



**Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas**

Tithe an Oireachtais

An Comhchoiste um Dhlí agus Ceart agus Comhionannas

Tuarascáil maidir leis an Póilíneacht Phobail agus Coireacht Tuaithe

Márta 2019

Houses of the Oireachtas

Joint Committee on Justice and Equality

Report on Community Policing and Rural Crime

March 2019



**Tithe an
Oireachtais**
Houses of the
Oireachtas

Tithe an Oireachtais

An Comhchoiste um Dhlí agus Ceart agus Comhionannas

Póilíneacht Phobail agus Coireacht Tuaithe

Márta 2019

Houses of the Oireachtas

Joint Committee on Justice and Equality

Community Policing and Rural Crime

March 2019

Contents

Chairman’s Preface.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Background to Community Policing	6
Reports in relation to policing in Ireland	8
International perspectives of Community policing	13
Rural Crime in Ireland.....	14
Stakeholder Views	16
Community Policing.....	17
Concept.....	17
Resources.....	17
Importance of police visibility in communities.....	20
Multi-agency approach to community policing.....	23
Structure	27
Rural Crime.....	30
Cross-border aspect of rural crime.....	35
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	36
Appendix 1 – Committee Membership	43
Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference of Committee	45
Appendix 3 – Opening Statements	50

Chairman's Preface

Issues relating to Garda oversight and accountability have been a key priority for the Joint Committee from the outset of the 32nd Dáil. In addressing community policing and rural crime, however, the Committee sought to look at the broader picture of how a modern policing service should be structured in order to most effectively address crime and engage with local communities. The Committee strongly believes that the philosophy of community policing should underpin policing practice in Ireland. This approach promotes community-based problem solving strategies to address the underlying causes of crime, whilst also addressing the fear of crime by providing reassurance to communities. Pro-actively addressing problems within communities, rather than reacting to crimes already committed, should become the organising principle of police activity.

It is the Committee's hope that the Minister will give immediate and due consideration to the suggested reforms detailed in this report and will advise, at the earliest possible date, of the steps he intends taking and of the timeframe involved.

On behalf of the Members, I would like to thank all those who engaged with the Committee and assisted us in our deliberations.



Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin T.D.

Chairman

March 2019

Introduction

Background to Community Policing

The concept of a community-based police force emerged with the foundation of An Garda Síochána, though it wasn't until the 1980s that the philosophy was to take hold in an effort to keep An Garda Síochána connected with members of the public.¹ Community policing is focused on the prevention of crime by building trust and strong relationships between Gardaí and people in the community, engaging in partnership groups and cooperating together to improve the area.

Community policing occurs where Gardaí, members of the community and statutory and voluntary agencies work together to:

- Prevent crime;
- Prevent anti-social behaviour;
- Reduce the fear of crime;
- Promote inter-agency problem solving;
- Bring offenders to justice; and
- Improve the overall quality of life.²

The development of community policing was successful initially, with several community based initiatives, such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programmes, being established. However, development gradually lost momentum, and in 2009, An Garda Síochána published the National Model of Community Policing. This model was to be a standardised plan for national use, in an effort to "re-energise the Community Policing culture within An Garda Síochána and enhance the organisational importance and attractiveness of the 'Community Policing' role amongst Garda staff."³ The model identifies ten 'pillars' for the delivery of a community led police service. These pillars are partnerships, problem-solving, crime prevention and reduction, accountability, accessibility, collaborative engagement, visibility, improved response,

¹ https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/libraryResearch/2012/2012-10-31_spotlight-community-policing-in-ireland_en.pdf p10

² <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/national-model-of-community-policing.pdf> p3

³ <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/national-model-of-community-policing.pdf> p ii

enforcement and empowerment. The specific objectives of the national model are as follows:

