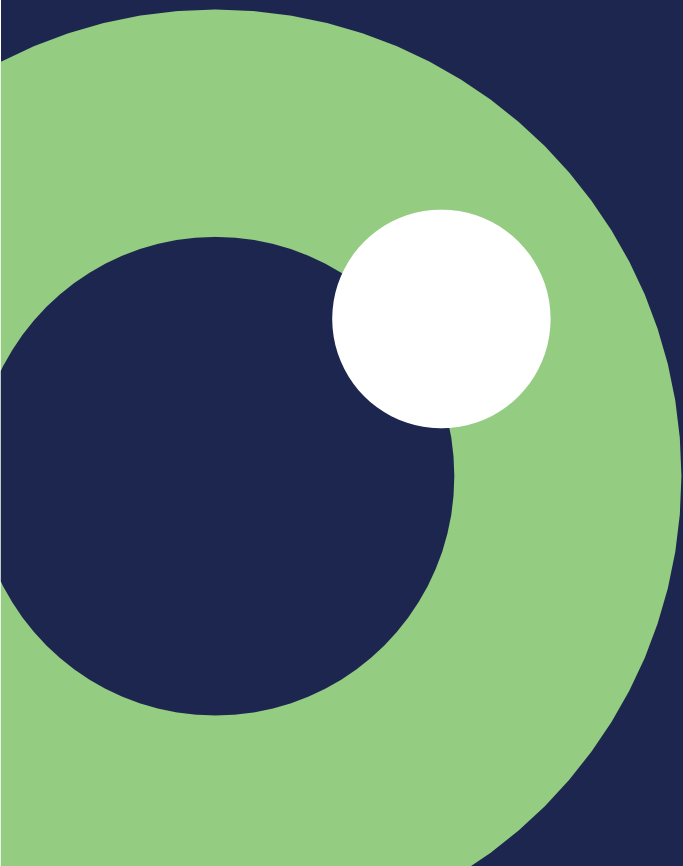




AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

# Customer Charter

2022-2024



# Customer Charter

## Introduction

The Policing Authority ('the Authority') is an independent body that oversees the performance of the Garda Síochána of its functions relating to policing services.

Our **Vision** is for an ethical, effective, human rights based policing service that merits and enjoys the confidence of the increasingly diverse people it serves.

Our **Mission is** to hold the Garda Síochána fairly and transparently to account in the interests of all, particularly the most vulnerable.

The primary focus of the Authority's work is to oversee how the Garda Síochána as an organisation delivers policing services in the State.

More detailed information on the functions of the Authority is available [here](#) on our website.

This Customer Charter is the Authority's public statement on the service all our customers—internal and external—can expect when dealing with the Authority.

We believe that internal staff members should be considered as customers and are entitled—as are all members of the public—to the highest standards of service delivery in their interactions with the Authority.

The Authority is committed to providing all those who communicate with us with a professional, efficient, courteous and high standard of service in accordance with the principles of [Quality Customer Service](#).

Our Customer Action Plan is available [here](#) on the Authority website.

## What to expect when you contact us

When you engage with the Policing Authority we will:

- Greet you politely and engage with you with courtesy and respect;
- Direct you to the person, service(s) or organisation that you need or who is best placed to assist with your query promptly;
- Protect your personal information in line with all Data Protection requirements;
- Provide access to necessary translation and interpretation services, including Irish Sign Language where necessary;
- Make sure our office is fully accessible for all our customers and complies with Health and Safety standards;

- Ensure that the information provided on our website <https://www.policingauthority.ie> is up to date accessible and provided in a timely manner; and,
- Listen and provide a prompt and comprehensive response should you have feedback or a complaint.

