# 5. What to do at the Police Station

You may feel perfectly able to walk into the police station and open a dialogue with the desk staff. Desk staff are human beings and will hopefully respond to you. If not, or if the station is closed, then you'll have to hang around outside and rely on the solicitor to keep you informed.

Be nice and the desk staff and police might be nice back – but do be prepared – sometimes it can be very difficult to get any information or any cooperation at all from the front desk. The police might even lie to you. Be tenacious but not pushy – the cops are likely to get pissed off at very frequent requests for information. Be confrontational and you may condemn your friends to several hours more detention (yes it does happen!) or even face arrest yourself.

If the police do cooperate, try to find out and make a note of anything you don't already know:

- **How many** people are they holding?
- **Who** they are holding?
- Are they **OK**?
- Are they being charged?
- What they are **charged** with?
- Any indication of a **release** time?
- **Some arrestees will choose not to give their name to police officers, so don't ask about individual people in custody unless you are sure of what name they are using.** If you want to get information about a specific person, you can give a **description** such as, 'Is the young person with black hair and a white shirt who was arrested at the climate protest today OK?'

You can try to get 'treats' (eg. chocolate), newspapers, books or dry clothes to arrestees, but this is up to the police station staff. Be nice and don't show your annoyance if they refuse. If you know the arrestee personally, you might want to use this opportunity to make sure the police know about people's dietary and medical needs.

Ask the police to make sure that they release people into your care and not out of a side exit – but don't be shocked if they say they'll do that and then do the opposite. If you have enough people, see if you can have supporters monitoring different exits, or take regular trips to check side doors.

If the police station is closed, you may be able to reach the custody desk using a phone or intercom outside. However, this doesn't always work and the police may be uncooperative. In this situation, you'll have to wait outside and rely on the Protest Legal Support Line, solicitors and appropriate adults for updates.

> **Be aware of your own boundaries and wellbeing and that of your buddy.** See if you can work in shifts with other people, and take it in turns to have breaks, such as going for a walk.