National Model of Community Policing 2009 - objectives

- To provide a dedicated, accessible and visible Garda service to communities;
- To establish effective engagement processes to meet the needs of local communities and provide feedback;
- To use problem-solving initiatives, devised in partnership with communities and local agencies, to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, through targeted enforcement and crime prevention and reduction initiatives;
- To engage in a community-focused approach to provide solutions that reduce the fear of crime;
- To engage meaningfully with young people to develop and foster positive relationships with the goal of promoting personal and community safety;
- To develop a participative management style and an organisational structure that rewards excellence in service, management and problem-solving;
- To enhance communication strategies that support Community Policing objectives; and
- To be accountable to the community we serve.⁴

However, a Garda Inspectorate report⁵ in 2012 found the 2009 National Model to be ineffective. The pressures facing An Garda Síochána during the downturn, where several resourcing issues emerged, resulted in community policing units being negatively impacted, particularly in rural areas. Reduced budgets, the introduction of rosters and an embargo on recruitment all led to an overall decrease in numbers of personnel within the organisation of An Garda Síochána and resulted in local officers being redeployed to areas of greater urgency and

⁴ <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/national-model-of-community-policing.pdf> p 2-3

⁵ http://www.gsinsp.ie/en/GSINSP/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf/Files/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf p242

need. As well as this, over a hundred Garda stations were closed nationally.⁶ Safety in communities is often linked to the number of police officers. Community work and community policing should - in line with the national model - be central to the ethos of An Garda Síochána as an organisation, but this focus was lost to some extent as personnel were redeployed to other roles. This is especially true of rural areas, where fewer resources and Garda numbers are assigned. Some divisions, namely in urban areas with greater Garda numbers, have maintained community policing units; however, it remains inconsistent throughout the organisation.⁷

Reports in relation to policing in Ireland

Over the last decade, several reports have been published in relation to improving policing in Ireland and creating a more community-based approach. In 2007, the Garda Inspectorate published a report entitled "[Policing in Ireland – looking forward](#)", which argued that community policing should be the fundamental philosophy at the heart of policing in Ireland. It recommended the implementation of a consistent rural policing model that would increase Garda visibility and make use of Garda resources in serving local communities.

In November 2014, the Inspectorate published another report entitled "[Crime Investigation](#)". It highlighted issues with policing in rural and remote areas, as well as PULSE crime recording issues. Many rural Garda stations at the time did not have access to broadband, with a total of 138 stations not connected to the Garda Network and PULSE system, leading to further discrepancies in rural crime data. This remains an ongoing issue, though as of July 2018, that number had reduced to 111, with further plans to reduce the lack of connectivity by year end.⁸

In 2015, the Inspectorate published a further report entitled "[Changing Policing in Ireland](#)". The report raised questions about the value placed on community policing by An Garda Síochána, particularly with regard to resourcing for community duties. Fewer personnel were being assigned to community policing

⁶ <http://www.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Policing-Investment.pdf> p11

⁷ http://www.gsinsp.ie/en/GSINSP/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf/Files/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf 242-243

⁸ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2018-07-12/221/>

roles and fewer community policing units were being developed. There are 81 recommendations listed, which are largely based on the previous 2007 report due to a lack of implementation of the original recommendations. The 2007 report recommendations on community policing included:

- Developing community policing as the fundamental policing philosophy at the core of the organisation;
- Implementing a consistent rural policing model that enhances visibility and makes best use of Garda resources in serving local communities; and
- Developing a more strategic policing model, utilising timely data and emphasising the importance of prevention and intervention.

In its Assessment on Policing Performance in July 2018, the Policing Authority expressed the desire for the Community Policing Framework to be updated and implemented by the end of 2017, as laid out in the 2009 National Model. While some work has been done with regard to the framework, these timeframes were not met and not agreed framework was finalised or provided to the Authority by An Garda Síochána.

The Commission on the Future of Policing published its report on *The Future of Policing in Ireland* in September 2018, which contained 50 key recommendations grouped under 10 principles.⁹ The recommendations in relation to community policing are as follows:

Commission on the Future of Policing - recommendations

- Effective multi-disciplinary approaches must be in place between the police and other public agencies and services, both at national and local level:
 - At the local level, policing partnerships should include the business community, voluntary organisations, faith-based groups, schools and

9

[http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

others who can contribute to community safety.

