



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

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

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The Policing Authority has today published the fifth in a series of reports on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis, which was submitted yesterday to the Minister for Justice and Equality.

The report found that the relatively low level of reported use of the COVID-19 powers supports the graduated approach adopted by the Garda Síochána at the outset of the emergency and more importantly its implementation by members on the ground. An examination of the geographic distribution of the reported use of powers in detail does not identify any concerns with regard to the use of powers being disproportionately used in any particular region.

In discussing the reported experience of policing during COVID-19, the majority of organisations the Authority has engaged with have referred to an overwhelmingly positive experience of engagement with the Garda Síochána. The importance of good community policing has been raised consistently, as the basis for a community's trust and confidence in the policing service and as the foundation on which policing during the COVID 19 emergency has been built.

However, as the Authority has expanded its outreach work it has become aware that, inevitably, this positive engagement has not been experienced consistently and that there are communities where the relationship with the Garda Síochána has not been as would have been wished. In communities where feedback has been negative, the reported experiences of the community attribute this to factors such as the frequent turnover in community Gardaí which mitigates against relationship building, non-responsiveness to call-outs, and a lack of consistency of tone and respect from all Garda members. The Authority has initiated conversations with the Commissioner and his colleagues about how a more fully rounded presentation of the breadth and depth of the community contacts can be shared.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

“The rich outcome of the discussions with communities throughout the country which the Authority has conducted, together with the Garda Síochána’s own community engagements, will offer important opportunities for learning by all concerned—the Gardaí, public policy and the Authority. We hope very much that the tone and approach that were so warmly welcomed by the public, and which appear to have emerged less by direction than by spontaneous Garda response, will be encouraged and retained as a constant signature of the

Garda Síochána. There is immense potential for these experiences to be embedded in the training and professional development of all Garda personnel."

The Authority will continue to keep under review the use of the emergency powers, the use of force represented by the temporary deployment of anti-spit hoods and the impact on individuals, particularly those who are vulnerable.