



**NOTICE  
TO DETAINED PERSONS**

NORTHERN IRELAND INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME REPORT ON

# CUSTODY VISITING

IN THE NORTH WEST DURING  
2004/2005

**This leaflet is about the work carried out in 2004/05 by the North West 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. These teams are:

- Antrim
- Belfast
- Down/Armagh
- North West
- 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 North West Custody Visiting Team during 2004/2005

There are 12 people in the North West team and they carry out visits in pairs to the custody suites in the following police stations:- Coleraine, Limavady, Strand Road, Waterside.

During 2004/2005 the North West Custody Visiting Team made a total of 172 visits to custody suites in the North West area, as shown in the following table.

Station	No of visits
Coleraine	68
Limavady	26
Strand Road	60
Waterside	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>

There were 143 detainees in custody during these visits and visitors saw and spoke to 72 (50%) of the detainees. Custody visiting is based on the consent of the detainee to see the visitors. Some 29 (20%) of the detainees did not want to see the custody visitors and the remaining 42 detainees were not seen for some other reason, for example because they were being interviewed or were asleep.

The custody visitors found that 137 (80%) of the 172 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 so that they can be addressed as soon as possible.

In relation to the treatment of detainees, three detainees complained to custody visitors about their treatment on arrest. Custody visitors do not investigate complaints - their role is to make sure that such complaints have been referred to the Police Ombudsman for investigation.

During their visits, two detainees asked to contact their solicitors and custody visitors were able to see that these requests were dealt with immediately by custody staff. They met a detainee who could not speak any English and found that custody staff had already made arrangements for an interpreter. Six detainees asked custody visitors to see a doctor or about access to medication and these issues were referred to custody staff for immediate attention.



# 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:

- concern for the welfare of others;
- the ability to work as a member of a team;
- impartiality and confidentiality;
- effective communication skills, and;
- 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 of the community.

The Policing Board's Community Involvement Committee carefully monitors the custody visitors' 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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**NORTHERN IRELAND INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME  
REPORT ON CUSTODY VISITING IN THE NORTH WEST  
DURING 2004/2005**

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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  
Northern Ireland Policing Board  
31 Clarendon Road  
Clarendon Dock  
Belfast BT1 3BG

Tel: 028 90408562 Fax: 028 90408564  
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