- Other departments, agencies and bodies with a function in policing, community safety and harm prevention should develop Joint Strategic Plans with An Garda Síochána. These should be submitted to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice and Equality each year.
- Crisis Intervention Teams should be established at divisional level, with round the clock response capabilities to serve every part of the country.
- Colocation of emergency social services and police should be considered wherever appropriate.
- The Cabinet sub-committee responsible for justice matters should hold at least two meetings a year focused on community safety.
- Cooperation between agencies in the criminal justice system should be put on a more comprehensive and formal footing.
- Dedicated funding should be provided to promote a shared platform for timely and effective information sharing between agencies in the criminal justice system.
- We recommend that there should be new legislation – a Policing and Community Safety Act – redefining policing and the role of the police service and other state agencies in harm prevention.
- The structure of the police service should be designed with the new district policing model at its core. Divisional level assets, administration offices and specialist units, should be seen as supporting the work of the front line:
 - All police service personnel at district level, sworn and non-sworn, should be considered to be community police.
 - District police should be competent, empowered, and resourced, to handle most day to day policing demands themselves and to provide a full community service.
 - District commanders should have a high degree of delegated authority to take decisions, and be held accountable by their superiors for their performance against the objectives in their policing plans.
 - We recommend that sufficient numbers of adequately trained sergeants and inspectors should be deployed to address the gap in

supervision of front line policing.

- Human resource management policies and practices around progression and promotion should be aligned with the objective of making front line work the core of policing.
- The district police should refer serious and complex cases to detectives or other expert units as appropriate. They should not be taken away from front line community policing to work on a major investigation.
- The building of genuine community partnerships should be a requirement for all Garda districts. Gardaí should be assessed for their performance in this respect, and it should be a factor in determining assignments and promotions.
 - Each district commander should work collaboratively with the local policing structures and other key community groups, to develop district policing plans.
 - Police members should rapidly be resourced with digital communication and workflow applications and tools, such as mobile phones or tablet-sized computers. All frontline police should be prioritised to receive officially issued phones or tablets and should be accessible via email to community and agency partners and people known to be at risk.
- Divisions should be self-sufficient administrative units, with their own devolved budgets and finance and human resources teams. In effect, a division should be, for most policing purposes, a mini police service in its own right. This points to the need for a certain critical mass in terms of size and significantly fewer divisions.
- We propose the deletion of the six regional offices from the organisational structure, to be replaced by a small number of Assistant Commissioners at headquarters dividing the divisions between them. These Assistant Commissioners should direct resource allocation between divisions, hold the divisions to account for their performance, have command responsibility for major operations and ensure inter-divisional cooperation when necessary.
- Garda headquarters should be less involved in routine management of the organisation than it is now. A review of organisational structure by

the Garda Commissioner should include a robust challenge of staffing levels in all headquarters and support functions, and a reduction in the numbers of senior positions to management ratios in line with modern practice.

- A thorough, well-resourced, expertly conducted workforce plan, based on a clear operating model, should be an early priority:
 - Police numbers, including the numbers at each rank, should be subject to regular workforce planning reviews. Personnel numbers, and the numbers required at each rank, should be based on operational requirements and should not be set in legislation.
 - To boost numbers of front line police, An Garda Síochána should urgently accelerate the redeployment of experienced Gardaí currently employed in other duties.
 - Job specifications should be developed for all positions in the police service, clearly indicating the skills and expertise required and whether police powers are necessary for the job or not. If not, the presumption should be that a non-sworn person should occupy the position.
 - Further recruitment to the Garda Reserve should be paused, pending the outcome of a comprehensive strategic review, examining how best to structure a reserve to meet the needs of the police service, which should recommend proposals for significant reform. Other ways of engaging the wider community in support of policing should also be examined.
- District police should be in close communication with their communities:
 - An Garda Síochána should produce regular, and eventually real-time, open data feeds to the public.
 - Public apps should be developed at the community level to enable residents to report their concerns, and police to disseminate information about matters of interest from crime prevention to road closures.
 - An Garda Síochána should develop and implement a new social media strategy. In all districts the police should use social media and other technology tools to engage with the local community.
 - An Garda Síochána's website should be further improved, to

enable transparent and seamless processes such as non-urgent crime reporting, case tracking and enhanced tools for victim support.

