

## ACCESSNI STAKEHOLDER FORUM – 30 March 2023

### Those in attendance (Via MSTeams)

#### Board Members:

Gary Richardson (PSNI)  
Sean Devlin (DVA)  
Denise Adams (ARCUK)  
Lorna Houston (Early Years)  
Michelle McClintock (NICSHR)  
Nichola McKay (QUB)  
Ruth Mulholland (Volunteer Now)  
David Jackson (CEF)  
Bernie Fox (Ulster GAA)  
Claire Gardner (Health and Social Care)

#### Invitees :

Samantha Corr (DBS)  
Carol Eland (DBS)

#### AccessNI:

Brian Thomson (BT) Chair  
Glenn Moorcroft (GM)  
Amanda Jenner (AJ)  
Patricia Kerr (PK)

#### Apologies:

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (PCI)  
John Cuthbert (NICSHR)  
Margaret Rainey (DVA)  
Samantha Vaughan (Sterling)  
Ann Marie Hughes (SRC)  
Andy Thomson (Catholic Church)  
Ruth Mulholland (Volunteer Now)

**Note Takers:** Frank McCabe

1.	<b>Welcome/Apologies</b>  <b>BT</b> welcomed everyone and introduced <b>Samantha Corr</b> and <b>Carol Eland</b> from <b>DBS</b>  <b>FMC</b> read out the list of members who had sent apologies for not attending.	
2.	<b>Minutes of the last meeting (26 January 2023)</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and accepted as a true record of business. They will now be posted on the DOJ website.	
3.	<b>Matters Arising - Action Points</b>  <b>BT</b> informed the members that the action points from the previous meeting had been completed.	

**4. AccessNI Operational Position**

**4.1 Patricia (PK) advised members of the Operational position.**

Since the last SHF Operations have continued to be extremely busy. Staff within the Team have been working overtime to keep queues moving in an attempt to maintain the high levels of output and to meet all targets and to ensure as far as possible that there are no delays in organisations getting staff into posts.

Operations are currently working on applications received on 28 March, a really good position considering the high volumes of applications received on a daily basis. Operations are processing around 800+ applications per day but still end the day with over 1000+ applications in the queue. A push will be made ahead of Easter holidays to try and manage the queues down as low as possible ahead of the break. Basics, Standards and Basic RBs will be cleared on a daily basis whilst the Enhanced queue is more difficult to predict and manage. It is estimated that at the end of this year in excess of 173,000 applications will be processed. This is the highest number processed ever for AccessNI in a single 12 month period.

**4.2 PSNI Update**

There are currently around 798 cases with PSNI, a drop of 400 cases from the previous SHF. Some applicants are experiencing longer delays in getting their certificate issued to them. Currently there are 266 cases outstanding at 25 days or more. Police continue to experience staffing difficulties and as a result have a small backlog of cases. Police are proactively working to reduce this backlog through overtime working and calling in staff from other areas to assist in progressing enquiries. Operations continue to work closely with PSNI to manage the outstanding cases.

**Gary (PSNI)** added that cases referred to PSNI for February are 46% up compared to February 2022, and 25% up from estimates, highlighting the challenges in estimating demand at the current time. Prioritised cases are completed on a day-to-day basis,

GB police referrals oldest case is 127 days and related to a case outstanding with the Royal Military Police.

**4.3 EU Referrals**

EU referrals are all flowing well with approximately 20 cases outstanding from February. After 6 weeks if a disclosure certificate is required urgently Operations issue the certificate, advising applicants and Registered Bodies that the certificate is issued without the EU check, as there are minimal safeguarding risks. Applicants and Registered Bodies are then informed that the certificate was issued correct, or a new certificate has been issued once the enquiry is completed. Operations has not had any instances where certificates have had to

