

POLICING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENT OF POLICING PERFORMANCE 2019-2021



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
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Chairperson's Foreword

In view of the fact that the end of 2021 coincided with the end of the three year Strategy period of the Garda Síochána, the Authority decided that the second of the twice-yearly reviews of performance should cover the entire three years rather than simply round out the review of 2021. This allows an opportunity to alter the perspective from the immediate objectives and outcomes of the very recent past to a longer-term view, to consider the cumulative results of what has been a sustained period of accelerated change for the organisation.

This, as the review makes clear, does not mean that the immediate escapes attention. Far from it, that is the continuing oversight work of the Authority. But the longer time-frame gives material for reflection on what has been successful and what has been less so.

The COVID-19 pandemic so marked the life of the entire community in the past two years that no consideration of that time will ever be detached from its presence and impact. Every commentary by the Authority has touched on that impact. This has been especially true of the sixteen reports submitted to the Minister on the Garda use of emergency powers during the period. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to rehearse those here. But it is right to note again, in particular, the innovation, initiative, agility and community focus that characterised the approach of the Garda Síochána that took very many by surprise - and may even have surprised the organisation itself in its effectiveness. In the great majority of instances it was very much appreciated by the public.

This review captures a sense of the changes that have been taking place within the Garda Síochána and records some significant success. A few phrases taken from the text illustrate the point – 'real and significant strides', 'a renewed approach to community policing', 'significant targets relating to diversity were achieved', 'notable and laudable successes', 'a major cultural shift for the Garda Síochána', and so on.

The review also identifies, of course, the reality that in some important areas the story is not quite so positive. Much remains to be done. Much will always remain to be done in a large, widely distributed organisation serving an ever-changing society. But what has been achieved, and is recorded here, is an encouragement to the conviction that the capacity to improve is well demonstrated and firmly embedded. Change, adaptation, performance improvement, renewal are never one-off tasks. They are constants in all institutions and organisations, especially in those with such a significant role as the national policing service.

The Garda Síochána is on a journey that will require it to traverse very difficult terrain. In some cases, it is in the foothills. In other areas great advances have been made, great strides taken. The success of the Protective Services Bureaux has been well recorded and will have long-term benefits for communities, individuals and for policing. The new emphasis on gender-based violence is a reflection of, and a significant contribution to meeting, the need for people, particularly women, to feel safe.

The introduction and impressively rapid uptake of human rights training marks a significant step in recognising the foundational nature of human rights for all policing, giving expression to the requirement of the legislation that the Garda Síochána vindicate the human rights of each individual.

The sustained momentum in the introduction of the new Operating Model, that has such potential for a more effective policing service, was slowed by, but not displaced during, the COVID-19 pandemic. Its extension to the entire State will be a very important achievement. In a different

context, the impressive international partnership to dismantle a major organised crime gang, involving the Garda, Europol and law enforcement agencies in the US and the UK, announced in April, was the fruit of detailed and committed work extending over the past few years.

That last mentioned success reminds us of those who have direct daily experience of living in communities that are vulnerable due to crime gangs, drug dealing, anti-social behaviour and who feel the need for a comparably energetic engagement with policing in their communities such as characterised the wider response during the pandemic. Many of them see all too frequently the consequences of the lack of safety that they so keenly experience. This will need the involvement of many statutory agencies as well as the Garda Síochána who fully understand the critical contribution that is required of them but cannot resolve all the issues alone.

In almost all cases where progress has been less than planned, weaknesses in ICT availability has been a significant contributory factor. Greater investment in technology is needed. There is an inextricable link between such investment and community and individual safety. This investment is not about capacity that is 'nice to have'; it is about essential capacity, which is standard in very many other police services.

There are challenges in this for the Garda Síochána in the priorities it establishes within its own budgetary allocations. But there are unavoidable challenges for Government because current Garda budgets cannot meet immediate demands and because the next few years will undoubtedly bring very turbulent economic conditions. But the rewards are real, life-changing, life-saving. Moreover, what such investment could help to achieve matches very closely the intentions and aspirations of many government policies and matches also the genuine needs and interests of the public.

This review properly draws attention to the slow pace of development in respect of what have come to be known as the enabling functions – HR, Finance, Analysis, Estate Management as examples. Some progress has been made but it cannot too often be stressed that these are critical functions within the Garda Síochána and are crucially linked to the quality of the policing service that can be delivered to the people. The effective running of the organisation; ensuring that the skills within the organisation are deployed to best effect; enabling the best possible return on the investment of public moneys; providing necessary training and development – all depend on further progress in these areas.

These expressions of concern or criticism do not, however, detract from the positive evaluation of what has been achieved over the past three years. There is a sense in which the chain is stronger than its weaker links. A great deal of progress has been made. It is important to acknowledge and applaud it.

Bob Collins
Chairperson

1. Introduction

This *Assessment of Policing Performance 2019-2021* (the report) is the Policing Authority's evaluation of the Garda Síochána's performance over the strategy period 2019-2021. Performance is assessed primarily but not exclusively against the commitments made by the Garda Síochána in its Statement of Strategy 2019-2021 and the three annual policing plans that gave it effect.

It is the latest in a series of bi-annual reports assessing Garda Síochána performance. These reports are provided to the Minister for Justice, the Garda Commissioner, and other stakeholders, and made publicly available through the Authority's website. The reports are important in providing transparency about policing performance, the oversight of policing, and the outcomes of that work.

This report is the first iteration that assesses performance over the medium term. The Authority believes that this longer lens view provides an opportunity to provide an assessment that better reflects the ongoing, long-term modernisation and change process being undertaken by the Garda Síochána and to allow for a more accurate reflection and focus on the outcomes of recent performance.

