matters regarding the skills and rules of that particular sport; this meets the AccessNI definition of Regulated Activity.

If the Youth Referee meets the frequency requirement, they are eligible for an AccessNI enhanced disclosure with the children's Barred List check.

Please record the position applied for as “Youth Referee – coaching children frequently”.

Registered Bodies are also reminded that if sports Referees are remunerated for their time in undertaking this activity they are not regarded as volunteers and should therefore not tick the volunteer box on the disclosure application.



Your Feedback Matters: Results from the 2026 AccessNI Customer Survey

At AccessNI, we are committed to delivering an efficient, accessible and customer-focused service. Earlier this year, we invited Signatories across Registered Bodies, Umbrella Bodies and Responsible Bodies to share their experiences through our 2026 Customer Survey.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate. Your feedback plays a vital role in helping us understand what is working well and where we can continue to improve.

A Strong Vote of Confidence

We were delighted to see that **95% of respondents rated the service provided by AccessNI as either satisfactory, satisfied or very satisfied**. This positive result reflects the success of ongoing improvements and the commitment of our staff to supporting customers throughout the disclosure application process.

What's Working Well?

The survey highlighted a number of areas where customers reported positive experiences:

- **98%** of respondents experienced no difficulties logging into or updating their **nidirect account**.
- **84%** found the online application process easy or very easy to use.
- **93%** found the identity verification process easy or very easy, an improvement from **87% in 2023**.
- **98%** of those using the **View All** feature found it helpful.
- **93%** of respondents use the case tracking facility to monitor applications.
- With disclosure certificates now issued digitally, **95%** reported no difficulties viewing a shared digital disclosure.
- **98%** confirmed that they receive AccessNI newsletters and circulars, demonstrating the effectiveness of our communications channels.

These results show that many of the digital services introduced and developed in recent years are supporting customers effectively and helping to streamline the application process.

Supporting Customers Through Change

During 2025, AccessNI introduced several significant process changes, including the use of **nidirect verified accounts**. We recognise that adapting to new systems can take time, and we are encouraged that customers have responded so positively overall.

The survey did identify some areas where additional support and communication may help. For example, some respondents highlighted challenges obtaining photographic identification from younger applicants, while others expressed uncertainty regarding the distinction between AccessNI and nidirect services.

We will continue working to provide clear guidance and information to help customers navigate these processes with confidence.

Listening and Improving

One of the most valuable aspects of the survey is the insight it provides into potential improvements.

While nearly all respondents receive our newsletters and circulars, only **78%** reported finding them useful. We will therefore be exploring how we can make our communications more relevant, engaging and informative for Signatories.

We will also continue to review individual survey comments and suggestions to identify opportunities for further service enhancements.

Looking Ahead

The AccessNI Stakeholder Forum remains an important channel for gathering feedback and testing ideas for future improvements. By working closely with our stakeholders and customers, we can ensure that our services continue to evolve to meet changing needs.

Thank you once again to everyone who took part in the survey. Your feedback helps shape the future of AccessNI, and we remain committed to delivering the high-quality service you expect.

Together, we can continue to improve the customer experience for all AccessNI users.

AccessNI CSV Export Facility

Once a certificate is issued, details of that certificate only **remain on your nidirect account for a period of 90 days**. After that time the details are removed and cannot be replaced on your account.

Log into your account, at the registered body home page select 'Track status of applications' as detailed below.



Then select the green button to "Export to CSV".

Body Pin

All registered and responsible bodies have recently received details of their Body PIN which they can use to circulate to applicants to facilitate the AccessNI disclosure application process.

The introduction of a Body PIN will be helpful for those organisations who process applications using a long-standing Signatory PIN.