International perspectives of Community policing

Community policing is a concept that is commonly deployed internationally, though various aspects are adapted and utilised differently across police forces. Examples of varieties of community policing are reassurance policing, proximity policing and neighbourhood policing. Across Europe, different models of community policing are in operation, with many countries, notably the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden, adopting the approach. Community policing has become a key element of policing in England and Wales, where a more developed model of community policing exists. The [*Crime and Disorder Act 1998*](#) created a statutory requirement for police-community partnership, mandated community consultation for local authorities, and also introduced anti-social behaviour orders. Additionally, the [*Police Reform Act 2002*](#) created the role of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), providing a visible presence at the frontline of local forces. Neighbourhood Policing Teams have been established across the UK and work closely with local councils and volunteers.¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/16/2122/21966.pdf> p180-1

Rural Crime in Ireland

While crime is a concern for all areas of the country, rural crime in particular became a significant issue in the years following the economic downturn, stemming from the under-resourcing of An Garda Síochána as well as the closure of Garda stations. These financial constraints have had long-term negative impacts on communities, where fear of crime is prevalent, and more isolated areas are left feeling more vulnerable to organised crime and other criminal activity.

Motorways throughout Ireland add increased access for organised criminal gangs to rural areas, where farms are targeted for machinery and livestock. According to an Irish Cattle & Sheep Farmer's Association (ICSA) survey, undertaken in conjunction with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), two thirds of Irish farming families have been affected by crime "relating to their farming enterprise." Based on this survey, the ICSA and WIT have published three reports on the issue of Agricultural Crime.¹¹ Their research found that:

- 47% of agricultural crime relates to vandalism/criminal damage/trespass (VCDT);
- 43% relates to theft;
- 5% relates to fraud; and
- 5% relates to criminal assault.

The third report also highlighted a reluctance to report crime to the Gardaí, particularly in relation to theft, as well as a reluctance to report the theft to insurance companies due to fear of higher premiums and costs.

In 2015, Operation Thor was launched by An Garda Síochána as a main initiative in combatting organised crime, with a particular focus on burglaries in communities. Operation Thor aims to have:

- Increased visibility in local communities to prevent burglaries and related crimes.
- More high visibility checkpoints.

¹¹ <https://icsaireland.ie/publications/>

- Increased patrolling on the motorway network denying criminals use of the roads.
- Enhanced use of intelligence, technology and data to target prolific offenders and organised crime gangs.
- A strong focus on working with communities to reduce opportunities for burglaries to take place.
- A national awareness campaign to inform people on how to enhance the security of homes.

Operation Thor has proven quite successful, according to An Garda Síochána, leading to disruption of criminal activity on motorway networks and significant arrest numbers across the country.¹²

¹² <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/news-media/garda-annual-report-2017.pdf>

Stakeholder Views

In 2018, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality held hearings with the following stakeholders:

Witnesses and Official Report		
Witness	Organisation	Date of hearing and link to the official report
Dr. Johnny Connolly	University of Limerick, School of Law	Official Report, 3 October 2018
Ms Bernie Meally	Foróige	
Ms Kayleigh Canning		
Mr Michael Sweeney Mr Niall Garvey	Muintir na Tíre	
Mr Alan Todd	Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	Official Report, 10 October 2018
Mr Pat Leahy Mr Michael Finn	An Garda Síochána	
Mr Richard Kennedy Mr Barry Carey	Irish Farmers' Association (IFA)	Official Report, 17 October 2018
Mr Seamus Sherlock Ms Laura Starnes	Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association (ICSA)	

The primary focus of these hearings was, first, to discuss the philosophy of community policing, and how it could be embedded within the organisation and practices of An Garda Síochána; and second, to examine the ongoing issue of rural crime, and how it can be most effectively addressed. The main themes raised throughout the engagements were in relation to resourcing needs, the structures within An Garda Síochána and a need for a multi-agency approach to policing to ensure that it is more effective and community based.