1.1 Impact of COVID-19

Any consideration of policing performance in 2019-2021 is inextricably linked with the Garda Síochána's central role in the national response to the health emergency, the policing of the associated regulations, and the demand placed on the organisation. In light of this central role and the extraordinary, temporary powers conferred on the Garda Síochána, the Authority began producing regular reports on Garda performance, as it related to COVID-19, in 2020. These sixteen reports are available on the Authority's [website](#).

COVID-19 and the associated public health measures had a significant impact also on traditional quantitative measures that are used to assess crime and policing. Primarily, this period saw a drastic decrease across the majority of measured crime categories – with certain exceptions – that either have already or are expected to revert to normal levels. The Public Attitude Survey, a major source of public perception data concerning policing and the Garda Síochána, was also affected during this period and as such data over the strategy period is not comparable for the purposes of reliable assessment.

In this context, the Authority vastly expanded its existing programme of stakeholder engagement in order to ensure it was hearing, to the greatest extent possible, the lived experiences of policing during COVID-19 and thereafter. Qualitative data therefore drives the assessment provided with quantitative sources used if and when available.

1.2 Report Structure

Following this introductory section, Section 2 provides information on the purpose of the performance framework that applies to the Garda Síochána, namely: how it is developed, the constituent parts, and the Authority's assessing of and reporting on performance within it.

Sections 3 and 4 provide the Authority's assessment of performance over the period 2019-2021 through the identification of two major themes that have emerged from oversight over this period: an improving service and enabling service delivery.

Section 5 presents the main conclusions and looks forward to the next strategy period.

2. Performance Framework

This section provides an overview of: the way in which performance of the Garda Síochána is strategically planned and operationalised; how the Authority assesses this performance; and, the relevant performance targets established in early 2019 that form the basis of the assessment within this report.

2.1. The Policing Priorities

The Policing Authority has a statutory function under the [Garda Síochána Act 2005](#) to determine or revise the priorities for the Garda Síochána in performing its functions relating to policing services.

These Policing Priorities establish what the Authority want the Garda Síochána to give the most attention to in any given period. They assist the Commissioner in identifying areas that require extra focus and/or investment of resources to improve the service delivered to the public and the enhancement of the Garda organisation.

For the period 2019-2021, the [Policing Priorities](#) were as follows:

- Policing our Communities
- Preventing and Confronting Crime
- Policing our Roads
- Embedding Human Rights as the foundation for the delivery of policing services
- Leading our People
- Reforming our Systems
- Protecting our State

2.2. Garda Síochána Statement of Strategy

The Garda Síochána's Statement of Strategy (Strategy) is a statutory document that establishes the Commissioner's vision for the organisation over a three-year period. The Strategy is drawn up by the Commissioner, in accordance with the [Garda Síochána Act 2005](#), and approved by the Authority with the consent of the Minister for Justice. The mission and objectives within the Strategy set out the range of public commitments made by the Garda Síochána to both the community and the members of its organisation.

2.3. Policing Plan

The annual Policing Plan (the Plan) sets out the specific actions, with accompanying targets and milestones, by which the Strategy's objectives will be realised and performance is to be measured. These actions represent the areas of primary focus for the organisation, its management, and workforce for the year ahead. As with the Strategy, the Plan is drawn up by the Commissioner in accordance with the Act, and approved by the Authority with the consent of the Minister for Justice.

The three iterations of the Plan established during the strategy period 2019-2021 have also addressed the actions assigned to the Garda Síochána under 'A Policing Service for the Future': an implementation plan for the recommendations arising from the Government's [Policing Reform programme](#).

2.4. Authority Oversight and Assessment of Performance

The primary mechanism for monitoring and assessing policing performance is through monthly Authority meetings with the Garda Commissioner, a minimum of four of which are held in public each year. The Authority's Policing Strategy and Performance Committee and its Organisation Development Committee also review performance in depth. Throughout the year, the Authority and the Committees review and analyse internal and external reporting from, and about, the Garda Síochána.

The Authority also assesses performance through a programme of stakeholder engagements; as well as engaging with the Garda Síochána, the Authority interacts with Joint Policing Committees and meets with a wide range of groups and organisations at national and local level. This programme of engagement or outreach seeks to listen and understand the lived experience of policing and the perceptions in the community as to its effectiveness. The information gathered through these different types of engagements is drawn together, along with research where relevant, to inform discussion between Authority members and the senior leadership of the Garda Síochána.

While the Plan may form the foundation for the oversight activities in any given year, and the Strategy in any given period, the Authority's engagement with and oversight of the Garda Síochána's performance is not restricted to the items contained within these documents. Through its regular contacts, and at meetings of the Authority and its Committees, wider matters of performance are also assessed. Thus, issues such as crime trends, third party reports, significant developments, the progress of other key areas, and performance against wider, multi-agency strategies are carefully monitored and reviewed periodically, as required.

The Authority then publishes these bi-annual reports on performance at the mid-year and end of year points. Heretofore these reports have primarily been concerned with performance against the relevant Policing Plan. Dedicated reports on key policing matters, such as the response to COVID-19, are also published as appropriate. All such reports are made available through the Authority's website. As such, while this report is concerned with the medium-term performance of the organisation over the period 2019-2021, further in-depth reporting during this time is available.

2.5. Establishing Framework 2019-2021

In its *Assessment of Policing Performance 2018*, the Authority concluded that the strategic planning and management of policing performance were areas of notable concern. The centrality and ownership of the Policing Plan, and by extension the wider performance framework, was highlighted, as was the internal monitoring, including leadership and accountability, and reporting on performance to the Authority. The Policing Plan 2018, while containing a modest number of achievements, finished the year with more than half of its consistent targets unachieved.