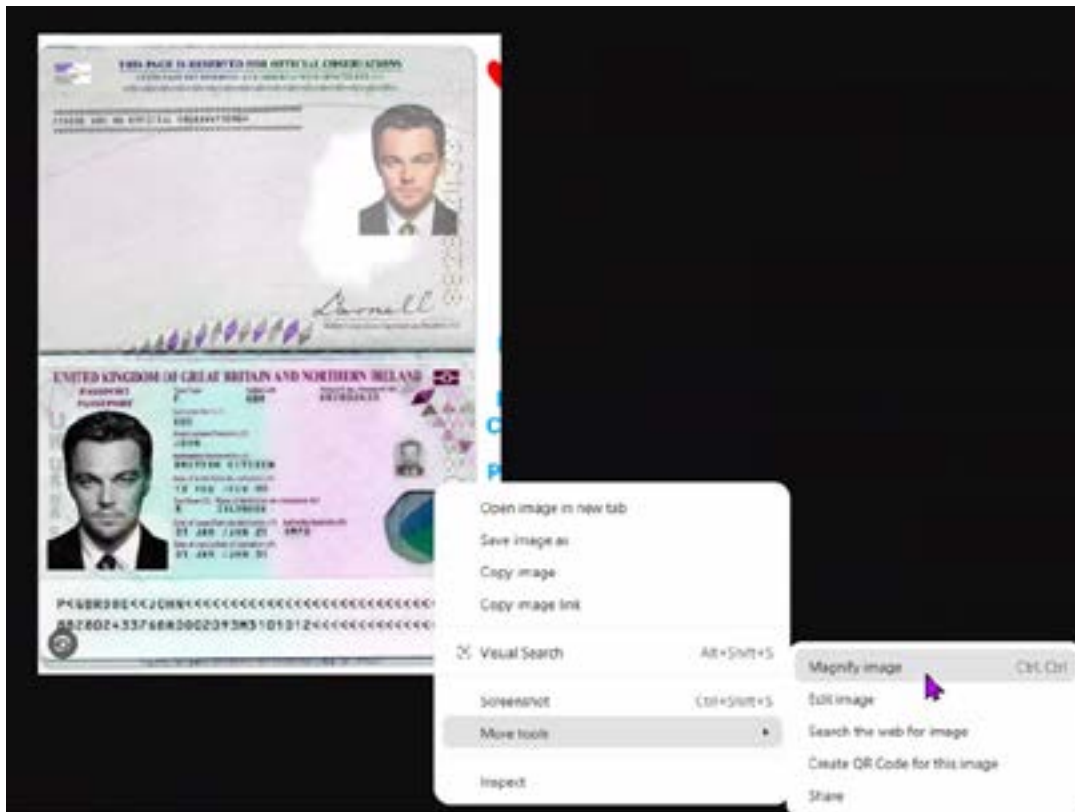
In the past, an organisation may have decided to circulate one PIN number belonging to a specific Signatory to all applicants, if the Signatory owning that PIN number left the organisation or moved on, their account would be made inactive and the PIN number would be invalid when used by an applicant to complete a disclosure application. The organisation would have to update all their documentation to provide applicants with details of another PIN number.

A Body PIN will never become inactive as it belongs to the organisation, the Body PIN will never need to be updated. However, if an organisation circulates the Body PIN, applications will only appear on the lead signatory work queue, the lead signatory will need to select the 'View All' function to permit all signatories authorisation to process these applications.

For full details of the Body PIN see [AccessNI circular 3/2026](#)

Rotating and Viewing ID Documents Uploaded To AccessNI Applications

To rotate and zoom the ID documents uploaded to the AccessNI application right click the image then > More Tools > Magnify Image



You then get options to magnify and rotate as pictured below.
This small menu will appear at the bottom left corner of the image.



Review of Barred List Information

Where an applicant has been included in one or both Barred Lists, this is indefinite unless the referred party asks DBS/DiscoSurre Scotland to review their inclusion.

The circumstances surrounding when they can ask for a review, and under which specific area of legislation, depends on a number of factors.

In summary, referred parties can ask for a review after a certain period of time has elapsed - that period is communicated to the individual in their Final Decision Letter and usually depends on the risk profile associated with their inclusion in the list(s). However, a Section 18A review can be requested at ANY time if new information is available.

Telephone - **0300 200 7888**
www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni