

INSPIRE
ADEQUATE FACILITIES
MONITORING
OVERSIGHT
PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS
IMPARTIAL VOLUNTEERS
TRANSPARENT
ADEQUATE FACILITIES
FAIR
INDEPENDENT OBSERVING
OVERSIGHT INDEPENDENT
IMPARTIAL REPORTING
EDCS **FAIR**

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE NORTHERN IRELAND
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
OBSERVER SCHEME**

**Would you like to play an important part
in helping to monitor key aspects of the
Police Service of Northern Ireland
recruitment process for Police Constables?**

1 WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVER SCHEME?

The Independent Community Observer Scheme is a volunteer scheme that helps the Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) monitor key aspects of the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI's) recruitment processes for Police Constables. This is a statutory function for the Board and is integral in providing independent oversight of this recruitment process. The Scheme is managed and administered by the Board with the roles and responsibilities of Independent Community Observers (ICOs) set out in Section 10 of the Police (Recruitment) (NI) Regulations 2001.

2 WHO AND WHAT ARE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OBSERVERS?

Independent Community Observers (ICOs), are impartial volunteers from across the community who observe and report to the Board on key aspects of the PSNI's recruitment process for Police Constables. They ensure that the same procedures are applied to all candidates and that facilities and arrangements are adequate. Visits currently take place in one Belfast City Centre location, but this could be subject to change.

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**BEING A VOLUNTEER GIVES ME MY
INDEPENDENCE AND PERSONAL PRIDE IN
DOING A VERY IMPORTANT VOLUNTARY
ROLE WORKING WITH A GREAT TEAM OF
OTHER VOLUNTEERS AND PROFESSIONALS.**

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INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY OBSERVER

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**NO ONE CAN DO
EVERYTHING BUT
EVERYONE CAN DO
SOMETHING.**

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INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY
OBSERVER

3 WHAT HAPPENS DURING A VISIT?

A team of ICOs carry out unannounced visits in pairs to observe a sample of assessment centre sessions 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 agency contracted to deliver PSNI's recruitment campaigns for Police Constables, to be resolved immediately, if possible, with the Board informed through completion of the agreed paperwork for each visit.

Any issues that cannot be resolved at the time of the visit are taken forward by the Board with PSNI in order to improve the recruitment process.

A report on visits carried out, and any issues that have been raised by the ICOs or addressed through the ICO Scheme is published after each recruitment campaign.

4 WHO CAN BE AN ICO?

We encourage ICOs from a wide range of backgrounds and you don't have to have specific experience to be an ICO, but the following will enable you 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;
- Ability to meet the necessary time commitments involved in carrying out visits set by the Board including access to transport; and
- A commitment to continued development and participation in any necessary training to carry out the role.

5 WHO CANNOT BE AN ICO?

In turn the following people are excluded from being ICOs:

- Former or serving Police Officers;
- Police support staff;
- Anyone 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
- Anyone 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 WHAT'S THE TIME COMMITMENT?

ICOs initially undertake a 6 month probationary period, after which a review will be carried out. If this is successful you will continue to volunteer for a further 2 ½ years. After this stage, you will undertake another review with a potential extension of up to 3 years, after which, in certain circumstances a further extension may be offered usually lasting no longer than a year.

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

7 DO ICOS GET PAID?

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

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I REALLY ENJOY VOLUNTEERING WITH THE ICO SCHEME AS I HAVE MET A GREAT BUNCH OF PEOPLE AND FEEL WE ARE PLAYING OUR PART IN INCREASING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE IN THE SELECTION OF POLICE OFFICERS.

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INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY
OBSERVER

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HOW DO I APPLY?

Recruitment for new ICOs takes place approximately every 3 years. Anyone who wishes to become an ICO must complete an application form. Candidates will then go through an eligibility sift and those who meet the criteria will be asked to attend an informal interview with a panel to discuss the key skills needed for the role. Following the informal interview, the Board will compile a list of those deemed successful at interview and appoint candidates to fill vacancies. 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. 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](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/accessni-criminal-record-checks/apply-accessni-check)**

The Board is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications for the Independent Community Observer 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. All candidates will be selected on merit.

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VOLUNTEERING HAS GIVEN ME A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND ACHIEVEMENT. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE RICH OR FAMOUS OR HAVE A DEGREE TO VOLUNTEER YOU JUST NEED A WILLINGNESS TO HELP.

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INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY
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WILL YOU GIVE ME ANY TRAINING?

Yes! ICOs are provided with a bespoke Induction training to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively carry out the visits and report back to the Board, and ensure each volunteer feels confident when undertaking the role. 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.

10 FURTHER INFORMATION

Find out more about what being an ICO is about and how you can get involved at www.nipolicingboard.org.uk

Or you can contact us at:

**Scheme Administrator
Independent Community Observer**

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