

POLICE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ACT 2003

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUMMARY

4. The purpose of the Act is to implement more fully the recommendations of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, set out in its report “A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland” (also known as the Patten report) which was published in September 1999. The Act’s contents cover commitments made in the updated Implementation Plan for the Patten report, published in August 2001, and matters arising from the 2002 review of policing reform in Northern Ireland. Many of the provisions in the Act amend the [Police \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2000 \(c.32\)](#) (“the 2000 Act”) which was the main implementing legislation for the recommendations of the Patten report. The Act also makes provision for giving limited police powers to police support staff and contracted-out staff, in line with legislation in England and Wales (the [Police Reform Act 2002 \(c.30\)](#)), in order to make more effective use of these staff.
5. The main provisions of the Act are:
 - to amend the law governing the way in which policing objectives for Northern Ireland are set and taken into account;
 - to amend the law relating to procedural provisions such as the timing of performance assessments issued by the Board, and the frequency and spacing of meetings of the Board;
 - to separate the Board’s funding and accounts for pension purposes from its funding and accounts for other police purposes;
 - to amend the law relating to the way in which the Chief Constable makes reports to the Board, and the Board holds inquiries;
 - to give the Ombudsman power to investigate current police practices and procedures;
 - to amend the law on the membership and role of district policing partnerships (“DPPs”) and of the Belfast DPP sub-groups;
 - to emphasise the importance of the core principle of policing with the community;
 - to extend employment protection provisions to police officers who report wrongdoing by their colleagues;
 - to provide for a limited exception to the “50:50” recruitment provisions of the 2000 Act to allow for the recruitment of constables with specialist policing skills;
 - to amend the law to allow the Chief Constable to make fixed-term secondments to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (“the PSNI”);
 - to make provision relating to disciplinary arrangements for police officers serving outside the United Kingdom; and

*These notes refer to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act
2003 (c.6) which received Royal Assent on 8 April 2003*

- to allow the Chief Constable to nominate police support staff and the staff of certain contractors to exercise certain police powers.