



PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE, PCSPs AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**REPORT BASED ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
MODULE OF THE APRIL 2017 OMNIBUS SURVEY**

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THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Northern Ireland Policing Board is an independent public body which oversees policing in Northern Ireland. It was set up on 4 November 2001 as a result of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. The Policing Board operates at arms length from Government and has strong independent powers to carry out its work. The Board consists of 19 Members; 10 Political Members from the Northern Ireland Assembly and 9 Independent Members appointed by the Minister of Justice.

The main role of the Board is to ensure that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is effective and efficient. The Board holds the Chief Constable to account for all his actions and those of his staff. This means that the Chief Constable must answer to the Board on any aspect of policing in Northern Ireland. However, the Policing Board cannot, and does not, direct or control the Chief Constable. He has the right to take independent policing decisions based only on the need to uphold law and order which is called operational responsibility. But he must in turn answer for his actions to the Policing Board. This process is what effective accountability is all about.

The Board must also keep itself informed as to:

- Trends and patterns in recruitment to the police and the police support staff; and
- The extent to which membership of the police and support staff is representative of the community in Northern Ireland;

It must also assess the effectiveness of measures taken to secure that the membership of the police service is representative of the community.

The Board, acting on behalf of the Joint Committee, which consists of representatives of the Department of Justice and the Board, assesses:

- The level of public satisfaction with the performance of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (DPCSPs).

In order to gauge public satisfaction and consider the views of the public on policing, the Board conducts a programme of consultation with and research of a range of groups and organisations. The results of this consultation and research are published by the Policing Board to ensure openness and transparency.

April 2017 Omnibus Survey

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is conducted several times each year by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of people in Northern Ireland. The survey comprises two distinct parts: core questions about the respondents and their individual circumstances, and a variety of mainly attitudinal questions commissioned by clients, which seek the views of the public on a range of issues, including policing.

The sample for this survey consisted of a random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses, the most up-to-date listing of private households in Northern Ireland. At each address, one person aged 16 or over was selected to participate in the survey. From an eligible sample of 2,200 households, 911 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 41%. Interviews were conducted over three months, between 3rd April and 1st July 2017. Analyses by religion are based only on those 798 respondents who identified as either Catholic or Protestant. Respondents who refused to answer the religion question, or who indicated their religion as other than Catholic or Protestant, are excluded from this analysis.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board uses Omnibus Survey results to assess the level of public satisfaction with the performance of the Police and of PCSPs and DPCSPs.

The following symbols are used in the accompanying results tables:

- Category not applicable – Cell is empty
- Category result less than 0.5% – Cell contains a zero (“0”)

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Statistical significance

Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the findings between the April 2016 and April 2017 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the views of the population can be inferred. In this publication, where differences have emerged as being statistically significant, this has been reported at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two-tailed). This means that, for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant, one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance. Figures in **bold** denote a statistically significant change between survey instances.

Summary of Findings

Public Perceptions of the Police

- In April 2017, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a statistically significant increase from the April 2016 figure (68%), with around three quarters of respondents (78%) indicating that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a small increase on April 2016 (75%).
- A large majority (90%) of respondents indicated either total, a lot, or some confidence in the PSNI's ability to provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of Northern Ireland, a similar figure to April 2016 (88%).
- In April 2017, 93% of respondents indicated that they felt very/fairly safe in their local community, a similar figure to April 2016 (91%). Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents indicating that they felt 'Very safe' in their local community, from 42% in April 2016 to 53% in April 2017.

Public Perceptions of PCSPs

- In April 2017, 43% of respondents had heard of PCSPs, a statistically significant decrease on the previous year's figure (49%). This was particularly pronounced for Protestant respondents – 42% had heard of PCSPs in April 2017 compared with 53% in April 2016.
- 41% of the respondents who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, a small increase on April 2016 (37%). Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) recorded a 'Don't know' response or did not respond to this question.

Public Perceptions of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

- In April 2017, a large majority of respondents (83%) had heard of the Policing Board, a similar proportion to the previous year (85%). Just over three quarters (76%) of the respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a small increase on the April 2016 figure of 73%.
- Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant increase in the proportion of Protestant respondents agreeing with this statement from 70% in April 2016, to 78% in April 2017.
- Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, a small decrease on the April 2016 finding of 74%, yet a marked increase on the 2014 and 2015 figures (both 57%).
- More than three quarters of the respondents (82%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well, a small increase on the April 2016 figure (79%) and continuing a trend of increases from 2015.

