



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

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

15 October 2020

The Policing Authority has today published [the eighth 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 level of compliance was found to be substantially high and the number of enforcements reported by the Garda Síochána correspondingly modest. Since the Authority's last report to the Minister on 11 September, there have been 62 newly reported incidents where enforcement powers under the Health Act 2020 were used, primarily as a result of the outcomes of Operation Navigation and the inspection of licensed premises. While the Authority's reservations remain regarding anti-spit hoods, a decline in the use of the device was welcomed.

The engagement by Gardaí with communities and vulnerable groups continues to be widely appreciated and, in the view of respected groups, has even saved lives. In those counties where additional restrictions were imposed, community representatives reported that a graduated approach to policing the restrictions was evident. Organisations spoken to believe that there now exists an opportunity to examine the experience of the last number of months to identify which gaps should be filled by the Garda Síochána and which gaps might now more appropriately be taken up by other organisations.

Gardaí have relied in the main, and with considerable success, on their existing powers and on the graduated response framework promoted by the Garda Commissioner. Despite the movement of all counties to Level 3 on 7 October this "soft" approach to policing COVID-19 restrictions remains the preferred option of both the Government and the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána believe quite firmly that the current approach of using the first three E's of Engagement, Explanation and Encouragement remains the most appropriate approach to policing during this health emergency.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

"Throughout this period, the Authority has held the view that emergency powers for the Garda Síochána should be at the minimum level possible. There is a genuine and well-founded concern that extensive new powers for Gardaí might not be a universal problem solver. Neighbouring jurisdictions have given added, and progressively more stringent,

powers to police services but there is little evidence that, in and of itself, such a policy eradicates any undesirable behaviours.”

In the event of possible further enforcement powers, the accurate and effective monitoring of such powers will become increasingly important for the oversight activities of the Authority.