

FAO The Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

In any review of the future operation of An Garda Síochána, I would like to see a greater emphasis being placed on community policing.

The number of Gardaí assigned to this role has diminished greatly in recent years, with little evidence of their presence in local areas of Galway at present.

Community Gardaí can play an important part in the detection of crime in our housing estates and suburbs, with their local knowledge being a major factor.

But they play an even more important role in the prevention of crime.

My experience of meeting and talking with community Gardaí in the past has clearly highlighted the benefits of their presence on our streets.

They get to know almost everyone in their area, they get to know who they need to 'keep an eye on' — and this is particularly important in relation to steering young people away from situations which might lead to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, where a friendly chat at the right time might make all the difference. And society benefits greatly in the long run from this approach. Prevention will always be preferable to the need for detection.

An added benefit of having a community Garda close by is that it helps to bring a sense of security to residents, particularly those who are vulnerable or living alone, and this helps to bring an improved quality of life to the community generally.

Community Gardaí can be the first line of defence against crime but currently that line of defence seems to have disappeared.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Terry O' Flaherty
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