

Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

Private Submission Representing Both Personal Experience &
The Voices of Gardaí throughout Ireland

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Date: 22/12/2017

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SUBMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF POLICING IN IRELAND

BY MARK REDDY M.SC.

Introduction

As we know members of An Garda Siochana are subject to not only the same challenges faced by Police Officers throughout the world but also an incredible amount of negativity due to the ongoing and long running issues affecting the force and change in public opinion towards them. Morale continues to be at an all-time low which impacts not only on the individual member and the organisation but also their families, friends and communities in which they serve.

“We cannot expect members to be proactive and successful in their duties if they are not supported, appreciated and healthy in themselves”. M.Reddy M.Sc.

Terms of Reference

Whilst this submission is based on experience and personal belief this author has endeavoured to broadly cover the following the terms of reference:

- An ethos and culture that values accountability and embraces change, and engages pro-actively, routinely and continuously with, and is responsive to the needs of, the diverse communities it serves, and valuable elements of police culture that exist are recognised and maintained
- That there are open, accessible and independent means of investigating and adjudicating fairly upon complaints against the police
- That there are arrangements for accountability and for the effective, efficient and economic use of resources in carrying out all policing functions and delivering policing objectives
- That there are effective means to ensure independent professional scrutiny of the police services to ensure that proper professional standards are maintained
- The legislative framework for policing, to ensure that it is adequate to meet the challenges of modern policing
- Existing and emerging issues identified as key challenges for Ireland’s model of policing, e.g., evolving nature of crime, society (including increasing diversity) and

public expectations and their relevance to structures, service delivery models, public confidence, performance measures etc

- International benchmarks in relation to the delivery of the most effective policing
- Best practices and changes in the policing models of other countries focused towards greater effectiveness and efficiency, and fostering public confidence in policing; and the relevance and applicability of such ideas in Ireland
- Previous reports concerning policing in Ireland
- Any specific challenges to delivering consistent structural and cultural reform in policing. The Commission should consult widely, including with the public and civic society and any other bodies or individuals it considers appropriate

Considering the following terms of reference submissions will be outlined under the following general headings:

- 1. Culture Ethos and Values**
- 2. Best practices and changes in the policing models**
- 3. Mental Health and Welfare**
- 4. Individual Submissions 1, 2 & 3**
- 5. Submissions by Younger Members**
- 6. Submissions by Individual Members**

The following will outline this author's experience having worked voluntarily with members of An Garda Siochana since 2002. Relevant research supporting the welfare needs of Police Officers will be outlined followed by the individual submissions of members. All issues have been painstakingly gathered, reviewed and agreed upon with each submitting member. All duplications of the same general topic have been reduced to one submission with the agreement of all parties were possible.

Authors Background

In 2002 whilst working fulltime in the caring profession and qualifying as a therapist, I began to see members in need voluntarily in my spare time. Due to demand, I established small groups of those in need who supported each other through their challenges together. I offered voluntary therapy, consultancy, mediation, training and advocacy, working alone with members of all ranks.

Since this time, I devised and put together training programmes for the GRA on welfare and mental health whilst also advising on this area. I was proudly presented with two prestigious awards by the GRA over the years for loyalty and service to the force. Over the past 17+ years, I have developed a trusted reputation, expertise and experience that has not only allowed me work directly with members of the force at all levels in need, but also to be proactive in trying to address and raise these issues as best I can for the betterment of the whole service.

In order to support my family, I work full-time, and so everything I do in this area is carried out in my spare time at my own cost. In the past 17yrs, working alone, I have seen members in deep distress, suffering from issues arising from conflict, suicidal thoughts, PTSD, depression to name just a few. The one common factor among them all, was a perception and genuine belief that there is a real lack of support and understanding from their employers. I have also seen the many positives this organisation is capable of. One of which was in 2014, when I was proudly nominated by Members of the force for my work with them and even won the Fingal Person of The Year Award.

I would like to formalise my experience and position in some way in order to help bring about the positive and lasting changes needed within the force as we move forward. This summary I hope will be part of this change.

Proactive voluntary work

I have supplemented my support work with the following:

- www.stressskills.ie
In 2002 approximately I established a basic website called *Stressskills* to supplement my therapeutic work by providing information on welfare and mental health.
- www.esforum.org
In 2006, due to the demand for a dedicated and secure forum for Gardaí and other Emergency Service Professionals, I established with a Member of the Gardai, The Emergency Services Forum. Up to this time, Gardaí were reaching out to others in the job through an open non-secure forum. Within this unique forum I have a welfare section. This site is run, supervised and monitored by members of all emergency services, I do not interfere in this side of the site and primarily focus on the welfare side. There is no doubt that this site has forged friendships, resulted in births, marriages

and mutual peer support for members suffering following traumatic incidences and challenges in life.

- Supporting Our Emergency Services (Facebook)

In 2014, the increase in online abuse towards members was at a critical point. I was contacted by members repeatedly whom were targeted by anti-Garda individuals and groups on social media. To counteract this, I established the “*Supporting our Emergency Services*” Facebook page. This named and shamed those who actively targeted Gardaí and their families online. Following legal advice, I would simply repost their online Facebook posts and their public Facebook pages. Although it took some time, the incidents of online abuse reduced drastically. This page was then used to focus on positive news stories promoting positive aspects of the force.

- www.gardasupport.ie

In 2015, due to demand and a perceived lack of welfare support, I wrote and paid to have the Garda Support website created. This is a site that members can use both professionally and personally. It is designed as a resource for members when working with the public in need and for their own personal mental health support. I also use this site to advertise the 24/7 telephone helpline and other supporting services.

Organisational Observations

The area of organisational change is both complex and challenging. However, the need for change is now reluctantly being accepted by all members I talk with. The Culture however within the force presents as toxic in many respects and will result in resistance and cynicism at many levels as the commission progresses in their mission.

Cultural change is a much bigger challenge than addressing the practical issues around policies, procedures and management. Any new change in any organisation can bring about insecurity, doubt, fear and resistance from both those loyal to the current culture and those whom want change. There is no doubt even now, that many will attempt to influence others to ensure change does not occur. As we know, cultural change needs to start at the top, leaders will need to model behaviour that others can follow. Communication with those on the ground has to improve and members need to be involved in such change. Continuity of work practices and procedures needs to be addressed and members need to feel supported and encouraged to have a vested interest in any positive change. All of which will require vision, accountability and a mission that all can work towards.