## **When you contact us by letter or email**

When you contact us in writing, by letter or email, we commit to:

- Acknowledge or reply to your written communication within three working days;
- After an acknowledgement, reply more substantively if required to your enquiry within fifteen working days;
- In cases where we cannot provide a full reply within this period, provide you with an interim reply explaining why and tell you when you can expect a full reply;
- Reply to you using clear, simple language, free from jargon and technical terms as far as possible;
- Explain to you when the matter raised is not within the Authority's remit and, where possible, provide you with contact details for a more appropriate alternative organisation;
- Consider your comments, suggestions and feedback on all aspects of our services where it is judged to be of value to the Authority's ongoing oversight work;
- Handle your complaints about Authority members and staff in line with the Authority's complaints procedures set out in Appendix C; and,
- Use automated e-mail responses when staff are out of the office for lengthy periods to provide you with alternative contact details or details of colleagues you can contact in their absence.

Please note that correspondence addressed to the Policing Authority or to individual Members of the Authority will typically be handled and responded to by the staff of the Authority.

## **When you contact us by phone**

When you contact us by telephone you can expect that we will:

- Answer your calls to our main switchboard number promptly during core office hours [10:00am to 4:00pm];
- Facilitate you by allowing you to record a voicemail message where phones are unattended and update voicemail messages as appropriate to indicate staff availability;

- Respond to your voicemail messages within one working day of receipt;
- Inform you of the name of the person who takes the call and any person to whom you are being transferred when it is necessary to transfer your call;
- Deal with your query in a courteous, respectful and helpful manner; and,
- If we cannot answer your queries immediately, take your details and agree to call you back within one working day and at a time that suits you.

If the information you wish to convey by phone is complex or lengthy you may be asked to communicate that information to us in writing.

### **Redirecting Communications which do not relate to the Authority**

If you make contact with us about a matter which does not fall within our remit we will:

- Indicate that we do not have a role in the particular matter;
- Explain our functions to you; and,
- Make every reasonable effort to identify the organisation which will be in a position to deal with the matter and if possible provide contact details.

### **When you visit our Public Offices**

The Authority does not have a public office and cannot accommodate members of the public who wish to meet Authority Members.

For anyone attending at the Policing Authority offices (e.g. to attend a pre-arranged meeting) we commit to:

- Treat you with courtesy, respect your privacy and be fair and helpful in our dealings with you; and,
- Provide appropriate facilities for meetings that ensure necessary privacy, comply with health and safety standards and facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

The Authority has appointed a Disability Access Officer in accordance with section 26(2) of the Disability Act 2005.

### **Public Meetings of the Authority**

The Authority has a statutory function to hold at least four meetings with the Garda Commissioner in public each year.

These meetings are open to the public and the media to attend.

In facilitating and hosting these meetings we commit to:

- Provide a safe and accessible venue;

- Provide an environment in which proceedings can be clearly observed and heard by the audience; and,
- Provide an environment in which the Members of the Authority and representatives of the Garda Síochána can conduct their business effectively and without disruption.

Further details of these arrangements and the conduct of observers are set out in the 'Arrangements for attending Authority Meetings held in Public' which can be viewed on our website [here](#).

## **Suppliers**

We commit to:

- Operating clear, impartial and transparent tendering and purchasing procedures in accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines; and,
- Ensuring that payments to suppliers are made in accordance with applicable Prompt Payment legislation and regulations.

In seeking opportunities for:

- Contracts for the supply of goods and services above certain procurement thresholds;
- Open recruitment of staff for the Authority; and
- Selection competitions for the ranks of Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and Superintendent in the Garda Síochána, for which the Authority has responsibility,

You can expect that we will:

- Advertise opportunities on our website, in addition to other communication appropriate to the process concerned;
- Provide dedicated means of contacting us by phone and email in relation to these opportunities;
- Provide comprehensive details of our requirements and the process for submitting an application, tender or other expression of interest;
- Provide details of our processes and the standards of practice which we aim to provide;
- Clearly state any deadline for submitting an application, tender or other expression of interest or for the provision of related information or

supporting documentation;

