

## The Policing Board's Role

The Northern Ireland Policing Board supports and administers the Custody Visiting Scheme. This includes recruiting volunteers for the scheme through open advertising and competency based interviews.

The key skills we look for in volunteers are:

- n Concern for the welfare of others;
- n The ability to work as a member of a team;
- n Impartiality and confidentiality;
- n Effective communication skills, and;
- n Time to carry out visits and attend team meetings.

To prevent any possible conflict of interest, police officers, police support staff, people involved in the criminal justice system and members and staff of the Policing Board cannot become custody visitors. We try our best to make sure that the custody visiting teams are as representative as possible in terms of community background, gender, age and so on.

The Policing Board's Community & Human Rights Committee carefully monitors the custody visitor's reports on a month-by-month basis. This includes looking at the treatment of detainees in terms of Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (PACE), human rights provisions, and the PSNI Code of Ethics.



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### DOCUMENT TITLE

REPORT ON THE DOWN/ARMAGH TEAM OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2005/2006

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This document is also available upon request in alternative formats including CD and large print. It can also be made available in minority languages or on audiocassette. Requests for alternative formats should be made to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

### ONLINE FORMAT

This document is available in PDF format from our website: [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk)

### MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about custody visiting or you are interested in volunteering for this role, you can contact the Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator as shown below:

Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator  
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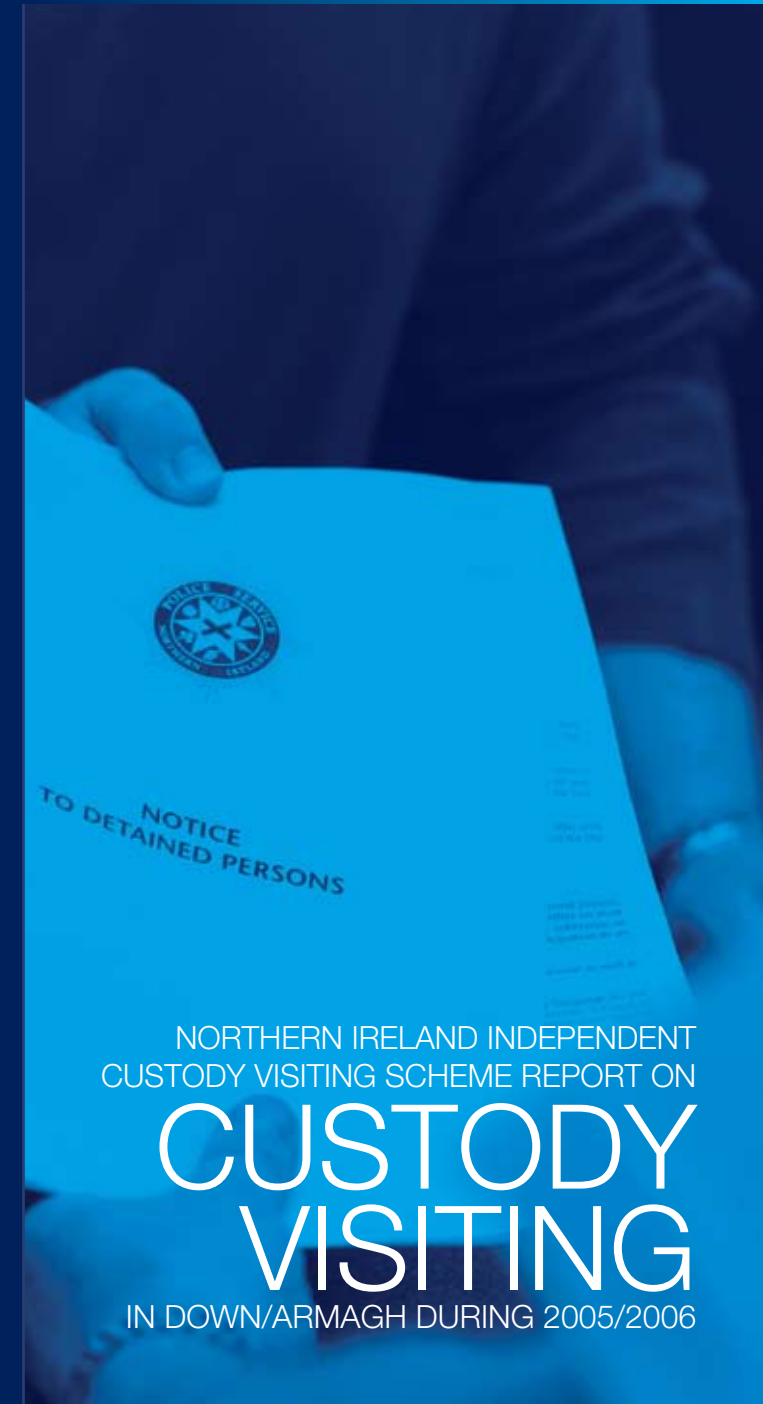
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### DESIGN