	<p>be reissued with criminal record information on them to date.</p> <p>From 01/02/2023 all referrals to Bulgaria have been suspended due to delays. This continues to be monitored.</p> <p><b>4.4 <u>Customer Enquiries</u></b></p> <p>Customer enquiries remain high to the call centre and mailbox mostly relating to delays which are related to cases referred to a third party. Where possible Operations expedite any delayed cases where financial hardship is cited by any applicant.</p> <p><b>4.5 <u>Staffing</u></b></p> <p>Agency Staff are employed to cover vacant posts within Operations. All 5 staff are now fully trained, operating to the expected standard and meeting all targets.</p> <p>Operations continue to carry out an extensive training programme to ensure current staff are all trained and ready face estimated new challenges after the summer with the possible introduction of the revised Rehabilitation of Offender legislation, pending a return to a working Assembly.</p> <p><b>LH (Early Years)</b> has requested an update on any change in the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order. <b>ACTION - PK</b></p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b></p> <p><b>5.2</b></p>	<p><b>Compliance and Finance Update</b></p> <p><b>Glenn (GM)</b> provided an update on the Compliance and Finance position.</p> <p><b>Compliance Audits</b></p> <p>There have been 175 compliance audits completed to date since the start of the year (April to March), of which 150 were for Registered Bodies (legislation driven – Standard and Enhanced checks) and 25 were for Responsible Bodies (purely for Basic). As of the end of March 2023 there are 616 Registered Bodies (156 of these are umbrella bodies) and 130 Responsible bodies (31 are umbrella bodies)</p> <p><b>Staffing</b></p> <p>One compliance officer remains on long term absence requiring a temporary promotion to backfill. Nevertheless, good progress is being made to completing the suite of audits. Due also to cancellations at short notice by Bodies re-scheduling is required. He asked that members cascade out to RBs that audit appointments do require time to organise and every effort to keep them should be taken.</p> <p>Although approval has been granted to recruit for a new post in the Compliance Team to help develop our services, there is a reliance on NICS</p>	

HR to fill these posts and there has been no progress in that area. Additional clerical support in our Finance Team was also sought but that is also subject to NICS HR providing candidates and recruitments have been delayed.

### 5.3 Training

AccessNI undertook to put Registered Body Training online with shorter 'modules,' including a voice-over, to allow for better learning 'in your own time.' The current four sessions will be reduced to 12 shorter sessions, maximum of 20 minutes.

The implementation of this is underway but as providing training is an ongoing necessity AccessNI ran four sessions in its usual format on 1-2 March 2023. These sessions were attended by 48, 60, 58 and 50 signatories, respectively. The next date for online training is the 26-27 April and is open for registration.

**NMcK (QUB)** asked when a date for the module training is to commence.

**BT** explained that no date had been finalised due to pressing and conflicting priorities but a date in the autumn is estimated.

### 5.4 Newsletter

The Spring 2023 edition of the Newsletter was issued on 24/03/23. An article on the role of the Stakeholder Forum was included.

Particular attention should be paid to the following articles in the Newsletter:

- Third Party Disclosure Application
- Keeping Signatories account information up to date
- Forenames/Surnames on Applications

#### Third Party Disclosure Application

There are a significant number of applications being submitted through Third Party Accounts. This means that an individual, other than the applicant, has created an account on the NIDirect website and submitted an AccessNI application through this account on behalf of the applicant. The article points out that there are potential data protection breaches with this arrangement and indeed potential legal challenges with consequences for the third-party account. There are other reasons that we set out in the Newsletter, and we recommend that RBs encourage applicants to create their own NIDirect account.

#### Signatory Account Information

AccessNI staff are having problems contacting Signatories using the number

<p><b>5.5</b></p>	<p>provided on the NIDirect account. Whilst this is not a widespread problem the team only generally try to make contact when there is something to be resolved. AccessNI would encourage checking of this down through the RB networks.</p> <p><b><u>Finance</u></b></p> <p>AccessNI has prepared a new Business Model for a four-year period commencing 1 April 2023. The model incorporates a number of assumptions for both demand for checks, and fluctuations in operational costs. The current projections indicate that the existing fee levels for Basic, Standard and Enhanced checks are set at an appropriate level.</p> <p>AccessNI will continue to monitor the out-workings of the Business Model, in particular how this might impact on fees. The approach is a prudent one, taking a long-term view rather than increasing or reducing fees erratically.</p> <p>By maintaining the fees at their existing levels, it is anticipated that AccessNI will be able to recover the full costs of providing its services. The business model has been through the Department's accountants and has just been submitted to Department of Finance for its consideration.</p>	
<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>6.1</b></p>	<p><b>Business Support and Transformation - IT Support Contract</b></p> <p><b>Amanda (AJ)</b> provided an update on the Business Support and Transformation - IT Support Contract.</p> <p>The Business Support Team are continuing to be extremely busy dealing with ad hoc queries and also progressing large pieces of work and projects.</p> <p><b><u>System Enhancements</u></b></p> <p>The cookies work has now been completed and the list of portal changes has been passed to our IT supplier, Version 1. AccessNI are expecting their Impact Assessments imminently. The list of changes were circulated to the members of the Stakeholder Forum with the previous minutes. The changes have been grouped to allow for the completion of less complicated amendments quickly.</p> <p><b>Update Service</b></p> <p>A workshop was held with senior AccessNI staff and Version 1 regarding the Update Service. This was for Version 1 to scope a bespoke NI solution. It is thought that this will be financially unfeasible but will need to be completed for due diligence. DBS continue to keep us updated regarding their progress with the Update Service and a few meetings were attended including a show and tell</p>	

