



## **1 WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME?**

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is a volunteer scheme that helps the Policing Board deliver independent oversight of policing and ensure the PSNI are meeting their human rights responsibilities. The Scheme is managed and administered by the Board. The roles and responsibilities of Independent Custody Visitors are set out in Section 73 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

## **2 WHO AND WHAT ARE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS?**

Independent Custody Visitors, commonly referred to as ICVs, are volunteers from our community who visit PSNI custody suites across Northern Ireland. They work in pairs to check on detainees held in custody, assessing their access to rights, their treatment, health and wellbeing and the conditions of detention.

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**BEING A VOLUNTEER IS SOMETHING EVERYONE SHOULD TRY. I REALLY ENJOY IT AND IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN AN AREA LIKE RIGHTS AND FAIRNESS THEN BEING A CUSTODY VISITOR IS JUST THE ROLE, BECAUSE IT GIVES BALANCE FOR BOTH PARTIES.**

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INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY VISITOR

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**IT'S REWARDING TO  
KNOW THAT YOU SEE  
FIRST HAND THAT  
EVERYONE'S BASIC  
HUMAN RIGHTS ARE  
ADHERED TO BY THE  
POLICE.**

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INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY  
VISITOR

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## **WHAT HAPPENS DURING A VISIT?**

ICVs work in pairs and make unannounced visits to designated police custody suites across Northern Ireland at any time of the day or night.

They introduce themselves to the detainee and outline their role. If they give permission, the ICVs then talk freely with the detainees to determine their treatment and conditions and check whether they have been able to access their rights and entitlements.

They also ask to see the detainee's custody record which can provide more information on their rights, treatment, and health and wellbeing.

ICVs record all relevant information and report to the Board. If the Board identifies any issues, they take this forward with the PSNI.

Each year, the Policing Board publishes a report on the number of visits made and the issues that have been raised or addressed through the Scheme.

## **4 WHO CAN BE AN ICV?**

You don't have to have specific experience to be an ICV but the following will enable you to carry out the role well:

- effective written and verbal communication skills;
- an ability to demonstrate concern for the welfare of others;
- an ability to act as a member of a team;
- impartiality;
- confidentiality;
- aged over 18;
- a clean driving licence with access to a vehicle;
- an ability to meet the necessary time commitments involved in carrying out visits set by the Board including weekends and unsociable hours;
- willingness and availability to take part in team meetings; and
- willingness and availability to attend necessary training.

## **5 WHO CANNOT BE AN ICV?**

The following people are excluded from being ICVs:

- 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);
- appropriate adults (from the Appropriate Adult Scheme administered by MindWise which aims to protect and safeguard the rights of young people and mentally vulnerable adults who are detained by police);
- former or serving Policing Board Members and Policing Board staff; and
- anyone under the age of 18.

## **6** WHAT'S THE TIME COMMITMENT?

ICVs usually carry out 2-4 visits a month. However, the amount of time you need to give depends on the area your team covers and travel times.

As well as the visits, there are bi-monthly team meetings and approximately 2-3 training sessions are provided per year to ensure ICVs feel confident and able in their role.

Your role will be reviewed after 6 months and, if this is successful, you can usually volunteer for another 2½ years. After this stage, you undertake another review with a potential extension of up to 3 years.

## **7** DO ICVs GET PAID?

ICVs are volunteers so they do not receive payment or compensation for earnings. However, the Policing Board will pay travel costs and, if applicable, other out-of-pocket expenses incurred through the ICV role.

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**BEING A VOLUNTEER HAS HELPED ME GROW AS A PERSON, GIVEN ME A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS, TAUGHT ME THAT LIFE'S A JOURNEY AND FOR MANY PEOPLE IT CAN BE A DIFFICULT ONE.**

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INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY VISITOR

## 8 HOW DO I APPLY?

Recruitment for new ICVs takes place approximately every 3 years. Anyone who wants to be an ICV must complete an application form and applicants may then be shortlisted for an interview. This is an informal chat with a panel discussing the key skills needed for the role. Following the interview, the Board will compile a list of suitable volunteers to fill any vacancies which may come up 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.

Due to the sensitive nature of custody visiting, those who have been successful at interview **will not be appointed** until a Counter Terrorism Check has been completed. Find out how this works at [www.gov.uk/guidance/security-vetting-and-clearance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/security-vetting-and-clearance).

The Board is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications for the Custody Visiting Scheme 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.

As young people, females and people from Black, Asian and Ethnic minorities are currently under-represented on the Scheme we particularly welcome applications from these individuals. However, all candidates will be selected on merit.

Please note not all applicants may be successful.

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**IT IS REWARDING  
TO KNOW THAT YOU  
ARE HELPING PEOPLE  
WHEN THEY ARE  
MOST VULNERABLE.**

INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY  
VISITOR

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## 9 WILL YOU GIVE ME ANY TRAINING?

Yes! All new ICVs will get induction training so they learn more about the role, the responsibilities of the PSNI and the rights of detainees.

Training is also given to provide further support, and includes areas such as human rights, mental health and equality.

All new ICVs will have a settling in period during which they will be paired with experienced ICVs for guidance and support.

“VOLUNTEERING HAS GIVEN ME A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND ACHIEVEMENT.

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INDEPENDENT  
CUSTODY  
VISITOR

## 10 CUSTODY VISITING TEAMS

There are 3 Custody Visiting teams in Northern Ireland:

- South East (SE);
- North West (NW); and
- Tyrone/Fermanagh (TyFer)

ALL ICVs  
ARE FULLY  
TRAINED

When you apply, you can indicate which Custody Visiting team you would prefer to be allocated to. If your application is successful, the Board will aim to accommodate your preference but you may be allocated to a 2nd or 3rd choice team.

Each team has a Team Leader who co-ordinates the activities of their team in line with the guidelines set by the Board, represents the team on the ICV Regional Committee, informs the Scheme Administrator of any issues, chairs team meetings, arranges visits and assists with the recruitment, support and review of ICVs.

**NORTHERN IRELAND  
INDEPENDENT CUSTODY  
VISITING SCHEME**

**11 FURTHER INFORMATION**

Find out more about what being an ICV is about and how you can get involved at [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk)

Or you can contact us at:

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