Additionally, there was criticism of the organisation's approach to the use of information as a management tool for operational decision making; matters pertaining to data quality; and, the organisation's understanding and use of its resources, specifically the lack of management information to allow the Policing Plan to be costed. Further detail is [available here](#).

Beyond this assessment, the Garda Síochána was grappling with the wide-ranging reforms contained within and/or resultant of: the Modernisation and Renewal Programme; the Crowe Horwath report on Mandatory Intoxicant Testing (breath-tests); the Garda Síochána Culture Audit; and, the Garda

Inspectorate reports *Changing Policing in Ireland* and *Crime Investigation*. These reforms being supplemented, and in some cases superseded by, the Report of the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland and the subsequent implementation plan for the recommendations within the Commission's report, A Policing Service for the Future (APSFF) – both of which were published in the latter half of 2018.

It was in this context that the current Commissioner, J.A. Harris, was appointed in September 2018. With the agreement of the Authority and the then Minister for Justice and Equality the Commissioner was granted an extension on the statutory deadlines relating to the submission of the Statement of Strategy 2019-2021 and the Policing Plan 2019 to allow for him to fully assess the standing of the organisation and prepare both documents. Accordingly, the Strategy and Plan were submitted to the Authority in March 2019 and approved by the Minister shortly thereafter.

In the [Strategy Statement 2019 - 2021](#) the Garda Síochána established its mission as 'Keeping People Safe', to be achieved through the following six strategic pillars and constituent key areas:



In his foreword, the Commissioner stated the vision of the Garda Síochána as *“a victim-centred police service, focused on keeping people safe, protecting the most vulnerable and providing a consistently high standard of service. We will be responsive to the needs of victims, local communities and the evolving nature of crime”*.

Acknowledging the significant investment, fundamental structural changes and restructuring necessary to deliver against this vision the Commissioner spoke to: the necessity of human rights being central; the organisation's people being adequately supported; progression on both internal and external diversity and inclusion matters; and need for the organisation and its management to be accountable for performance.

The foreword ends with the assertion that the implementation of the Strategy *“will result in a better organisation in which to work and an organisation that provides the standard of public service demanded of us”*.

The following sections of the report assess performance against the above outlined framework.

3. An Improving Service

The primary function of the Garda Síochána is to provide a policing service to the Irish public and the many communities that exist within the State. At a high level, the Authority's assessment of performance against said function over the period is that it is generally improving. That is not to say that there are not areas for improvement, or indeed of concern also, but rather that, in line with the stated strategic outcomes – see below – the organisation made real and significant strides over the strategy period. This section considers performance against these outcomes, as set in 2019, and more broadly.

Strategic Outcomes: Service Delivery

From a service delivery perspective, the Strategy included the following target outcomes:

Community Policing

- A renewed approach to community policing agreed, understood and implemented
- Visible, responsive policing services tailored to community needs, which can be accessed by all of our diverse communities

Protecting People

- An agile police service, responsive to the changing nature of crime, informed at local and national level by quality and timely data and intelligence
- A reduction in both crime and the fear of crime
- A consistent approach to crime investigations, leading to improved criminal justice outcomes
- A victim-focused policing service, supportive of all vulnerable service users, implementing our statutory obligations to victims
- Highly visible roads policing, providing effective enforcement and deterrence
- Safer roads demonstrated by a reduction in people killed and a reduction in people injured

A Human Rights Foundation

- The development & implementation of a new human rights approach to policing service provision
- The Code of Ethics understood and lived by all personnel

3.1. Community Engagement

One of the Policing Principles, contained within the Act as a central tenet of the delivery of policing, is that service *“is dependent on securing the confidence, support and co-operation of local communities and engaging with those communities”*. The Garda Síochána has consistently engaged with the Authority on the basis that it is, first and foremost, a community policing service and that this is intrinsic to the role of all of its members and staff.

Over the lifetime of the Strategy there have been clear signs that there has indeed been a renewed approach to community policing at a strategic and operational level. Strategically, the new Community Policing Framework was developed and published in 2019. This provided a necessary articulation of what community policing is within the Garda Síochána, and what shape this would take when provided as a service to the public. The Authority welcomed the centrality of engagement with communities (including diverse communities), recognition of the need to police through partnership, and the design of dedicated training and supports within this vision. Operationally however the Authority retained concerns that community policing remained an ancillary function to 'real policing' as reflected in views expressed by Gardaí and communities that community policing is

not given the regard and resourcing it requires. While 'visible' policing is a stated priority and intended outcome of the new framework the Authority was, and remains, of the view that community policing relies on not just visibility but also on its presence in the community.

During the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear, renewed operational approach to community policing was evident. The Authority heard repeatedly from communities that the Garda Síochána had re-established a presence in the community and the service provided was responsive and tailored to need. The Garda Síochána, through this response, achieved a renewed connection with the community and with other groups and agencies providing support to those who are vulnerable or were rendered vulnerable by the exigencies of the pandemic. The widely covered roles undertaken at the height of the onset of COVID-19 and during subsequent lockdowns enlivened the connection with existing communities and the establishment of relationships with newer communities.

The challenge now for the Garda Síochána is to ensure that the Community Policing Framework rollout (delayed due to COVID-19) learns from and builds on these enhanced relationships and new lines of communication and partnerships. The response to COVID-19 required the Garda Síochána to listen to the community in all its diversity, to tailor its approach accordingly and to adapt and respond with agility, care and compassion in a time of widespread community vulnerability and fear. While this may ebb at a national and community level in respect of COVID-19 it is clear that those communities experiencing a similar vulnerability or fear due to high levels of drugs and drug-related crime or the wider impacts of organised crime, hate crime, anti-social behaviour, etc. and who do not feel safe require a similar, renewed approach to policing.

