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**APPLICANT
INFORMATION
BOOKLET
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
OBSERVER (ICO)**

GLOSSARY

ICO	Independent Community Observer Scheme
ICOs	Independent Community Observers
ICV	Independent Custody Visiting Scheme
ICVs	Independent Custody Visitors
IiV	Investing in Volunteers
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
The Board	Northern Ireland Policing Board

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Note - The Board reserves the right to alter operational arrangements of the Independent Community Observer (ICO) Scheme. Newly appointed ICOs will be advised of any changes and will be expected to meet with alterations made by the Board for the efficient and effective running of the Scheme.

1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing in 1999 (the Patten Report) recommended that police recruitment should be contracted out to an independent agency, and there should be community oversight of the process. As a result, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (hereafter the Board) established a team of impartial 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 recruitment processes for Police Constables for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). This is a statutory function for the Board and the ICO role is integral in providing independent oversight of this recruitment process.

ICOs carry out unannounced visits in pairs, to observe a sample of role plays being undertaken within the Assessment Centres for Police Constables, and report back to the Board on:

- The adequacy of facilities and arrangements; and
- Whether, as far as practicable, the same procedures are applied to all candidates to ensure the recruitment process is independent, transparent and fair for all.

Any issues of concern identified during a visit are brought to the attention of the independent agency¹ to be resolved immediately, if possible, with the Board informed through completion of the agreed paperwork during each visit.

The information ICOs provide is vital and used in a variety of ways, such as improving the PSNI recruitment process and the Assessment Centres themselves, operational decisions around the ICO Scheme, statistical reporting, and the creation of reports after each recruitment campaign to analyse the effectiveness of the Scheme.

In November 2023, the Board was reaccredited with the Investing in Volunteers award (IiV), the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers, both of our well-established volunteer programmes - the ICO Scheme and the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme which makes unannounced visits to police custody suites to check on the welfare and treatment of detainees, the conditions of detention and to inspect the facilities and check custody records. The IiV is assessed locally by Volunteer Now, and enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management and publicly demonstrate their commitment to volunteering.

People wishing to become ICOs will be asked to complete an application form as part of a selection process. This will be followed by a shortlisting exercise and an informal interview. The scheme operates a rolling recruitment process, as such, the Board will aim to hold informal interviews at regular intervals, as and when new ICOs are required. Board Officials will advise you of an indicative time frame once your application form has been processed. At the end of the process, applicants will be deemed 'Appointable' or 'Not Appointable'. The Board will hold a merit list of successful candidates to fill any subsequent vacancies which may arise over the next 3 years. So even if you are successful at the interview, we may not be able to offer you a place on the Scheme straight away.

Please also note not all applicants may be successful.

The Board is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications from eligible candidates irrespective of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, including gender reassignment, disability, age, race, marital/civil partnership status, sexuality or whether or not they have dependants.

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2 **ROLE OF THE BOARD**

The Board is responsible for establishing and maintaining the ICO Scheme. Responsibilities include:

- Managing all aspects of the ICO Scheme;
- Developing policy to maintain and enhance the effectiveness of the ICO Scheme;
- Ensuring the maintenance of appropriate organisational arrangements and visiting patterns;
- Overseeing the recruitment, selection, accreditation, 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 daily remit of administering the ICO Scheme currently falls to the Partnership Directorate's Engagement Team, with the Board's Partnership Committee responsible for overseeing the role and operation of the ICO Scheme.

3 **ROLE DESCRIPTION**

The role of an ICO involves carrying out unannounced visits, in pairs, to observe a sample of Assessment Centre sessions for the recruitment of Police Constables, and reporting back to the Board by completing the agreed paperwork.

Within the Assessment Centre, 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 and 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;
- The 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.

4 KEY QUALITIES, SKILLS AND REQUIREMENTS

We encourage ICOs from a wide range of backgrounds, all training and support will be provided, however, there are some essential skills required to carry out the role effectively:

- Effective communicator both verbally and in writing;
- Ability to demonstrate discretion and an impartial view in relation to all parties involved in the ICO process;
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and adhere to policies and procedures;
- Ability to work as part of a team;
- Ability to make sound judgements;
- Aged over 18;
- Have access to a form of transport to meet the requirements of the post in full;
- Ability to meet the necessary time commitments involved in carrying out visits set by the Board; and
- A commitment to continued development and participation in any necessary training to carry out the role.

You should aim to provide evidence of the above in **Section 5** of your application.

5 TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Location

Assessment Centres currently take place in one Belfast City Centre location, but this can be subject to change.

Length of Service

ICOs can serve a maximum of two terms (6 years) and in certain circumstances an extension can be offered. ICOs are welcome to reapply to the Scheme following a 1 year break.

Volunteer Expenses

ICOs are volunteers so they do not receive payment or compensation for earnings. However, the Board will reimburse ICOs' mileage and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with undertaking the ICO role.

Induction Training

Before taking up their role, all new volunteers must undertake bespoke induction training to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively and confidently carry out the role.

