



Future of policing report



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Justice Minister Helen McEntee TD: Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill 2023

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD looks ahead to the enactment of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill 2023 and outlines how the legislation will seek transform the governance and oversight of An Garda Síochána while bolstering community policing.

In 2022, I had the privilege of being involved in An Garda Síochána's centenary celebrations. At each of the events I attended the pride that members and staff have for the organisation's achievements over the past 100 years was palpable.

While there have been many significant moments throughout this country's history that have called on the organisation to demonstrate its ability to adapt to challenging situations, there is one element that has remained at the core of An Garda Síochána; that is its deep-rooted connection to community policing.

The relationships gardaí have developed with the communities they serve and protect have been vital in ensuring they can deliver on their ethos of policing with consent, even in the most challenging of circumstances. While the centenary offered

us all a moment to reflect and mark the successes of An Garda Síochána, it also offered an opportunity to look to the future of the organisation as it evolves to respond effectively and appropriately to the needs of our changing society.

As a country we have experienced massive change and development over the last century. The policing needs of the country have changed in line with those developments. On the one hand, criminality has developed, with technology playing a massive role, and we must ensure that An Garda Síochána have the tools and technology to fight criminality and keep us safe in a modern world. On the other hand, the policing needs of communities have also developed as demographics shift.

Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill 2023

To meet this change, the Policing, Security and Community Safety (PSCS) Bill will completely overhaul the governance and oversight of An Garda Síochána while still preserving that important component of community engagement and trust – which has always been at the forefront of the work that gardaí carry out.

There are several complementary reforms currently under way, including the Garda Commissioner's ongoing rollout of the new Garda Operating Model with its focus on community policing. The new Operating Model further embeds the ethos of community policing which has always been the strength of An Garda Síochána. This was rightly at the centre of the centenary celebrations last year.



That is why I believe we should always keep sight of the main benefit of these reforms: ensuring there are more Gardaí on frontline duties in communities.

Under the PSCS Bill, the Policing and Community Safety Authority will merge the broad-ranging oversight functions of the existing Policing Authority and the inspection functions of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, superseding both bodies and reducing the number of oversight bodies by one. It will oversee and assess in an independent and transparent manner the performance of An Garda Síochána in relation to policing services but with the benefit of an in-house empowered inspection function.

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSCOC) will also undergo substantial restructuring. I believe that there is a need for more efficient and effective GSCOC investigation processes. That is why a key objective of the new Bill is to improve the complaints handling and investigation systems of GSCOC.

department informed of significant matters, and to account to the Minister and Government for policing and security matters.

Another feature of the Bill is the establishment of an Independent Examiner of Security Legislation. This is a significant development in enhancing the national security infrastructure, providing an independent review of security legislation to ensure that it is effective and contains sufficient safeguards for the protection of human rights, the operation of such legislation and the examination of the delivery of security services.

At the heart of the Bill is a new approach as to how we as citizens can and should be involved in keeping our communities safe. Gardaí have always strived to develop and maintain positive relations with all the people they serve. But in recognition that community safety is not solely the responsibility of An Garda Síochána, or my department alone, the Bill provides for new structures for community safety including the rollout of local community safety partnerships across

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While the external oversight of an organisation with a remit such as An Garda Síochána is important, it is imperative that the Garda Commissioner has the power and scope to operate in a manner that enables swift, effective policing. The PSCS Bill will make explicit, for the first time, the Commissioner’s operational independence.

The Bill also strengthens internal governance of An Garda Síochána through the establishment of a non-executive Garda Board, to which the Commissioner will be accountable. The Bill will not diminish the relationship with the Minister for Justice, and the Commissioner will still report to the Minister. The Commissioner will continue to be required to keep the Minister of the day and the Secretary General of my

the country. These partnerships will provide a forum for State agencies and local community representatives to work together to act on community concerns and will shape the overall response to criminal activity and community safety in each locality. All community safety partnerships will produce their own unique, targeted community safety plan and will be supported in its successful implementation.

As Minister for Justice, I look forward to the forthcoming enactment of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill, driven by the need to modernise our policing structures so that we as a society and country can benefit from another 100 years of successful, transparent, and proactive policing.



Striving for even greater gender diversity

For An Garda Síochána, enhancing its gender diversity has been a key part of its cultural change and organisational transformation programme.

This is why it was especially noteworthy that this year An Garda Síochána was welcomed as the 300th member of the 30 Per Cent Club's Irish Chapter.

The 30 Per Cent Club supports the achievement of a minimum of 30 per cent gender balance at all senior decision-making levels in companies/organisations nationwide.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris says: "For me, it is important when future generations look back on this next phase in our history, they see an organisation that not only strived for equality, but also delivered. As of March 2023, there are more than 6,000 female personnel working right across An Garda Síochána.

"Women make up 30 per cent of all serving police officers, putting us above the European average in terms of female representation within police services. Meanwhile, women account for more than 70 per cent of all Garda staff. We can be proud too of the fact that more women hold senior leadership roles in An Garda Síochána than ever before."