Diversity

Significant targets relating to diversity were achieved within the strategy period including: the production of its first external facing Diversity and Integration Strategy in December 2019; the inclusion of a hate crime definition within the strategy; the establishment of both a National Diversity Forum and a local, Divisional-level equivalent in Blanchardstown; and, the launch of an online facility to report incidents of hate crime. The Garda Síochána has now applied the experience gained to its preparation of a second diversity strategy that will combine the internal and external elements of diversity. The Authority notes this as an important step in acknowledging and acting on the intrinsic importance of diversity within the police service, both in terms of its workforce reflecting the composition of the population it serves and the provision of a policing service that merits the trust and confidence of all communities. The Authority welcomes the recognition that these are mutually reinforcing.

A clear policy intent has emerged and been articulated by the Garda Síochána over the lifetime of the strategy period 2019-21. This has been supported by the identification and training of diversity officers and the establishment of the Diversity Forum.

The establishment of the National Diversity Forum, a local equivalent and the intention to replicate this across the country indicates a vital openness to engagement and partnership in approaching diversity. Such ventures can lead to frank and difficult interactions. Even in the face of such engagement, it is imperative that concerns expressed are engaged with in good faith and actively listened to. The experiences of how communities experience policing, and how they experience it in

different ways offers an invaluable and critical opportunity for the Garda Síochána to learn from the organisations and representatives acting in this ‘critical-friend’ capacity.

3.2. Protective Services and Vulnerability

A major area of focus for the Authority since its establishment has been the approach and performance surrounding protective services, with particular emphasis on the policing of sexual offences and domestic abuse. This has been an area of notable and laudable successes for the Garda Síochána over the three-year period, including:

- The rollout of specialist Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs) to allow for access by all divisions by the end of 2020 – following piloting in 3 divisions in 2017;
- The rollout of training for DPSU members and various training updates as prompted by review and/or legislative change;
- Call-backs to victims of domestic abuse (made within 7 days of reporting) increased from approximately 36% in 2019 (which was up 15% from 2017) to approximately 80% by the end of 2021;
- The undertaking of Operation Faoiseamh during COVID-19 to ensure that victims of domestic abuse were adequately supported;
- The disaggregation of assaults, the recording of the victim:offender relationship, a pilot recording of sexual offence outcomes to allow for increase data for analysis so as to better inform policing responses;
- The design and commencement of the rollout of a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool (ongoing) to members; and,
- Landmark convictions for coercive control offences following its introduction as an offence as of 01 January 2019.

Regarding call-backs, a shift in policy allowed for consideration to be given to the appropriateness of call back methods, with members now permitted to use remote means (phone calls) to contact victims where there were difficulties undertaking in-person call-backs, for example in terms of safety, privacy or access issues. Whilst this variety of methods necessitates the strong monitoring and governance of call backs to ensure consistent quality in service provision, this is clearly an area of notable progress in terms of the service offered to victims becoming increasingly victim-focussed and supportive. Similarly, the rate of victim assessments – undertaken to assess needs relating to accessibility, language, protection, etc. – saw significant increases in 3-day completion rates within the period.

In isolation, any of the above achievements represent strong operational performance, and the Authority recognises the commitment and effort undertaken to achieve them by members, staff and management. More significantly, in the round the above represents a major cultural shift within the Garda Síochána that occurred over a slightly longer timeframe but enabled these significant achievements over the strategy period. There is a wider understanding of these offences and the relevant legal framework within the organisation and in addition to the DPSUs there has been a building of competence across the workforce. Stakeholders including groups working with those experiencing domestic abuse report that there has largely been sustained positive change and a greater quality of services provided to victims. An outdated societal view of domestic abuse as a ‘private/family matter’ has been largely consigned to the past. It is believed this increased

confidence in the service offered and this has contributed to the rise in reported sexual offences – notoriously underreported – which is regarded as a positive development.

There remains scope for improvement and this primarily relates to consistency in the service provided to victims, greater knowledge and understanding of the various legal orders available to victims and what constitutes a breach of these orders. Also some work remains to be done in the provision of a service to those who are suffering domestic abuse who may also be battling addiction or from members of some communities, for example the Traveller Community where a lack of trust in the police service can deter a victim of abuse from seeking help from the Garda Síochána.

3.3. Prevention and Detection of Crime

Broadly, COVID-19 and the associated restrictions over the strategy period heavily affected crime rates. This downward shift in trends, in part, enabled the strong community policing response described above. It lessens the ability to assess accurately the policing response to crimes such as assaults in public, burglary, theft, etc., and the performance against outcomes such as “a reduction in crime and the fear of crime”. Nevertheless, the Authority welcomes the finalisation and publication of strategic and operational frameworks to address volume crime such as the Assaults in Public Strategy, the Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2024, etc.; an assessment of their impact will be possible as trends revert to normal ranges.

The outcome “a consistent approach to crime investigation, leading to improved criminal justice outcomes” was also complicated by the impact of COVID-19 on policing and the wider criminal justice system. The Authority retains concerns in respect of detection rates. The pilot of a system to ascertain outcomes initially in the area of sexual crime, beyond detection alone, is being closely monitored by the Authority. There is a high potential value to the Garda Síochána in better understanding barriers to detection, and such information may allow mitigation of barriers and/or increased ability to work with partners to achieve greater outcomes for victims of crime.

The introduction and continued rollout of the Investigation Management System, which will provide improved governance and accountability to investigations, is an important aspect of achieving consistency and improved outcomes. The centrality of the system to the Garda Síochána’s work to improve detection levels makes the slow pace of rollout over the period a matter of concern.

