



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

## **Policing Authority publishes report on policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis**

22 May 2020

The Policing Authority has today published the third in a series of reports to the Minister for Justice and Equality on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis. The report, which was submitted to the Minister yesterday, is available [here](#).

The report found that the level of the use of their new powers has been modest, given the extensive level of engagement between the Garda Síochána and the public, and that the positive reaction at community level to the breadth and depth of engagement by Gardaí continues. Those who work with vulnerable people reported very positive responses from gardaí throughout the country. This is very welcome and the Authority also welcomes increased clarity and transparency regarding the provision of COVID-19 testing and the wearing of PPE by Garda members.

The report highlights some concerns regarding data, including that the effort by the Garda Síochána to comprehensively record and report the use of their new powers under emergency legislation. This has not yet yielded the hoped for detail. Reports by the Garda Síochána on the use of their powers or of anti-spit hoods show that their use has declined since the Authority's last report, in the case of reported enforcement powers for the second period in succession. The abhorrent practice of gardaí being spat at continues to be reported, however. The Authority will keep all these issues, including the question of reporting appropriate information on ethnicity, under review in the coming weeks.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

*“The Garda Síochána’s sustained community engagement and the continuing positive community response is to be commended and is fully acknowledged. The outreach work by the Authority with a range of NGOs and with Joint Policing Committees has allowed these reports to convey a rich sense of the importance to many vulnerable people of the extensive work being undertaken by the relevant services within the Garda Síochána. The Authority will reflect on a continuing basis with the Commissioner on the significance of this growing body of information.*

*The Authority is disappointed to be unable to give a clearer indication in this report of the extent to which the five separate powers were exercised by the Garda Síochána, or offer a view on the extent to which their use was appropriate and proportionate. We cannot report on the exercise of the powers as we would have wished, because the necessary information that we hoped to obtain from the Garda Síochána has not been made available, despite the significant efforts made by the organisation. The Authority will continue to encourage the Commissioner to seek for ways to make a greater level of detail available in order to add to the public’s understanding and confidence in the use of these powers.”*

While the easing of the restrictions in recent days is to be welcomed, the Authority is keenly aware that it will pose difficulties for the Garda Síochána in its policing task. The Regulations have been renewed and, although slightly amended, they remain substantially in their original form. With the very welcome increase in greater mobility for many, the challenge for Gardaí in sifting through the many groups of people who are entitled to be out and about should not be underestimated.

The Policing Authority will continue to publish its reports to the Minister on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis on a fortnightly basis.