- Respond to all queries and requests for information in regard to the process within a reasonable time period with regard to relevant timeframes;
- Publish details of queries in relation to a process as “Frequently Asked Questions” (‘FAQs’) so that responses are available to all interested parties in an open, transparent manner;
- Respond to your enquiry, application, tender or other expression of interest, as appropriate, in a timely and effective manner;
- Put in place processes to provide appropriate feedback and review in relation to our processes and;
- Treat your personal information as confidential in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

## **Customer Responsibilities**

### **What We Require Of You**

To make our service better, we ask that you:

- Give full, honest and accurate information;
- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect;
- Check the Policing Authority website prior to contacting us. Your query may be answered there;
- State your query and/or the assistance you need as clearly and concisely as possible;
- Provide us with accurate and relevant information, including supporting documents, where necessary;
- Respond to requests for additional information as promptly as possible;
- Use a reference number, if you have been provided with one, when following up on correspondence;
- Refrain from engaging in persistent communication on matters deemed outside of our remit and/or which have received a comprehensive response;
- Understand that we cannot enter into lengthy discussions about matters by phone or e-mail if those matters do not relate to our statutory functions or have been dealt with previously; and,
- Refrain from sending sensitive or graphic images and material which may be distressing to our staff.

## **Unreasonable Communication**

In a very small minority of cases, the Authority encounters difficulties in its correspondence with members of the public. We understand that in times of trouble or stress, people may act out of character and there may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to communication with the Authority and we will make reasonable efforts to accommodate this.

However, if your communication is deemed unreasonable in line with our Unreasonable Conduct policy i.e. unreasonable persistence and demands, lack of cooperation, arguments and inappropriate behaviour (see Appendix A), we may respond in the following way:

- **Phone:**
  - Explain how and why your behaviour is unreasonable and ask you to change it;
  - Terminate your call if your unreasonable behaviour persists and,
  - Request that you communicate with us in future in writing.
  
- **Written Communication:**
  - Cease acknowledging and responding to e-mails and letters after providing a written explanation to you for the cessation.

Furthermore, while the Authority will generally acknowledge or respond to all correspondence which is addressed to it, there are certain circumstances where it may be judged appropriate not to acknowledge correspondence nor to respond, for example:

- Where it makes sense to issue an immediate final reply;
- Where the correspondence contains abusive material;
- Where the Authority receives persistent correspondence which does not contain new information; and,
- Where the Authority is copied on communications which are clearly primarily being directed at another person or body.

## **Freedom of Information Requests**

We commit to processing any Freedom of Information requests received within the required statutory timeframe.

## **Privacy and Data Protection**

We take your privacy and the protection of your personal data seriously.

We commit to process and store your data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.

We have appointed a Data Protection Officer (DPO) in accordance with section 88 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

You can view our Data Protection Policy [here](#).

You can contact our DPO by:

**Post:** DPO, Policing Authority, 4th Floor, 90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV

**E-mail:** [dpo@policingauthority.ie](mailto:dpo@policingauthority.ie)

## **Your Feedback/How to Contact Us**

Your feedback is important to us. We would like you hear to your views, comments, suggestions and complaints on all aspects of our services. One of the Authority's functions is to promote and support continuous improvement of policing in Ireland.

In this context, we encourage you to provide feedback, including positive feedback, to the Authority about matters relating to policing or the performance of the Garda Síochána.

We commit to use your feedback to improve our customer service and oversight work.

### **Our Complaints Procedure:**

If you are unhappy with the customer service provided by or on behalf of the Authority by its staff we would encourage you to raise this issue directly with the individual concerned.

If the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may make a formal complaint by completing the complaint form (see Appendix B). We commit to deal with your complaint fairly and impartially and in accordance with our complaints handling procedures (see Appendix C)

If you do not feel the matter has been deal with adequately, you may contact the [Office of the Ombudsman](#).