Shadow Culture

The organisation has in this author's opinion become slaves to a very challenging "shadow culture" (Michael Carroll 2006) that operates throughout all ranks. Research, common sense and experience would suggest that within a part of this shadow culture, there lies a great deal of cynicism, mistrust, fear and bad practice. It would be safe to say that an overall lack of confidence in senior management is common among members, as too their faith that the current structure can bring about any of the changes required. Members it seems believe themselves to be unsupported, unappreciated and constantly open to abuse, be it from the public, media, GSOC or internally. The perception remains that if you are not connected or know someone senior you won't progress through the ranks in any form. This belief feeds into the sense of resentment that permeates throughout the service. For example, I have continuously heard how members become increasingly arrogant to their colleagues in different divisions, less public friendly and less productive when they move from the general rank and file units to different operational divisions, and even quite often taking credit for other people's work. Ill health (mental/injury) is rampant within the service compounding members overall feelings of being isolated and dejected, which ultimately leads to great challenges and one's ability to cope. The current culture does not address these issues proactively. These areas should raise serious concerns for the commission and requires an immediate and proactive response.

This shadow culture is unique to this service, it can't be matched with others which will bring about many unique challenges for the Commission and directions for change in the future. As it currently stands, if members don't operate within this culture your career can (members believe) be in real jeopardy. This subversive culture is one that can ensure rumours, ways of

doing things outside of policy, general beliefs and negativity are widely spread at great speed throughout the whole service. As we know, rumours and the perceptions of others can often be wrong or incorrect yet this continues within the force and has a very real negative impact on people, reputations and any moves for change. This author has seen this aspect of An Garda Siochana many times at many levels and the damage it can do. This aspect of the current culture has led to many professionals steering clear of getting involved or seeking to address change in the force.

Psychological Contracts

Members operate under various psychological contracts that can bring them into conflict quite often within the job. These psychological contracts are held by many proactive, dedicated and not so dedicated officers. The sense of entitlement in this regard can bring about resentment when change is required or demanded. Seeking to change this will lead to conflict and negativity and will require a great deal of consideration and planning as the service moves forward.

Welfare

The reviewing commission needs to consider that many in the force are not well, and are suffering stress and low morale which is negatively affecting a great number of members. As such, one cannot expect people who are unwell to immediately hop on board and work for change. The perception on the ground is that the organisation has done little to address the ongoing issues around mental health and welfare. As one experienced member suggests, “*they have attempted to tick certain boxes that negates their responsibility, but they don’t care*” (Garda 2017). Again, one only has to look at the suicide figures and illnesses to realise that this is a serious issue.

These issues go far beyond monetary issues, members feel increasingly isolated, unheard and unsupported in their work. And so listening to their insights and needs can only help in understanding the changes required in the service and internal culture in which they operate. Basic behavioural psychological principals employed today understands that the ‘centre agent’s’ in an organisation are the staff, aka humans, predictable error prone humans. Understanding that as humans, we make miscalculations and mistakes which can and do have an impact on the organisation and therefore the service provided is **vital**. We know that low morale and stress increases the possibility of poor decision making and so again this area needs understanding and vision.

Workforce

There is no doubt in this authors experience that the most valuable resource this service has is its employees. The vast majority of members have developed both experience and insight that has seen the force continue to be successful in their roles, even through all of the negativity and trouble. This is an incredible resource to work with and learn from. Incentivising those hardworking, committed and proactive members, whilst addressing their welfare concerns fully, without interference, from those intent on keeping things the same will ensure success in the future. We need to cultivate a growth mind-set that accepts and understands that occasional mistakes can be learned from rather than hidden, ignored or blamed on others as is the case now.

For example, the promotional process within AGS seems to highlight many of the problems that exist within this service. We take members with very specific skill sets in the community and promote them to duties in very different areas. This results in the loss of knowledge on the ground in the area where it would be best served. It also results in very experienced members in these areas not going for promotions as they don't wish to leave the area that they know best. We know that success in learning is based on learning through action and experience, we know that expanding upon our skillset is best achieved through the sharing of information, through modelling and observational learning. And so there are many areas of positive development and growth in this one area that could be developed, explored and changed for the better.

There is no doubt in this authors mind that An Garda Siochana has far more positives than negatives and these are found in its members. By promoting/supporting these members through guided modelling, understanding and greater communication and the proactive response to their needs will result in the very negative culture decreasing and eventually those unable or unwilling to be a part of change will leave the force.

Some Recommendations made since 2002

Following this authors research, from very early on, the results showed the need for a proactive internal non-member therapeutic team on the ground working with members in need, not affected by Management and able to feedback on issues needing to be addressed and help make the changes required swiftly.

It was also recommended that members need to attend mandatory therapy after traumatic incidents, this would help to start to change the negative view, stigma and mistrust that exists in the force when seeking such support.

The 24/7 Helpline which this author recommended and fought for from 2002 was only meant to be a supplementary support to this therapeutic service and was supposed to provide actual therapy the minute a member would call. The pitfalls in regards to the current service that are

being mentioned by members were highlighted many times by this author before its creation. My recommendations are not designed to affect the current EAO and peer support Services but to compliment them. Research shows that members have little trust in seeking certain kinds of support through any part of the current services on offer. There are many reasons for this, one of which is the perception that one's career path would be seriously affected if in fact a member sought therapy.

Since around 2008, the need for a non-member representative/mediator (not the GRA or AGSI) with independent authority has been required to address, mediate and help resolve the following issues:

1. *Bullying*
2. *Members Returning from long term injury/sick leave*
3. *Transfers*
4. *False Allegations*

This author has been overwhelmed by members affected by these issues. These issues are hugely contentious, bad for morale and are negatively impacting on the health of those being affected and their families. This author has endeavoured to help mediate these issues over the years due to the high demand. Again, the role recommended needs to be separate to the GRA and AGSI and needs to link with the welfare team recommended and be in a position to help mediate and resolve issues before they become greater issues for HR.

Members need greater training in the area of mental health, to not only build their own self-awareness and understanding as they progress through their careers but to also help when they deal with those suffering from such issues in the public.

In relation to these core issues, members feel completely isolated and it seems feel that there is no clear support system for them to use that can help, this leads to far more difficulty and long term resentment, absenteeism and conflict. Addressing these areas properly will save the service time, money and upset in the future.

Over the years, I has forecasted that issues such as suicide and financial hardship, bullying were and would peak. Each has respect proven to be correct.

As a loyal Public/Civil Servant for the past 21yrs, this author has proven time and again that there is no agenda in play other than wanting to help make positive change in the force. I do understand how I could be viewed with scepticism but after such a long time, this just becomes nonsensical and tiring. I know only too well how any change can be difficult to achieve but the perceived lack of interest, commitment to change and appreciation of different views and advice is staggering. This author has seen how highly professional and talented individuals in the force can lose their own sense of self-worth, ideals and be sucked into the culture of not rocking the boat. Yet through it all, time has shown that these issues are not going away or improving.

Research on Police Trauma and Mental Health

To help support the committees understanding of why we need to address the issues of mental health and welfare within AGS, I present the following research. Although this author has completed many pieces of research into this area I have excluded this in order to avoid any biases.

Research

“Police officers are often the first responders to critical incidents that have the potential to be traumatic and which may precipitate a traumatic response which, in turn, may impact negatively upon their physical and mental well-being” (Manzella & Papazoglou 2014).