Public Perceptions of the National Crime Agency

- In April 2017, just over half of respondents (54%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA), a figure which is unchanged from April 2016.
- Almost three quarters of the respondents (73%) who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well, an increase from 68% in April 2016. 19% of respondents recorded a 'Don't know' response or did not respond to this question.

PERFORMANCE OF THE POLICE

Q1. How do you rate the job the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) do in your area?

In April 2017, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that they thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a statistically significant increase on the April 2016 finding of 68% (Table 1). A similar proportion of Protestant respondents (76%) and Catholic respondents (73%) indicated that they thought the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, with the latter a statistically significant increase on the April 2016 figure (64%). 10% of respondents rated the performance of their local police as very/fairly poor, a marginal decrease from the April 2016 figure.

Table 1: Performance of local police												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	65	69	68	66	67	67	64	73	68	73	76	74
Neither good nor poor	24	19	21	20	19	20	21	16	20	17	14	15
Very/fairly poor	9	12	10	11	13	12	15	10	11	10	9	10
Don't know/refusal	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1

Q2. How do you rate the job the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) do in Northern Ireland as a whole?

In April 2017, just over three quarters (78%) of respondents indicated that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a marginal increase on the April 2016 figure of 75% (Table 2). The proportion of Protestant respondents (84%) who thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole remained slightly higher than Catholic respondents (76%). 6% of respondents overall described the performance of the PSNI in Northern Ireland as a whole as very/fairly poor.

Table 2: Performance of PSNI in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	70	73	71	67	73	72	68	81	75	76	84	78
Neither good nor poor	20	19	20	21	15	17	18	15	16	15	11	14
Very/fairly poor	8	7	8	11	11	11	11	4	7	9	4	6
Don't know/refusal	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	1

Q3. How satisfied are you that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole?

In April 2017, more than three quarters (78%) of respondents were very/fairly satisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant increase on the April 2016 figure (73%). The percentage of Protestant respondents who were very/fairly satisfied also saw a continued statistically significant increase from 77% in April 2016 to 85% in April 2017. The percentage of Catholic respondents who were very/fairly satisfied also saw a statistically significant increase to 73%, from 66% in April 2016.

Table 3: Satisfaction that PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (January)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	68	77	73	67	71	70	66	77	73	73	85	78
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21	13	17	19	15	17	21	16	18	16	10	14
Fairly/very dissatisfied	10	10	10	13	12	12	11	8	9	10	5	8
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1

Q4. How much confidence do you have in the PSNI's ability to provide an ordinary day-to-day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland?

In April 2017, 90% of respondents indicated that they had some, a lot, or total confidence in the police's ability to provide a day-to-day policing service for everyone in Northern Ireland, a marginal increase from the April 2016 finding of 88% (Table 4). The percentage of respondents overall who had total confidence saw a statistically significant increase from 12% in April 2016 to 21% in April 2017.

Table 4: Confidence in the police's ability to provide an ordinary day to day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	9	10	10	8	12	11	10	15	12	12	21	16
A lot of confidence	34	42	39	33	34	34	32	39	37	39	45	42
Some confidence	46	36	40	43	36	39	42	36	39	37	27	32
Total/A lot of/Some	89	88	89	84	82	84	84	90	88	88	93	90
Little confidence	7	10	8	11	14	12	10	8	9	9	7	8
No confidence at all	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	3	1	2
Little/No confidence	10	12	11	15	18	16	13	10	11	12	8	10
Don't know/refusal	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Q5. How satisfied are you with the levels of police patrols in your area?

In April 2017, just over half of respondents (51%) were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, a marginal increase on the April 2016 figure of 48%. Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) indicated that they were very/fairly dissatisfied (Table 5), a statistically significant decrease from 28% in April 2016 - a positive result.

Table 5: Satisfaction with the levels of police patrols												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	54	49	52	44	42	44	51	46	48	51	52	51
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	28	23	26	29	24	26	26	26	27	26	24	25
Very/fairly dissatisfied	17	27	22	25	34	29	23	28	28	22	23	23
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1

Q6. Over the last year, has the overall standard of policing in your area...?

In April 2017, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that the overall standard of policing in their area had remained the same over the last year – this figure was unchanged from April 2016. Analysis by religion revealed no significant change in opinion from the previous year's results (Table 6).