**You can provide comments, feedback and submit a complaint by:**



- Calling us on:
  - Main Line +353 1 858 9090
  - Appointments Unit: +353 1 858 9058
  - Press office: +353 1 858 9090
- Writing to The Policing Authority, 4th Floor, 90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV
- Emailing us at [info@policingauthority.ie](mailto:info@policingauthority.ie)

## Unreasonable Conduct Policy

The Authority maintains correspondence in order to learn of peoples' experiences of policing, to receive the views and comments of people, as a forum for interaction with the public and to itself **generally** informed of issues arising with regard to the performance of the Garda Síochána. We fully appreciate that some callers are particularly distressed regarding their experience and that, from time to time, that stress will show in the nature of the engagement.

However, this does not mean that we expect our staff to tolerate behaviour by correspondents that is abusive, offensive, threatening or, due to the frequency of contact or lack of new information, accounts for a disproportionate amount of time and resources that could be spent more effectively dealing with other correspondence.

Further, the Authority cannot investigate complaints concerning Garda conduct or criminal matters. Consequently, the Authority will not accept sensitive and/or graphic images and requests that members of the public refrain from sending them.

### Unreasonable Conduct

This type of behaviour is classified as unreasonable conduct and can be identified as comprising:

- **Unreasonable Persistence:** Persistence with correspondence that has already been addressed via letter, email or phone call. The persistence may be manifested in different ways; for example, insisting on another member of staff to correspond with or persevering with a topic that has previously been explained as being outside the Authority's remit.
- **Unreasonable Demands:** An outcome or approach is expected that is unrealistic or disproportionate. Examples include repeated demands for investigation or action in relation to a matter that is outside the Authority's remit, seeking a remedy that is disproportionate or unrealistic, or trying to direct the Authority as to how to conduct its work.
- **Unreasonable Lack of Co-operation:** For example, a refusal to provide relevant information as requested or in a timely manner.
- **Unreasonable Arguments:** Examples include exaggerating issues, presenting irrelevant and/or unreasonable arguments, placing too much emphasis on trivialities, insisting that the complainant's version of events be accepted as fact where there is no objective evidence to support this view, obstinately refusing to consider counter-arguments, being guided by unfounded conspiracy theories and/or by desire for revenge or retribution against another person or public body.

- **Unreasonable Behaviour:** Unreasonable behaviour includes threats of violence, abuse of Authority staff, rude or aggressive conduct, and threats of self-harm. Also, sending sensitive or distressing images including intimate images of persons with or without their consent.

### **How We Will Manage Such Behaviour**

When a correspondent's behaviour is considered unreasonable, they will be told why that is, and they will be asked to change it. If the contact is by phone they will be informed that the call may be terminated if such behaviour persists. Where it might be of assistance, possible adjustments to the service which may help the customer to avoid unreasonable behaviour may be considered.

Authority staff who directly experience unreasonable behaviour may deal with the behaviour at the time of the incident in a manner they consider appropriate and in line with this policy and this may include politely terminating a conversation. When they experience unreasonable behaviour, they will report the matter to their line-manager without delay for consideration in line with this policy.

However, if the behaviour continues, action will be taken to restrict the correspondent's contact with our office. The decision to restrict the correspondence will only normally be taken after there has been a review of service given to the particular correspondent.

The decision will be taken at Head of Division level or the Chief Executive. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options most likely considered are:

- Requesting contact in a particular form (letters only).
- Requiring contact to take place with a named officer.
- Informing the correspondent that correspondence on the same topic may not receive any further response.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Asking the customer to enter into an agreement about their future conduct.
- Ultimately, terminating all contact with the complainant where the behaviour shows no signs of abating. This decision will be taken at a senior management level.

In all cases, we will contact the correspondent to tell them why we believe their behaviour is unreasonable and what actions we propose to take. However, where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the Policing Authority's staff or others, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the Garda Síochána or instigating legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

Regardless of the complaint's behaviour, staff will act respectfully to the complainant and impartially with regard to the nature of the correspondence.

