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**NORTHERN IRELAND
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
OBSERVER (ICO)
HANDBOOK**

APRIL 2022



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CONTENTS

1. Chair’s Foreword	3
2. The History of Independent Community Observers	4
3. Introduction to the Independent Community Observer Scheme	5
4. Your Independent Community Observer Handbook	7
Part 1: Recruitment, Selection Management, Training and Complaints	9
1.1 Recruitment	9
1.2 Selection	10
1.3 Management	11
1.4 Training	14
1.5 Complaints	14
Part 2: Code of Practice for Independent Community Observers	17
2.1 Health, Safety and Security	17
2.2 Independent Community Observing and Equality	17
2.3 Legislative Framework	18
2.4 The Police Recruitment Process	19
2.5 The Independent Community Observer’s Role and Remit	20
2.6 Planning Your Visits	20
2.7 Reporting Back	22
2.8 Developing Good Working Relationships	23
Part 3: Independent Community Observers’ Involvement in the Recruitment Process	25
3.1 Initial Selection Tests and Assessment Centres	25
Annexes	
1. Volunteer Policy	27
2. Volunteer Agreement for Independent Community Observers	31
3. Independent Community Observer Role and Remit	35
4. Performance Review	37
5. OB1 Form	39
6. OB2 Form	41
7. Further Expenses Information	43



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OVERSIGHT
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1. CHAIR'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to provide you with your Handbook for the Independent Community Observer (ICO) Scheme for Northern Ireland.

Our ICO Scheme is a well-established volunteer programme and we are keen to continue to support you in your role by demonstrating best practice in relation to volunteer management throughout your volunteering journey.

The Board's two volunteer programmes, the Independent Community Observer Scheme and the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, provide independent oversight of policing. Through these Schemes the Board is delighted to have been re-accredited in October 2020 with the Investing in Volunteers (iV) award for another three years.

iV is the UK Quality Standard for all organisations which involve volunteers. iV, assessed locally by Volunteer Now, enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management and also publicly demonstrate their commitment to volunteering.

When you report your findings to the Board, they provide us with an impartial picture of PSNI Recruitment for Police Constables. The information you provide is important: you carry out this essential role to ensure every candidate has a fair and consistent experience and support the Board in ensuring the PSNI meets its responsibilities.

The Scheme is an essential function within the remit of the Board and in turn you are a valued member of the Board's team. Thank you for being a volunteer with us and I wish you every success in carrying out this role.

Doug Garrett

Chair, Northern Ireland Policing Board

2.

THE HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVERS (ICOs)

In September 1999, the Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (the Patten Report) recommended that police recruitment should be contracted out to an independent agency and there should be community oversight in the process.

Following this the Board established a team of volunteers from all sections of the community known as Independent Community Observers (ICOs). In line with Section 10 of the Police (Recruitment) (NI) Regulations 2001, these volunteers observe and report to the Board on the PSNI recruitment processes for Police Officers.

The Independent Agency is responsible for the day to day running, management and assessment of the process for recruitment of Police Constables. Their role through their recruitment team, role-players, assessors and lay assessors, is to assess the candidates' suitability for the post for which they have applied. They do not carry out tests in relation to firearms, vetting, or monitoring of candidates in regard to fair employment, this is done by PSNI.



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PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
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3.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER (ICO) SCHEME

The Northern Ireland Policing Board

The Board is responsible for establishing and maintaining the Independent Community Observer Scheme. Responsibilities include:

- Developing policy to maintain and enhance the effectiveness of the Scheme;
- Ensuring the maintenance of appropriate organisational arrangements and visiting patterns;
- Managing all aspects of the Scheme;
- Overseeing the recruitment, selection, training and management of ICOs;
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for feedback from visits and putting in place the necessary arrangements to respond to issues as they arise; and
- Bringing the volunteer relationship to an end (where necessary).

The Independent Community Observer Scheme sits within the remit of the Board's Partnership Committee.

The Board reserves the right to alter the arrangements as laid out in this Handbook. ICOs will be advised of any necessary changes and will be expected to meet with alterations made by the Board for the efficient and effective running of the Scheme.

The Handbook will be reviewed periodically and re-issued as required.

Independent Community Observers (ICOs)

ICOs are volunteers from the community who play an important part in helping to monitor key aspects of the PSNI recruitment process and report on this to the Board. They focus on observing that the same procedures are applied to all candidates and that the facilities and arrangements are adequate.

While ICOs complete their observations singly they are supported by a wider team of ICOs and the staff at the Board.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER (ICO) SCHEME

Contact Details

ICO Scheme Administrator

Tel: 028 9040 8500

Email: community.observers@nipolicingboard.org.uk

Website: www.nipolicingboard.org.uk

Outside office hours, and **only** in an emergency situation, the Board can be contacted on 07342712033.

4.

YOUR INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER (ICO) HANDBOOK

This Handbook, produced by the Board, contains guidelines on the volunteer management of the Independent Community Observer Scheme. It includes information on the recruitment, selection, training, and management of ICOs; details the support mechanisms in place for ICOs; provides an ICO Code of Practice; and provides details of the PSNI Recruitment Process. It also includes useful policies and documentation to support the ICO Scheme and volunteer management best practice, including the Board's Volunteer Policy, role descriptions and review templates.

We hope this Handbook will be of use and a support to all ICOs. It aims to provide you with the information you need to carry out your role fully and confidently. If you have suggestions about further information which would be useful, or questions about anything in the Handbook, please do not hesitate to get in contact with the ICO Scheme Administrator.