Organised Crime

There have been substantial operational successes at a national level in tackling organised and serious crime over the period 2019-2021, for example in the seizure of firearms, currency and drugs, and also in the achievement of convictions and interventions to save lives. Similar to protective services these successes have been facilitated through longer-term strategic planning and approach. Particular reference must be made also to the strong inter-agency relationships held by the Garda Síochána in working with partner agencies to continue to disrupt organised crime groups, both national and international. Significant achievements occurred within the period, particularly at a European-level that involved or benefitted the Garda Síochána including large scale drug seizures, the interception of communications (most significantly Encrochat), and arrests undertaken in other jurisdictions – including related to drug trafficking and cyber-crimes. It would appear that these efforts will continue to provide notable results for the organisation in its response to organised crime, not least the recent announcement by Irish, UK and US law enforcement agencies on matters relating to the Kinahan organised crime group. Alignment between these functions of protective

services and organised crime has also been evident through successes in respect of organised prostitution and human trafficking – a dedicated unit was established with responsibility for the former in 2021.

The Garda Síochána has also designed and rolled out the Organised Crime Group Threat Assessment Matrix and implemented a National Intelligence Model, aligned with the Operating Model. These initiatives will allow greater ongoing interoperability between security and intelligence services and the wider organisation. The Authority has observed a more explicit articulation of aspects of these security services as a vital policing support and function – an enabler of information-led policing – rather than a standalone aspect of Garda activity concerned with state security.

The challenge for the Garda Síochána and its partners is to ensure that these national successes and improvements translate into an impact felt by communities. The launch of Operation Tara is welcome at a strategic level however, it appears that the intended impacts are yet to be experienced from a sub-national policing or community perspective. Communities' sense of safety is not necessarily improved as a result of the large seizures of drugs and weapons. Lower level dealing, drug-related intimidation and the fear that organised gangs will attract children and young people into criminal activity, especially those children and young people that are already in vulnerable situations, remain as challenges. Often this requires a multi-agency, community safety approach which itself is a competence that the organisation strengthened during the pandemic. It also points to the need for policing of organised crime to have strong linkages with community policing. The positioning of drugs policing within the community pillar of the Statement of Strategy 2022-2024 is a welcome acknowledgement of the need to consider success in this area of policing beyond the metrics of seizures to measures that also include quality of life for communities.

Economic and Cyber Crime

The Garda Síochána, as outlined, performed quite strongly over the period on what might be termed 'traditional' crime and policing functions. However, similar to some of the challenges outlined in respect of responding to an increasingly diverse society the organisation has struggled with new and emerging crime. These are not matters of competence or ability to respond to the offences in and of themselves. Rather, there is a lack of ability to respond as an organisation in a sufficiently agile and efficient manner.

Economic and cyber crime – both cyber-dependent (i.e. the offence requires a device) and cyber-enabled (i.e. the offence can be committed with/without a device) – are increasing in prevalence nationally and internationally. This is a long-term global trend. Targets within the Plans over the strategy period however remained persistently unachieved at year-end, in the main due to insufficient resource allocation to meet them. Most notably, against a target of reducing the time it takes to ensure a device is analysed by gardaí once seized to below 12 months the current backlog for device analysis is in the region of 3 years. This backlog impacts on victims, suspects, investigation timelines, and potentially court outcomes.

The Authority has heard since the start of the strategy period that plans to resource both the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau have been in place and approved by management. Nevertheless, the lack of alignment between key enabling functions (namely human resources, IT, finance, and estate management) have largely resulted in underperformance against the stated targets and/or timelines.

This enabling function issue is expanded upon in the next section, however it is illustrative how the failure to ensure internal performance places the organisation at a deficit in its attempts to respond adequately to the changing nature of crime. While consideration of Garda visibility and presence is routinely considered in terms of boots on the ground, the changing nature of crime demands Garda presence increasingly in private spaces – online – and behind closed doors, which may challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a visible police service.

Roads Policing

Roads policing has seen significant improvements over the period and achieved efficiencies that perhaps were not initially envisaged at the beginning of the period. In line with the strategic outcome of ‘highly visible roads policing’ the 2019 Plan included a target of increasing the number of members within the roads policing function, continuing an approach carried over from the previous period. However, due to the efficiencies offered by the extremely successful mobility devices rollout, management sought to rationalise the allocation of resources and revised the target downwards. Prioritisation was instead given to the mobility rollout with all members provided with a device in 2020. This has seen, in respect of the issuance of fixed charge notices (FCNs), a move to an entirely digitised system through the mobility device that has offered, among other benefits, increased public payment rates and a reduction in processing time (in the region of a 6 hour saving per FCN).

Crucially for the Authority, there has also been significant progress made with the implementation of the Crowe Horwath recommendations – pertaining to the mandatory intoxicant testing issues uncovered in 2017. The recommendations are, insofar as possible at this stage, implemented with some remaining matters to be addressed through training and inter-agency approaches. While the Authority continues to engage on these matters, there is a confidence that the implementation has been a success over the period.

Likewise successes have been achieved in enforcement and deterrence with: road deaths in 2021 being at the lowest level since records commenced; decreases in serious injuries on the roads; significant increases in detections of drug driving; and increased provision of drug testing machines at the roadside. It would be inappropriate not to heed the contributory factor of decreases in road traffic over the period, nevertheless these are significant operational successes that result in safer roads. There is a challenge now for the Garda Síochána to maintain, and where possible, continue these successes as road usage returns to pre-pandemic levels.

This combined success made in roads policing has been acknowledged by the Authority in the removal of roads policing as a Policing Priority. It will continue to be overseen and monitored as an aspect of service however, the pressing concerns and governance risks that were evident in previous years have been dealt with by the Garda Síochána.