Community Policing

Concept

Addressing the Committee on 2nd October 2018, Dr Johnny Connolly described community policing as a philosophy of policing that promotes community-based problem-solving strategies to address the underlying causes of crime and disorder and fear of crime, and which provides reassurance. Many community policing approaches, he noted, involve the police performing a role in addressing community problems which may not be directly related to crime:

“Problem-solving policing reorients the police role away from an exclusive focus on the crime. Problems, not crime, become the organising core of police activity. The concern is with preventing future harm. Similarly, solutions can be broader than simple law enforcement and can involve the participation of other agencies, such as housing or health agencies. Furthermore, the criminal law becomes only one means of addressing problems. Civil laws can also be utilised. Planning regulations and, increasingly, mediation and restorative justice schemes can have a part to play.”

Dr Connolly added that whilst there is no single model of community policing, the model is strongly linked to the concepts of localised democracy and policing by consent, based on respect for fundamental human rights. It also requires the entire police force to adopt a broader concept of policing and a transformation of the mindset of all police officers.

Resources

Due to financial constraints during the recession, resources were tightened and an embargo was placed on recruitment of new members of An Garda Síochána. In addition, many Garda stations were closed in order to have more Gardaí ‘on-the-beat’, and resources were directed towards more urgent areas. Often, the community Garda was first to be deployed to other roles, leaving many communities without access to a local, recognisable police officer.

In its opening statement to the Committee, Muintir na Tíre highlighted the implications these constraints had on community policing across Ireland. What had been a beneficial, supportive service to communities that sought to prevent crime and build trusting relationships was soon eroded, with many districts losing their community police officer. The long-term effect of this has been that people no longer know their local Garda, and a lack of visible policing has resulted in an increased fear of crime, as well as a lack of deterrent to committing crime, especially in rural areas.

In addition, there has been a substantial practical impact on areas such as the Community Alert programme which operates in conjunction with An Garda Síochána. One of the programme's main projects, Community Text Alert, has been highly successful on a national level, proving to be a vital aid in crime detection. However, Mr. Niall Garvey highlighted the barriers a lack of resourcing has had in this regard:

"The Garda community relations office has reduced in numbers and there is now only one sergeant responsible for the entire country. While we appreciate his help and work very well with him, it severely curtails what can be achieved in our partnership. Historically, the community relations bureau had one inspector, two sergeants, two Gardaí and two administrative staff, but, as I say, it has been reduced to one person. These inadequate resources, coupled with the Garda management structure, hinder the central dissemination of best practice. That leads to practical difficulties in areas such as community text alert. None of this is a criticism of individual Gardaí, with whom we have an excellent working relationship; it is simply the end result of the provision of inadequate resources."

Dr Connolly contended that community policing in Ireland is marginalised and undervalued. It is very informal and dependent on the personal commitment of local management to this form of policing:

"The diversion of resources to other duties would appear to vary significantly within the force. The lack of available records to quantify this is itself an issue of concern. There is a considerable lack of

supporting infrastructure for community policing units. The outcome of the work undertaken by community gardaí is inappropriately measured, if at all. Community policing is under-resourced ... Community policing personnel are moved to other policing units when the need arises, such as for sporting events or temporary transfer deals in response to pressure on policing resources, and this breaks down continuity in community police service. Community police do not receive adequate training in conflict resolution, problem solving or communication skills. There is no specific office space to do such basic things as conduct meetings or receive telephone calls.”

Addressing the Committee on behalf of Foróige on 3 October 2018, Ms. Bernie Meally submitted that the increased demands within An Garda Síochána have resulted in community officers being reassigned without replacement, and local communities having less than adequate engagement with their local Garda. She expressed disappointment that there has been a “gradual erosion of community policing nationwide in recent years.” Many Garda districts and divisions do not have a dedicated community policing service, which results in a system that is constantly firefighting and responding to issues as they arise, rather than engaging in crime prevention and reduction measures. With a reduction in resources and increase in demand, we have seen many community gardaí removed from community duties in response to front-line operational needs. This prioritising of regular policing has “resulted in a loss of the preventative work of relationship building within communities, with many community gardaí who have retired or been moved not being replaced.”