Table 6: Perception of the overall standard of policing over the last year												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Got better	11	5	9	13	6	9	10	7	8	10	9	9
Remained the same	77	77	77	71	71	71	72	75	74	73	76	74
Got worse	10	15	12	13	21	17	14	15	15	13	14	13
Don't know/refusal	2	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	5	2	3

Q7. How safe do you feel in your local community?

In April 2017, a large majority of respondents (93%) indicated that they felt very/fairly safe in their local community, a marginal increase on the April 2016 figure (91%, Table 7). The proportions of Protestant respondents rating their local community as 'Very safe' saw a statistically significant increase from 42% in April 2016 to 53% in April 2017).

Table 7: How safe do you feel in your local community?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very safe	39	37	38	40	40	40	42	42	42	44	53	49
Fairly safe	53	53	52	51	48	49	46	50	49	47	42	44
Very/fairly safe	92	90	90	91	88	89	88	92	91	91	95	93
Neither safe nor unsafe	4	6	5	5	7	6	5	5	5	5	3	4
Fairly unsafe	4	3	3	2	4	3	5	3	4	3	1	2
Very unsafe	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	1
Fairly/very unsafe	5	4	4	4	5	4	6	3	5	5	2	3
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

2: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PCSPs

Q8. Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?

In April 2017, less than half of respondents (43%) had heard of PCSPs, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2016 finding of 49% (Table 8). The proportion of Protestant respondents who had heard of PCSPs also saw a statistically significant decrease over the same period (from 53% to 42%).

Table 8: Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	42	52	46	42	47	45	45	53	49	45	42	43
No	58	48	54	58	53	55	55	47	51	55	58	57

Q9. Do you know how to contact your local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety?

In April 2017, more than a third of respondents (38%) who had heard of PCSPs knew how to contact their local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety, a small increase on the April 2016 figure (34%, Table 9) and continuing the trend of small increases from 2015.

Table 9: Knowledge of how to contact PCSP about local policing and community safety									
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	31	32	31	33	33	34	35	40	38
No	69	68	69	67	67	66	65	59	62

Q10. Do you feel that your local PCSP has helped to improve policing in your local area?

In April 2017, 41% of respondents who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, a small increase on the April 2016 finding (Table 10). The proportion of Catholic respondents who agreed that their local PCSP had helped improve local policing saw a statistically significant increase from 37% in April 2016, to 49% in April 2017. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) that had heard of PCSPs recorded a ‘Don’t know’ response to this question.

Table 10: Has your local PCSP helped to improve local policing?												
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	45	33	38	32	42	37	37	37	37	49	37	41
No	29	40	35	40	42	42	43	37	39	34	37	26
Don't know/refusal	27	26	27	27	16	21	20	26	23	17	27	23

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

Q11. Have you heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Policing Board)?

In April 2017, a large majority of respondents (83%) had heard of the Policing Board (Table 11), a similar proportion to April 2016 (85%). A higher proportion of Protestant respondents (86%) had heard of the Policing Board than Catholic respondents (81%). The proportion of Protestant respondents who had heard of the Policing Board saw a statistically significant decrease from April 2016 to April 2017 (from 92% to 86%).

Table 11: Have you heard of the NI Policing Board?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	81	90	84	83	87	84	79	92	85	81	86	83
No	19	10	16	17	13	16	21	8	15	19	13	17
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q12. Do you think that the Policing Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job?

In April 2017, just over three quarters (76%) of the respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a small increase on the April 2016 figure of 73% (Table 12). The proportion of Protestant respondents who agreed that the Board helps to ensure that the PSNI do a good job saw a statistically significant increase, from 70% in April 2016 to 78% in April 2017.

Table 12: Does the Policing Board help to ensure that the PSNI do a good job?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	75	70	72	69	69	70	76	70	73	75	78	76
No	10	17	14	16	19	17	13	19	16	14	12	14
Don't know/refusal	14	13	14	15	12	13	11	11	11	11	9	10

Q13. Do you think that the Policing Board is part of the police or independent of the police?

In April 2017, almost three quarters of respondents (72%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, a marginal decrease on the April 2016 finding of 74% (Table 13), yet a marked increase on the 2014 and 2015 figures (both 57%). Analysis by religion did not reveal significant differences in awareness of the Policing Board's independent status between Catholic and Protestant respondents.