An Garda Síochána's two deputy commissioners are women, and women now make up more than half of the Garda Senior Leadership Team. With such a considerable number of women excelling in senior positions, it is reflective of the marked improvements that have been made to address the gender balance within An Garda Síochána. So much so, that An Garda Síochána is now looked at internationally as a measure of what can be achieved.

This is a point recognised by Deputy Commissioner Shawna Coxon, who joined An Garda Síochána from Toronto Police. Deputy Commissioner Coxon notes: "There are more than double the number of women in policing here than in Canada and I have observed wonderful support and encouragement between women in An Garda Síochána.

"At present at the top three levels of sworn members in An Garda Síochána (Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners), six of the 11 positions are held by women. When you include the seven executive staff members of the Senior Leadership

Team, 10 of 18 are women. It is a dynamic, effective and collaborative team."

She adds: "I am acutely aware of the sacrifices of the many women who have come before me and I am grateful that they bravely stepped out. Their actions allow me to be here today. I hope my actions now will create new opportunities for others in the years to come".

Leaders in the organisation have also highlighted the key role they play in encouraging women to aspire to similar leadership positions.

Eimear Bourke, Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation says: "Since I joined An Garda Síochána, I have been delighted and truly inspired by the professionalism, openness, collaboration, and support offered to me by people right across the organisation. I am a firm believer in the adage, 'if you can see it – you can be it'."

She highlights that in recent years, An Garda Síochána has made significant strides in creating a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

"An Garda Síochána's inclusion in the 30 Per Cent Club is a recent example of this. While everyone has a role to play in promoting greater diversity and inclusiveness – a key part of our role as senior leaders in An Garda Síochána is to provide the opportunities and environment where women feel supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential."



Among Garda staff, women make up approximately 50 per cent of all Executive Director, Principal Officer, Assistant Principal, Higher Executive Officer, and Executive officer roles, while women make up 75 per cent of its clerical officer grades.

Kate Mulkerrins, Executive Director Legal, notes that since she joined in 2017, she has seen a trebling of female participation on the senior leadership team.

“This ‘extraordinary’ level of female participation is matched by the increasing levels of female sworn membership which is nearly one-in-three, a very significant proportion by international standards, and an overwhelming percentage of female participation at all grades of Garda staff.

“Gender is of course only one strand of diversity, but it is a very important indicator of inclusivity and equality. In my experience equality in one area begets equality in others. The challenge now is to similarly expand all strands of ‘equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)’ in our workforce, eliminating discrimination, ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment of all persons who work within An Garda Síochána and in the treatment of all the communities served by An Garda Síochána.”

An Garda Síochána has developed an EDI strategy to work towards these goals.

The first step for women in An Garda Síochána was made in July 1959 when the first female Gardaí presented for duty at Pearse and Store Street Garda Stations.

While it was first envisioned that their role would be confined to dealing with the victims of sexual and domestic crime, these women aspired to do more. Their career path may have been windy and full of ups and downs, but it paved the way for other women.

Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon has the following guiding words to those women contemplating a career with An Garda Síochána.

“My advice would be to go for it. It is a very fulfilling career, there are lots of opportunities to diversify and there is a huge variety of day-to-day roles. It is not without its testing times but that’s what makes it all the more worthwhile.

“I am passionate about An Garda Síochána and the important role we play



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An Garda Síochána Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon

in society in terms of keeping people safe and I am honoured and privileged to hold the rank of Deputy Commissioner in an organisation dedicated to serving the people of Ireland.”

Meanwhile Assistant Commissioner Southern Region Eileen Foster says improved representation is to be celebrated.

“The trailblazing previous women at the senior leadership table have instilled the confidence for myself and my female colleagues to know we are experienced, contributing members of the senior leadership team who bring our perspectives in conjunction with that of our male colleagues to ensure a collective all-encompassing view of policing at management level.

“I hope that in my role, I continue the tradition of women inspiring women to believe in themselves.”

While An Garda Síochána is proud to say it ranks above the European average in terms of female representation within police services, there is still more that it wishes to achieve in this area.

Commissioner Harris notes: “Across the

board gender balance is improving but there is always progress to be made.”

An Garda Síochána has established its own Women’s Network in recent years, which provides critical opportunities for training, mentoring, collaboration and networking among colleagues.

It continues to encourage more women, and women from diverse backgrounds, to join An Garda Síochána.

It recognises too that being more reflective of the diverse and inclusive society it serves will enhance its ability to provide an effective police service for all people.

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Garda CIO Andrew O'Sullivan: Information led policing

Where society goes, crime goes, and where crime goes, policing must follow. In the context of the increasing digitalisation of society, Ciarán Galway sits down with CIO Andrew O'Sullivan at Garda Headquarters to discuss digital innovation and *Information Led Policing*.

Digitalisation in society has led to an explosive growth in data, both in terms of volume and complexity. From a policing perspective, has two key implications.

Firstly, the evolving expectations of citizens in relation to interactions with police, access to information, and transparency. Secondly, the increased availability of digital tools to criminals who are changing the ways in which they operate.