This was echoed by Mr Niall Garvey of Muintir na Tíre. He told the Committee that in the years of financial constraint since 2008, community policing has been hit particularly hard, locally and centrally. When resources were limited, the role of the community Garda was often the first to be hit, as resources were directed towards what were thought to be more urgent areas: “This has had the effect of damaging the relationship between communities and An Garda Síochána. That relationship needs to be rebuilt urgently.”

Importance of police visibility in communities

The significant work of Community Gardaí when involved with Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) was emphasised to the Committee by Foróige. There are currently 105 GYDPs nationally, managed by a range of community-based organisations. Funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service, these projects are community based, multi-agency, youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people involved in criminal/anti-social behaviour away from the criminal justice system by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects.

It was submitted that Gardaí who build strong, trusting relationships within the community will often play a vital role in the early intervention of young people at risk of offending behaviour. An informal intervention by a community Garda in incidents of anti-social behaviour can often positively impact a younger person's behaviour or allow for a timely referral to appropriate services to be made in more difficult cases. Ms. Meally highlighted the importance of these early interventions in terms of crime prevention, but also the wider significance of Garda visibility in communities in breaking down mistrust:

“In a police force in which there is a level of mistrust in many communities, community gardaí are the exception. As the visible, approachable and friendly face of An Garda Síochána, many young people and community members will reach out for help and advice from the person they have met at a local meeting, in the school corridor or community centre or walking through their estate before they would even consider going to the local Garda station. The ability to access the support of community gardaí has benefitted many communities enormously from both the crime prevention and quality of life perspective. Those in the community policing service have managed to build positive and effective working relationships with the community, voluntary and statutory agencies working in partnership with them, but equally, if not more importantly, they have built positive personal relationships with community members, young and old.”

According to Foróige, the partnership approach of community Gardaí has also been effective in identifying young people under the age of criminal responsibility who may be engaging in risky or antisocial behaviour. This has ensured that the appropriate supports are put in place for those young people under 12 years and has allowed us to address their risks and needs at an earlier stage using their strengths and interests to build skills, increase protective factors and reduce the likelihood of future offending. Engagement with community Gardaí has allowed for frank informed conversations enabling Foróige to monitor behaviour, respond quickly and appropriately and ensure better outcomes for young people.

Mr Seamus Sherlock of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ICSA) observed that not long ago, every community had a garda. Everyone knew the garda by name and they were rooted in the community, always kept an eye on things. Now, however, in the view of Mr Sherlock, too many rural gardaí are spending too much time sitting behind a desk, or are asked to go to court sittings, inquests and so on instead of being out patrolling and looking after the elderly and most vulnerable.

Addressing the Committee on 10 October 2018, Chief Constable Alan Todd of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) stated that a similar culture towards police visibility and accessibility is experienced in Britain and Northern Ireland. Both Dr Johnny Connolly and Mr Todd emphasised the importance of police visibility in communities, stating that greater visibility would help to prevent crime and significantly reduce the fear of crime experienced particularly by those in more remote areas:

“Local communities take a significant degree of reassurance from seeing their local police. I spoke earlier about visibility as well as accessibility and familiarity, in other words, people see the police, can make contact with them when they want to and they know who they are. This means people feel linked and engaged with the police. The significant reassurance that comes from that should not be underestimated. Similarly, we talk about police stations and the very fact that bricks and mortar provide confidence for local communities because they have a police station. If a police station

is closed or moved, it is generally a source of significant local stress. All of those things have a value for the community.”

