

NEW POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY AUTHORITY TO HIT THE ROAD



Forthcoming legislation is set to address the recommendations made by Commission on the Future of Policing and will also provide for a new Policing and Community Safety Authority. Mark Toland, Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate, says that the new Authority will need to have the right resources and skills in place, to be fit for purpose when it comes into operation.

The next year will be an evolving and exciting one for the Garda Inspectorate, as we await the passage and enactment of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill. The Bill addresses many of the recommendations made by the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland on policing reform as well as recommendations from previous Inspectorate reports.

It also provides for the establishment of a Policing and Community Safety Authority to supersede the Inspectorate and the Policing Authority. The Inspectorate is working collaboratively with the Department of Justice and the Policing Authority to contribute to the transition of the inspection function into the new Authority.

This Authority will have new and welcomed powers, such as conducting unannounced visits to places where garda personnel are deployed as well as the power to publish its own inspection reports and monitor the progress of inspection report recommendations.

It is critically important that the Policing and Community Safety Authority has the right level of resources and skills in place, so that it is fit for purpose on the date of establishment.

IMPROVING POLICING SERVICES

the Garda Síochána Inspectorate was established in 2006 and now has over 16 years of proud public service. Our objective is simple: *'To ensure that the resources available to the Garda Síochána are used so as to achieve and maintain the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness in its operation and administration, as measured by reference to the best standards of comparable police services.'* (S. 117 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005).

This is done by conducting inspections which are thematic in nature and involve a deep dive into the practices and processes of the Garda Síochána. All of our inspections are conducted with the intention of improving policing services and ultimately to make communities safer. The Inspectorate has always strived to produce high quality inspection reports with evidence-based recommendations.

In all inspections, we measure what the Garda Síochána does against the best standards of comparable police services. We are conscious that it is a national police service with additional responsibilities such as state security and we must also take account of the rural and big city challenges of providing policing services across communities in Ireland.

Our experience has shown that most systems that work very well in other jurisdictions, can be adapted and transferred to Ireland. It is also the case that the Garda Síochána operates many good practices, and it is equally important that we acknowledge those successes.

We could not do our work without the assistance of Garda personnel at all levels of the organisation who continue to engage with us positively. In most cases, those delivering frontline services know what works well and what needs fixing.

WIDE-REACHING INSPECTIONS

Often, recommendations in our reports result from suggestions made by those that we engage with. The Inspectorate also recognises the importance of engaging with relevant stakeholders in policing and the most impactful engagement for me has been with victims of crime, their families, and communities who are affected by crime and anti-social behaviour.

During the lifetime of the Inspectorate, I am unable to think of many areas that have not been inspected by the Garda Síochána. This has included some wide-reaching inspections such as the Crime Investigation inspection in 2014.

This was followed in 2015 by a whole-of-organisation review entitled Changing Policing in Ireland, which identified many issues that are now part of the Garda Reform programme. Others important areas that have been inspected recently include *The Garda Response to Child Sexual Abuse, Policing with Local Communities and Public Order Policing.*

The ever-changing environment, accelerated by the



Mark Toland, Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate

pandemic, has provided new and emerging policing challenges for the Garda Síochána. As such, our inspection activity has had to be equally adaptive to react to these changes.

In response, the Inspectorate moved to an annual inspection programme focused on relevant and high-risk areas. Two previously published reports by the Garda Inspectorate – *Countering the Threat of Internal Corruption* and *Delivery of Custody Services* – are good examples of our risk-based inspection approach.

TWO INSPECTIONS UNDERWAY

Currently, we are conducting two inspections. The first is an inspection into the policing response to transnational organised crime. The aim of this inspection is to establish how effective the Garda Síochána is at preventing transnational crime, as well as disrupting and dismantling organised crime groups.

Individuals and communities across Ireland are greatly affected by crimes such as drug crime, human trafficking, forced prostitution, cyber-crime, and money laundering. For the first time, the Inspectorate has carried out an online public consultation survey that asks victims and witnesses to share their experiences and their perception of how these types of crimes affect local communities.

The second inspection is



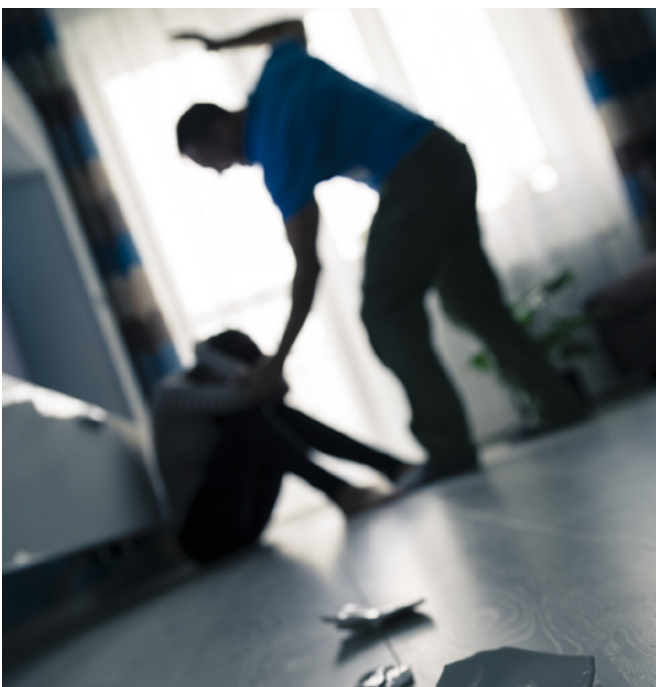
One of the current inspections aims to establish the effectiveness of the Garda Síochána in preventing transnational crime, as well as disrupting and dismantling organised crime groups.

looking into the effectiveness and efficiency of the Garda Síochána's response to domestic abuse. This will examine the approach to tackling domestic abuse at strategic and operational levels, including how the Garda Síochána prevents domestic abuse from occurring; protects victims; responds to and investigates reports of domestic abuse; and how they work in partnership. We have adopted a victim-centred focus to the inspection, which again includes a survey to obtain

the views of victims of domestic abuse.

As the third Chief Inspector of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, I am extremely privileged to lead a hugely committed and talented team who continue to produce work of a very high quality.

Irrespective of any forthcoming change, it is important that we continue to discharge our statutory function and we are in the process of seeking views from stakeholders about areas that could be suitable for inspection in 2023.



The Inspectorate is currently looking into the effectiveness and efficiency of the Garda response to domestic abuse.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Mark Toland was appointed Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate in November 2017. Mark previously served as a Commissioner at the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and as a Deputy Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate. As a senior police officer he worked in the Metropolitan Police Service for 30 years prior to relocating to Ireland with his family. In 2010, Mark was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished police service.

