



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Policing Authority publishes Assessment of Policing Performance 2020

12 March 2020

The Policing Authority has today published its Assessment of Policing Performance 2020, which evaluates the performance of the Garda Síochána relative to its annual Policing Plan for 2020. This process of reporting, which takes place twice yearly, is central to the Authority's statutory oversight work.

The performance of the Garda Síochána was found to be strong on the whole in 2020, with an unprecedented level of agility and responsiveness demonstrated in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis.

- The response to the COVID-19 crisis delivered focused and energetic community policing that was well-resourced and clear in its purpose, resulting in a reconnection with the community. At a time when health restrictions prevented many agencies and organisations from working, the Garda Síochána became key in identifying need and vulnerability and providing a link between people and the services they required.
- The Garda Síochána made significant progress in relation to its infrastructure around victims, with the provision of Protected Services Units in every division. These are dedicated, specialised resources for the investigation of certain serious crimes, including sexual offences, offences against children, and domestic abuse.
- Through Operation Faoiseamh, the Garda Síochána provided a critical policing service to victims of domestic abuse. Resources and focus were allocated to the operation, which had a clear purpose and intent.
- In relation to tackling drugs and organised crime, last year saw record levels of seizures of drugs and assets by the Garda Síochána and its partner agencies; significant inter-jurisdictional work; a number of significant court outcomes and trial commencements; and the continued successful intervention in threat-to-life incidents.
- Information and technology has been an area of significant progress, with important milestones being met, such as the delivery of improvements in data quality.
- The establishment of the Garda Anti-Corruption Unit (GACU) is a considerable development for the Garda Síochána, with further progress made against the Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Despite all the successes, the report found that significant challenges endure in relation to some of the internal organisational structures of the Garda Síochána:

- A strategic workforce plan has been overdue since early 2019. This plan is needed in order to assess the future needs and staffing levels required by the organisation and provide a

roadmap for ensuring that the right number of people, with the right skills are in place.

- In the area of training, a number of commitments made in relation to the organisation's strategy, governance and prioritisation remain outstanding. As a large organisation experiencing a period of substantial change and modernisation, the training demands for the Garda Síochána are high. A significant bottleneck exists in terms of prioritising and providing training to meet these ever-growing needs. Additionally, a Learning and Development Director has not yet been appointed by the organisation.
- The Commissioner appears to be strongly managing the annual budget of €1.88 billion. However, financial management does not seem to be embedded in the day-to-day planning, decision-making and performance management of the Garda Síochána.
- Significant issues persist in relation to Estate (Garda buildings) Management. A comprehensive plan is needed for assessing and addressing the condition of the Garda Estate as well as the finalisation of a proposed approach to Estate Management. Of particular concern is the potential impact on the rollout of the Operating Model.
- There continues to be concern about detection rates for sexual offences, which remain persistently low. However, the Authority welcomes the recognition of the need for a new approach here.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented on the publication of the report:

“The Covid-19 health emergency has told us much about the depth and quality of the relationship between community and Gardaí. It has also told us of the commitment of all in the Garda Síochána to the principle and practice of public service. A key challenge will be to find the way to retain and to value anew all that has shone so brightly in the service given to the public in 2020. The Authority warmly welcomes the Garda Commissioner's ambition in this regard, and his commitment to a strong focus on community policing.”