

Dear Sir/Madam,

I'm hoping you're well. In respect of the above I hope you might consider the following when suggesting reform to AGS - these matters have already been highlighted by the Garda Inspectorate on several occasions so I'm hoping that the commission might be finally able to convince the Government to force these changes through:

i) Organisational Strength - the need to increase the number of sworn officers. Comparison made with Police Scotland (13,000 sworn officers vs 17,000 sworn officers - geographical and population jurisdiction of similar size)

ii) Modernised Structure - the need to define the role of each section of the organisation. Uniform Patrol Officers ('The Regular') are being tasked with investigating serious crime as well as volume crime. Many of these investigations should be handled by specialist teams with liaisons for victims. This leads to a strained service provided by officers under pressure and lack of visibility

A full explanation is outlined below.

AGS is currently about 13,000 sworn officers. These officers are tasked with responsibilities of general policing with several additional duties which are not normally under the remit of a national police service. Although Security and Intelligence has already been mentioned it is often neglected to mention that AGS is also responsible for offences relating to Immigration, Animal Control, Littering, Social Protection, Courts and Prison escorts and a myriad of instances which are normally handled by other organisations in foreign jurisdictions. As a layman I do not know how many gardaí are allocated to these duties on a full time basis however I would not be surprised if all sworn members of AGS have had to tackle all aspects of the above in their normal duties.

For comparative analysis lets focus on Police Scotland; with an allocation of 17,000 sworn officers for a population and geographical jurisdiction quite similar to our own. The remit of Intelligence and Security falls into the remit of MI5/MI6. The remit of Immigration falls to that of the Border Protection Agency. The remit of Animal Control falls to that of the Royal Society of Protection of Cruelty to Animals, Littering to the Local Authorities and Courts and Prison escort services often fall into the remit of private security firms answerable to the department of Justice. It must also be noted that serious crimes, such as gangland and those of national interest - care handled by the National Crime Agency.

Although the local authorities in Ireland also have a duty to littering, animal control etc it often falls to AGS as the number of designated officers allocated by the local authorities to these duties is minimal, at best. The Irish Society of Prevention of Cruelty to animals, unlike the British equivalent, cannot investigate or instigate prosecutions - again leaving the duty to AGS. Similar is said for social protection aspects in Ireland.

The current surplus of 4,000 officers between Police Scotland and AGS is already noteworthy however if you factor in these additional duties and responsibilities it can easily be seen why two questions are frequently asked - a) how come I rarely see gardaí on patrol. and b) why does the service appear unprofessional given the latest 'scandals' of discrepancies in breath testing and prosecutions.

Having interacted with stakeholders in the criminal justice and policing sectors I often observe that An Garda Síochána often relies on all of these duties to be carried out by uniform patrol officers. Internally they are referred to as 'The Regular'. These are the gardaí who work 24 hours a day and answer emergency calls. Although AGS has Detective units, Traffic units, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault units - it often appears that the regular investigate all crime. In addition to a remit that extends to cover those that don't involve the police in other jurisdictions - I've often witnessed patrol officers being tasked with investigating rapes, sexual assaults, burglaries, complex fraud and computer crime etc. whilst also being expected to conduct their normal duties i.e. man the public counter, answer the telephone, allocate and designate units to report to crimes; attend those calls in addition to the serving of subpoenas and execution of warrants in the courts. Although the specialist units often provide an 'advisory' role - they rarely directly lead an investigation. This is prevalent more so in stations outside of Dublin - which appears to differ greatly in terms of policy.

In many jurisdictions patrol officers are seen as front line first responders. If a matter requires a 2nd tier investigation i.e if a suspect cannot be identified in short notice and arrested; the matter is often referred to a specialist investigative team that have the time and resources to ensure a swift criminal investigation whilst also providing a compassionate liaison with the victim or crime.

It appears from the organisational structure of AGS that these frontline gardaí; who also account for the majority of all MAT checkpoints performed (as opposed to Traffic Corps, surprisingly); any new policy, procedure or obligatory duty is assigned solely to the front line patrol officers as opposed to the units that are required. Many gardaí cited that they had to account to senior officers if a MAT checkpoint was not performed. These gardaí would be castigated for not performing the checkpoint even if a legitimate reason had been provided - reasons often including that the gardaí were liaising with victims or investigating a crime.

The question must be asked - why are these gardaí the jack of all trades but master of none? The Traffic Corps are often assigned fewer Traffic Duties than the regular patrol officer garda. The Detectives in many stations are rarely tasked with investigating crime that are reported. Is it a case that the regular garda is often burdened with so many duties and is expected to conduct all without error - whilst also providing time to be seen by the public on general patrol?

The Garda Inspectorate Report 'Changing Policing in Ireland' the inspectorate had reacted, with surprise, that many Superintendents could not define the role of a Detective. One

Superintendent stated that their role was to investigate serious crimes. When asked which crimes he would class as serious - he was unable to be specific in reply. This ambiguity also extends to the role of a 'regular' garda, detective garda and community garda. The only units that appear to have defined roles are that of the Traffic Corps and National Units such as SDU, GNDOCU, GNIB etc.

In order to restore confidence in the organisation there needs to be a review of the role of a garda in a particular unit - especially in the regular. To provide a visible, consistent experience gardaí need to be given a list of their roles and responsibilities. It is unfair to expect a 24 hour shift working garda to provide a 100% excellent service to a victim of a rape when they are taking their statement one moment; only to have to rush to a report of a sudden death/theft/public order issue next. The burden of additional duties also causes delays in these investigations and, as can be imagined, would weaken any investigation.

If duties are distributed in a defined and manageable way there would be far more gardaí available to answer calls. The burden of administrative duties also needs to be looked at - this includes the legal changes required to modernise particular duties (a garda having to physically write down every word said by a suspect in interview even though the interview itself is being recorded on Video makes a 10 minute interview become an hour long interview. This practice was abolished decades ago in other jurisdictions).

One major aspect is that many gardaí must be demoralised by feeling overburdened yet underappreciated for the work expected of them. Many I have spoken to would gladly perform the investigations assigned to them if given the time, and suitable working pattern, to allow for it i.e. to be a detective.

Although two small points I believe that if the Garda Inspectorate's reports had been adhered to and implemented many of the issues today would not exist. Unfortunately there does not appear to be a political will to invest in policing - either monetarily through increased numbers or through changes in practices and technology/legislation. Serious consideration needs to be given to ensure that the public are provided with the police service they deserve.

Thanking you for your time in reading this and hoping it may be of use.

Sincerely

██████████