A word cloud graphic featuring various terms related to the handbook's content. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some appearing in larger, bolder fonts than others. The colors used for the text include purple, yellow, teal, and light blue. The words include: 'MONITORING', 'OVERSIGHT', 'PSNI RECRUITMENT PROC', 'IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEER', 'TRANSPARENT', 'ADEQUATE FACILITIES', 'FAIR', 'INDEPENDENT OBSERVING', 'INDEPENDENT TRANSP', 'REPORTING', 'OVERSIGHT', and 'FAIR IMP'.

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MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
TRANSPARENT
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INDEPENDENT OBSERVING
INDEPENDENT **TRANSP/**
REPORTING **OVERSIGH**
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PART 1:
RECRUITMENT, SELECTION,
MANAGEMENT, TRAINING
AND COMPLAINTS

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, MANAGEMENT, TRAINING AND COMPLAINTS

1.1 Recruitment

Recruitment of ICOs

Volunteers for the ICO Scheme are recruited through open advertising in various media outlets, including social media, and by contacting a range of statutory and voluntary organisations. The process for the recruitment of volunteers is in line with good volunteer practice. The Board is committed to encouraging participation in the Scheme from all communities in Northern Ireland.

Application forms and interviews

People wishing to become ICOs will be asked to complete an application form as part of a formal selection process. This will be followed by a shortlisting exercise and an interview. The process will seek to gain information about an individual's suitability for the role based on the key qualities, skills and attributes deemed essential for the role. At the end of the process, applicants will be deemed to be either 'selected subject to' or 'not selected'. All applicants will be made aware when applying that not all applications will be successful.

Key qualities and requirements for ICOs

The key qualities, skills and requirements needed are:

- Effective communication skills, both oral and written;
- Discretion, impartiality and confidentiality;
- The ability to work as part of a team;
- The ability to make sound judgments;
- Aged over 18;
- Ability to meet the necessary time commitments involved in carrying out visits set by the Board; and
- Participation in necessary training to carry out the role.

All ICOs have a role description (see Annex 3) to provide them with a clear understanding and overview of the role.

People excluded from being ICOs

The following people are excluded from being ICOs:

- Former or serving police officers;
- Police support staff;
- Former or serving Policing Board members and Policing Board staff;
- Anyone under the age of 18;
- A person is disqualified from being an ICO if they have at any time been convicted in Northern Ireland or elsewhere of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment passed, whether suspended or not; and
- People involved in the criminal justice system (where there is deemed to be a conflict of interest).

1.2 Selection

Selection on merit

ICOs are selected on the basis of merit and regardless of religious belief, political opinion, gender, marital status, having or not having a dependant, ethnicity, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The Board has a statutory responsibility to ensure that as far as practicable the team of ICOs is representative of the community in Northern Ireland. To achieve this it may be necessary to make allocations to the ICO team from the meritorious list which is not strictly in order of merit.

Reserve List

When recruiting volunteers the Board will aim to recruit sufficient numbers to enable a reserve list to fill vacancies that may arise over a period of time. Volunteers who are not immediately allocated an ICO role may be placed on a reserve list and appointed as an ICO when an appropriate vacancy arises.

Security Checks

Given the nature of the ICO Scheme, an Access NI check, for those individuals deemed selected at interview, will be undertaken. This is carried out by Access NI.

All appointments of ICOs are subject to successful security clearance.

1.3 Management

Policing Board

The Scheme Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day management of the ICO Scheme and the volunteers. The Scheme Administrator is the first point of contact for help and support between the ICOs and the Board.

The Scheme Administrator reports to the Scheme Manager. The Scheme falls into the strategic management portfolio of the Board's Director of Partnership. An organisational chart showing the specific work areas of the Board can be downloaded from www.nipolicingboard.org.uk.

The Scheme Administrator will:

- Provide help and assistance to ICOs;
- Process claims for mileage and other out-of-pocket expenses;
- Provide report forms, stationery etc;
- Provide ICOs with details of the Assessment Centres and other parts of the recruitment process, including timetables and venues;
- Assisting with meetings of the ICO as and when necessary;
- Prepare, as necessary, reports for the Partnership Committee of the Board on the work of the ICO Scheme;
- Organise induction and refresher training as and when required;
- Review ICOs at end of their settling in period and recommend if appointment can be confirmed for the full term; and
- Act as a liaison point between the ICOs and the Recruitment Agency to ensure proper and appropriate channels of communication.

Settling in period

All ICOs have a settling in period of six months.

The settling in period is a two-way process and will provide the new ICO with the opportunity to discuss their experiences, ask questions, seek guidance and receive feedback.

On completion of the settling in period the Scheme Administrator will prepare a short report on:

- The number of visits carried out;
- ICO availability;
- Feedback from PSNI/Recruitment Agency (if applicable);
- Observations to the Volunteer Agreement;
- Display of skills required to perform the role; and
- Compliance with Board policies.

Following completion of the report ICOs will receive notification, in writing of the Board's decision. This could be:

- To confirm the appointment; or
- To extend the settling in period; or
- To bring the volunteer relationship to an end.

Confirmation of appointment

Following satisfactory completion of the settling in period, ICOs will be appointed for a pre-determined period of time. This will usually be for three years from the start of their settling in period, however this may be shortened or extended as deemed necessary by the Board.

Extension of the settling in period

Following the settling in period should the Board have minor concerns about an ICO a settling in period extension will be applied, for example to provide further assistance or additional training.

At the end of the settling in period extension the Board must be satisfied that the individual can now fulfill the role of an ICO or if unsatisfied, then the volunteer relationship will be brought to an end.

Bringing the volunteer relationship to an end

If at the end of the settling in period the Board is not satisfied that the individual can fulfil the role of an ICO, the volunteer relationship may be brought to an end.

Review

In addition to the six month settling in report, ICOs will undergo a performance review at the end of their three year term (see Annex 4). A satisfactory review will be necessary if the ICO wishes to be considered for a further three year term. The review is a two-way process in conjunction with the ICO and will provide an opportunity to discuss contributions to the role and the overall scheme, visits carried out, attendance etc. An unsatisfactory review will exclude the ICO being offered a further three year term.