on the findings from the Discovery phase.

The next stage is for the Alpha Report where they will provide recommendations for what changes should be taken forward and what should not be addressed in this project.

### **IT Healthcheck**

The remediation for the risks identified in the Health Check are underway with risks assigned to Version 1 and ITAssist as required. As mentioned at the previous SHF - no major risks have been identified.

## **6.2 LOA2**

AccessNI have had further discussions with the Department of Finance (DoF) regarding LOA2. Unfortunately, the changes that AccessNI has sought during the NIDA account creation and verification process cannot be taken forward. Ways are being looked at of getting the information required and an internal workshop has been held to discuss preferred approach. The preference remains to move to LOA2 and to pilot this with Basic Citizen (No RB) checks. Ensuring the capture of all names including middle names, previous names and 'known as' is an issue as these are not verified as part of the NIDA check. However, LOA2 does undertake a range of other digital ID checks such as checking for a credit listing for the applicant at that address – it is believed that the AccessNI applications process would benefit from this.

## **6.3 Reaccreditation**

It was mentioned at the previous SHF that our reaccreditation was due in May 2023. However, following clarification from DoJ Accreditation Team, members should note this is not due until mid-2024.

## **6.4 PNC Replacement System**

AccessNI have also been placed in Tranche 14 to move from Police National Computer (PNC) to its new replacement system Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) – existing plans indicate a transition date for AccessNI for November 2024.

Home Office is progressing the roll-out of LEDS, with a number of police forces already migrated. Access to this system has also changed and AccessNI will need to be part of the NIAM (National Identity Access Management) project to access LEDS.

<p><b>6.5</b></p>	<p><b><u>GDPR Guidelines</u></b></p> <p>A report is expected at the end of this month from Version 1 regarding Retention and Disposal work which should progress plans aimed at ensuring AccessNI comply with Departmental Retention and Disposal Schedules.</p>	
<p><b>6.6</b></p>	<p><b><u>Digital Certificates</u></b></p> <p>AccessNI is keen to explore extending the provision of digital certificates to include those certificates contain criminal history information. The DOJ Chief Information Officer has indicated support for this approach, commenting on improved efficiency and information security. Whilst there are a number of conflicting priorities at present, this service improvement will be a project that AccessNI will seek to progress at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Bernie Fox noted that all National Vetting Bureau certificates are issued digitally, with no option for a paper copy.</p>	
<p><b>6.7</b></p>	<p><b><u>PLX</u></b></p> <p>Engagement meetings are planned with DBS regarding minor operational changes to data held on PLX (soft intelligence database).</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Customer Survey</b></p> <p><b>BT</b> advised that a copy of the Customer Survey has been circulated with the meeting papers and has invited feedback from the Forum members. The aim is to issue the survey in June 2023.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>DBS Outreach Presentation</b></p> <p><b>Samantha Corr (SC)</b> and <b>Carol Eland (CE)</b> from <b>DBS</b> were invited to present a PowerPoint presentation on the DBS Regional Outreach Service. This slideshow was circulated to the members of the forum on the same day by AccessNI.</p> <p>Key Points included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Role of DBS</li> <li>• An Overview of the DBS Outreach service</li> <li>• Types of Barring Referral (Discretionary, Auto-bar, Disclosure Information)</li> <li>• Legal Duty to Refer and When Must you Refer.</li> <li>• Relevant Conduct</li> <li>• The 'Harm' Test</li> <li>• Barring Decision Making Process</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>BT</b> advised that DBS have identified a disproportionate under representation in Northern Ireland in relation to barring referrals and that DBS planned further engagement to increase awareness in this area.</p> <p><b>BT</b> referenced the discussion point from the last the Stakeholder Forum regarding DBS not informing employers about barring decisions and advised that this was raised directly with DBS at the Barring Conference in Belfast on 1 February. Samantha Corr noted that this matter has been reiterated in the Bailey Review which has been presented to the Home Office.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Portable Disclosures</b></p> <p><b>BT</b> advised that the Deloitte consultancy team has presented their findings from the Discovery Phase to DBS. <b>BT</b> thanked the members of the Stakeholder Forum for their participation with this phase.</p> <p>The Alpha phase of the project has commenced and will consider what identified improvements can and cannot be taken forward; the Alpha phase is expected to run for 12 weeks, until the end of June 2023.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Stakeholder Feedback</b></p> <p>No further feedback from the Stakeholder Forum</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>AOB / Date and Time for Next Meeting</b></p> <p>There being no further queries / issues raised <b>Brian</b> thanked everyone for attending and for their contribution.</p> <p>The next meeting will be on June 29<sup>th</sup> at 11am,</p>	



