



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Policing Authority publishes 13th report on policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis

20 April 2021

The Policing Authority has today published the 13th 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 yesterday.

To inform this latest report, the Authority has extended its engagement with the Garda Síochána to gather further perceptions and experiences of policing during the public health emergency from their perspective. This has included engagement with representative bodies, focus groups with divisional officers, and attendance at checkpoints to observe policing and community engagement. Engagement with statutory, voluntary and community organisations has also continued throughout the public health crisis. The engagements which inform this report again suggest that the experience of policing can be uneven – even within what may appear to be a single group or community.

Those working with migrants – documented and undocumented – made reference to both positive and negative experiences of policing performance, including a perceived lack of empathy and understanding experienced by some migrants in their interactions with Gardaí in stations. A recent engagement with student representatives suggests that for some students the relationship with the Garda Síochána has significantly deteriorated and is characterised negatively in terms of feelings of distrust, harassment and fear.

Engagements with organisations working with women and men who are suffering domestic abuse have continued to be positive with regard to policing performance. The Divisional Protective Services Units, now present in each Garda Division, are highly regarded as offering an experienced, expert and victim-centred service to those who come forward to report. Operation Faoiseamh is credited with having encouraged reporting amongst men and women. There is an emerging sense of the strengthened relationships that have developed between the Garda Síochána and the groups and organisations working in this area at a local level, and the opportunities now arising from those relationships.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

“This series of reports owes a great debt of gratitude to those individuals and organisations who have given of their time to outline the experiences of those whom they assist and support during the health emergency. Their first hand telling of how policing is experienced is invaluable. As has been comprehensively reported in these reports, the performance of the Garda Síochána has been of a high quality and warmly appreciated in the great majority of instances. But this report, while still very positive in so many respects, sounds a further note of concern that the experience of an increasing number may be changing.”

To date there have been 134 incidents involving anti-spit hoods recorded, with only three additional incidents since the last report. The Garda Síochána completed an evaluation on the use and management of anti-spit hoods to which the Authority and other stakeholders had made submissions. Overall the evaluation did not provide any firm conclusions as to whether the anti-spit hoods have been effective or if they should be retained as part of Garda Síochána equipment. The Authority discussed this at its last meeting and will continue to engage on this subject with the Commissioner.

The next meeting in public between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner will take place on Thursday 29 April, and will be live-streamed on www.policingauthority.ie.

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