Transforming criminal record checks for AccessNI

New Online Disclosure System improves customer experience whilst reducing costs and processing time

nidirect government services

AccessNI is responsible for providing the criminal record disclosure service for Northern Ireland residents.

This service enables employers and voluntary organisations to obtain a criminal record check for prospective employees and volunteers. The AccessNI service teams handled over 140,000 disclosure applications and provided the service to over 700 registered customer organisations in the year to March 2017.

Simplifying service delivery

The AccessNI service was lengthy, and required citizens to complete and return paper based applications. Processing these applications was a time consuming, error prone task, and incurred higher costs. In addition, citizens often experienced delays in receiving their criminal record checks with the average time from receiving an application to issue of a certificate for an Enhanced Disclosure being seventeen calendar days (in the year to March 2015).

Benefits

▶ Since the introduction of the solution **92% of customer organisations have seen improvements** in the speed that disclosure certificates are returned.

▶ Since the introduction of the solution the average issue time for Enhanced disclosure certificates has **reduced from 17 to less than 7 days.**

▶ Partner portal that enables over **700 customer organisations to securely exchange electronic applications with citizens.**

These inefficiencies meant AccessNI found it difficult meeting the targets for processing applications and issuing certificates.

To address some of the key challenges, Access NI engaged Civica, as part of the NI Direct strategic partnership programme, to design and implement a citizen centric online disclosure portal, complemented by a customer organisation facing portal, and an AccessNI staff facing management solution.

Over 99% of all disclosure applications are now submitted online

Expenditure costs including additional inflation costs, **fell by 14%**

94% of customer organisations are satisfied with the service

"We reduced staff costs, removed layers of work no longer necessary such as checking of poorly completed paper forms, improved the quality of the jobs in AccessNI, and, most importantly provided a better and quicker service to our customers."

Tom Clarke, General Manager, AccessNI

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Agile Discovery

Civica's agile discovery team worked collaboratively with AccessNI stakeholders through a series of focused workshops, interviews and a detailed analysis of the existing service delivery, helping key stakeholders to describe and prioritise their business needs in a technology agnostic manner.

Working with service delivery teams and senior managers allowed the team to scope and agree innovations in the approach to service delivery that would enable AccessNI to achieve their transformation vision. Adopting an agile delivery model facilitated regular demonstrations of working functionality with AccessNI. These sessions enabled AccessNI stakeholders to provide regular feedback on the evolving solution, and iteratively shape and steer the project to achieve better outcomes. "We found the agile development approach a critical element of the process" says Shaun.

New customer centric digital solution

Following the successful agile discovery phase, Civica delivered a new online digital solution, enabling citizens to complete disclosure applications and payments, securely online. The solution was enhanced further to include digital disclosure certificates as of September 2018.

This enables customer organisations to collaboratively exchange electronic applications with citizens, before final authorisation and submission to AccessNI, making it the only disclosures service in the UK to provide both online applications and the issue of digital certificates across all types of disclosure product. The new Civica solution enabled the rapid transformation of the service from a paper based, service focused offering, to a customer centric digital solution and included:

Electronic Applications - A customer facing disclosure portal that allows citizens and customer organisations, to fill in online electronic forms that check their disclosure applications are as complete and accurate as possible before submission.

Online Payments - Integration of the disclosure portal with an online payment handling solution to enable citizens to make payments securely online, using their debit or credit cards. This reduced the delays associated with the processing of payments made by cheque and postal orders.

Status Tracking - To reduce the time and cost of responding to queries about the status of disclosure applications, Civica developed a component which allows applicants to check the status of their disclosure applications online.

Partner Portal - Developed a partner portal, which enables over 700 customer organisations to collaboratively, and securely exchange electronic applications with citizens, before final authorisation and submission to AccessNI.

Through partnering with Civica, AccessNI is now benefitting from a modern, customer focused solution that streamlines and automates their Disclosure Service. The new online solution has realised a reduction in the staff costs and provided a significant improvement in the user experience for Northern Ireland citizens and organisations. As a result, AccessNI are now able to set and achieve more demanding targets than before the online service was introduced.

> "Enabling users to track the status of their application online, provides a much improved customer experience, and reduces the amount of time that AccessNI service teams spend handling queries. Enabling AccessNI to re-deploy its dedicated telephone/e-mail team to other duties."
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> **Tom Clarke,** General Manager, AccessNI