On the issue of visibility, the Committee noted that Garda numbers are increasing, with 800 Gardaí graduating from Templemore per year, and members being reassigned from administrative roles to front-line roles. However, Garda staffing still remains inadequate in most districts throughout the country, with most standing at or below 2011 levels. While some Members of the Committee, and stakeholders, raised the question of reopening Garda stations in order to enhance Garda visibility, the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris, outlined that the range of modern challenges facing An Garda Síochána were not necessarily best met by reopening stations, but perhaps by alternative approaches of delivery, such as social media.

Members expressed enthusiasm for building upon existing social media platforms as an alternative mechanism for providing visibility and outreach to local communities. This would be particularly effective in more rural areas, where Garda stations have been closed or Garda numbers are lower. Mr. Todd outlined the effectiveness of using social media in Northern Ireland, where the PSNI has an outreach of 900,000 followers. A proactive approach is required to achieve this, though Mr. Todd emphasised that using social media as a way of publicising and showing police work being done in a community “provides visibility in a wider sense, rather than only seeing officers in uniforms on the streets”. The Committee noted efforts made by An Garda Síochána in regard to social media usage, stating that the area was one that required more attention to maintain a modern approach to policing that would empower the local community.

Multi-agency approach to community policing

Throughout the course of the hearings, witnesses and Committee Members expressed a need for a more adequate multi-agency approach to policing. This was also highlighted under the second principle of the Commission on the Future of Policing's report, where it is recommended that "effective multi-disciplinary approaches must be in place between the police and other public agencies and services, both at national and local level".

Dr Connolly cited a 2015 report by the UK College of Policing which found that 84% of calls to the police were related to non-crime incidents, notable concerns over an individual's welfare: "Mrs Teresa May told the Police Federation of England and Wales conference in May 2015, when she was then Home Secretary, that police officers were "not social workers ... mental health nurses, or paramedics." In reality, however, they often are all of these things, or at least on an amateur basis and unless other professional bodies who perform these roles engage or are available and accessible. An Garda Síochána will continue to perform such functions until that happens."

Mr Alan Todd, echoed this experience in Northern Ireland, and outlined the variety of challenges facing modern day police forces which have brought growing demands in the face of reduced resources: "While crime in Northern Ireland has reduced significantly over the past ten years, we know from experience that the complexity and type of work faced by policing has become more challenging, for example, the changing nature of public protection work. The increasing vulnerability in society is also having an impact on policing. The PSNI regularly deals with approximately 150 calls for service each day linked to a person with identified mental health issues or a related vulnerability."

He noted that much of police business now involves interventions with people self-harming and harming others because of mental health issues. They have a high level of training and provide a high level of non-lethal intervention in situations that might otherwise get out of control for police officers. Various approaches are in place in Northern Ireland to cater to these challenges, though Mr Todd emphasised that more progress is needed.

Policing issues often overlap with healthcare issues and the role of the health service. Several new models of service are being explored which seek to break

the cycle of reoffending through a criminal justice and health partnership. These include custody suites which integrate nurse-led healthcare, allowing for interventions to be made and healthcare gaps to be identified; and joint ambulance and police control rooms and call services. The Committee heard that across the UK, legislation is in place that “compels statutory agencies to work together to deliver key outcomes for communities and society”, though this legislation was not introduced in Northern Ireland despite attempts to do so in 2011 and 2012.

The Committee expressed concern that, in the South, there are large gaps in service that are creating a significant barrier to an efficient community policing service. The greatest of these lay in the capacity and availability of other service providers, particularly those in primary care health services. While some service providers are criticised for lengthy waiting lists, insufficient resources and insufficient staffing, one of the most pertinent issues is the lack of provision of service outside of regular business hours. Members noted that while some service providers make the effort to provide an on-call service for evenings and weekends, very often this is not enough.

An Garda Síochána representatives agreed that challenges such as those described by the PSNI have had a substantial impact on policing in Ireland over the last decade. This is especially true of situations arising from mental health issues. The increase of these challenges is directly proportionate to a lack of available supports from relevant organisations after hours. An Garda Síochána is very often the last resort of vulnerable people in the evenings or at weekends, when these organisations are closed and services are not being provided. The knock-on effect of this is reduced police visibility in communities and officers being inadvertently removed from core policing roles. Without doubt, the complexity of the challenges met by officers result in them performing welfare roles.