3.4. Integrity and Human Rights

The Strategy sought to develop a human rights foundation for the Garda Síochána and the service it provides. It is clear that significant progress has been made in this regard over the period. Matters of integrity, including ethical behaviour, anti-corruption and the safeguarding of human rights have been a central tenet to practically all interactions between the Authority and the Commissioner over this time.

The establishment of the anti-corruption unit in 2020 and a policy and procedures framework on which their function operates was a significant, hard-won success. The ongoing work on discipline procedures and the action undertaken on anti-corruption and discipline are noteworthy.

Likewise the continued rollout of the Code of Ethics (introduced in 2017), with over 95% of members now signed up, the design and delivery of human rights training to over 1,000 members and staff (including senior management), and the publication of use of force data demonstrate a public and private commitment to matters of integrity. The commencement of reviews of the wider policy framework from a human rights lens on a prioritised basis is also notable.

This foundation is vital as the organisation modernises and moves beyond this strategy period. The work done over these three years has the potential to be a watershed if the organisation continues to embed the associated principles and behaviours within its organisational culture, and most significantly within its management culture at all levels, from national down to divisional. These are not matters that are the responsibility of one individual, unit or bureau. They are foundational principles on which policing is based.

4. Enabling Service Delivery

The policing successes outlined in the previous section do not simply occur, nor are they a product of merely the drive and commitment of individual members or units within the organisation – accepting of course the critical role that this factor plays. Thus, the allocation of members and staff to certain functions is not, of itself, a sufficient guarantor of performance. Rather they are enabled to perform by the harmonisation of a variety of factors: the provision of sufficient people, with the right knowledge, skills and expertise to provide a service and affect positive change; that these people are adequately supported with the right equipment, training and necessary specialised support; and, that this effort and resource investment is managed correctly. It is only through proper, thorough strategic planning that this is possible.

The successes outlined under *Victims and the Vulnerable*, for example, were built on strong foundations put in place in the years immediately preceding through the design, piloting and establishment of the DPSUs and the provision of dedicated training. It was within this structure that members and staff were further enabled to provide a high-quality service to victims.

It is in this critical context of facilitating service delivery that the progress and challenges in respect of the key enabling functions (human resources, information and technology, financial management and planning, training, and estate management) must be considered.

Strategic Outcomes: Key Enabling Functions

From a service delivery perspective, the Strategy included the following target outcomes:

Our People – Our Greatest Resource

- Recruitment, diversity, training, deployment and development of our personnel, guided by our People Strategy
- A committed workforce who feel supported and who identify the value they add through their work
- A workplace culture that encourages honesty, openness and learning

Transforming Our Service

- A transformed service providing consistent, efficient and effective policing services, delivered primarily at divisional level
- Policing services supported by modern information and communications technology, including mobile technology
- Enhanced confidence in policing and in our performance-related data

4.1. Key Enabling Functions

The Authority published a dedicated version of this report in July 2021 on the enabling functions. In the main, the assessment made in that report remains unchanged and the Garda Síochána, despite progress as of the end of 2021, has struggled to adequately realise the above strategic objectives.

Human Resources

Policing ultimately depends on appropriate people being present and equipped to provide the necessary service. The Garda Síochána has a long-standing need for a workforce plan (People Strategy) that adequately assesses the need for the allocation of the workforce (members, staff and reserves) in line with an analysis of the demand on the organisation. This does not necessarily mean a greater workforce or allocation of people – the organisation currently consists of a workforce

numbering approximately 18,000. Rather it requires the strategic allocation of specific skills, knowledge and expertise and/or the provision of training, equipment, and technology. Roads policing provides a clear example of this with the efficiencies gained through technology outstripping what was envisaged with additional members and the need for them, as planned, negated.

The above notwithstanding, there has been progress in respect of HR matters over the strategy period; in particular in 2021 with the provision of a draft workforce plan and the beginning of a process to increase diversity of the workforce. Culturally, the organisation has advanced significantly in its attitude towards Garda staff. There is a clear progression in terms of the recognition of the value add of skilled staff being allocated rather than trained members by default. With this progression, the demand for staff has aligned with the pre-existing need for the allocation of staff to specialist positions within the workforce. However, quantifying and meeting this need are significant issues that are yet to be overcome. The inadequate prioritisation of staffing positions and the extensive recruitment and commencement processes are longstanding barriers.

An area where more progress might have been made is that of the Garda Reserve with the strategy period best described as a period of stagnation for this cohort of the Garda workforce. The publication of the new Garda Reserve Strategy 2021-2025 was cautiously welcomed by the Authority. There are significant foundational actions included within this strategy that must be achieved at an early juncture to allow meaningful change to take place in respect of the manner in which the Reserve is incorporated effectively in the organisation. The recognition that the Reserve presents an opportunity for increased community engagement and visibility as well as opportunity to diversify the workforce is in contrast to the lack of pace to implement the key actions within the strategy.

In summary progress and improvement, although present, is slow and the continued inability of the organisation to strategically align its HR function with the overall targets and objectives of the organisation will continue to affect the policing service provided, until addressed. This as earlier stated leads to an inability to adequately respond to changing demands on the organisation, including in the areas of economic crime, cyber crime, community policing, etc. The enabling functions are as stated previously not a back room function but a key strategic partner in the provision of a high quality policing service.

