



Policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis
Interim Report to the Minister for Justice and Equality

21 April 2020

Since the latter half of February, the Authority has adapted how it oversees the Garda Síochána to the new realities and has had frequent, open and effective contact with the Garda Síochána about both preparedness and day-to-day management of policing during the COVID-19 crisis. Underlining the importance of policing oversight at a time of increased police powers, last Thursday, the Minister for Justice and Equality requested the Authority to report on an interim basis on its assessment of the policing performance of the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis. The report submitted to the Minister last night is available [here](#).

While tentative, this interim report appreciates the work of the Garda Síochána, recognising the importance of human rights, the need for proportionality and the central importance of a consistent approach throughout the state. The Authority is satisfied that the Garda Síochána fully understands the temporary and exceptional nature of the new powers and the importance that any use of the new powers is appropriately and fully recorded.

The success of its oversight will depend on the fullest information and arrangements being in place for real-time reporting of any issues of public interest to the Chairperson or Chief Executive and for weekly reporting to the Authority on the use of the new powers. While it is not certain that the reporting of arrests alone fully reflects the incidence of the use of the new policing powers, the Authority will engage further with the Garda Síochána, to have a more settled and complete information base for its next report to the Minister. Any use by the Garda Síochána of the spit-hoods which were introduced in the last few weeks are being reported directly to the Authority and it is intended to seek more complete information on their, so far, limited use.

The Policing Authority welcomes the Commissioner's focus throughout on community safety, on a graduated response and on the critical importance of community consent. The Authority also welcomes and commends the extent of community engagement by the Garda Síochána across the

country. The Authority remains at all times acutely aware of the well-being of Garda members, and recognises their vulnerability during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Authority has extended its engagements with community groups, statutory organisations and NGOs and is reassured that so far, there is a general sense that the approach of the Garda Síochána is reasonable. Over the coming weeks and months, this engagement will be further extended and deepened, both geographically and to vulnerable groups.

The Garda Síochána's ongoing response to the COVID-19 emergency will form a central part of the next meeting between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner, which is scheduled to take place on 29 April 2020.

.