ICOs are expected to carry out their role and responsibilities in accordance with the ICO Volunteer Agreement (see Annex 2), the Board's Volunteer Policy (see Annex 1) and the Code of Practice (see Section 2). If they fail to do so, without good reason, the Board may bring the volunteer relationship to an end.

This will be assessed through a performance review process conducted between, as applicable, the ICO and the Scheme Administrator.

ICOs can serve a maximum of two terms (six years) and are welcome to reapply following a three year break.

Extensions

The Board reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to extend a period of appointment (with the individual's agreement) beyond the six year term. This may be done to retain particular skills within the scheme or to provide continuity.

Volunteer expenses

The Board will reimburse ICOs' mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. If ICOs use their own car to make visits, they must have fully comprehensive/business use car insurance and are responsible for incurring the cost of amending their car insurance to cover for business purposes.

Expenses claim forms are provided by the Scheme Administrator and can be used to cover mileage and other expenses. This may include, for example, if you attend a conference which relates to your duties as an ICO and your accommodation and food are not provided under the conference costs.

In line with audit requirements and good practice, the Board will reimburse ICOs' mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses when claims are submitted on an official expenses claim form, aligned with receipt of the appropriate OB1 form(s) (see Annex 5) and accompanied by receipts where appropriate.

For consistency, and to support budgetary monitoring, claim forms are required to be submitted to the Board bi-monthly in line with the financial year commencement, for example, April/May, June/July etc. Failure to provide the relevant documentation within the bi-monthly timeframe may result in a delay in processing the payment.

Provided the expenses claim form has been completed correctly, in line with bi-monthly submission, signed by the ICO and accompanied with the correct supporting documentation, the Board will endeavour to make payment within 10 days from the date of receipt, in line with the Government's 10 day Prompt Payment Initiative target (PPI).

Additional information on expenses can be found at Annex 7.

1.4 Training

Before taking up the role, all new volunteers must undertake induction training. This will include, for example:

- Overview of the Board, including the background to the ICO Scheme and its key aims and objectives;
- Guidance on your ICO role;
- Information on reporting, administration and volunteer management policies relating to the effective running of the Scheme, procedures and processes of the PSNI recruitment process; and
- Introduction to the Independent Recruitment Agent and their job.

Further training may be provided for you throughout your time as an ICO. This may take the form of refresher training on particular aspects of the ICO Scheme, team building, or attendance at seminars and conferences.

1.5 Complaints

Raising a concern

When problems arise the first thing to remember is that ICOs can always call upon the Scheme Administrator for help and advice. Indeed, there are a number of problems and issues which ICOs must tell the Scheme Administrator about as soon as possible. These are:

- Any breach of the Volunteer Agreement or Code of Practice;
- Any complaint made by an ICO or made against an ICO;
- Any changes in circumstances which could affect an ICO's position or result in a conflict of interest; or
- Any other matter of concern.

Should you wish to raise a concern about a Board Member, the Board, a member of staff, your role or any other matter please contact the Scheme Administrator.

In all cases concerns will be investigated by the Scheme Administrator who will speak to the parties involved and seek to address the concern informally.

Should your concern be about the Scheme Administrator please contact the Scheme Manager in the first instance.

Formal complaints procedure

If the concern cannot be resolved informally and a formal complaint is received then the Board's Policy for dealing with complaints will be invoked. You can find details about the Board's Complaints Policy on the website www.nipolicingboard.org.uk.

Bringing the volunteer relationship to an end

There may be occasions when the Board has to consider bringing the volunteer relationship to an end either because of wrongdoing or unacceptable performance within the volunteer role. This may include such matters as:

- A complaint;
- A conviction for a criminal offence (which would result in an Access NI failure);
- A breach of confidentiality;
- Failure to act in accordance with the Volunteer Agreement, Volunteer Policy or Code of Practice;
- Behaviour detrimental to the ICO Scheme;
- Bringing the ICO Scheme into disrepute;
- An unsatisfactory review;
- Non-attendance at the necessary training on a regular basis; or
- Non-compliance with the Board's policies.

Complaints against the PSNI

Complaints against the PSNI, an individual Police Officer or a designated PSNI civilian must be made to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland for investigation or can be brought to the attention of the Board which has a statutory duty to pass any complaints it receives to the Police Ombudsman under Section 52 (1) (b) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.

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MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
TRANSPARENT
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INDEPENDENT OBSERVING
INDEPENDENT **TRANSP/**
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PART 2:
CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR INDEPENDENT
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OBSERVERS (ICOs)

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVERS (ICOs)

This part of the Handbook sets out the Code of Practice on the standards of behaviour expected throughout your time as an ICO and includes guidelines as to how best you can carry out your role as an ICO.

2.1 Health, Safety and Security

Personal health, safety and security are of paramount importance and, in carrying out your role; any ICOs **can refuse to carry out tasks which they consider undeliverable due to health, safety or security concerns.**

ICOs must always follow the health, safety and security advice of the PSNI/Independent Recruitment Agency when undertaking their role on site.

You must think about your health and safety when travelling to the Assessment Centre. Park in a well-lit and safe place and be especially careful if, for example, there should be any local disturbances in the area. The Board issues all ICOs with the PSNI's leaflet "Protect Yourself - A Guide to Personal Security".

If you sustain an injury in undertaking the role of ICO you must tell the PSNI/Recruitment Agency and the Scheme Administrator as soon as possible.

The Board has undertaken a Risk Assessment for the Scheme which can be provided on request to the Scheme Administrator.

2.2 Independent Community Observing and Equality

The Board is committed to meeting all of its responsibilities under equality legislation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Board, in carrying out all its functions, powers, policies and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; people with a disability and people without; people with dependants and people without.