Information and Technology

Modernisation and the continued improvement of the Garda Síochána, as with wider industry, is heavily dependent on information and technology advancement. The scale of advancement over the strategy period has been considerable. The resourcing of the strategic and operational leadership of the IT function through the appointment of Executive Director, Chief Information Officer in 2019 and the increased centrality of IT within the planning and governance of the organisation has yielded significant results. Central to this has been the finalisation of the ICT Vision and Strategy, which are based on a vision for policing services rather than an isolated focus on technology. The Vision is not about kit or equipment but is directed towards the provision of data and information that will inform and enable policing. This has provided a clear pathway for the organisation in modernising its policing services and supporting its people through products that are designed with the front-line member and the services that they provide to the public in mind.

In tandem, a number of ICT projects have advanced, including: the mobility devices; Computer Aided Dispatch; the Roster and Duty Management System; and, the Investigation Management System.

The introduction of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in particular was a substantial achievement for the Garda Síochána in terms of its scale (in excess of 90% of targeted members and staff were trained to enable its launch) and has had a number of significant policing impacts through the identification of over 50 individuals wanted under European Arrest Warrants within the first 6 months of go-live, as well successes in identifying missing persons and property.

On the information side, there has been a noticeable increase in the value placed at a management level on data and information and a concerted effort to move towards increasingly information-led policing. In this respect, the resumption of the publication of crime and policing data (using PULSE data) by the Central Statistics Office in 2019 was a positive development. The positive commentary from the CSO on the improvements in data over the period are encouraging, as is the progress reported by the Garda Síochána in progressing matters within the data quality improvement plan. While statistics are still published 'under reservation', such a classification on crime statistics is not an uncommon phenomenon in Ireland and the UK. Of enduring concern however is the continuing capacity development within both the Garda Síochána Analysis Service and the Garda Information Services Centre. These deficits are long-standing, pre-date the strategy period, and strongly reflect the need for strategic planning and prioritisation in relation to the workforce. The continued lack of progress in sufficiently addressing the deficits places significant risks on the organisation in terms of accessing the appropriate data and information to assist in planning and reviewing policing performance.

Training

Training has been a long-standing bottleneck for the organisation given the significant demand for training across the gamut of Garda Síochána functions. In particular, driver training has been a cause of concern for the Authority. However, the increased use of online or blended learning has been a positive within the strategy period, in part increased in response to COVID-19, including in the following areas: Youth Diversion, protective services, and the Schengen Information System. There now is a necessary period of reflection and assessment whereby the organisation must find the balance in training that ensures it is delivered in the most appropriate manner. For example, the provision of training to Probationers must be reviewed in terms of its effectiveness and, as appropriate, updated.

In order to accurately address these challenges and provide a clear sense of future direction the leadership and strategic capacity of training must be sufficiently established. There has been a disconnect to-date between the operation of the Garda College and the wider CPD processes and a sense of prioritisation linked to risk, demand and need.

Finance and Estate

As outlined above there have been considerable policing successes through investment in information and technology, the Garda Síochána faces a considerable challenge however in continuing the implementation of these critical IT projects and the realisation of the Vision and Strategy. The current capital financial requirement to realise this is approximately €40 million per annum, considerably higher than the €15 million capital budget the organisation has been allocated for 2022. Modernisation simply will not occur as required without increased capital IT investment.

The articulation of this scenario is possible due to the strategic planning undertaken in respect of Garda IT. This is not the case more broadly and the Garda Síochána still possesses a notable

organisational risk in its lack of management information surrounding the organisation's finances and the resultant inability to quantify costs associated with the Strategy or Plan. The completion of an external review of the finance function and the commencement of the implementation of resultant recommendations is welcome; however it is too early in the process to provide a more in-depth or indeed positive assessment of work in this area.

Perhaps most pressingly, the organisation is exposed to severe risks in respect of the Garda estate. While recent progress has been made the strategy period was characterised by delays to major projects, including the move to a major new facility on Military Road. The ability of the organisation to ensure that its accommodation is fit for purpose for both its workforce and those it serves and engages with, is tied:

- in the short-term to its strategic planning and joint-management of the estate with the Office of Public Works, and
- in the long-term to its adoption of the function of estate management – as planned for under the ongoing Government Policing Reform Programme – and appropriate investment through the National Development Plan.

The Garda Síochána is engaged with stakeholders on these matters, including the Authority and further detail will be provided in terms of the policing impacts in the Authority's annual letter to the Minister on the adequacy of Garda resources – as per section 62H(2)(b) of the Act.

4.2. Performance and Learning Culture

As previously stated, in the period preceding 2019 the Garda Síochána was pursuing wide-ranging change and implementing recommendations from across a disparate set of reviews, reports and strategies. Internally, 2019 marked a change in approach with the aligning of the strategic direction of the modernisation and reform of the organisation with the delivery of policing services using the vehicle of the performance framework, specifically the Policing Plan 2019. This marked a significant and important shift in mind-set and appropriately married policing performance with the, previously ideologically removed, internal machinations of the organisation.

In keeping with this, the Policing Plan has increasingly become not only a set of ambitious targets but also those that are within the ability of the organisation to deliver against within the year, allowing greater progress in tandem against the longer-term Strategy. As outlined throughout this section, the exception to this remains that in respect of targets relating to the key enabling functions and wider targets where there is a critical dependence on these functions. Here the organisation continues to have severe difficulty in achieving its stated aims.

However, the principle of enhanced performance culture has become somewhat pervasive within the organisation and the embedding of the Performance and Accountability Framework as a management tool at all levels of the organisation is a positive development.

Closely aligned to this has been an observed shift to an increased culture of organisational curiosity and self-reflection, which encouragingly led to, where appropriate, criticism and awareness of weaknesses or areas of improvement. In particular, reviews into areas including homicide investigation and public order highlighted the ability to and importance of undertaking critical self-reflection.

The Garda Síochána now needs to ensure it possesses the ability to monitor and rigorously assess the implementation of recommendations arising from such internal reviews and the recommendations made by third parties, including the Garda Inspectorate; currently work being undertaken by the Deputy Commissioner Strategy Performance and Governance.