"Increasingly, it is much lower risk to engage in cybercrime than break into a house. If you scale that up, organised criminal gangs at the very top end are operating akin to software vendors.

"As such, we are now observing crime-as-a-service whereby smaller, local criminals will engage with an organised criminal gangs which will, in turn, outsource or offshore to a less than reputable software organisation, which will then provide them with scam tools and techniques."

Digital evidence

Reiterating what the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau previously told *eolas Magazine*, the CIO emphasises the reality that every single major investigation now has a digital component.

"Digital evidence, therefore, is a core

aspect of policing. It has changed dramatically from a few hours of CCTV footage 10 years ago, to thousands of hours and in major investigations, it could be tens of thousands of hours of video footage. Likewise, it has changed from one or two text messages on a phone several years ago, to tens of thousands of emails and hundreds of thousands of images on an individual device," he says.

"Policing must have access to electronic tools to be effective in dealing with the increasing volume of data. However, the first thing to understand is how we define digital because digital and electronic are not the same thing. Digitalisation is the combination, or a blending of the



electronic world with the physical world,” the Garda CIO explains.

Computer-in-the-loop

Elaborating, O’Sullivan comments on the ineffectiveness of electronic tools in the absence of training, tradecraft, empathy, common-sense and a human rights-based approach to policing. “Our digital policing strategy is about achieving the right blend of the electronic world and the physical world,” he says, adding: “While ‘human-in-the-loop’ is a term used in computing to describe oversight of automated decisions, An Garda Síochána’s systems have taken that one step further.

“We use the term ‘computer-in-the-loop’ for decision-making. The computer is there only to support Garda personnel making decisions. This means that no machine ever makes a decision that could adversely impact an individual.”

Illustrating this, O’Sullivan references the GoSafe vans or automated speed detection. Contrary to popular belief, it is not an automated process. While GoSafe cameras detect and identify a potential speeding offence, that is then scrutinised by several pairs of human eyes before a sanction is issued.

Similarly, while the Garda vetting system now processes 500,000 applications each year, the decision support system used is limited to making suggestions to vetting agents that something may need to be examined before making a final decision.

“This human accountability is critical for maintaining exceptionally high public trust in An Garda Síochána. There is absolutely no question of machine decision-making. Rather, it is about supporting decision-making by accountable Garda personnel,” the CIO insists.

Data and technology branch

In response to digitalisation, An Garda Síochána has invested significantly in the expansion of its data and technology branch.

Headed up by the CIO, the branch employs approximately 1,000 staff across six enabling resources:

1. Garda Information Services Centre (GISC)
2. Information and Communications Technology

“Our digital policing strategy is about achieving the right blend of the electronic world and the physical world.”

Andrew O’Sullivan, Chief Information Officer and Chief Data Officer, An Garda Síochána

3. Data Architecture
4. Garda Síochána Analysis Service (GSAS)
5. National Data Protection Office including the Freedom of Information Office
6. Garda National Vetting Bureau

“We have invested heavily in the skills of our people over the last couple of years, both through internal training and education, focusing on the professional development of our data and technology professionals. We have also expanded from three principal officers to 13 plus one Director of ICT with recruitment for a GSAS Director to begin shortly. That investment and growth is going to continue,” O’Sullivan outlines.

Seeking to emulate vendors in the software industry in terms of adopting similar principles, practices, and career structures, the data and technology branch is “blending the best organisation design principles and the best professionalisation available” with the intrinsic value of the public service. “We are pursuing this in a way that sets the standards for international policing,” O’Sullivan asserts.

While the data and technology branch works closely with industry, it is primarily motivated to develop its in-house skills in cooperation with other agencies. “We know exactly what we want, and we have the expertise to oversee it. While we procure some products, we apply a very careful decision processes to ‘buy versus build’, and our preference is always to acquire something that already works elsewhere,” the CIO outlines.

Information led policing

In 2018, the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland’s published its final report. Under the Commission’s 10 principles for vision for the future of policing, the eighth principle asserts that policing must be information led.

The Future of Policing in Ireland acknowledged that:

- An Garda Síochána badly needs to introduce better business processes and systems for collecting, recording, managing, analysing, and disseminating information about crimes, incidents, complaints, finance, human resources, and other management issues;
- police and partner agencies need to share information effectively between themselves, and communicate with community partners;
- technology can provide the tools for this, as part of a comprehensive strategy for digital innovation;
- current Garda technology is outdated and inadequate to the detriment of both effective delivery of police services and efficient allocation of resources;
- data should be seen as a strategic asset and a key factor in determining policing decisions. In this way it should complement, not substitute for intuition and experience;
- professional data analysis is an essential tool in modern policing and should be available in each Garda division and in an enlarged Garda Analysis Service at Headquarters; and



- police should share information with their communities and partners.

A purely ICT strategy, *Connect: An Garda Síochána's Digital Strategy 2019-2023* has now been succeeded by *Information Led Policing* which is an overarching vision rather than a strategy.