The nature of the demands placed on members of An Garda Siochana is unique and multi-faceted. *Papazoglou (2016)* reported how in any given situation an officer may have to “*oscillate between different roles; specifically from crime-street fighter to that of social service worker and vice versa*”. This rapid shifting requires officers to maintain high psycho-physiological adaptability. This makes police work unique. Putting aside the challenges that all people who do shift work experience, at the end of a shift, an officer returns to his/her home where there is an expectation that they discard the role of police officer and transition to the role of spouse, parent and friend. *Papazoglou (2016)* highlighted the challenges faced in this transition, the difficulty experienced in re-assuming the role of caring parents and spouses after a shift at work, where they may have had to respond to many crisis’s, traumas and life-threatening situations. Further research is required to expand and explain these challenges more fully.

Police officers are, because of the nature of their work, routinely at risk of threat and assault. For instance, a Dutch study conducted by *BZK (2006)* detailed how, in 2005, 53% of all Dutch police were confronted once or more with physical violence. Research has highlighted how intentional violent events (e.g. assaults), led to poorer levels of health than non-intentional events (e.g. traffic accidents) (*Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes & Nelson 1995*). Moreover, *Van der Velden et al (2010)*, in their research on aggression and mental health in police officers, cited the findings of *Evers, Tomic & Brouwers (2002)*, who argued that the frequency of incidents involving aggressive confrontations was associated with poorer mental health complaints, e.g. symptoms of anxiety, depression, sleeping problems and burnout.

Whilst this research is similar, there are some differing factors worthy of consideration, in particular the ferocity of assaults and the characteristics of the perpetrators of the participants in both studies, *Evers et al (2002)* explored the experience of staff at homes for the elderly whereas *Van der Velden et al. (2010)* explored the experience of police officers.

Psychological Perspective of Police Trauma

It is well documented that police officers often encounter stressful situations such as dealing with violence, attending sudden death, suicide, fatal accidents, and child abuse, all of which have the potential to impact negatively on their mental health. *Atkinson-Tower 2003* and *Brown, Fielding and Grover (1999)* argued that exposure to occupational stressors is associated with officer's psychological well-being, sometimes manifesting as depression and anxiety.

Ketch, Violanti, Fekedulegn, Andrew, Burchfield & Hartley (2012) argued that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one of the most severe psychiatric disorders and is frequently under-recognised and under-treated, something this author agrees with. They further contended that where it affects 8-9 % of the general population, in certain occupational groups, such as duty police officers, the risk is greater still.

Research highlighted that over one third (35%) of police officers who are exposed to a potentially traumatic event later develop post-traumatic stress (*Papazoglou 2012*). *Haugen, Evces and Weiss (2012)* argued that police officers are at a greater risk of developing full or partial PTSD than members of the general population (10% and 8% respectively). *Darenberg, Andrew, Hartley, Burchfiel, Fekedulgen, & Violanti (2006)* found that police officers over 50 years of age had 40% higher PTSD prevalence than officers aged 40 years and younger, implying the longer an individual serves as a police officer the greater the risk of PTSD.

This author questions if the demands on these serving men and women are comparable to the Gardaí, as the work demands may be of a different nature due to the size of the districts and populations. However, working therapists here in Ireland report similar findings as detailed below.

Richards and Balfe (2015), suggested that Gardaí presenting for therapy are struggling to deal with high levels of trauma. Using this author's research, they too argued that the nature of policing has changed, society has become more violent, gangland crimes are more prevalent and that there is a constant threat of physical danger to the Gardaí. They too stated that there is “*no provision for the effect on the Garda with regard to their ongoing mental and physical well-being following a traumatic event*”. Like many therapists, both this author and these writers highlight that not dealing with issues can lead to much bigger issues, the main one being Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) something seen regularly within AGS.

Impact on Carers and Family

Violanti and Gehrke (2004) argued that police officers are a high risk population in terms of exposure to traumatic stress leading to increased risk for PTSD symptoms and eventually to a state of compassion fatigue (CF). They conceptualised CF as “*the cost of caring without reward or result*”. *Figley (1989)* classified CF as “*secondary traumatic stress associated with the psychological cost of caring for others*”. In these instances, those who care for traumatised

individuals may themselves experience emotional upset, and become secondary victims of the traumatic event. Something again seen in the close family members of Gardai. *Miller (2005)* reports how death by suicide is two to three times greater for police officers than the general population. *Rudofossi (2012)* maintains that traumatised officers displayed more dissociative symptoms during a traumatic event (peril-traumatic dissociation) and after the traumatic experience (post-traumatic dissociation) when compared to non-traumatised police officers. This author wonders has anyone in charge of An Garda Siochana and the Government considered the families behind each officer?

Biological-Physical Perspective of Police Trauma

Violanti, Andrew, Burchfield, Hartley, Charles, & Miller (2007) studied the Cortisol responses of traumatised police officers. Their findings indicated that traumatised officers showed hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) over-activity throughout the entire day. Over-activity of the HPA axis activates the adrenal gland which secretes Cortisol. These researches further contended that PTSD is associated with an excessive stress response influenced by neurochemical and neuroanatomic abnormalities controlled by the Central Nervous System.

Groer, Murphy and Bunnell (2010) confirmed the finding of *Violanti et al. (2007)* when they demonstrated that police officers exhibited considerable increases in Cortisol in response to lethal force training scenarios. Cortisol has systematic effects over a wide range of organs and bodily functions, such as blood pressure and metabolic actions (*Lovallo 2015*). *Sapolsky (2004)* cautioned how, over extended periods of time, dysregulated levels of Cortisol significantly raise the risk of illness such as diabetes and cardio-vascular disease. Chronic secretion of Cortisol has been shown to have negative effects on mental health and, it is argued, may lead to difficulties such as misuse of alcohol and drugs, anxiety sensitivity, depression and threat-related decision making among police officers. The cost to the state in treating these conditions must be astronomical. Would it not be more cost beneficial to invest this money into supporting members and their families before these issues present?

Police Culture

Crank & Crank (2014) suggested that police officers have their own distinct culture, comprised of a framework of values, tenets, attitudes and language. *Woody (2006)* detailed how police culture is characterised by internal solidarity, brotherhood and support, while also being isolated from society. *Papazoglou (2016)* suggested that police culture instils in its members, a sense of group cohesiveness and loyalty, he further contended that a major component of this culture is “*the salient role of teamwork and reciprocity in facing adversities in the line of duty*”. This however maybe a changing aspect to the current culture within the AGS. This author suggests that in smaller Garda stations in Ireland, Papazoglou’s findings would have even greater resonance. In these smaller stations, officers do not have the breath of support potentially provided by larger numbers of colleagues. In smaller Garda stations, in particular rural stations, there may only be a handful of Gardai - they are often neighbours, their children

attending the same schools etc. This results in a greater sense of collegiality and support – they are not only colleagues but members of the same community.