4.3. Operating Model

The development, launch and initial rollout of the Operating Model is a hugely significant achievement for the Garda Síochána over not only the strategy period but also within its lifetime. The organisation has shown a resilience and commitment to this major reform project – a cornerstone of the Government Policing Reform Programme – through the initial design and communication of the model through to responding with agility to the impact of COVID-19.

Following piloting of the model in four Divisions in 2018 and 2019, the Garda Síochána announced the details of the model in the latter half of 2019. The approach to communication, including the presentation and Q&A sessions undertaken by the Commissioner with each Joint Policing Committee across the country, was an important aspect of the approach taken. It provided an opportunity for the Garda Síochána to articulate the rationale for the fundamental change and how it will enable the organisation to deliver an effective policing service attuned to the needs of communities and the changing nature of crime and that the Garda Síochána becomes an increasingly modern and fit-for-purpose service. This ensured that the organisation was aware of the concerns of communities in relation to the proposed changes.

Following the onset of COVID-19, the organisation made the entirely appropriate decision to revise the implementation plan and prioritise the rollout of the Business Services function in the first instance. This was taken, in part, to ensure that the policing service provided was not impacted unnecessarily on top of the high and unanticipated demand of the pandemic and associated public health restrictions. This approach was significant as a statement of commitment to the Operating Model, but also in ensuring that progress and momentum was maintained. As a result, the business services function was approaching full rollout by the end of 2021.

The implementation of the operating model is a large-scale complex project which has demanded significant commitment and leadership at all levels in the organisation. A roll out team has, in

Operating Model

The Operating Model is a fundamental change to the organisational structure and operation of the Garda Síochána, at all levels. It will increase the management and resource autonomy of the divisions, supported by national and regional infrastructure, to deliver a more effective policing service.

The introduction of the Model reduces the number of Garda Divisions from 28 to 19, with an emphasis on the management of division-wide functions rather than geographic 'Districts'. This means that instead of a Superintendent having responsibility for a small geographic area, they will have responsibility for managing a functional hub (crime, community policing, governance, or business services) across the division. The rollout places each division in one of four 'phases'.

The Business Services function will enhance the Garda Síochána's management of finance & logistics, administration and HR services at a divisional level, using specialised staff and new business practices, under the management of an Assistant Principal.

The all-encompassing nature of the model means that not only are wider projects dependent on the changes brought in by it, but also that the model's success is dependent on a number of the other ongoing internal modernisation projects.

addition to senior and local management, provided continued focus on the implementation process and has developed a strong relationship with the divisions, characterised by strong communication and an agile and solution-focussed approach to issues and/or matters of concern.

As with change processes of this magnitude there are however challenges and risks. In this instance the availability of estate has posed challenges to the pace of roll out.

5. Conclusions

In the main, the Garda Síochána's performance in the delivery of policing services over the past three years has been encouraging and progressive. While the pandemic was not within contemplation when the 3-year strategy was developed, any assessment of policing performance over the past three years is inextricably tied to the circumstances and demands that arose. COVID-19 has acted as both a barrier and an accelerant to performance. Certain projects were delayed and targets necessarily revised. Additional demand on the organisation saw it demonstrate agility and respond to communities throughout the country.

While the assessment of the key enabling functions may be quite stark in parts, there has been a significance to the extent to which the Garda Síochána now positions and considers the key enabling functions. The progress that has been made from a strategic and conceptual standpoint must not go unnoticed. The scale of the task being undertaken to reform an organisation the size of the Garda Síochána is not to be underestimated. Thus, while progress has in places been slow in the round it has been made, and made significantly in parts. The challenge now is to build on this and ensure continued and increasing alignment between strategic planning across finance, HR, ICT, training and estate and the operational demands on the organisation.

If this is managed, the strategic processes and planning that have been put in place over the past three years combined with the roll out of the operating model will serve as the foundation for the policing service improvements to be built upon.

This highlights again the critical need for the enabling functions to be properly resourced and developed to allow for the necessary improvements and natural progression of the coming years and decades to take place. This investment is necessary if policing is to keep pace with changes in its environment including population and the nature of crime. Resourcing is not only about the numbers of Gardaí, it is also about the organisation's capability to manage its workforce and resources effectively through HR systems and financial systems, but also to keep pace with crime that increasingly happens in private spaces and requires a virtual policing presence to keep people safe. Strategic thinking, planning and capital investment now will shape the service that is provided in the future.

The variation in achievement against the Strategy is not, in and of itself, unexpected or indeed entirely problematic. Given the wide-ranging and in-depth nature of the modernisation and reform process being undertaken by the Garda Síochána and the eclectic and diverse roles it undertakes in the delivery of a policing service, a variation is to be expected. Increasingly, the level of achievement made against the performance framework in any given years is increasingly in line with the targets set. The Authority is encouraged in this regard. This can only be further enhanced by an increased ability to cost the initiatives designed and objectives set in advance and to analyse and assess outcome once completed.

5.1. Looking Forward: Strategy Period 2022-2024

As we progress into 2022, the Garda Síochána enters a new strategy period (2022-2024). In line with the Act, the Authority has approved a new Statement of Strategy and Policing Plan. In addition, the Authority has determined new Policing Priorities; following consultation with the Garda Commissioner, a public consultation, research, and reflection on the previous three years. These have been set for three years – with a commitment of annual review to ensure relevance – to

overlap with the new Strategy and for the first time make publically available a suite of performance metrics on which the Authority will assess performance.

This new performance framework offers a strong and ambitious public commitment to the continued improvement of policing services and the continued modernisation of the Garda Síochána.