## Appendix B



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

### Complaint Form

For use in making a complaint about Authority Members or Staff

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Description of Complaint:</b>	
<b>What you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, an explanation etc.)</b>	
<i>Note – in describing your complaint, please provide a full description of the nature of your complaint and how you think it might be resolved, please use additional pages as necessary and sign each additional page)</i>	

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed form to The Secretary, The Policing Authority, 4th Floor, 90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV or email to [info@policingauthority.ie](mailto:info@policingauthority.ie)

## **Complaints Handling Procedures**

The Policing Authority is committed to dealing openly and effectively with any complaint a member of the public may wish to make about its Members or staff. A complaint should set out the basis for their dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, the Authority.

### **Informal Resolution**

We believe it is best to deal with things as soon as possible and in a straightforward and direct way. If you have a complaint we would encourage you, where possible, to raise it with the staff member you are dealing with. They will try to resolve it there and then if this is possible. If there are lessons to be learnt from addressing the complaint, the member of staff may be asked to draw them to the attention of the Chief Executive.

### **Making a formal complaint about Authority members or staff**

If a correspondent wishes to make a formal complaint they may do so by:

- Completing the complaint form at Appendix B (also available on our website [here](#)) and sending it to Secretary of the Authority, either by mail to our office address marked for the attention of the Secretary or by email to [info@policingauthority.ie](mailto:info@policingauthority.ie) with 'For the attention of the Secretary' in the subject line of your email; or
- Calling the Secretary of the Authority on 01-858 9090

### **Who will deal with a complaint?**

- Complaints about staff will be handled by the relevant line manager;
- Complaints about the Chief Executive will be handled by the Chairperson;
- Complaints about Authority Members will be handled the Chairperson; and
- Complaints about the Chairperson will be handled by the Chair of the Authority's Audit and Risk Committee.

Depending on which circumstance the person dealing with a complaint will be referred to as the "*Complaints Officer*".

### **Process for dealing with Complaints about staff**

In considering a formal complaint received, the Complaints Officer will review the Complaints form and will have regard to whether the complaint relates to the work of the Authority or the conduct of Authority Members or staff in the context of their Authority work. If the matter appears to require further consideration then the Complaints Officer will further examine the complaint and make recommendations in relation to it. This may include asking for further information to validate the complaint.

The individual complained against shall be shown the material gathered, including the initial complaint, and shall be given the opportunity to respond to the Complaints Officer. The

individual against whom a complaint has been made shall have an opportunity to comment on the final letter to the complainant before it issues in all cases. If there is a disagreement between the individual and the Complaints Officer on the outcome of the examination, the matter should be referred to the Chief Executive for review.

The decision of the Chief Executive shall be final. Each complaint will be dealt with on its own merits and if a complaint is upheld, the Complaints Officer may recommend action to the Chief Executive to resolve the matter and to avoid any recurrence of the circumstances concerned.

### **Process for dealing with Complaints about the Chief Executive, Authority members or the Chairperson**

The process will be as described for staff but references to the Chief Executive above will be replaced by the Chairperson in the case of complaints about the Chief Executive or Authority members and by the Chair of the Authority's Audit and Risk Committee in the case of complaints about the Chairperson.

### **Communication to complainant**

Once a determination has been made in relation to the complaint, you will be informed about the outcome and any lessons learnt. If you are unhappy with the resolution of the complaint a review may be requested by writing to the Secretary of the Authority either by mail to our office address marked for the attention of the Secretary or by email to [info@policingauthority.ie](mailto:info@policingauthority.ie) with 'For the attention of the Secretary' in the subject line of your email. If the matter remains unresolved from your perspective, you have the right to refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman.

### **Referral to Office of the Ombudsman**

If you are not happy with the resolution of the complaint by the Authority, you may complain to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent and can look into your complaint if you personally, or a person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received unsatisfactory service through some failure on the part of the Authority;
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure.

You can contact the Office of the Ombudsman by the following means:

- **Telephone:** 01 6395600
- **Lo-Call:** 1890223030
- **Email:** [ombudsman@ombudsman.ie](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.ie)
- **Website:** [www.ombudsman.ie](http://www.ombudsman.ie)
- **Writing to:** The Office of the Ombudsman  
18 Lower Leeson Street  
Dublin 2