In carrying out your role as an ICO, you should treat everyone you meet equally and not treat an individual less favourably than another on the basis of any of the categories aforementioned.

The Board has an Equality Scheme which is available from the Scheme Administrator or can be downloaded from www.nipolicingboard.org.uk.

All ICOs are required to undertake equality training at least every three years. This is arranged by the Scheme Administrator and failure to undertake the training may result in bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

2.3 Legislative Framework

Within the Police (Recruitment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001 the legislative remit of Independent Community Observers is established as follows:

Independent Community Observers

- 10.** - (1) The Policing Board shall appoint a pool of Independent Community Observers who shall report to the Board on such aspects of the recruitment process for police trainees and police reserve trainees as may be agreed by the Board and the Chief Constable.
- (2) Independent Community Observers shall not be involved in any aspect of the recruitment process under Part III of these regulations.
- (3) The reports of Independent Community Observers shall deal with: -
- (a) the adequacy of facilities and arrangements; and
 - (b) whether, as far as practical, the same procedures are being applied to all candidates.
- (4) The reports of Independent Community Observers shall be made in such form and on such occasions as the Policing Board may determine.
- (5) The agent shall make such arrangements as are necessary to enable the Independent Community Observers to carry out their duties.
- (6) The Policing Board shall exercise the duty to appoint the pool of Independent Community Observers under this regulation, so as to ensure, as far as practicable, that it is representative of the community in Northern Ireland.
- (7) No person who is a serving or former member of the police, the Police Authority, the staff of the Police Authority, the Policing Board, the staff of the Policing Board, or the police support staff shall be appointed as an Independent Community Observer.

- (8) A person is disqualified from being an Independent Community Observer if he has at any time been convicted in Northern Ireland or elsewhere of any offence and has had passed on him a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not).
- (9) Independent Community Observers shall be appointed on such terms and conditions including provision as to expenses and allowances as the Policing Board may determine.

2.4 The Police Recruitment Process

ICOs currently observe and report one key part of the police recruitment process in the designated Assessment Centre(s).

The Independent Recruitment Agent

The Independent Recruitment Agent is responsible for the recruitment of Police Constables. Their role is to assess candidates' suitability for the post for which they have applied, and administer the following stages of the recruitment process:

- Application Process;
- Eligibility screening;
- Initial Selection testing; and
- Assessment Centre.

They pass on a merit list of all candidates who are successful at the Assessment Centre to PSNI, who are then responsible for the following stages in the recruitment process:

- Online learning;
- Vetting (including substance misuse test);
- Physical competence assessment; and
- Medical assessment.

Lay Assessors

The Independent Recruitment Agent appoints a pool of Lay Assessors who play a full decision making role and work alongside the Independent Recruitment Agent's assessors in selecting applicants to form a pool of qualified applicants.

They work alongside the Independent Recruitment Agent's assessors at the Assessment Centre(s), interviewing candidates, marking written exercises and assessing oral exercises.

It should be noted that the respective roles of Lay Assessors and Independent Community Observers are not transferable.

2.5 The Independent Community Observer's Role and Remit

A detailed Role Description can be found at Annex 3

2.6 Planning Your Visits

Identity Cards

You will be provided with an identity card with your photograph, name and role.

You will not be admitted to observe the recruitment process without your identity card. You should have it where it can be clearly seen at all times when you are observing. If you lose your card you must contact the Scheme Administrator immediately.

Arranging your visits

The Scheme Administrator will be given the dates, locations and timetables in advance of each part of the recruitment process. The Scheme Administrator will then arrange visits in agreement with all ICOs. All ICOs will, as far as practicable, be assigned at least three visits per part of the recruitment process.

All visits are unannounced and the schedule of visits is not shared with the Independent Recruitment Agency. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as a pandemic, the visits may have to be announced.

Carrying out your visits

Please visit alone and not in pairs in order to reduce the number of people in the room. In general, on each visit, try to ensure that you observe at least 2 interviews or role-plays. In this way you will build an overall picture of the facilities and arrangements, and this will help you to assess whether the same procedures are being applied equally to all the candidates you observe. *(The option of a return to visiting in pairs for future campaigns will be kept under review, subject to consideration of PSNI requirements of Deloitte and any Government restrictions/guidance, or any venue capacity matters relevant at the time.)*

Make sure that you always arrive at the location well before the first session which you want to observe - 30 minutes is recommended. You must leave plenty of time to introduce yourself to reception staff, find the location of the rooms you need to be in, deal with the forms you need to complete, and generally get yourself organised.

The Process

The following is the agreed process for undertaking your visits:

- Introduce yourself to the Independent Recruitment Agent recruitment team and give them completed form OB1 (covered in next section) detailing the sessions you would like to observe.

When you attend an Assessment Centre the recruitment team will provide you with a suggested timetable based on your OB1 preferences. Please be at the relevant exercise room several minutes in advance of the session starting.

- A holding room for ICOs will be provided and the Independent Recruitment Agent recruitment team will escort you to the relevant exercise room;
- You may not enter a session after it starts or leave before it ends;
- When observing an exercise you must remain silent and should not draw attention to your presence or distract candidates in any way;
- You should not have conversations with candidates; Do not engage assessors in conversations when assessments or interviews are in progress;
- Following the observation please report issues to the Independent Recruitment Agent as soon as possible (e.g. room too cold, excessive noise outside room). Actions taken should be recorded on your report;
- If a candidate knows an ICO, they can opt for them not to sit in on an exercise (except group exercises);
- Complete Form OB2 as soon as possible after observing and before leaving the venue. One copy of the report should be given to the Independent Recruitment Agent and a copy should be sent to the Scheme Administrator as soon as possible; and
- You must maintain confidentiality at all times.