### Annex A – Action Points

Action Point No / Date of Meeting	Action Point	Owner	Action Taken	Status
1 26/1/21	Access NI to issue clarification concerning the NI number on AccessNI Applications.	Amanda	To be issued with minutes of 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 21 meeting	Closed
2 26/1/21	AccessNI Newsletter to include matters raised from short survey.	Amanda	Information included in Newsletter Issue 35 – Spring 21, issued in March 21	Closed
3 26/1/21	Update on AccessNI survey's to be provided at future Stakeholder Forums as a standing item.	Amanda	Information – under Amanda's update to be issued with minutes of 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 21 meeting	Closed
4 26/1/21	AccessNI to review Identity documents in line with Cabinet Office guidance and digital identity checking.	Amanda	Review carried out. New guidance issued July 21.	Closed
5 26/1/21	AccessNI to include details of new DBS Outreach officer in next Newsletter.	Amanda	Information included in Newsletter Issue 35 – Spring 21, issued in March 21	Closed
6 26/1/21	Forum members to provide details on possible additional SHF members.	Forum Members	No information provided	Closed

<b>7</b> <b>30/9/21</b>	AccessNI to review Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder Forum for the next meeting.	AccessNI SMT		Closed
<b>8</b> <b>30/9/21</b>	AccessNI to consider the Registered Bodies who are high-user clients and will invite them to nominate a representative to attend the Stakeholder Forum. In addition, we will also clarify with attendees what organisations they are representing at the Forum other than their own business area	Amanda		Closed
<b>9</b> <b>31/3/22</b>	AccessNI to share details of Chief Officer Delegate email address with SHF members.	Brian F		Closed 31/3/22
<b>10</b> <b>31/3/22</b>	AccessNI to issue p/point slides on the use of organisation / preferred reference on application form.	Pauline		Closed 8/04/22
<b>11</b> <b>306/22</b>	Change List to be issued with minutes	Pauline	Change list incorporated within minutes of meeting	Closed
<b>12</b> <b>27/10/22</b>	Stakeholder Forum members to provide their views on the way forward for the completion of compliance audits	Amanda	It has been agreed that AccessNI Compliance Audits would continue using on-line meetings but consideration would be given to audit visits when considered appropriate.	Closed

<b>13</b> <b>26/01/23</b>	Stakeholder Members to share slide DBS February event	Forum Members		Closed 27/1/23
<b>14</b> <b>26/01/23</b>	DBS Stats to be shared with Stakeholder Members	Frank	E-mail sent on 27/01/23	Closed 27/01/23
<b>15</b> <b>26/01/23</b>	An article on the role of the Stakeholder Forum to be included in the next Newsletter with a link to the minutes on the DoJ website.	Joanna	Included in the Spring 2023 Newsletter	Closed
<b>16</b> <b>26/01/23</b>	Update on progress with IT developments to be provided in advance of next SHF	Amanda	Circulated with the Agenda for the Stakeholder Forum on 30 March 2023.	Closed
<b>17</b> <b>26/01/23</b>	Articles setting out details of when AccessNI make referrals to DBS for barring consideration to be included in next Newsletter.	Brian T	Included in the Spring 2023 Newsletter	Closed
<b>18</b> <b>30/3/23</b>	Update to be provided to LH (Early Years) on the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation	Patricia	Patricia has spoken with LH	Closed