"Building on the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland's report, *Information Led Policing* is the destination that we want to get to," the CIO notes. "From an implementation perspective, we take an agile development approach, with smaller individual projects in the service of the overarching vision. Does a particular project support us in advancing the vision from an innovation perspective? If the answer is no, then the project is dropped. If the answer is yes, then we progress with it.

"*Information Led Policing* is distinct from the style of a five-year change transformation programme. At the scale that we are operating at, it is impossible to have a single strategy or a single plan that is all encompassing. Instead, with a very clear vision, we can constantly kind of refine our projects in pursuit of that."

How An Garda Síochána manages and organises the data it handles is a key component of *Information Led Policing*. "The whole vision is about implementing what are called data value chains. Business value chains turn raw materials into finished products and deliver them

to customers. Data value chains use data as the raw material and turn it into information. Information is something that can be transformed into insight, which explains not just what happened, but why it happened. Ideally, again, this can be turned it into foresight, which is what is going to happen next and what you can do to influence that outcome," the CIO observes.

Digital innovation

Digital innovation means invention plus practical application. The Covid pandemic provided huge impetus for An Garda Síochána to innovate very quickly. "While Covid was completely unwelcome, it was transformative from a cultural perspective and accelerated our data strategy. It opened eyes to the potential for the use of digital tools and remote working. Also, because we were getting data feeds in things like traffic patterns from Transport Infrastructure Ireland, it really accelerated the concept of acquiring data rather than simply collecting it from first principles.

"Garda personnel have demonstrated that they are extremely creative with how to use the tools at its disposal. In early 2020, prior to Covid, we were experimenting with videoconferencing. It was not something that was initially embraced because policing orthodoxy dictated for instance, that personnel should be present at crime scenes and in the same room to talk about major

crimes and investigations, from the perspective of confidentiality.

Now, in geographically large divisions such as Cork County, rather than driving for more than an hour, superintendents who conduct early crime scene assessment can use mobile devices to videoconference with gardaí on the scene and make the decision as to what resources should be allocated. Likewise, almost every meeting from the Commissioner's weekly management meeting downwards has a digital component.

In the last year, An Garda Síochána also had one of the biggest data centre moves in Irish public service history. "Historically, there were two data centres on site at Garda Headquarters. While one remains here, we have moved the other to a separate, secure location. Moving 20- or 30-year-old systems is a big deal because they are practically built into the fabric of the building. The fact that we were able to do that seamlessly was a big step forward.

"There is a concept in computing about having a fundamental core and then innovating around it. The data centres are a core that provide us with a strong basis for future innovation," the CIO explains.

The mobile technology used by Garda personnel is another example of a fundamental core. Today, An Garda Síochána still has traditional desktop computers and some of these will always be needed. However, it is primarily focused on the use of laptops and smartphones which become a computer when plugged into a screen or lapdock (which resembles a laptop but with no storage or processor). This mobile platform puts An Garda Síochána in a very strong position to quickly develop new applications in response to policing needs. "As the mobile technology continues to evolve with improved computing power, we can leverage that," he adds.

PULSE

Delivery of the *Information Led Policing* vision is underpinned by the deployment of technology. One milestone in 2022 and 2023 has been expanding beyond the PULSE, a core policing system used to records details of crime incidents on a central database.



“Every single project that we complete and hiring decision that we make is in the service of advancing the vision to deliver on the eighth principle of The Future of Policing in Ireland.”

“PULSE is a massive system and is categorised in computing terms as a classic legacy system in that it is mission critical for Garda operations but is also subject to a high rate of change. We are constantly innovating, and PULSE has effectively been completely re-engineered several times,” O’Sullivan asserts.

“Contrary to some discourse, we have no intention of replacing PULSE and it has evolved well over the last two decades,” O’Sullivan asserts. “However, the challenge is that PULSE was solely intended to be a crime incident recording system.”

CAD

Until recently, PULSE was An Garda Síochána’s only nationally linked database. Over the last year, it has been complemented by two other very large systems: firstly, the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD2) system and secondly, the Investigation Management System (IMS).

On the front end, the CAD2 system is in the process being rolled out in the Eastern Region and the Southern region, with the North Western region and the Dublin Metropolitan Region to follow.

Previously, control room dispatchers had four or more different computer systems on their desks, as well as a laptop for additional applications such as maps. None of these were integrated and it took considerable skills and coordination to dispatch a response to a 999 incident. Now, CAD2 locates the caller’s location on a map and recalls a history of previous incidents at that location and first responders will have an app on their mobile devices which displays this information. Dispatchers can now make better informed decisions on how to respond to a call for service.

“Computer Aided Dispatch is about collecting information from the very first

point of contact. This reduces the pressure on PULSE because not every call turns out to be a crime. For instance, some calls are dealt with via a first line policing response. This is recorded by the CAD2 system. Similarly, proactive policing exercises, such as checks of licenced premises, can be recorded rather than everything ending up on PULSE,” the CIO explains.