Please make sure that your behaviour and manner throughout the time you are observing does not adversely affect candidates, staff or the smooth running of the proceedings. Make sure that you:

- Switch off your mobile phones (non-negotiable);
- Are as quiet as possible when observing;
- Do not take bags/briefcases etc into rooms where tests are being held (a holding room is provided for these by the Independent Recruitment Agent); and
- Think about what might distract you if you were doing an important interview.

A detailed ICO Role Description can be found at Annex 3.

2.7 Reporting Back

Reporting back to the Board is one of the most important aspects of being an ICO. Therefore you should take care over your reports and provide as much accurate information as possible.

All OB1 forms are discoverable documents so you should be careful to use appropriate language at all times.

The Board will use the information you provide in your reports to:

- Make recommendations to the Chief Constable who is the owner of the recruitment process; and
- Report back to the necessary channels, papers/reports, as applicable.

You will be provided with forms on which to make your reports on each of your visits. As a general rule there will be two forms for you to complete. The first, called an OB1 (see Annex 5), will simply record your name and the sessions which you want to observe. You should give this form to the Independent Recruitment Agent staff as soon as possible after you arrive as it will help them to check with the candidates whether or not they know you, if this is necessary.

The second form, called an OB2 (see Annex 6), is your report on what you have observed. Complete your report as soon as possible after you have finished observing. Try to do this in a quiet area away from Independent Recruitment Agent staff and/or candidates, for example the ICO holding room. Please write clearly and concisely and make sure that all sections of the report form are completed as necessary as the Scheme Administrator will use the information you provide on your form to prepare a report to the Board as well as to collate statistics.

Do not be afraid about reporting issues that you believe may be unimportant - if in doubt write it down! Should the Independent Recruitment Agent or the PSNI disagree with anything that has been written they have the chance to take this up with the Board not the ICOs.

The OB1 and OB2 forms are distributed as follows:

- The top (white) copy of the form should be sent to the Scheme Administrator as soon as possible in the provided FREEPOST envelopes;
- The second (green copy) is left with the Independent Recruitment Agent staff; and
- The remaining copies (pink and blue) are for the ICO records.

You should hand all completed forms which you do not need any more back to the Scheme Administrator to be disposed of.

Confidentiality

The OB1 and OB2 forms contain an undertaking not to reveal the identity of candidates or other confidential information obtained in the course of an observer visit. If you do not maintain this confidentiality you will be in breach of these guidelines, the volunteer agreement for ICOs, and you may also be liable to civil proceedings by the candidate concerned.

2.8 Developing Good Working Relationships

For community observing to be effective it is very important that ICOs and Independent Recruitment Agent staff develop and maintain professional working relationships based on mutual respect and understanding of each other's roles.

As an ICO you should:

- Be courteous and considerate;
- Be impartial;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Appreciate Independent Recruitment Agent priorities; and
- Stay within your remit.

In return, you should expect Independent Recruitment Agent staff to:

- Accept your status and recognise your responsibilities in observing, commenting and reporting on the candidate experience;
- Treat you with courtesy and respect; and
- Be positive around the role of an ICO.

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ADEQUATE FACILITIES
MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
TRANSPARENT
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PART 3:
INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY OBSERVERS'
(ICOs) INVOLVEMENT
IN THE RECRUITMENT
PROCESS

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVERS' (ICOs) INVOLVEMENT IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

As outlined earlier, ICOs are involved in the oversight of arrangements for the following posts:

- Police Constables.

3.1 Initial Selection Tests and Assessment Centres

ICOs are involved in observing the Assessment Centre(s) and these guidelines set out some specific information on your role in observing at the Assessment Centre(s), inclusive of the Sergeant's Briefing, Role Plays, and written Report exercise.

There will be 18 candidates invited to the venue for each assessment session per day. Please note there will be three sessions Monday-Thursday (morning, afternoon, and evening), and two sessions on a Friday (morning and afternoon only). The candidates will take the written exercises in groups of 18, although they will do any interviews and role-plays singly.

Please note that if candidates do not attend, then the last slots in the sessions will not be filled.

On arrival you should make your way to the main Administration Room, introduce yourself to the Independent Recruitment Agent Recruitment Team, and give them completed form OB1 detailing the sessions you would like to observe (it is important that you show your ICO ID to the Recruitment Team and tell them your name every session). Your name will be announced to candidates to ensure they are aware of your identity. Candidates have the right to refuse you access to an individual exercise if they know you personally.

Depending on the availability of the Recruitment Team, there may be a short delay in registering your attendance as Candidate Registration will also be ongoing. Please bear with the Recruitment Team until a member of staff is available.

You will be provided with a suggested timetable based on your OB1 preferences ('ICO Assessment Centre Visit Schedule'). If available, there will be a dedicated ICO waiting area. It is important that you move to this room having registered with the Recruitment Team and use this room in your downtime throughout the session.

Throughout the session the Recruitment Team will liaise with you and escort you when possible. Based on your Visit Schedule please attend the correct room one minute prior to candidates. You may not enter a session after it starts or leave before it ends.

The Sergeant's Briefing will commence at 10:00 for the morning session, 13:45 for the afternoon session, and 17:30 for the evening session (evening sessions Mon-Thurs only). It is helpful to allow some processing time, so please arrive approximately 5-10mins before the Sergeant's Briefing is due to commence.

You may observe as the role-play instructions are given to the candidates by the Independent Recruitment Agent staff, and, of course, observe the role play itself. Please be aware that all candidates will prepare for their assessment exercises in the same Briefing Room. ICOs are welcome to remain seated in the Briefing Room during this period. You should be aware that for the majority of time the Recruitment Team will supervise in the Briefing Room, however for practical reasons there may be periodic absence due to having to fulfil other administration duties.

