



GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO SAFEGUARDING ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

It is natural in this time of crisis that people want to help others, including those who are ill, the most vulnerable in our society who are staying at home as much as possible and those who are self-isolating. This help can take many forms including shopping, going for medical prescriptions, making telephone calls or contacting them by other means. Many groups are springing up across Northern Ireland to provide such help, including church and community organisations and charities large and small. In all of this the current Government guidance in relation to leaving your home should be followed.

[Staying at home and away from others](#)

Where people require support, the first option should always be to rely on friends, family, or neighbours who already know one another. If this is not possible, there are some very simple steps that can be taken to make arrangements with community volunteers as safe as possible. Particular care must be taken where children or vulnerable adults, such as those with dementia or other medical needs, are helped.

These precautions can include (safely) working in pairs, maintaining records of support given, especially where money is involved and provision of receipts to the person being helped.

For most activities with vulnerable groups, such as a “keeping in touch” call service, or going for prescriptions, there is no eligibility for an enhanced AccessNI check, though a basic check could be sought. A basic check for all applicants including volunteers costs £18.

Some activities with people who require support however, may fall within the legislative definition of ‘regulated activity’, for example regularly managing a person’s cash, paying their bills or shopping for a person who needs that assistance because they are elderly, ill or have a disability. A person must not undertake this work if they have been “barred” by the Disclosure and Barring Service, or by the Scottish Government, from working with adults. An individual who is on the list of those barred from working with adults and who does undertake work which is considered ‘regulated activity’ is committing an offence.

Individuals are not required to undertake an enhanced check with AccessNI to undertake regulated activity, though one may be sought through an organisation registered with AccessNI. As an absolute minimum a group should ask someone who is volunteering if they have been barred. A group may also consider accepting an AccessNI enhanced check obtained by or for another organisation. However AccessNI checks are not considered to be portable because:-

- they may not be for the same type of work;
- the police information on a certificate may have been different depending on the level of contact with a vulnerable group;
- some enhanced checks do not require a check of the “barred lists”;

- the older a check is, the greater is the risk that the information on the certificate may have changed; and
- an organisation cannot be certain that the individual is not at the time, on a barred list.

AccessNI has established a fast track system whereby a check of the barred lists can be undertaken quickly for volunteering positions related to the Covid-19 crisis. Details are available at the following link:-

[AccessNI - Barred List Application Form - Covid-19](#)

This is however only available, due to legislative requirements, through an organisation registered with AccessNI.