IMS

On the back end then, the IMS is an electronic solution designed to regulate and support the administration and operation of investigations and specified operations conducted by An Garda Síochána arising from a PULSE incident.

“Instead of gardaí having to manually keep track of investigation related information, all evidence from individual investigations is digitised and made available to the investigation team. That has allowed us to move from paper-based files to mobile access.

“IMS is intended to standardise the management of investigations and operations from the initial reporting and recording of an incident on PULSE, to the conclusion. This will take time to fully bed in and we are constantly looking for ways to reduce the overhead on users who must log and record data,” O’Sullivan describes.

Ambition

Identifying the delivery of *Information Led Policing* as the most significant of his priorities, the CIO indicates that each of the groups within the data and technology branch has its own role to play. “It is really about people understanding our vision and then delivering on it. Every single project that we complete and hiring decision that we make is in the service of advancing the vision to deliver on the eighth principle of *The Future of Policing in Ireland*,” O’Sullivan remarks.

As was the experience of many public service agencies during the 2010s, in the wake of the Great Recession, An Garda Síochána underwent severe budget cuts and a dearth of innovation in technology,

In recent years, however, with a significant increase in funding, it is in advantageous position. “Having come from a position of not being able to modernise our technology, we are now able to leapfrog over what some other police services might have achieved.

“We must also increase our professional capabilities and hiring experts in areas such as data science and AI to ensure that we remain flexible and ready for the next waves of digitalisation because the thing about digitalisation is that it never stops. What we are doing today will evolve into something completely different in the future,” he concludes.

Profile: Andrew O’Sullivan

A native of Clontarf, Dublin, Andrew O’Sullivan is a graduate of computer science, engineering management, and statistics from Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin. Along with over 2,000 Garda colleagues he has completed the University of Limerick’s NFQ Level 8 certification in Policing and Human Rights Law. O’Sullivan joined An Garda Síochána in 2019 where, as CIO and chief data officer, he has overall responsibility for data and technology. Having begun his career as consultant for International Computers Limited and Fujitsu, he spent the longest portion of his working life in IONA Technologies, before joining Microsoft. He was CIO of Citibank Europe before joining the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2016 where he was an assistant director general and chief information officer.



Justice Plan 2023 published

Then-Minister for Justice Simon Harris TD and Minister of State James Browne TD published Justice Plan 2023 in April 2023, setting out 140 headline actions with the aim “to continue building stronger, safer communities”.

Justice Plan 2023 is the third in a series of annual plans, with its 2021 and 2022 counterparts having been brought to government and published by the since-retired Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD. The annual plans contain within them objectives and actions designed to deliver upon the strategic goals set out in the Department of Justice’s Statement of Strategy 2021-2023, which contains a focus on ensuring a “safe, fair, and inclusive Ireland”.

Progress reports will be published throughout the plan’s lifespan, one at the midway point, and another at its end. The plan contains five overarching strategic goals, three of which contain some relevance to the future of policing:

- tackle crime, enhance national security, and transform policing;
- strengthen community safety, reduce reoffending, support victims, and combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; and
- accelerate innovation, digital transformation, and climate action across the justice sector.

Tackle crime, enhance national security, and transform policing

Actions under this strategic goal are grouped around six objectives: developing a “leading edge and accountable policing service” through the



implementation of *A Policing Service for the Future*; delivering a comprehensive programme to improve the operation of the criminal justice system; combatting cybercrime; strengthening measure to tackle terrorism and other serious and organised crime through domestic action and international cooperation; reforming, reviewing, and modernising criminal law and procedure; and ensuring strong governance in all bodies across the criminal justice sector.

Three of the headline actions under this strategic goal concern legislation, the first of which is passing the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas. At the time of writing, the Bill – aimed at strengthening both external oversight and internal governance of An Garda Síochána – sits at the Dáil Éireann Third Stage. The plan also pledges to support the enactment of the Recording Devices Bill, which has passed the Dáil Second Stage but not yet entered the Third Stage. Further powers for the Criminal Assets Bureau aimed at ensuring it “remains a world leader in seizing ill-gotten gains” are also pledged under the Crime Amendment Bill 2023.

Other notable aims under this goal include increasing the maximum sentence for assaulting a peace officer to 12 years, supporting legislation to increase sentences for assault causing harm, conspiracy to murder, and the creation of stand-alone offences for stalking and non-fatal strangulation. Further investment for An Garda

Síochána is also pledged to “drive recruitment, fund new stations and infrastructure, such as the new Garda plane”.

In terms of recruitment, which resumed in 2022, the plan states that the State now has a “steady stream of recruits entering the college [The Garda College in Templemore, County Tipperary] every 11 weeks” and that Budget 2023 has provided funding to allow for the recruit of up to 1,000 new gardaí in 2023. It is said within the plan that this increased recruitment will support the rollout of the new Garda operating model, which “introduces major changes to the structures of An Garda Síochána by providing more front-line Gardaí, increased Garda visibility, and a wider range of policing services for people in their local area”.

