



**Mercy Law Resource Centre
Submission to the Commission
on the Future of Policing in Ireland**

By Email: submissions@policereform.ie

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Mercy Law Resource Centre Limited is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, registered in Dublin, Ireland. Co.Reg No:471072. It is also a registered charity, Chy No:18698. Directors: Anne Doyle, Niall Farrell, Jo Kennedy, Ciara McGrath, Helena O'Donoghue, Deirdre Quigley, Margaret Roche, Patrick Stagg, Liam Twohig, Gerry Whyte.



Mercy Law Resource Centre

Mercy Law Resource Centre is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) provides free legal advice and representation for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It also seeks to advocate change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact people who are at the margins of our society.

Mercy Law Resource Centre provides five key services: free legal advice clinics; legal representation in the areas of housing and social welfare law; legal support and training to organisations working in the field of homelessness; policy work; and a befriending service. MLRC's ethos recognises the dignity of each person. We seek to ensure that all people are treated with respect and compassion and are enabled to achieve their full potential as human beings. We are committed to the principles of human rights, social justice and equality.

What we should value?

We recognise and acknowledge the great daily policing work being carried out by An Garda Síochána. We admire and would encourage the dissemination within society of the Declaration of Professional Values & Ethical Standards by An Garda Síochána. This Declaration underpins and supports the public policing mission and its principles would help mould best policing practice in Ireland.

What should we improve?

- Proactive leadership by Garda Management to encourage mutual respect and support between the Gardaí and the public, ensuring greater transparency and accountability within the Police force.
- Foster a culture of protection rather than enforcement. Increase of Garda presence on the ground, especially in areas where families are regularly being threatened and intimidated in places where severe anti-social behaviour are experienced and where the goal of policing is to protect the people and to act as a deterrent to intimidation.
- Continuing professional development for all Garda staff to be introduced with yearly training on subjects such as human rights, technical surveillances, best practice in policing, dealing with domestic violence, sex workers and guidance on engaging with and assessing distressed and vulnerable clients.
- Address the very low levels of representation from the Travelling Community and non-nationals in the police and encourage participation.

What should we change?

Greater transparency and structure in relation to role of Garda in assessing applications for social housing and in particular in estate management checks and deferrals. Present practice is ad hoc, without guidelines and open to arbitrary decision making without recourse to a structured appeal system. Clients are unable to access the information that was passed between the Garda and the Council. Garda opinion that our client is engaged in ASB can lead to a deferral on the social housing list for long periods of time for some three or four years. This has detrimental effect on people and families in homeless accommodation in accessing social housing. We ask that the Garda opinion be made available to our clients under a Freedom of Information request as a matter of fair procedures.

Many thanks for your review of our submission and we wish you every success with your good works.



Yours sincerely,

Sinead Kerin
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