Similar to AGS *Rudofossi (2007)*, a uniformed police psychologist states “*at police academy, open expression of fear was unacceptable, and scepticism of any sort was considered resistance*”. *Reiser and Geiger (1984)* highlighted how police departments have little understanding of the trauma experienced by their officers, often it is regarded as part of the job. Within AGS, stigma often follows an officer that admits to being traumatised as they are removed from active duty and placed on desk duty. As highlighted by (*Rudofossi 2007*) a traumatised officer is considered by the department as “*soft civilian sentimentality*” this too is a factor here. However, within the unique culture of AGS two things can happen, your career can be ruined by the rumour mill or you can be crucified by abuse often referred to as slagging without the recipient finding it funny. It can be construed that, this organisation seem happier to lose officers from their ranks than help them return from trauma. This is more worrying when we know that these officers can be far more professional in their duties when they are supported, helped and encouraged to return to active duties.

Carlan and Nored (2008) conducted a large study ($n = 1,114$) and examined, through the use of questionnaires. Their research highlighted officer’s opinions that signs of stress did not make officers less well-suited for police work, but still acknowledged a reluctance to confide fears and anxieties with other officers. This contradiction suggested that officers feared the stigma associated with the need for stress counselling as they do in AGS. These researchers found that police departments who promoted counselling benefited from officer stress reduction.

Their study also suggested that police departments should consider mandatory and periodic counselling for all officers. They proposed that given the widespread concerns for officers regarding the stigma associated with stress and counselling that this procedural tactic would remove the stigma while concurrently treat existing (or potential) problems of ‘stressed’ officers. It’s important to note that this author recommended this for AGS six years before this research was conducted. These researchers also believed that an additional benefit of mandatory counselling would be to assist officers to become aware of mounting stress and its attendant concerns. This has the potential to minimise the damage such stress could inflict.

Research has detailed organisational stressors that negatively impact on the lived experience of police officers, for example, *Woody (2005)* highlighted how officers’ decision-making skills are constantly under scrutiny from command staff and administration. He also detailed “*a rigid hierarchy and bureaucracy, limited lower-level involvement, and decreased sense of control*”. *Stinchcomb (2004)* noted inadequate guidance and support, along with poor communication and consultation. *Kirshman (2007)* highlighted how officers had to deal with “*poor equipment, unfair workload distribution, favouritism, limited family-friendly policies*”. Again, these are the same issues we hear from members routinely.

Studies have highlighted the impact of policing on the officer's families and found that the demands and stressors associated with membership in police organisations were found to have potentially problematic influences on relationships. *Kirshman (2007)* detailed these as: competition for time, carryover of work attitudes (e.g., hyper-vigilant, authoritative, cynical or protective stances), job-related problems, negative interactions, negative mood and problematic behaviours such as aggression.

This research again supports and highlights the needs for proactive change within the force, not only in regards to mental health and welfare but at all levels.

Submissions Made By Individual Members

I have been entrusted with issues of every sort over the years, the following issues were given to me with the hope that I can ensure they are heard. As a non-member of this force, I understand that such trust and confidence is unusual. I have advocated and raised many of these issues at various levels without success. In collating these issues, I have ensured that they are of an honest nature, are practical and give a clear insight into the service, mind-set of its members and a blueprint for change.

The members involved are of varying years' service. They are situated throughout the country in both city and rural stations, and hold various ranks.

Submissions and insights were gathered in person, by phone and online. Members were issued the Police Reform website and asked what issues they wished to raise that might help others understand the problems they have in the job and what they wished to change to make the service better. Once submissions were issued they were adapted to ensure confidentiality and again agreed upon by the submitting members. Submissions that covered the same points were discussed and mutual agreements were reached as to putting one submission forward that covered the point raised.

This is a very unique format and was chosen as it allows the words of actual working members to be heard.

The Submissions are broken down into:

- **Culture Ethos and Values.**
- **Best practices and changes in the policing models.**
- **Mental Health and Welfare**
- **Individual Submissions 1, 2 & 3.**
- **Submissions by Younger Members**
- **Submissions by Individual Members**

Note: These insights are the actual words and posts of members and may contain bad language, spelling and grammar errors.

Insights Presented by Individual Gardai

Culture Ethos and Values

“We need a cultural change which is no surprise, I also think we need to get back to basics. There is a lot of Management Speak going on, and a lot of new changes coming in the organisation but how effective is it on the front line. I don’t see the benefits yet. The changes are adding so much to the workload on the front line, with little benefit to the front line police officers in terms of efficiencies, workload, knowledge”

“The culture of the force is such that things will never change until management changes. We also have a responsibility in this too but so many are now gone lazy and no longer care.”

“Members are expected to immediately apply for the Sergeants exams, even though they have no management experience”

Management are not interested in our welfare only in arse covering. The mere fact they are called "management" and not officers is very telling.

“Get off the regular young fella, you'd be mad to stay on it...” This is wrong the regular should be to the forefront of the job because the job wouldn't run without it, instead it's frowned upon.”

“Due to the lack of Management experience and the desperate culture of wanting to look professional. Each respective Manager up the ranks will take credit for the work of others. And so the one achievement on the ground goes from a simple theft for example to an operational success overseen by the respective ranks”

“Members are dictated and at the mercy of a culture that can end your career if you don't tow the line. That line does not have to be a professional one. This is why bullying is rampant in the job”

“Accountability, this does not include senior management. We have supers and chiefs completely ignoring rules without issue. Blatant and I do mean blatant mismanagement but yet nothing happens! Accountability vanishes once you stop wearing shoulder numbers.”

Let’s face it, the culture is fucked, the job is fucked it needs to be taken down and started again. Too many good members getting side-lined, bullied, overlooked in favour of incompetent management so backward that they would rather the job go to hell than take responsibility

“The use of the CMO as a punishment needs stopping now”

“A change in culture that accepts that the job involves traumatic incidences that result in stress related issues. Members need to be supported as a matter of course. Contact after a bad call by a trusted person (Therapist), downtime and understanding without negative recourse is vital as well as secure and confidential therapeutic support.”

“Nepotism, the promotion system wrecks of it. My _____ has not in the last -- years made an arrest or prosecuted an offence he has detected. I’ve seen him rise from Garda to (Senior Rank) in that time and he is charged with presenting cases I and other actual working police officers detect to a Judge”

“Due to the culture in relation to stress many rely on alcohol to elevate the stresses they feel, this leads to further issues”

“Nepotism, the promotion system wrecks of it.”

“Culture dictates that: “There is no public response by the service to address the constant bad publicity that members face when doing their jobs or support for members when faced with false allegations or complaints. This impacts on every aspect of the job, morale, families and friends”.

“Culture dictates that: “We are expected to be everything to everyone on the regular with bugger all support”.

“I could go on about proper patrol cars with cages/driver training/uniform/tasers etc but if the Policing Authority wants a modern, progressive police force they need to see through the deception and buzzwords and realise that ‘management’ have zero interest in modernising the job and 100% interest in maintaining the status quo.”