Strengthen community safety, reduce reoffending, support victims, and combat domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence

“Substantial reforms” are committed to under this strategic goal in order to meet commitments on strengthening community safety, reducing reoffending, diverting young people from crime, supporting victims, and combatting domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

The continued implementation of *Zero Tolerance*, the national strategy to tackle such violence, is among the key actions under this strategic goal, along with a commitment to “work to remove the legal barriers that prevent domestic violence victims from remaining in their homes and examine how to allow An Garda Síochána issue removal orders to take offenders out of the home in high risk cases”. Also pledged is the publication of a new human trafficking action plan and preparation for the national rollout of new Community Safety Partnerships in 2024.

The establishment of a task force to improve education and upskilling across the criminal justice system is also pledged. The programme will start with prison education and will consider youth justice issues, agree a work programme, and be co-chaired at the ministerial level in the Department of Justice and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science.

Accelerate innovation, digital transformation and climate action across the justice sector

Most relevant to the future of policing under this strategic goal is the commitment to “dramatically increase” digital services throughout the entire justice sector, which is cited as a key action in the modernisation of An Garda Síochána. Actions to be undertaken in 2023 under this goal include the commencement of a project that allows for the automated transfer of relevant court list data from the Courts Service to An Garda Síochána, to be concluded in Q2 2024.

Speaking upon the launch of the plan, then-Minister Harris said: “This plan contains an ambitious number of actions to be achieved over the course of the year as we work to continue to build stronger, safer communities that will make a real difference for people in Ireland in both the short and long term.

“A key priority will be to continue to support An Garda Síochána in protecting our communities from crime through increased resources and a stronger and more diverse Garda service. We will invest in recruitment, training and technology and progress new legislation to help An Garda Síochána as they do their vital job protecting us.”



Transforming policing for a changing Ireland

An Garda Síochána is in the midst of a very exciting period of organisational change, the largest of its kind since its inception in 1922, as it rolls out a new operating model across the whole organisation.

The new operating model includes restructuring at national, regional, and divisional levels to enable improved delivery of community policing according to local needs. With increased specialist services and enhanced capabilities, it will allow An Garda Síochána to respond to changing communities and the changing nature of crime.

The operating model is a key initiative being delivered as part of the overall transformation programme for An Garda Síochána and is guided by the Government's plan for policing – *A Policing Service for the Future (APSFF)*. This will deliver upon the recommendations contained in the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland report.

An Garda Síochána is changing because it wants to ensure it continues to provide a high quality policing service to the people of Ireland, who trust in the organisation to help them feel safe in their homes, their communities and as they go about their daily lives.

A key structural change under the

operating model is the organisation moving from six regions to four, and from 28 Garda divisions to 19.

Each division will be headed by a Divisional Chief Superintendent, who oversees four newly defined functional areas: business services; performance and assurance; crime; and community engagement. Each of these functional areas will be led by a superintendent, with the exception of business services, which will be led by an assistant principal officer.

Among the drivers of this change is a recognition that An Garda Síochána's existing core structures have not fundamentally changed in its 100 year history.

It is also responding to changes in society as a whole. Our communities are more diverse and require a more tailored approach catering to their specific needs. An Garda Síochána, therefore, wants to organise and operate in a way that continues to work for Ireland now, and into the future.

The model now being rolled out responds to the diverse communities that exist today. It increases the importance of local and responsive policing. It places increased emphasis on our already close connection with local communities.

Crime too is changing, and this model recognises a need to stay ahead of criminals and how they have adapted over time. This includes enhancing An Garda Síochána's capabilities in tackling cybercrime, economic crime, organised crime, domestic violence, and sexual crime at local level.

By having larger divisions, with more resources and more services available locally, we can provide better local and community policing with increased specialist services and enhanced capabilities.

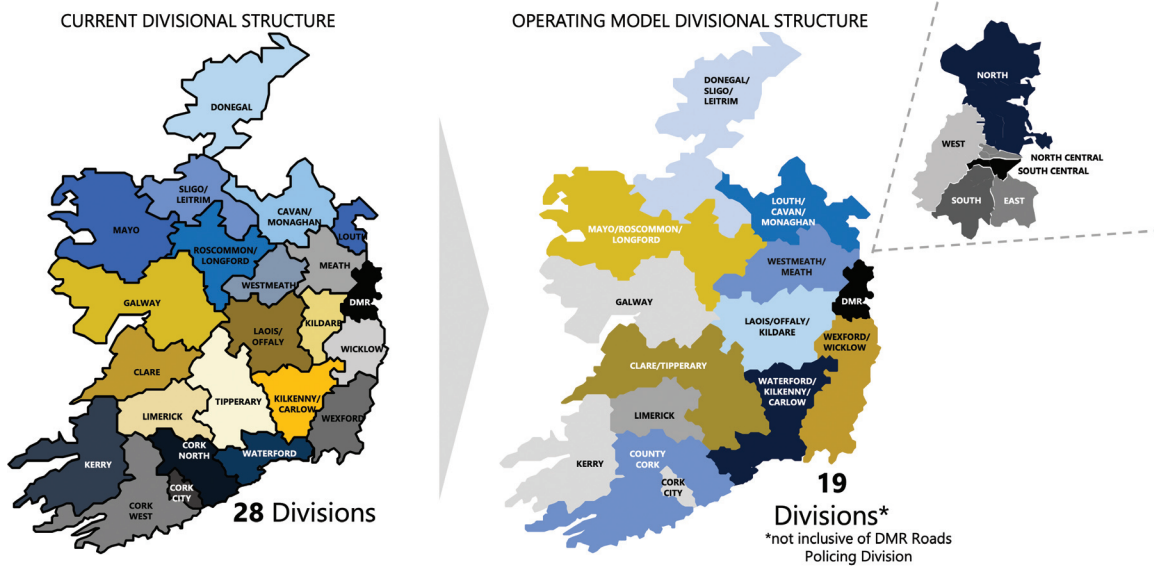
An Garda Síochána began this transformation in October 2019 when it moved from six regions to four, and has seen divisions transition to the new functional area structure over time.

