

Safeguarding Report

In May 2017 AccessNI carried out a complete inspection of our safeguarding policies and practices. While the results of this were very positive, especially for such a small organisation, there were some minor amendments which AccessNI requested.

AccessNI requested that we create policies on the handling of disclosure information and the employment of people with criminal records. I worked with AccessNI to draft policies which meet their requirements and these were presented to GPC for clearance in September.

The policy on the handling of disclosure information simply notes that we undertake to store appropriately any information provided in support of an AccessNI application and that, once a period of 90 days has elapsed, that this material will be securely destroyed.

The policy on the employment of ex-offenders sets out our legal obligation to not automatically refuse employment to any person with a criminal record but instead to consider the nature of the offence and the post applied for. These policies are provided to anyone who is applying for an AccessNI check in the denomination and are included in the Denominational Safeguarding Guidance.

Following these amendments it was important to offer updated training on our policies and procedures. Although the training events took place in 2018 significant work was carried out last year to prepare for these. This included the creation of a summary policy, training presentation and workshop materials. Although this will be covered in next year's report I would like to record my thanks to the session and committees of Banbridge, Holywood and Ballycarry for hosting the sessions and to Rev McKee and Adele for supplying the projector and screen.

Looking ahead there are challenges. Unfortunately AccessNI are now enforcing a minimum number of checks per year for registered bodies. Despite appealing they have deemed us too small to sustain our status and therefore we are now investigating other options. This is likely to mean having to use an external body to carry out checks and may mean we have to pay a cover charge even for volunteer checks. I am exploring options and will offer an update once we have this finalised.

Ms Victoria McMullan