“Good managers are restricted in their duties due to political pressure”

“Bureaucracy is the downfall of this service, its rampant arse covering bureaucracy from senior managers down. It’s soul destroying”

“If you don’t march to the beat of the toxic drum your career and reputation are over”

“It’s a culture of bullying, belittlement, arse covering and laziness. If you step outside these parameters, try and work hard, not go along with the bullying you are signing your own death warrant”

Best practices and changes in the policing models

“Body worn cameras need to be issued and utilised by all Gardaí, this will ensure all follow procedure and stops the false allegations that follow many arrests”

“Someone akin to a whistle blower but not that serious is required. A barrier that takes suggestions and criticism to from rank to management. The inspectorate could have appointed this post but you can’t rely on them, and when around they are shadowed by management. If anything negative was said it would be pretty obvious who said it.”

“I can’t stress this enough, indirect discipline needs to be dumped. It’s too common for mules to find themselves distanced with shitty numbers suspiciously often and sometimes it’s for nothing more than actively standing up for themselves or expecting management to also stick to the rules. (Driver follows the rules, and won’t go out without a fire extinguisher for example. Let’s see how long they will be drivers for).”

“Its simple start rewarding good work not punishing it. Get management to do epw 1's instead of mules looking for it themselves. Skippers already review every pulse incident why not spot a good one and fill out the epw 1? As it stands now the more work a member does the more work they will get from it and the more trouble they will get into when they can’t get it done. Stress piles up”

“Until the culture is changed for good we need oversight in which Management or managed by professionals, issues are raised, issued and timelines are placed on them to be dealt with. We need a representative who knows the culture to speak on our behalf, to follow up on issues raised to ensure they are dealt with, who can watch our backs and ensure issues raised are done so without our careers being ruined. Like all of us here, I want to police without getting in trouble for doing so”

“There is no trust between rank and management and rank CANNOT speak freely or honestly with anyone”

“We now have managers not officers. Certain Inspectors have not made arrests in 10 plus years. These are people we are supposed to rely on to act as State Prosecutors in District Court!”

“Senior Officers can be more concerned with grammar and bureaucracy than the care of their officers. This is highlighted after traumatic incidences when the care for paperwork is put above the care of the members involved”

“Everyone should do their probation in a city station as it’s busy and you do learn!”

“We need an advocate, not the GRA or AGSI but an independent Advocate whom knows the issues and addresses them with the appropriate bodies. Someone trusted to not be bullied by management.”

“Management are not interested in our welfare only in arse covering. The mere fact they are called "management" and not officers is very telling.”

"Flogging the willing horse". Jobs or tasks are routinely given to the people that will carry them out the job rather than spreading the workload in a fair and equitable manner. This results in the same members doing all the work, all of the time while the same few do nothing. A common occurrence and complaint from around the country.”

“The Management culture is completely broken, it needs to be torn down and built up again”

“Trusted person separate to force needed to take on the issue of bullying before we lose more members”

A change in culture that accepts that the job involves traumatic incidences that result in stress related issues. Members need to be supported as a matter of course. Contact after a bad call by a trusted person, downtime and understanding without negative recourse is vital as well as secure and confidential therapeutic support.

“Something has to be done about the elitist mentality that thrives in our organisation. Lads moved to plain cloths suddenly don't take to the normal mule on the ground. It's sickening, insulting and encouraged by seniors. _____ when in plain cloths units you can basically do nothing, are accountable to nobody and take credit for the work of others. You can never be put back on the regular as it would look bad by the DI. _____ I've seen lads of 20yrs being ignored by young members, purely because they are in plain cloths”.

General Work Related Issues, Insights & Recommendations

“Consistency of work and practice in all stations is vital, moving from station to station in which paperwork and things are done differently happens regularly. There is little to no proper briefings given when assigned to duties in different stations/districts. Members are expected to find out for themselves! Such inconsistent approaches results in members being reprimanded for filling out forms differently to other stations etc. All of which destroys morale and results in greater worry and disharmony”

“Too much paperwork in the job. At times of more serious incidents like robbery, assault causing harm etc. Gardaí put incident on pulse as normal and the narrative box is filled with all the details of the incident... then we are required to do a report about the incident before we finish shift so the super can read it in the morning. It's on pulse the super can read it! Members are required to sit in front of a computer too many times in a working week to type up reports

about reports and at the end of the day it's all on pulse. The amount of paper needs to be cut out.”

“Managers need to be experienced in the areas they are promoted too. A Community Garda, if good at the job, works well in the community (which is frowned upon) if promoted should be promoted to a Community position. There are lads moved from units where they excel into the likes of HQ, hence losing the experience from the ground.”

“We also have reports to do up now and then about traffic accidents (a.65, c.56) this means sitting for a considerable amount of time doing this... why can't there be a feature on pulse that does this automatically?”

“Currently the more work you do and take on the more trouble you can find yourself getting in to, all result in no thanks thus destroying morale. All can see those members whom do nothing and yet neither get in trouble nor court trouble, nothing is said to these member which again ruins morale”

“For example, having stopped a drug driver one night, resulted positive, I forgot to issue summons somehow. I got a discipline regulation over it. I could of drove that car around in circles that night and stopped nobody and I would been better off”.

“Transfers: more clarity and communication from hierarchy about the status and time frame, very stressful for members if they have no idea if or when a transfer will happen”

“Transfers: when a member transfers to a new station a week’s orientation before they are assigned to the best would be of great assistance. Complete culture shock for some”

“Advocate employed by the Policing Authority or other, separate to the current representing bodies whom can listen to the issues, raise them on our behalves and not be manipulated by Management or anyone else. This one person could work with all services and establish an appropriate line of communication like this”.

“Files: a standardised system nationwide to ensure similar practice in all stations, again helps with member transfers but also inter divisional communication”.

“Very little support is given on the ground as regards assisting investigations (serious ones in particular)”.

“Court: there needs to be more support/guidance re court appearances and procedures very daunting task for some and I for one found it put me under serious stress at times”.

“The bottom line I think for all of us is we need genuine experts from outside the job. People who are there purely to ensure our rights and needs are met. People that can't be bought or threatened by management”

“The lack of driver training is really causing issues. In certain stations there's only one driver per unit on the regular, that's a trained driver whereas the rest of the unit have to drive around without any authority to pull someone over or use the blue lights.”

Re: Driver Training: “This one issue has been going on for years without a hint of the driving school coming back to divisions in the foreseeable future, destroying morale. Something has to give - and the sense on the ground will involve an untrained guard being involved in a collision or an urgent call where an untrained guard couldn't respond in time due to lack of said training. Can anything be done?”

“On court... we have court on every early shift on a Monday and Wednesday. So some months you could be in court 3-4 times. Why? Surely once a month is enough for everyone. This puts pressure on units having half the district sitting in court. Sitting in court for 5, 6, 7 hours can test your patients. The problem could be solved with CAPU (summons office people) who issue all my court summonses for one day in a month or maybe even one day every 2 months.”