Ongoing Training/Development Opportunities

The Board will provide regular training for ICOs to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role. There is also a requirement for all ICOs to undertake any training deemed by the Board to be essential in carrying out the role effectively.

ICOs will also be provided with a Handbook containing useful guidance and policies around the role along with a volunteer agreement.

Refresher training will be provided along with guidance and support from the Scheme Manager and Scheme Administrator at the Board. ICOs may also be invited to take part in relevant topical briefings, focus groups and an Annual Volunteer Conference.

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.

If ICO's use their own vehicle to undertake the role, **they must have fully comprehensive/business use insurance**, and are responsible for incurring the cost of amending their car insurance to cover for business purposes.

What is the time commitment?

The ICO role is classed as 'episodical' volunteering with ICOs only volunteering when there is a live recruitment campaign for Police Constables, with visits taking place at set times in the morning, afternoon and early evening. ICOs are usually expected to commit approximately 20 hours annually to this role, dependent on there being a live recruitment campaign.

Selection on Merit

Appointments will be made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition, selected on the basis of merit and regardless of religious belief, political opinion, gender, including gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, having or not having a dependant, ethnicity, disability, age or sexual orientation. Please note, not all applicants may be successful.

Reserve Lists

The Board will aim to recruit sufficient numbers to enable a reserve merit list to fill any subsequent vacancies that may arise over the next 3 years. Volunteers who are deemed successful, but are not allocated immediately to the ICO role, will be placed on the reserve list for if/when appropriate vacancies arise.

Security Checks

Given the nature of the ICO Scheme, successful candidates will only be appointed subject to a successful Access NI security check. To find out more about this please visit: www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/accessni-criminal-record-checks/apply-accessni-check

Settling in Period

New ICOs will have a settling in period of 6 months and will be paired during this time (or for at least the first 3 Assessment Centres) with another experienced ICO (where possible) who will provide the help and support they need to feel confident in the role. The settling in period is a 2 way process and provides new ICOs with the opportunity to discuss their experiences, ask questions, seek guidance and receive feedback.

Following completion of the settling in period, and a review, ICOs will receive notification in writing of the Board's decision to confirm them in post, extend their settling in period or bring the volunteer relationship to an end.



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GUIDANCE

6.1 Eligibility and Exclusions

Applicants should ensure they are eligible to apply by completing Section 3: 'Exclusions' and Section 4: 'Eligibility' of the application form.

The following people are **excluded** from being ICOs:

- Former or serving Police Officers;
- Police support staff;
- People involved in the criminal justice system (where there is deemed to be a conflict of interest);
- Former or Serving Policing Board Members and Policing Board staff;
- Anyone convicted in Northern Ireland or elsewhere of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment passed, whether suspended or not; and
- If you are involved in any part of the PSNI recruitment process (for example as part of paid employment with the independent agency contracted to deliver the recruitment campaigns).

6.2 Assessment Process

People wishing to become ICOs will be asked to complete an application form as part of a selection process. This will be followed by an eligibility sift and an informal interview.

At the end of the process, applicants will be deemed 'Appointable' or 'Not Appointable'. Not all candidates will be successful and not all successful candidates may be appointed.

It is helpful for candidates to familiarise themselves with the criteria as this forms part of the basis of the selection process.

6.3 Application Form

All parts of the application form must be completed by the applicant. Failure to do so will result in your application not being progressed. Applicants are encouraged to complete electronic applications and submit via e-mail wherever possible. However, hard copy application packs are available on request. All applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or electronic. The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.

6.4 Interviews

As this is a rolling recruitment campaign, the Board will aim to hold informal interviews at regular intervals, as and when new ICOs are required. Board Officials will advise you of an indicative time frame once your application form has been processed. The Interview Panel will design the informal interview questions as a mixture of standard interview questions and criteria based questions designed to enable the applicant to talk about their knowledge and experience/s against the agreed criteria.

CRITERIA FRAMEWORK

Criteria 1

Effective Communication Skills

Effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front; communicating with clarity, conviction, enthusiasm and with a good use of language in a team setting. Experience of writing reports/papers and/or verbally presenting information to a wide range of audiences and thinking through the style to suit the audience.

Criteria 2

Ability to demonstrate impartiality and confidentiality

Being independent and impartial is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens regardless of religion, gender, sexuality, culture, racial and socio-economic status. Be able to demonstrate experience of handling situations in an independent, fair and unbiased manner showing a clear awareness of the issue and importance of confidentiality and describe the challenges faced and resolutions implemented to overcome these.

Criteria 3

Ability to Work in a Team

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting relationships within a team and work collaboratively to achieve objectives/goals, all with an understanding of where their role fits and to support the wider team's needs. Those with an effective ability to work in a team will have the confidence to challenge assumptions, take the lead, but also listen to other team member's views and opinions. They will have the confidence to manage conflict and resolve team disharmony. They will actively seek development opportunities for their team.

