



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Policing Authority publishes 14th report on policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis

18 May 2021

The Policing Authority has today published the [14th 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.

The number of Fixed Charge Notices issued per week has continued to decline following the easing of restrictions during April and May. It is expected that ongoing easing of restrictions will have a further impact on reducing these numbers over the coming weeks. In terms of the age and gender breakdown, those aged 18 to 25 received the highest number of fines, accounting for 53% of all fines issued, while 74% of the total fines were issued to males.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

“The disproportion in these figures is self-evident. It raises questions for reflection for the young people concerned, for their families, and for wider society. Taken together with some of the engagement work that the Authority has done throughout the period of the health emergency, there is also occasion for the Garda Síochána to give detailed consideration to these figures and to the potential impact on the relationship of policing to young people in general.”

The importance of Community Policing and relationships emerged once again in this latest report. Relationships between the Gardaí and local organisations providing support and services to victims of crime have led to increased opportunities for learning, information exchange and collaboration. There is a recognition that relationships that developed through urgent necessity during the pandemic are maturing and are yielding mutual dividends, but most importantly are resulting in an improved policing service for victims of crime. Relationships as the foundation of Community Policing have again been highlighted from the Authority’s engagement with community organisations and NGOs, as well as engagement with Gardaí. There is an awareness expressed by both community groups and the Gardaí that the time and resources required to nurture and maintain relationships within the community will be impacted with the return of previous levels of crime. There appears to be an expressed desire however to find ways to preserve the community oriented working undertaken during COVID-19.

The Authority has continued its engagement with Garda members and staff who have been at the frontline of the public health emergency, with mental health repeatedly cited as a key issue during these engagements. Anecdotally, mental health incidents were thought to have increased significantly during the course of the pandemic and as a result of the lockdown measures. This has included a number of serious hostage-barricade-suicide incidents as well as a significant amount of time spent on dealing with those with less serious mental health issues, particularly where detention is required. There was a sense that, while there is a policing element in these situations, the Garda

Síochána are not best placed to take the lead in dealing with many of these issues. Response from mental health professionals is critical, yet not always immediately available, particularly outside of office hours.

The Authority will continue to engage with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues on a range of matters, including at its next meeting on Thursday 27 May.