“The uniform and kit needs to be immediately addressed, the uniform needs to be practical and fit for the purpose of policing. Active members need to be heard as to their daily needs, at present there is no inclusion in this regard.”

“Training needs to be role specific with proper procedures being in place in regards to all members accessing such training.”

“Branch needs to be more accountable for “all” criminal incidents and not permitted to pick and choose the crimes they wish to investigate.”

“Traffic Divisions need to be expanded so that they can investigate serious and fatal accidents at Garda Rank as a matter of course.

“Change is happening”. No. It's not. The only change is increased bureaucracy. Not accountability but red tape. The only big difference is losing more front line Gardaí to victim support offices which could easily be manned by civilians. These offices have also lead to personally being tied to their computers responding to e-mails from these offices looking for explanations. Stress is the natural response to this.”

“Doing more with less”. This has increased the stress and workloads of many members who feel like they're trouble makers if they voice their fear of not keeping on top of things. The funny thing is, if they fall behind, they'll be disciplined for it.”

“The lack of Gardaí on the front line is a disaster”. Why is the Commissioner trying to keep upwards of a thousand members in HQ? There is absolutely no reason why a civilian could not do at least 60% of the roles there. Why are we promoting people when we don't have enough guards to supervise in the first place?”

“Lack of any continuous training”. The Inspectorate has highlighted this time and time again. Where is it? Why isn't it happening? We're chancing our arms more often than not and simultaneous being held responsible for every decision we make. Give us increased transparency and accountability sure; but at least prepare us for the job we are doing”.

“The soundbites given to the media. 'Invisible policing, saturation policing, intelligent policing' and the commitment to set up these special units that would patrol the motorways of the country. We don't see anything other than the replacements for the Volvos. All the terminology is an excuse for massive under investment in the force since every other force advanced from physically having to write down a suspect's words underneath a video camera for goodness sake..!”

“Why are we still writing down everything physically?”

“Morale is in the toilet. There has been zero opportunities in the job in the last five years and the regular keeps getting hammered continuously with additional burdens and responsibilities without any positive benefit. Why can't we even get courses anymore?”

“It's impossible for AGS to soar with the eagles when no matter who is in the chair or patrol car or front office is completely overruled and controlled by an inept government, ombudsman, authority and judiciary.”

“Promotions are for the most part unfair, the right people are not being placed in the right posts. Nepotism is alive and well and the continuous and future problems this causes are unquantifiable.”

“Proper patrol cars with cages/driver training/Uniform/Tasers etc. We want a modern, progressive Police Force, whilst there is clear deception ongoing with publicity buzzwords and statements portraying a force that is not there. The truth is 'management' have zero interest in modernising the job and 100% interest in maintaining the status quo.”

“The amount of paperwork is overwhelming in this job. Surely everything could be done by email, or on Pulse by ticking boxes. For example in the London Metropolitan Police Service every incident is automatically generated on their computers and the investigating members only have to tick boxes, scan their notebook entries onto the computer, scan the injured party statement and copy same onto the computer... and that's it! No writing involved, except at the scene.”

“FCPS notices, the money generated from these should go back into AGS for buying PROPER patrol cars (not standard family cars) and PROPER equipment... and not into the State's coffers, where the money usually goes! Again, in the UK Police Forces do it this way. That's why they can afford to drive BMWs, Volvos, Subarus, Audis, etc. Allowing the money generated to go back into the police gives members incentives to issue FCPS notices, if they know the money is being returned to them”

“Re: The Office of Public Works. Any issues regarding maintenance of Garda stations has to be done through the OPW. They are so slow on getting the job done and when the job is done the cost is usually 10 times the cost that a local tradesman would have done the job for. For example, (Identity withheld) station needed to be painted on the exterior a few years ago. A local painter quoted the job as €1600. The OPW cost was €15000 and it was paid out!! If the government wants to save money in AGS, this is what they should be looking at, not the Garda pay bill!”

“FCPS system. No recorded delivery letting working members who detect Road traffic offences down badly. Legislation already exists to add prosecution costs to any fine, it's not happening. Registered post costs approx.: €6 add that to fine. There is also legislation on books but not yet enacted to have a third payment option for offence served on offender when summons is served. This would be double the initial fine and would negate summons. On books for at least 5 years, Susan Gray of PARC has raised it numerous times”

“Uniform. What we have is not functional and is overly cumbersome”

“Fleet, our vehicles are bog standard family saloons. Not fit for policing.”

“Managers require the tools and supports to do their jobs at this stage those whom are proactive and good Managers are being restricted by political pressure”

“Transparency and external interviews when it comes to promoting members.”

“The Police Authority know little about the culture of the force and are not willing to have someone meet individuals and follow up on issues such as bullying for example. They are the ones charged with ensuring we meet our terms of contract and agreement with the state for fucks sake!! Does anyone have any balls out there, everyone is either bought off or scared off before they can do anything proactively to change the service”

“I could go on about proper patrol cars with cages/driver training/uniform/tasers etc. If the Policing Authority wants a modern, progressive police force they need to see through the deception and buzzwords and realise that 'management' have zero interest in modernising the job and 100% interest in maintaining the status quo.”

“A full review of the job from the top down covering everything we do. Standardize the job, why do country Members have to do a file for court on a public order or theft charge when DMR Members fill in a tracking form and forget about it until a hearing date?”

“Standardize investigation files. How you do a file can differ between two sergeants on a unit, never mind a station! We don't have standard headed paper or forms, again this can differ from members on units”

“More training and a proper system of listing members for the training. I got my gun course due to a mix up over another person on the unit sorting out one through a family member!”

“We need CPD reformed as a priority. We've new legislation rolling out or changed due to court decisions and all we get is a post on the portal with no proper explanation.”

“More transfers over new allocations, there's too many unhappy people renewing transfer requests only to see a new recruit sent to the place they want. They are new and learning, they should be in the busy spots”

“The regular unit needs to be invested in, with the first priority being numbers. We need immediate accelerated recruitment to drive up the numbers. My unit is down 50% on when I joined but the workload is the same. Throw in proper uniforms and appropriate vehicles. More Taser access.”

Mental Health and Welfare

“We need some form of support and check when it comes to GSOC, there is no recourse back against them. We had a member take his life due to dealing with GSOC, and what happened, they got more powers. We need someone with teeth to address these issues and protect members actually working and doing the job. The commission and authority could have done this but they are clueless and without teeth.”

“Trusted person separate to force (Non Member) needed to take on the issue of bullying before we lose more members.”

“Routinely offered help when under pressure with paperwork”

“Research on the impact of police trauma has shown that experience of trauma may be debilitating for the officer’s physical and psychological well-being” (Miller 2000).

