

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

21 July 2020

The Policing Authority has today published the sixth in a series of reports on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis, which was submitted to the Minister for Justice, Ms. Helen McEntee last Friday.

The Authority's engagement with organisations working in the community and representing different groups within society has continued to reinforce the appreciation of the effort, approach and willingness with which the Garda Síochána has engaged during the public health crisis. It has also been reported that the policing response to domestic abuse has been sustained throughout the period, in terms of proactivity and resourcing. Organisations working in this area continue to report positively on the responsiveness and quality of the interventions being carried out by the Garda Síochána.

Not everyone or every group has had the same response to the experience of policing in these past months and the Authority's engagement has revealed an inconsistency in relation to the experience by young people of policing. Irrespective of social class, ethnicity, sexuality or location in the country, it was reported to the Authority that young people were treated differently than the rest of the population. Organisations that work with young people drew attention to the long-term importance and potential implications of any diminution of trust between the Garda Síochána and young people.

Since the introduction of anti-spit hoods by the Garda Síochána as a protective mechanism, the Authority has been monitoring incidents of use on an individual basis. To date, there has been limited evidence presented as to their overall effectiveness in protecting police in other jurisdictions, and the effectiveness of the type of anti-spit hood deployed in Ireland to preventing the spread of COVID-19 has not yet been determined. The Garda Síochána have committed to a review of the requirement for the use of anti-spit hoods in September 2020 and the Authority will continue to monitor this.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

“Much of the really valuable experiences that have been reported to the Authority are not resource demanding. It is not a question of opening the wallet but more one of opening the mind. Gardaí themselves must have experienced the generosity of the responses to their exemplary service. The challenge for the Commissioner and the leadership of the Garda Síochána will be to capture that new approach, that new openness, that greater respect and understanding and to make it a permanent part of the life and work of all in the organisation. There is challenge but there are great opportunities in reflecting this new approach in the education of new Garda members and in the continuous professional development of all Garda personnel.”

The next report by the Policing Authority on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis is due to be published in September.