



Policing Authority publishes Assessment of Policing Performance

10 August 2021

The Policing Authority has today published its first Assessment of Policing Performance in 2021. The assessment covers the policing performance in the first six months of 2021 and is made primarily but not exclusively against the commitments made by the Garda Síochána in its [Policing Plan 2021](#). This process of reporting, which takes place twice yearly, is central to the Authority's statutory oversight work.

2021 saw the reduction of initiatives included in the annual Policing Plan. It was agreed by the Authority and Garda Síochána that the organisation would benefit from a greater focus on a smaller number of key priority projects. At the half-year point, the Garda Síochána is performing strongly against the plan as a whole. Approximately two-thirds of the targets are reported as being on-target at the end of June. This marks a considerable improvement compared to previous years.

Commenting on this, Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins said:

“The reduction in the number of objectives or priorities has sharpened the focus and has brought greater clarity in the reporting of the year’s activities. Happily, there is greater progress to report as well. It is not certain whether the reduction in targets and the improvement in performance are causally related; that will require evidence over a longer period. But it is right that improved performance should be acknowledged and recognised.”

Key achievements in the first half of 2021 included:

- The policing response to the pandemic which has persisted into 2021, requiring the Garda Síochána to be agile in its response to changes in the restrictions while still maintaining a high-level of community engagement, in particular with the vulnerable and with minority communities. This has been a challenging environment and there is much to be positive about in terms of policing performance.
- Progress in the roll-out of the Operating Model, which sees at the half-year point the business services function fully operational in six of the 19 divisions, and is advancing in those remaining.
- The continued high level of contact with, and support of, victims and those at risk of domestic violence. Operation Faoiseamh has now seen over 35,000 contacts between the Garda Síochána and victims. Additionally, the Garda Síochána is currently reverting to 80% of reported victims by way of a call-back within seven days of them reporting a crime—up significantly in recent years.
- A record level of seizures of drugs, currency and assets/proceeds of criminal activity through work undertaken with national and international partners.

- A significant increase in the level of detections of those driving under the influence of drugs has been achieved.
- The resourcing and formal launch of the Garda Anti-Corruption Unit and the underpinning of its functions through the ratification and publication of a number of anti-corruption policies.
- The delivery of human rights training to approximately 500 members of the organisation, including 70% of senior managers, in conjunction with their delivery partners, University of Limerick.

Challenges continue particularly in respect of the key enabling functions of performance management, human resources, training, information technology, finance, and estate management. The longstanding weaknesses in these areas have a very real impact on the policing service that is delivered to the public.

Most notably, this has been seen in respect of the inappropriate cancellation of CAD 999 incidents—a matter which was absent in the Garda Síochána’s reporting on the Policing Plan in the first half of 2021. The unwarranted closure or cancellation of these CAD incidents highlights the importance of a performance culture in which there are clear expectations articulated of the standards of service to be provided and the individual behaviours which give them effect. Those standards require that performance is managed and supported through appropriate training and ongoing supervision. Oversight of this topic is, and will remain, a priority for the Authority for the remainder of the year and likely beyond.

In the operating context of changing crime environments, increasingly sophisticated organised crime activity and a large-scale modernisation programme, it is vital that the Garda Síochána ensures the effective deployment of its workforce through the development of a strategic workforce plan. This document—which will assess the future needs and staffing levels required across the organisation’s functional areas and provide a roadmap to ensuring that the right number of people, with the right skills, are in place to undertake same—has been awaited by the Authority since 2019.

These areas of the organisation can often be seen as ‘back office’ but they are central to the realisation of the Garda Síochána’s strategic objectives and can help the organisation to develop and grow. Accordingly, the main focus of the report is on these issues and the effect that they have on the policing service provided by the Garda Síochána. This is not to detract from the aforementioned success but to highlight the need for urgent attention to the key enablers which will facilitate greater success in the future.

Commenting on the publication of the report, Policing Authority Chief Executive, Helen Hall said:

“The onset of COVID-19 and the response of the Garda Síochána was agile, considered and prioritised the protection of the most vulnerable in society. It gave a renewed vigour to the strengths of the Garda Síochána and built on the progress and success achieved in recent years. Areas such as community engagement, victim support and protecting the vulnerable saw extremely high levels of performance during 2020. This has continued in 2021.

However, the weaknesses that were exacerbated were also, and continue to be, evident—predominantly those relating to performance management, supervision, strategic HR management, financial management and planning, and the provision of training. These key enablers are the foundation of good performance and at present they are undermining the ability of the Garda Síochána to provide an efficient, and effective policing service.”