“Mandatory and Compulsory attendance with an experienced and qualified therapist after serious incidents”

“The bottom line I think for all of us is we need genuine experts from outside the job. People who are there purely to ensure our rights and needs are met. People that can't be bought or threatened by management”

“If you are faced with bullying there is nothing you can do. If you report it your career will be over, you will be isolated and eventually either go sick or leave. The bad publicity follows you even if you transfer. Management will not and do not help, we need a mediator with teeth to come in and ensure discretion and that issues are resolved at an early stage”

“Currently the more work you do and take on the more trouble you can find yourself getting in to, all result in no thanks thus destroying morale. All can see those members whom do nothing and yet neither get in trouble nor court trouble, nothing is said to these member which again ruins morale”

“I know of members who are physically sick as in vomiting from stress when others on the units are doing nothing”

“Rank and file members need a secure and open forum to regularly speak with their super and inspector about issues pertaining to welfare and support in the job without fear of reprisal.”

Van der Kolk (2003) described psychological trauma as being any sudden, uncontrollable, disruptive incident that negatively affects an individual's emotional, behavioural, and cognitive process.

“I've seen colleagues be physically sick and sometimes be disciplined for not keeping on top of their massive workload while all the time not being offered a hint of support or assistance”.

“An on call therapist experienced in the work of the AGS whom does not report to anyone unless you are a danger to yourself or others. Family may also make use of such a service”

“Individual oversight of Health and Safety Issues.”

Members of different cultures are now targets for abuse of both racist and sexist nature. Some say its slagging but we don't see others called _____, (a derogatory name). We are supposed to laugh it off, but it's not slagging it is in fact hateful racist bullying. Who will represent us with Management?

“Sudden/traumatic deaths: members need a more structured support system as identified, each will deal with incidents differently but knowing that you will be asked about your welfare and assigned support is needed”

“Independent advocate is needed, experts in their respective fields who put the needs of the Garda first over the 'organisation”

“I'm out due to bullying, nobody has called me except _____ author. My career is over, I'm told to suck it up but we are supposed to be above this!!!”

“Due to the issues with transferring my child is losing out on having both parents in their life, expense of travel and duel rents is crippling our family”

“Following a serious incident a colleague suffered a life changing injury and was only given a phone number of a therapist to call at their own expense, an utter disgrace”

“And that Telephone support! What gobdaw thought that having a 24/7 counselling line that does not offer counselling when you call would be a good idea? A terrible waste of money and time, no surprises there. Now they can say they did something for us”.

“Following two serious incidents I’m out _____ it took the EAO over a year to call me. I was liked in the job but nobody supported me. Where is the support?”

“Mandatory session with an appropriately trained and trusted mental health professional after a serious incident such as a serious assault or official use of firearm; similar regular sessions for those member who have to view child porn or deal with similarly harrowing stuff.”

“The 24hr Counsellor asked me to try Aloe Vera for stress and then proceeded to tell me about her business selling Aloe Vera”

“I attended therapy that the job sent me too, _____ was without doubt a lunatic and started to cry after I told them my issues!!! Never fucken again!!”

“Work life balance: serious communication and standardisation required nationwide to ensure members are supported and facilitated as much as is possible.”

“Advocate employed by the Policing Authority, separate to the current representing bodies whom can listen to the issues, raise them on our behalves and not be manipulated by Management or anyone else. This one person could work with all services and establish an appropriate line of communication like this”.

“Tried the new 24hr Telephone Helpline, useless in every way. Wanted to refer me to someone known throughout the community as a mouth and busy body, confidentiality is a word ____ couldn’t spell”

“Referred to a Counsellor who wanted me to quash their speeding fine”

“_____. It is widely known that the EA service is a shipping ground for members who can’t hack it”

“Members routinely deal with traumatic incidents during their service. Some will affect us, some won’t. We don’t know until we’re in the middle of it. There has to be protocols for dealing with traumatic incidents, from the moment the incident is reported to the finish. I know a member who was first on the scene of a fatal accident where a child was killed, and they ended up preserving the scene long after everyone else was gone. That sort of situation should not happen.”

“I have watched colleagues relationships breakdown due to stress related issues and the job does nothing, they don’t give a shit!”

“I know a member from (Country) who took leave purely because of the racist and sexist taunts they had to endure with a smile every day. Seniors ignored it, EAO’s avoided it and the GRA were as usual useless” _____ “Decent members destroyed by a nasty culture that leads them to think they are untouchable. We need a standalone person, trusted by rank and file that we can go too at these times and get support and have these issues addressed properly”.

“Member/s need to meet an appropriate professional confidentially for a chat (or more) as soon after such incidents, with a follow up session days or weeks later if necessary. It has to be the Superintendent’s responsibility to make sure the referral/meeting happens. Once members know they will be contacted after a traumatic incident, and get used to seeing it happen, then it will become normal, and nobody will pass any notice.”

“I have never before seen the level of members at breaking point with nobody but _____ there to support them. It’s only a matter of time before members and families sue the force for neglect. I will be the first witness on the stand. The AGSI, GRA and Management should be very worried about this”

“Lets ‘make no mistake about this, Garda Management in Senior Ranks and HR don’t care about us. They care about making big bucks, living it up at our expense and then think that they know what’s best for us on the ground. Criminal Behaviour that will come out in the wash, of that I am sure”

“A colleague was suicidal, calls were made to HR with concerns about the situation. Nobody called, asked or looked to see if _____ was okay, nobody! _____ killed themselves that week. That is how valuable we are”.

“There is nobody we can go too in order to address issues, therefore issues such as an initial issue of bullying for example have to be taken formally resulting in more trouble in the long run”

“Careers can be ruined overnight if you complain, slagging is so entrenched in the service. If inclined to complain that such ‘slagging’ was not on annoying or offensive it would result in you being ostracized”

Some issues raised by new recruits

“Training is not appropriate for the role of policing, a false environment was created in Templemore that is/was not reflective of the actual work in stations and on the ground. Training needs to return to the old way of going out as a student with a qualified Garda and learning

from real world experience. Attesting for reserves might help in building experience for those seeking to move into the full time role.”

“Irish language continues to be required for Irish Citizens joining the force yet Foreign Nationals don’t need to have Irish! This is discrimination of those of Irish descent who don’t have Irish”

“Exemptions in Irish are not accepted by Garda Recruitment yet are actively accepted by the Department of Education and Universities, this is unfair. Irish training in the college is inadequate at every level leaving hard pressed students to have to pay for their own Irish grinds”.

“CPD whilst in the station continues to be inadequate and now unfairly provided in so far as there is no study days offered to new members as there was for members who joined before me. (Members used to get a day a week to study, new recruits do not get study time)”.

“TUSLA is failing families and young people in care, when we contact them they ignore us, ignore requests for supports etc. There is no joint working policy between services. There is a great deal of resentment shown to members when TUSLA are evoked through law to get involved in cases that cause us great concern. Serious child protection issues raised by members on the ground are ignored by TUSLA and will in time result in much greater problems for the force and HSE if not addressed now”.