Please make sure that you complete your OB2 clearly and provide concise information about the sessions observed (please provide the Recruitment Agent with the relevant copy of OB2). ICOs are encouraged to seek clarity where appropriate. Where immediate intervention is possible the Recruitment Team will attend to this (in certain cases, where further information is required the Recruitment Team will provide feedback via the ICO Co-ordinator).

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MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
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ANNEX 1:
VOLUNTEER POLICY

THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD'S VOLUNTEER POLICY

Values

The Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) involves volunteers (which are as representative of the community as possible) in two Volunteer Schemes. They are the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme to deliver oversight of police custody arrangements as they provide a valuable independent check on detainees' rights, health and wellbeing and conditions of detention; and the Independent Community Observers Scheme to provide oversight of the police recruitment arrangements by completing valuable independent checks on the assessment centre process.

The Board recognises and values its Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) and Independent Community Observers (ICO) volunteers as a core part of the team with a distinctive role alongside paid staff. All volunteers are provided with a Handbook which outlines the purpose and expectations of their role.

Equal Opportunities

The Board is committed to equality of opportunity when managing the Volunteer Schemes. It therefore welcomes applications from members of the community irrespective of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, disability, age, race, marital status, sexuality or whether they have dependents or not. As young people and people from minority ethnic communities are currently under-represented in its volunteer schemes, the Board particularly welcomes applications from these groups. However, all appointments are made on merit.

Recruitment and Selection

The Board is committed to encouraging participation in its volunteer schemes from all sections of the community in Northern Ireland. Volunteer opportunities are widely advertised throughout Northern Ireland. The process for the recruitment of volunteers is in line with current best practice.

All potential volunteers must complete an application form and attend an informal interview. The process is conducted by appropriately trained individuals and seeks to gain information about an individual's suitability for the role based on the key qualities, skills and requirements deemed essential for the volunteer role.

Given the potential sensitive nature of the Board's volunteer roles any individual deemed appointable at interview will undergo a check prior to confirmation of appointment. At present for ICVs this is a Counter Terrorism Check (CTC) and for ICOs an Access NI Check.

Management of Volunteers

The Scheme Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day management of the volunteer schemes and is the first point of contact for help and support between the Schemes and the Board.

The Scheme Administrator reports to the Engagement Manager. The Volunteer Schemes fall into the strategic management portfolio of the Board's Director of Partnership.

All new volunteers are provided with a written letter of appointment and volunteer agreement which outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both the volunteer and the Board.

All new volunteers must undertake induction training prior to commencing their role. This provides background information on the Schemes, explains their structure and procedures, describes the ICV/ICO role and outlines how they will be supported. At the training volunteers will be provided with a Handbook.

All volunteer appointments are subject to a settling in period of six months. The settling in period is a two way process and will provide the new volunteers with the opportunity to discuss their experiences, ask questions, seek guidance and receive feedback. Appointments to the scheme will only be confirmed on satisfactory completion of this settling in period.

Following satisfactory completion of the settling in period, volunteers will be appointed for a pre-determined period of time. This will usually be for three years from the start of the trial period, however this period may be shortened or extended as deemed necessary by the Board.

A satisfactory review will be necessary if the volunteer wishes to be considered for a further three year term. The review is a two-way process in conjunction with the ICV/ICO and will provide an opportunity to discuss contributions to the role and the overall scheme. An unsatisfactory review will exclude the volunteer from being offered a further term.

If you serve a second term the Board will liaise with you approximately three months before your CTC is due to expire so you can submit a new CTC. You must complete and submit your new CTC application six weeks from the expiry date. If you do not comply and your CTC expires you will be removed from the rota until it is renewed.

Volunteers can serve a maximum of two terms (six years) and are welcome to re-apply following a three year break.

The Board is committed to continuous improvement within its Volunteer Schemes and will provide regular training for volunteers to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to competently carry out their role. This may take the form of refresher training on particular aspects of their volunteering, team building or attendance at seminars and conferences. Volunteers must also undertake any training deemed by the Board to be mandatory.

The Board expects all volunteers to carry out their role in accordance with the Board's Volunteer Agreement, Volunteer Policy and the Code of Practice. If they fail to do so without good reason the Board can bring the volunteer relationship to an end.

The Board recognises its duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of volunteers and therefore operates a procedure relating to complaints made by, or relating to, volunteers. It is the Board's aim that when raising a concern; it is dealt with by the Scheme Administrator. Formal complaints are dealt with in line with the Board's Complaints Policy.

In order to effectively manage volunteers the Board maintains a personal file for all volunteers, which, includes: contact details and other relevant personal information, details of the application and selection process, volunteer agreements; confirmation of a settling in period and reviews; any complaints or grievances made or received. Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998)¹

Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers. IiV is owned by the UK Volunteering Forum, which includes Volunteer Now for Northern Ireland. The Board was re-awarded IiV Accreditation for its volunteer schemes, the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and the Independent Community Observers Scheme, in October 2020.

¹ The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into effect on 25 May 2018.

Expenses

The Board will reimburse volunteers' mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Expenses claim forms are provided to volunteers by the Scheme Administrator.

The claim form can be used to cover mileage and other expenses. The Board will reimburse volunteers' mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses when claims are submitted on an official expenses claim form, aligned with receipt of the appropriate form(s) (CV2/CV4 or OB1) and accompanied by receipts where appropriate. For consistency, and to support budgetary monitoring, claim forms are required to be submitted to the Board bi-monthly in line with the financial year commencement.

Failure to provide the relevant documentation within the bi-monthly timeframe may result in a delay in processing the payment.

Insurance

In line with the approach taken by many public bodies/statutory organisations, the Board 'self-insures'. This means that it sets aside funds to enable it to pay out on substantiated claims which may be made.

