

A chara,

Firstly I'd like to welcome this public consultation on the future of policing in Ireland and for giving all citizens a voice in how our society is kept safe and secure.

I am a local Dublin City Councillor in the Dublin 17, and 5 areas the broader areas serviced in the main by Coolock Garda Station. My contribution to your consultation is based on my observations in my local communities and of the work of my local officers who strive despite being starved of appropriate frontline resources to carry out their daily work.

As a starting point I think it important to note that most families living want to live in an area that is clean, green well-serviced from an amenities perspective and safe. While certain aspects of achieving such environments are outside the remit of the Gardai in ensuring that our communities are safe is a key priority.

Over the years I have witnessed a significant increase in anti-social behaviour, damage to public and private property and low level crime perpetrated particularly by younger people and indeed children. Garda capacity to deal with this has been at a dangerous minimal for too long. This inability to attend appropriately to local community issues has, in my view contributed, not only to a consistent increase and prevalence of low level crime and younger people progressing to more serious crime.

To go forward we need to go back and significantly strengthen our community policing to the extent that it becomes the backbone of policing. A strong community policing presence allows officers to get to know the people who live in their communities, particularly children and younger people. They act both subtly and deliberately as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.

The current schools programme needs to be expanded to reach all pupils (all classes from Junior Infants to Leaving Cert at least 4 times per year) particularly in at risk areas. This way young children get to know their local Gardai, what they do, how they do what they do and significantly the Gardai get to know the children and young people. The community Gardai need to get back involved with local sports and community activities - late night leagues for example as part of youth diversion programmes. Local councils can also play a supporting partnership role in such activities. Prevention work on the ground should be a cornerstone of keeping our communities safe and secure.

While I recognise it is easier to intervene in crime/catch an offender if Gardai work in plain clothes or under cover however visible Garda presence out either on foot or on bikes or cars send a strong message to communities that the people living in them are important to them and that antisocial behaviour, damage to property or crime will not be tolerated - we need more Gardai interacting more regularly in our communities. In Edenmore (D5) a local Garda, when he can, runs a weekly/fortnightly pop-up office in the local community. This allows locals pop down for a chat about what's concerning them in the community and get any business done that they need doing. This allows an interaction with the local Garda previously not experienced by the community which builds trust and confidence and indeed adds to the attempts by the local

community groups to improved their community. Such outreach/pop-in facilities should be established in other vulnerable areas.

Where young people in particular do get involved in crime and are subsequently jailed a strategic post-prison intervention and employment programme needs to be provided for them to prevent re-offending and them falling into a full-time life of crime and them becoming isolated from them communities and a danger to their communities. For example PACE <http://www.paceorganisation.ie> could be used as a starting point for mainstreaming

Many years ago the Department of Education and Skills introduced a Breaking the Cycle scheme for what was termed socio-economic disadvantaged areas (now known as DEIS <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/>) These areas need a similar tailored programme to break the cycle of young people from socio-economic disadvantaged areas getting involved in anti-social behaviour and low level public order and criminal activity. Hand in glove with education, health support and other community supports these young people can their communities can be empowered to break the cycle of crime.

Kind Regards,

Alison

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