“Members are the ones whom face the problems every day on the ground, yet nobody looks to ask us what needs to be changed or addressed in order to make the job more professional for all”

“Members suffering stress/depression/fatigue and burnout in good stations can be supported by colleagues to an extent but in others stations can be left with nothing and HQ clearly don’t care nor wish to address these issues”

“New members have it appears increasingly no respect for management, they don’t seem to understand or have learnt the chain of command and respect for same and are now on first name basis with senior managers which is wrong for so many reasons”

“New members are quickly submerged into the various cultures operated in different stations, it is widely understood that you don’t rock the boat in relation to any concerns you have for fear that it will result in isolation or constant slagging which can be soul destroying”

“Inequality is rampant in the force, if you know someone in a senior position or have family in senior positions you will do well, if not you have little chance of progression”

“Transfers are so unfair with no consistency, you can wait years to transfer yet others who might be hated in the unit can be transferred in days”

“I have seen as a new member how you could lose your mind in the job and how nobody cares if you do. Suicides, Violence, Abuse online and ridicule by different ranks and units can mean you are isolated everyday”

“I have seen my colleagues close to suicide and nobody gives a damn. Say anything and you will never progress in the job”

“I have heard of the recent suicides and it doesn’t surprise me, what does surprise me is how more haven’t killed themselves. As someone said, hang yourself in Garda HQ and maybe then they’ll do something”

Individual Submissions

Submission A

I joined An Garda Sìochàna in [REDACTED] & have enjoyed a career of service at Garda rank since. I have been commended on numerous occasions and by many different officers for excellent police work including [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

However, my career has been blighted at times when my non membership of cliques has resulted in me being passed over for courses. I have and never have had any interest in promotion. I am happy at Garda rank. The lowest point to date was _____. I was diagnosed with a lifelong illness & the sickness regulations were imposed on me despite my condition predating the newer regulations! This came home to roost when a member through simple human error forgot to take me off the sick line & despite me only being absent for a day and submitting both work returns and pay forms, I was arbitrarily removed from the payroll with no advanced notice. I was annoyed and was visibly angry, worried about payments of mortgage etc. (I have recently been diagnosed with PTSD which could explain bad reactions to stressor) On the same date I also pointed out a procedural error made by the District Officer which I believe was not taken well despite it being legally and procedurally correct. I had to take all necessary actions to ensure that I was returned to the payroll and received no assistance whatsoever in this regard or in appealing the decision regarding my related sickness.

Despite being assessed as medically fit to drive patrol cars on response my non medically qualified management have viewed me as a liability with regards to response driving and on occasion to question my driving have referred me to the CMO who also cleared me for response driving failed to accept this and referred me back to the driving school. The same treatment has not been meted out to members who have a far more chequered history but are lucky to not have a chronic health condition.

PULSE has become a tool for monitoring work returns which it was never intended as at outset.

We are expected to record times where we monitor speed and other functions which are part of our daily patrolling, the purpose of which is to prevent and detect crime/RTA offences and preserve life.

When I joined all that was important was the numbers detected which in my opinion is still all that matters. I am a trained policeman not a statistician. The recent furore over MAT/MIT checkpoints and associated phantom/elevated breath test figures is a direct result of a figures obsessed management pandering to questions from politicians for meaningless figures. The only figures that count are the figures for offences DETECTED & offenders prosecuted. How many crimes & potential criminals did I prevent during my time as a Community Garda in DMR? I was involved in various community activities, organised and run a Halloween festival

with a licensed fireworks display in DMR in 2002 resulting in quietest Halloween in that District but received no attention from then Superintendent. 6 months hard work but not measured on Pulse.

How often is that experience of good preventative work replicated across An Garda Siochana by members?

In short, how can they expect high morale when they do nothing to recognise good work, dedication to duty and service?

Submission B

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. 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 let's 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.

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.

Submission C

(Background: Ongoing case of bullying, representations for resolutions were made but were ignored)

At this stage I believe the cause of my depression and physical impairments is a result of management failure across all ranks in the organisation.

Mid rank managements had failed to take effective actions and steps to prevent the situation from escalating. Senior management neglected their responsibility and accountability by failing to provide a safe and friendly work environment to respect and promote cultural diversities in the force.

The Senior Gardaí had once again tried to sweep everything under the carpet as they believe it is the only way to resolve issues and concerns raised by members. It's a fundamental failure and appalling culture that is so deep rooted and institutionalised which has put many members welfare and dignity in jeopardy and I have been suffering under the shadow of darkness for a very long time.

I chose not to suffer and stay in silence anymore because I gained courage from my son whom I want to make proud. As an Irish citizen my rights to dignity and safety at work shall not be infringed.

The internal investigation procedures are not fit for purpose to carry out impartial investigation to address the culture issues in the force. The policing authority and department of justice should take effective actions to implement the code of ethics for An Garda Siochana. The government should oversees the implementation of the policies of reform to make sure real changes and ratify the wrongdoings.

Independent watchdogs should be given more power and effective resources to investigate complaints and corruption. They should be Independent from any political influence of sort. Whistle blowers rights and needs should be protected and job prospects should not be effected.

I am making effort to recover from my illness to resume work in the near future.

Garda 10yrs loyal Service.

Appendices

Fingal Person of the Year Award, Speech by Mary Kennedy RTE.

"In 2002 our next nominee established a voluntary therapeutic support service helping members of our emergency services who suffered issues with mental health and trauma. He supports individuals, primarily members of the Gardaí 24 hours a day 365 days per year, alone and in his free-time whilst working fulltime! He established small groups of individuals in need of support in order that they can support each other.

To expand on this voluntary service, he developed an online forum for all emergency service personnel in which he has a secured welfare section. This allows him to support more members in need, those who may have been suicidal to find a way through their crisis.

He has voluntarily advised the Garda Representative Association on best welfare practice and researched the area in order to best advocate on behalf of those in need of support. He would never admit that there are many successful people helping others who are alive due to his support in their recovery from poor mental health and he has done this alone and voluntarily, believing that if you are not well in yourself you cannot be well for others.

Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome Mark Reddy."

Mary Kennedy RTE

Websites As Outlined Above

	<u>www.esforum.org</u>
	<u>www.gardasupport.ie</u>
	<u>www.stressskills.ie</u>
	Facebook page “Supporting our Emergency Services”, sharing positive news stories about the success of our services.

AWARDS

Both plaques awarded to me by the CEC of An Garda Siochana for “Loyalty and Service” with members in need.



Fingal Person of the Year award.
Nominated by members of AGS for
my voluntary work with them

Qualifications

Post Grad Cert Management of Operations.

M.Sc. Hons Psychotherapy.

Grad Dip Hons Psychology.

B.Sc. Hons Psychotherapy.

Diploma (IACP Accredited) Counselling.

Diploma Psychotherapy.

Diploma in Social Studies.

Diploma in Health and Social Care.

Certificate in Family Group Co-ordination.

Certificate in Family Therapy.

Certificate x 2 in TCI (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention).

Certificate in Cognitive Psychology