It is essential that all volunteers inform their insurance company that they are using their car for the purposes of volunteering and that they have an appropriate and continued insurance policy which covers them for business purposes.

Health and Safety

Volunteers are subject to the Scheme's health and safety guidelines at all times. This is included in the induction training and is detailed in the Code of Practice. It is also important to note that volunteers can refuse to carry out tasks which they consider unrealistic.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key requirement for volunteers and must be maintained at all times. Any breach of confidentiality may result in bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

Reviewing the Board Volunteer Policy

The Board reserves the right to amend this policy as necessary. Volunteers will be advised of any necessary changes and will be expected to comply with any alterations made by the Board.

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ADEQUATE FACILITIES
MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
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ANNEX 2:
VOLUNTEER
AGREEMENT FOR
INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY
OBSERVERS (ICOs)

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

1. This Volunteer Agreement sets out key expectations and responsibilities for both the Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) and you as an Independent Community Observer (ICO).
2. Please read the agreement carefully as you will be asked to sign that you understand and accept the requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact the Scheme Administrator if you have any questions.

Expectations of the Board

Behaviours

3. It has been explained to you that impartiality and confidentiality are key requirements for ICOs. As an ICO you will seek to be impartial and maintain confidentiality at all times.
4. You may have access to information which you cannot disclose to others outside the Scheme.
5. You should not take part in any public activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise or damage, the reputation of the Board or the ICO Scheme.
6. In respect of the use of social media, ICOs are reminded that the same standards of behaviour and conduct apply online as would be expected offline in the posting of information or in commentary made on social media platforms. The same rules also apply with social media as with other traditional forms of media in terms of libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws.
7. Any breach of these requirements may result in bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

Visits and meetings

8. You understand the time and travel commitments expected of you as an ICO and you will seek to fulfil these requirements.
9. You will carry out visits in accordance with the ICO's Code of Practice.
10. You will inform the Scheme Administrator immediately of any change in your circumstances which could affect your position as an ICO, your ability to carry out the duties of an ICO, or which might result in a conflict of interests.
11. You are required to undertake at least 2-3 visits and will seek to regularly attend meetings unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this. If this happens you will inform the Scheme Administrator as soon as possible. Should at least 2-3 visits not be made across each campaign the Board may bring the volunteer relationship to an end.

Training

You will undertake training as required by the Board. Should you not attend necessary training on a regular basis the Board may bring the volunteer relationship to an end.

Working Relationships

You recognise that it is important that ICOs work as a team. You will treat your fellow team members with courtesy, respect and consideration. You will work to develop and maintain professional working relationships with the Independent Recruitment Agent. You will treat Board staff with courtesy at all times.

You will conduct yourself in a way which enhances the Scheme. Any behaviour or practice which is detrimental to the scheme or the smooth running of the team may result in bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

You will adhere to the Board's policies as applied to the Independent Community Observer Scheme.

Settling in period and performance review

You will be subject to an initial six month settling in period. At the end of this period, and subject to a satisfactory performance review agreed by yourself and the Board, you may be offered a three year appointment.

At the end of your three year term, the Scheme Administrator will conduct a performance review. This will reflect your attendance at team meetings and training, ability to show concern for the welfare of others, work positively as a member of the team, including The Independent Recruitment Agent and Board staff, demonstrate impartiality and confidentiality, and display effective communication skills. Should you fail to meet the minimum requirement we may consider bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

A satisfactory review will be necessary if the ICO wishes to be considered for a further three year term. The review is a two-way process in conjunction with the ICO and will provide an opportunity to discuss contributions to the team and the overall scheme. An unsatisfactory review will exclude the ICO from being offered a further term.

Identity Card

On appointment you will be issued with an identity card. You undertake to look after this carefully and use it only for making your allocated ICO visits. If it is lost or stolen, you will report this to the Scheme Administrator, as a matter of urgency (within 24 hours).

At the end of your ICO volunteering you will return the identity card within two weeks.

Expectations of the ICO

Help and Support

The Board employs a Scheme Manager and Scheme Administrator to run the Community Observer Scheme and to provide as much help and support to you as possible on its behalf. In the first instance you may contact the Scheme Administrator at any time if you have a query.

Training

The Board recognises the importance of training for volunteers and undertakes to provide you with induction training you will need in order to be an effective ICO.

The Board will organise further applicable training which will support your ICO development.

Insurance

In line with the approach taken by many public bodies/statutory organisations, the Board 'self-insures'. This means that it sets aside funds to enable it to pay out on substantiated claims which may be made.

Reimbursement of expenses

The Board will reimburse your mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with your allocated visits to Assessment Centres and attendance at team meetings.

Keeping in touch

Should it be necessary for you to take a break from your volunteer role as an ICO you will be expected to keep in touch with the Scheme Administrator to update them on your anticipated timeframe for return.

Where circumstances prevail, and you feel it necessary to leave your volunteer role, you should contact the Scheme Administrator as soon as possible. Failure to do so could result in bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

If the Scheme Administrator has not been able to contact you for a period longer than 8 weeks, then the Board will consider bringing the volunteer relationship to an end.

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MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
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ANNEX 3:
INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY
OBSERVER (ICO)
ROLE AND REMIT

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Independent Community Observer (ICO) is detailed under Section 10 of the Police (Recruitment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001. In short this is to observe samples of the key part(s) of the PSNI officer recruitment process and report back to the Policing Board on:

- the adequacy of facilities and arrangements; and
- whether, so far as practicable, the same procedures are applied to all candidates.

ICOs can be involved, through a focus group, on the testing of the Independent Recruitment Agent's Advertising and Outreach Programme, to inform the Agent's approach. It is proposed the Deloitte Recruitment Team will run a clarification workshop or online session 3-5 weeks after the Assessment Centres begin to allow for early consideration of feedback and so clarity can be provided on any matters, and then again at the close of the Assessment Centres in order to understand what worked well and highlight any areas for improvement.