The Covid-19 pandemic delayed its implementation, but An Garda Síochána is now in the midst of rolling out the new functional areas and implementing the realignment of divisions. Mayo and Roscommon/Longford Garda divisions were the first to formally amalgamate in September 2022.

Six divisions – Kerry, Cork City, Galway, Limerick, Mayo/Roscommon/Longford, and the DMR South Central in Dublin – have implemented the four functional



Future divisions under the operating model



areas (business services, performance assurance, crime, and community engagement) under the new operating model. Work continues across the remaining 13 divisions to implement the operating model during 2023.

The rollout of the operating model is already benefiting communities and enabling greater efficiencies in delivery of services. For example, the operating model has enabled the establishment of regional cybercrime hubs, putting tools and specialists in place locally to investigate this form of criminal activity. Further to this, it has reduced the amount of time Gardaí spend on administrative tasks allowing them to spend more time on front line duties, increasing visibility on the ground.

Already, there are key points of learning from the transformation process, which may be of interest to other organisations going through similar change.

Inspector Sean Cullen says: “Because this change is so big, we have found you have to be agile as to how you implement it. For instance, there are approximately 140 standardised business services processes (finance, HR, general administration) documented. It is only when people begin using the processes that you will get feedback to say this works, or there is a better way of doing this or that there are too many layers. When we get feedback, we make changes to standardised processes or our design where appropriate, as we are moving along.”

For An Garda Síochána there will always be new regulations or legislation that will require operational and/or administrative changes, so it needs to be able to adapt to these.

“You have to have an integrated approach; you cannot be siloed. You have other change going on in the organisation too, like upgrades to our investigation management system, our computer aided dispatch system, implementation of the rosters and duty management system etc. And so, with all these other projects coming in you have to ensure you do not encounter change fatigue. We have found it is important not to implement too much change in divisions at any one time,” Cullen notes.

All change must still go through the relevant policy owners for approvals, but as Cullen notes, “it is not a one size fits all either”. The divisions themselves have their own unique make-up, some are urban, some are rural, and others encompass up to three counties. For this reason, there needs to be a more tailored approach when implementing this change.

Mary Gildea, Assistant Principal over Business Services in the Mayo Roscommon Longford Division, says: “From my perspective the operating model has been very successful and innovative in its rollout throughout the division.

“The model allows for the standardisation and optimisation of processes with the divisions so that if someone wishes to report a crime, have

an event policed or look for specific documentation, the same process is applied across all divisions. It takes administrative tasks away from front-line Garda members and allows for them to exercise their specialities in policing and allows the business specialists deal with business matters.”

The real-world benefits of this ongoing transformation will be seen in the form of Gardaí being freed up to focus on the front-line, enhanced local policing and community engagement, and a wider range of services being provided locally.

It will not only improve organisational processes and operations to support community policing, it will help An Garda Síochána improve performance, and help it develop best practices at national and local level.

There will also be greater accountability throughout the organisation and regions and divisions will have greater control over how policing is delivered locally, while working within a corporate framework.

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31 MAY 23
DÁIL ÉIREANN

New policing bill proposes sweeping reforms

Credit: Fianna Fáil

Currently at committee stage in the Dáil, the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill 2023 aims to “strengthen the governance of An Garda Síochána and to provide for clear and effective oversight and accountability of An Garda Síochána”.

The Bill will be successor legislation to the Garda Síochána Act 2005. To achieve the objective of strengthened governance of An Garda Síochána, the Bill is proposing a new Garda board known as Bord an Gharda Síochána.

The new board’s functions would provide for the independence of the Garda Commissioner in relation to the performance of his or her functions and for the appointment of members of An Garda Síochána and members of garda staff.

With the aim to provide for local community safety partnerships, the Bill further aims to establish a new policing and community safety authority to be known as An tÚdarás Póilíneachta agus Sábháilteachta Pobail (Policing and Community Safety Authority), which would replace the Policing Authority.