Table 13: Is the Policing Board part of the police or independent of the police?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	Rating	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P
Part of the police	35	36	36	41	32	36	24	20	21	25	20	22
Independent of the police	56	58	57	52	62	57	70	75	74	69	74	72
Don't know/refusal	9	6	7	7	6	6	6	4	5	6	6	6

Q14. What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?

In April 2017, a large majority of respondents (82%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly indicated that the Board's primary role is "to oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account" (Table 14). This was largely unchanged from the previous year (83%). Again, analysis by religion revealed no significant difference in awareness of the Board's primary role between Catholic and Protestant respondents.

Table 14: What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?													
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents												
	Rating	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
		C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
To actively direct police operations	15	11	13	19	12	15	9	10	9	11	10	10	
To oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account	72	79	76	73	77	76	81	82	83	80	84	82	
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	4	3	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	
Other	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	
Don't know/refusal	8	5	7	3	5	4	6	4	5	5	3	4	

Q15. Do you think the Policing Board is made up of ...?

In April 2017, just over two thirds of respondents (69%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly indicated that they thought that the Board is made up of “a mix of politicians and independently appointed members”, a minor increase on the April 2016 figure of 67% (Table 15). Almost a quarter of respondents (22%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that they thought that the Board is made up of “independently appointed members”. Analysis by religion did not reveal any significant differences in opinion between Catholic and Protestant respondents regarding the Board’s composition.

Table 15: Do you think that the Policing Board is made up of...?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Politicians	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	3	2	1	2
Independently appointed members	16	15	15	16	13	15	27	24	25	23	21	22
A mix of politicians and independently appointed members	73	75	75	75	78	76	66	68	67	68	72	69
Other	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Don't know/refusal	8	6	7	7	5	5	4	5	4	7	4	5

Q16. Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?

In April 2017, more than three quarters of the respondents (82%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well, a slight increase on the April 2016 figure of 79% (Table 16). Analysis by religion revealed statistically significant increases for Protestant respondents indicating that the Board is working either very well (8%, from 5% in April 2016) or well (33% from 26% in April 2016), and a statistically significant increase overall for respondents indicating that the Board is working very well (8%, from 5% in April 2016).

Table 16: Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	6	3	4	6	4	4	5	4	5	8	8	8
Well	28	26	27	26	26	26	28	26	28	28	33	30
Adequately	40	45	43	46	42	45	45	50	46	45	43	44
Very well/Well/Adequately	74	74	74	78	72	75	78	80	79	81	84	82
Poorly	9	11	10	14	15	14	11	10	10	9	9	9
Very poorly	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	0	1
Poorly/very poorly	11	13	12	16	18	17	13	12	12	11	9	10
Don't know/refusal	15	13	14	7	9	8	9	8	9	9	6	8

4. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY

Two additional questions were added to the Northern Ireland Policing Board module of the Omnibus survey in April 2016 in order to measure public perceptions of the National Crime Agency (NCA). The data referenced in Tables 17 and 18 is a comparison of public perception at April 2016 with that at April 2017.

Q17. Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?

In April 2017, just over half of respondents (54%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA), unchanged from the previous year. There was no significant difference in terms of awareness of the NCA between Catholic and Protestant respondents.

Table 17: Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?						
Rating	Percentage of respondents					
	2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	46	61	54	51	58	54
No	54	39	46	49	42	46
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q18. Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?

Almost three quarters of of the respondents (73%) who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well (Table 18). 9% of respondents indicated that the NCA is working either poorly or very poorly, with 19% of respondents indicating a ‘Don’t know’ response. Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant increase in the proportion of Protestant respondents indicating that the Agency is working either very well, well or adequately (81% compared with 70% in April 2016).

Table 18: Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?						
Rating	Percentage of respondents					
	2016 (April)			2017 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	4	4	4	4	5	4
Well	18	25	23	23	30	26
Adequately	43	41	41	37	46	43
Very well/Well/Adequately	65	70	68	64	81	73
Poorly	11	5	7	11	5	7
Very poorly	2	1	1	3	1	2
Poorly/very poorly	13	6	8	14	6	9
Don't know	23	24	24	22	13	19



Northern Ireland Policing Board

Waterside Tower
31 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG



028 9040 8500



information@nipolicingboard.org.uk



www.nipolicingboard.org.uk



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