Criteria 4

Ability to use sound judgement

Effectiveness for this criteria is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to make accurate informed decisions and comparisons by analysing the situation and information. Will have the confidence to analyse and take into consideration all evidence and information to evaluate the situation/options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

6.5 Informal Interview

The informal interview is likely to last approximately 15 minutes and the panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your own experience. You may draw examples from any area of your work/volunteer/life experiences. Ensure you:

- Read and understand the criteria for the post;
- Understand the ICO role;
- Clarify **your** role/unique contribution in the examples you give; and
- Listen carefully to the questions and if necessary, ask for a question to be repeated.

6.6 Changes in Personal Circumstances and Contact Details

Please ensure the Board are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances or contact details.

6.7 Disability Requirements

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a disability as a “physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend the informal interview. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact us on communityobserverrecruitment@nipolicingboard.org.uk or 028 9040 8500.

6.8 Guaranteed Interview Scheme

In line with the Equality Commission’s Positive Action for People who are Disabled guidance (www.equalityni.org/Home) the Board operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). You do not have to be registered as a disabled person to apply under this scheme.

To be eligible for the GIS you must have a disability or long term health condition/impairment which puts you at a significant disadvantage in either obtaining or keeping appointments. The disability could be physical, sensory or mental and must be expected to last for at least 12 months. Provided that you demonstrate in the application form that you meet the essential criteria for the post, you will be offered a guaranteed interview. The Board will monitor all applications made under the GIS for Equality Commission Northern Ireland reporting purposes.

Section 6 on the application form includes a section on Reasonable Adjustments, and an applicant can state what adjustments are required, either due to a disability or if applying under the GIS. If clarification is required, a representative from the Board will contact the applicant to discuss their requirements.

6.9 Right to Work and Nationality Requirements

The Board must ensure that you are legally entitled to volunteer in the UK and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment. Applicants must be either:

- A UK national; or
- A Commonwealth citizen; or
- A British Protected Person; or
- An EEA national; or
- A Swiss National; or
- A person who is not an EEA or Swiss national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose.

6.10 Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application. To read the Board's Equality Scheme go to www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/

6.11 General

The Board is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select volunteers are fair and in accordance with good volunteer practice. Requests for feedback can be accommodated. All information provided on your application form will be treated in confidence and only the relevant sections will be provided to the interview panel, which may include:

- **Section 3:** Who Cannot be an ICO;
- **Section 4:** Who Can be an ICO;
- **Section 5:** Personal Statement; and
- **Section 6:** Reasonable Adjustments.

6.12 Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the appointment process or who require documentation in an alternative format should contact communityobserverrecruitment@nipolicingboard.org.uk or 028 9040 8500.

To find out more about the ICO Scheme please go to www.nipolicingboard.org.uk

7 PRIVACY NOTICE

Data Controller Name:

Northern Ireland Policing Board

Address: James House
Block D
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Gasworks
Belfast BT7 2JA
Telephone: 028 9040 8500

Email: information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

Data Protection Officer Name:

William Magee

Telephone: 028 9040 8500
Email: Data.protection@nipolicingboard.org.uk

Why are you processing my personal information?

- We need your personal information to allow us (the Board) to process your application in relation to the Independent Community Observer (ICO) volunteer scheme. If successfully appointed your information will be used to administer your involvement in the Scheme throughout your term of appointment.
- We have identified the lawful basis for processing your personal information as being covered under our public task as set out in Article 73 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and Police (Recruitment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001. We will process special category data (as defined in Article 9 of GDPR) that includes: race; ethnic origin; religion; and sexual orientation, for monitoring the diversity of our volunteers under the condition at Article 9(2)(b).
- If you do not provide the personal data requested we will be unable to process your application in relation to the ICO Scheme.

Do you share my personal data with anyone else?

- We do not routinely share your personal data with any other organisations. We may, however, on occasion need to share your personal data with 3rd party service providers, for example the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) in relation to training attendance.
- Due to the sensitive nature of Community Observing candidates will be required to **pass** an Access NI Basic Disclosure check. You will be asked to submit information via Access NI. Access NI will be the data controller for this information. Access NI will tell you if your application has been successful or not and you will provide us with a copy of your Basic Disclosure Certificate.

Do you transfer my personal data to other countries?

- The Board does not transfer personal information overseas.

How long do you keep my personal data?

We will retain your data in line with our Retention and Disposal Schedule which states:

- Recruitment files for unsuccessful candidates will be destroyed 3 years after the close of the competition.
- Recruitment files for successfully appointed candidates will be destroyed 3 years after the end of tenure.

What rights do I have?

- You have the right to object to the processing in specific circumstances.

In addition:

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being processed and access to your personal data.
- You are entitled to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete.
- You have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing in specific circumstances.
- You have the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data in specific circumstances.
- You have the right to data portability in specific circumstances.
- You have rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

How do I exercise my rights or complain if I am not happy?

You can find out more information about your rights on the **Information Commissioner's Office website** or you can contact them at the address provided below.

If you wish to exercise any of your rights or if you are unhappy with any aspect of this privacy notice please contact the Board's Data Protection Officer at:

James House
Block D
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Gasworks
Belfast BT7 2JA

Email: Data.protection@nipolicingboard.org.uk

If you are still not happy, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: casework@ico.org.uk

<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

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