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NORTHERN IRELAND INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME REPORT ON

# CUSTODY VISITING

IN DOWN/ARMAGH DURING 2005/2006

**This leaflet is about the work carried out in 2005/2006 by the Down/Armagh Team of Independent Custody Visitors. It also contains general information about custody visiting and details of how to contact the Northern Ireland Policing Board if you are interested in this voluntary work.**

## Background

Custody Visitors are volunteers from the community who make unannounced visits to police custody suites to check on the welfare of people being held in custody. They look, listen and report on what they find. In this way custody visiting means that people unconnected with the police or the criminal justice system can inspect and report on how arrested people are dealt with by the police and the conditions in which they are held.

There are five custody visiting teams covering Northern Ireland. The teams are:

- n Antrim
- n Belfast
- n Down/Armagh
- n North West
- n Tyrone/Fermanagh

Custody Visiting has been taking place in Northern Ireland since 1991, and was made statutory by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

## The work of the Down/Armagh Custody Visiting Team during 2005/2006

There are 12 people in the Down/Armagh team and they carry out visits in pairs to the custody suites in the following police stations: Armagh, Banbridge, Downpatrick, Lurgan and Newtownards.

During 2005/2006 the Down/Armagh Custody Visiting Team made a total of 221 visits to custody suites in the Down and Armagh areas, as shown in the following table.

Station	No. of visits
Armagh	42
Banbridge	57
Downpatrick	25
Lurgan	48
Newtownards	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>

There were 161 detainees in custody during these visits and visitors saw and spoke to 84 (52%) of the detainees. Custody visiting is based on the consent of the detainee to see the visitors. Some 36 (22%) of the detainees did not want to see the custody visitors and the remaining 41 detainees were not seen for some other reason, for example because they were being interviewed or were asleep.

The custody visitors found that 149 (67%) of the 221 visits were entirely satisfactory and raised no issues

about the treatment of detainees or the conditions in which they were being held. Most of the visits they found unsatisfactory were to do with the conditions of detention, such as cleanliness of cells or repairs being needed. These matters are brought to the attention of the PSNI and the Policing Board and they are addressed as soon as possible.

In relation to the treatment of detainees, if a detainee complains about their treatment, it is not the custody visitor's role to investigate complaints - their role is to make sure that such complaints have been referred to the Police Ombudsman for investigation.

During their visits, custody visitors encountered five detainees who had been assessed by custody staff as being at risk of self-harm. The custody visitors were able to check that custody staff were carrying out very regular checks on the detainees' well-being. They also met a detainee who could not speak any English and found that custody staff had already made arrangements for an interpreter to attend.

Custody visitors additionally reported that during their visits, two detainees had told them that they were on medication. The custody visitors were able to check that the custody staff had been made aware of this and the Forensic Medical Officer (FMO) had also been informed. One detainee complained about feeling ill. The custody visitors were able to check that the FMO was aware of this.