Prior to the Assessment Centres going live ICOs will undertake a site orientation visit (in addition to the formal training) to allow for familiarisation with the venue and Assessment Centre set-up prior to the go-live period. The orientation visit will also allow ICOs to understand what the 'consistent experience' should look like as the Deloitte Recruitment Team will walk ICOs through the session from the candidate's point of view.

Within the Assessment Centre areas ICOs should take into consideration that:

- Candidates are given equal amounts of time for each process;
- The same procedures are applied to all candidates;
- Instructions to candidates are clear whether spoken or written;
- The appropriate number of assessors/role-players etc. are with the candidates;
- Candidates are treated with respect/courtesy/sensitivity/confidentiality/professionalism;
- Candidates are given prompt responses to any questions they may have;
- The size of rooms/temperature/lighting etc. is acceptable;
- There are no distractions for candidates such as excessive noise;
- Background briefing is provided as necessary; and
- Sessions last the specified length of time.

ICOs are also expected to:

- Keep the Scheme Administrator and fellow volunteers informed of any problems with rostered visits;
- Complete and submit report forms and expense claims in line with the Board's policy; and
- Immediately report any change of circumstances likely to affect an individual's ability to fulfil the role of ICO

Essential criteria and requirements for Independent Community Observers

ICOs are required to demonstrate the following essential criteria:

- Effective communication skills, both oral and written;
- Discretion, impartiality and confidentiality;
- Ability to work as part of a team;
- Ability to make sound judgements;
- Ability to show concern for the welfare of others; and
- aged over 18; ability to meet the necessary time commitments involved in carrying out visits set by the Board (minimum three); participation in necessary training to carry out the role; and access to a form of transport to meet the requirements of the post in full.

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MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
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ANNEX 4:
PERFORMANCE
REVIEW

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER SCHEME

Three Year Performance Review

ICO	
Period under review	
Date of review	
<p>In accordance with the ICO Handbook, appointments will be initially for a three year period. At the end of this time the ICO may wish to serve a second term. This is subject to a satisfactory performance review. The Reviewer should complete all sections applicable.</p>	

Attribute	Comments
Having effective communication skills	
Showing impartiality and confidentiality	
Working as a member of a team	
Ability to make sound judgments	
Having time to attend meetings/training and undertake visits	
Additional comments	

Recommendation of Scheme Administrator

Signed

Date

Comments by ICO

Willingness to continue as ICO?

Yes/No

Signed

Date

Recommendation of ICO Scheme Manager

Signed

Date

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ANNEX 5:
OB1 FORM

REPORT FORM

1. Name of Observer: (Please Print)

.....

2. Location:

Day:

Date:

.....

3. Sessions to be observed:

.....

Time:

.....

Time:

.....

Time:

.....

[Give this form to Recruitment Agency Staff at the Assessment Centre upon arrival. They will advise you if you can observe sessions stated at (3) above. If not they must give a reason. If you are refused entry to a particular session please state reasons on Form OB2.]

Signed (ICO):

Signed (Recruitment Agent):

TOP COPY (WHITE) TO SCHEME ADMINISTRATOR
2ND COPY (GREEN) TO RECRUITMENT AGENT
3RD COPY (BLUE) TO BE RETAINED BY COMMUNITY OBSERVER
4TH COPY (PINK) TO BE RETAINED BY COMMUNITY OBSERVER

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ANNEX 6:
OB2 FORM

REPORT FORM

Report on recruitment of full time Police Officers

1. Name of Observer: (Please Print)
2. Location: Day: Date:
3. Time obs. started: Time obs. finished:

4. Candidate's Instruction	Number of sessions observed
Sergeant's Briefing	
Role-play 1	
Role-play 2	
Role-play 3	
Other (please say)	

5. Were the same procedures applied as far as possible to each candidate observed?
Yes **No** (if "no" please give more details below):

6. Overall, were the facilities?: **Good** **Acceptable** **Poor** (if "poor" please say why):

7. Other comments:

8. I will not reveal any details of candidates, processes or other confidential information to any unauthorised person:
 Signed (ICO):
 Signed (Recruitment Agent):

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ANNEX 7:
FURTHER EXPENSES
INFORMATION

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD EXPENSES - FURTHER INFORMATION

The Board follows the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) mileage rates (which are non-taxable) and, as from 6 April 2011, these are:

- Cars - 45p/mile for first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile thereafter; and
- Motorcycles - 24p/mile.

Mileage is checked against the AA route planner. Where there are major discrepancies in mileage claimed from the **most direct route** arising from the ready reckoner, the form will be returned to the ICO for explanation. Where you have taken an alternative route, for example, due to roadworks, weather conditions, time of driving, please note this clearly in the 'reasons' column of your expenses claim form.

ICOs can claim for periods of time they spend away from home (more than 5 miles from their home address) as outlined below.

Period of time away from home	Rate	Conditions
Over 5 hours	Up to a maximum of £4.25	Supported by a receipt
More than 10 hours	Up to a maximum of £9.30	Supported by a receipt

Expenses can be claimed for each completed period of twenty four hours as outlined in the following table. The Board will book hotel accommodation for you at the special discounted government rate (where possible). However you may be responsible for paying hotel costs and claiming it back later.

Location	Rate	Other
Central London	B&B up to a value of £140 including VAT (supported by receipt)	Up to a maximum of £18.30 including VAT to cover lunch and dinner (supported by a receipt)
Elsewhere (including N. Ireland)	B&B up to a value of £100 including VAT (supported by receipt)	Up to a maximum of £18.30 including VAT to cover lunch and dinner (supported by a receipt)

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