The Bill is also proposing the appointment of An tOmbudsman

Póilíneachta (Police Ombudsman) and An Leas-Ombudsman Póilíneachta (Deputy Police Ombudsman) respectively, as well as the establishment of a body to be known as Oifig an Scrúdaitheora Neamhspleách um Reachtaíocht Slándála (the Office of Independent Examiner of Security Legislation). The head of this body will be known as An Scrúdaitheoir Neamhspleách um Reachtaíocht Slándála (Independent Examiner of Security Legislation).

Introducing the Bill to the Dáil on 22 February 2023, Minister of State at the Department of Justice, James Browne TD, said: “This Bill provides a new framework for policing, security and community safety, and, when enacted, will repeal and replace the current legislation, the Garda Síochána Act 2005, in its entirety. The Bill is based on the recommendations of the commission report which itself was informed by

extensive consultations across the policing landscape, including with the wider public.”

Sinn Féin justice spokesperson Pa Daly TD expressed his opinion that “it is a disappointment to see that the Bill now narrows the [Policing] Authority’s remit to only An Garda Síochána”.

“If a future scandal were to arise, it would not be difficult to see the Commissioner asserting that its accountability is solely to the board, which is, in itself, responsible for the interests of An Garda Síochána rather than to the authority,” the Sinn Féin TD said.

With the Bill currently at committee stage in the Dáil, the Department of Justice has stated that it aims to have the Bill signed into legislation by January 2024, albeit with the caveat that this date is “dependent on Oireachtas scheduling”.



Facial recognition technology is commonly used in airport security in the United States.

Greens blocking controversial FRT bill

The Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Bill 2022 continues to face delay amid opposition within government from the Green Party and human rights organisations, over the use of facial recognition technology.

The original draft of the Bill, announced under then-Minister for Justice Heather Humphries TD in 2021, did not include a provision for the use of facial recognition technology (FRT). However, calls to equip gardaí with body cams have intensified this year after a series of high-profile attacks on members of the force and recent policing of far-right protests and counter-protests.

Former Minister for Justice Simon Harris TD had hoped to bring about the use of FRT by way of tabling amendments to the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Bill 2022 before he left office in May 2023.

Arguing in favour of the provision, the Fine Gael TD said: “The accurate and efficient identification of suspects and equally, the elimination of individuals from enquiries are key pillars to ensure that An Garda Síochána meets its statutory obligations.”

The former Justice Minister’s support has been echoed by the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors, which

has argued that the use of FRT will make gardaí less prone to attacks and increase their ability to streamline work.

Speaking on RTÉ’s *Morning Ireland* in June 2023, AGSI General Secretary Antoinette Cunningham outlined her belief that “garda assaults are on the increase” and that bodycams are “a basic level of protection that is needed”.

She added: “Every day that this legislation is delayed, there is an increased risk to An Garda Síochána and that is not acceptable.”

Whilst supportive of the use of recording devices for gardaí, the Green Party has outlined its opposition to the provision proposed by Harris, which it argues will lead to gender and racial bias and could be open to abuse.

“The party is not supportive of Minister Harris’s proposal to amend the original bodycams bill in order to allow the use of a form of artificial intelligence known as facial recognition technology, which has proved controversial in other

countries,” a Green Party spokesperson said.

Concern over the use of recording devices has been raised by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, citing: intrusion on rights for law enforcement purposes; equality implications in the use of technology; access and retention of data; and adequacy of safeguards and oversight mechanisms.

The Commission acknowledges that police recording is lawful under the Constitution and international human rights law, subject to the requirement that it is based on law, pursues a legitimate aim, is proportionate in that aim and is necessary in a democratic society.

However, Chief Commissioner Sinéad Gibney has said: “It is vital that this new law incorporates from the outset the necessary human rights and equality protections for people today, and into the future.”

Credit: Delta Airlines



Crime and policing statistics

Recorded crime victims 2022



Murder or manslaughter

- **75%** male (35)
- **25%** female (12)

Physical assault and related offences

- **57%** male (13,321)
- **43%** female (9,934)

Sexual offences

- **17%** males (543)
- **83%** females (2,575)

66% of sexual crimes reported in **2022** occurred in the previous **12 months**, whilst **20%** occurred more than 10 years prior

In **2021**, one-fifth of sexual offence crimes had a male offender and a male victim

Source: CSO, May 2023.

An Garda Síochána in 2021



€63.7 million in drug seizures by the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau

45,283 contacts and attempted contacts with victims of domestic abuse between April **2020** and December 2022

340 probationer gardaí allocated, as part of the pandemic operational response, to Garda stations nationwide

Successfully connected to Schengen Information System (SIS) with **110 arrests** under SIS Article 26 and **88 arrests** under European Arrest Warrants (EAW)

Source: CSO, December 2022

Crime between 2021 and 2022



30% increase in homicide and related offences

17% increase in attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments, and related offences

32% decrease in fraud, deception and related offences

13% decrease in controlled drug offences

41% increase in theft and related offences

Source: CSO, March 2023.