While An Garda Síochána endeavour to attract people with the skills to respond appropriately to these situations and challenges, Assistant Commissioner Michael Finn stated that more training and supports are required to deal with vulnerable individuals who have high needs. Members expressed concern that while work is being done to ensure that appropriate training is provided, members of An Garda Síochána are not adequately trained to deal with these

complex issues alone and that support from other services was necessary. To balance this, Mr. Todd outlined the effectiveness of local multi-agency hubs/concern hubs which have been developed in Northern Ireland over the last 18 months, emphasising that a structured service of local police working collaboratively with organisations was an essential element to the progression and success of community policing. Joining together different agencies provides communities with a more cohesive service whereby information from each agency is brought together in order to find solutions. Regarding the efficacy of the hubs, Mr. Todd stated:

“If we are to have local policing, local service delivery and local problem solving, we need a local partnership structure through which they can be delivered. It needs to be empowered by the partner agencies. Experience shows that this is effective and usually cost efficient. We have anecdotal examples from the centres that show that people who used to contact the agencies around 50 or 60 times a year about a range of issues are now finding that their problems have been solved and that they do not have to contact us anymore. There is a return on investment in that type of approach.”

Some collaboration does exist between An Garda Síochána and other organisations to provide community based services in Ireland, however, an effective, structured model has yet to be implemented.

Both Foróige and Muintir na Tíre work with An Garda Síochána to engage with vulnerable members of communities, and highlighted effective and successful community-driven approaches to crime prevention and detection. Through partnerships such as these, members of the community are involved in problem solving alongside An Garda Síochána. This is evident from the Community Alert programme delivered by Muintir na Tíre in collaboration with An Garda Síochána.

Ms Bernie Meally outlined the work done by Foróige in partnership with An Garda Síochána in relation to Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) as a marked example of effective multi-agency approaches that complement community policing. GYDPs are “community based, multi-agency, youth crime

prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour away from the criminal justice system by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects”.

There are over 100 GYDPs nationally, with 42 of them managed by Foróige. The role and support of the community Garda (where present) is essential to the success of GYDPs. The relationships formed between local Gardaí and the members of their community provide a basis for engagement in cases of anti-social behaviour and high-risk young people. In such situations, early intervention by a local Garda works as a support and allows for those affected to be referred to the appropriate service where necessary. While the Committee noted the positive impact of this approach, the general consensus was for greater involvement of other organisations.

Committee Members noted that recidivism remains an issue, with many stakeholders expressing concern that the lack of resources available to provide for the formal structuring of a multi-agency service was accentuating the issue. While many stakeholders called for stronger sentencing for repeat offenders, Members of the Committee expressed interest in restorative justice as a method for combatting recidivism. Restorative justice engages with people and aims to be preventative by addressing the problem ahead of the crime.

Dr. Connolly outlined the possible benefits to adopting models of restorative justice in policing:

“There is huge potential and there are many good things happening with it. Restorative justice is being rolled out and used more, and it fits into the model we are proposing because it looks at the problem and not necessarily the crime. It aims to be preventive and it engages over time in bringing people together... Restorative justice has much potential. I have done work recently relating to drug debt. In other areas such as sexual violence or hate crime, many are not engaging at all with the criminal justice system. They are not going to the police because they do not necessarily want to end up in a prosecution. They do not want to end up in a court case and even prison does not solve the problem

if the offender ends up there as a problem may still continue from within a prison. We must look at alternative and imaginative approaches, and restorative practice has much to offer in that respect.”

With a multi-agency approach like that of a concern hub as outlined above, restorative justice could be integrated as part of that service. An Garda Síochána stated that where restorative justice is used, it is primarily with youth offenders, though it was agreed this service should be expanded within policing. Where the practice has been used, the outcome has been positive and Committee Members expressed enthusiasm at considering various restorative justice models though some concerns were raised with regard to resources and costs.

Structure

Throughout the Committee hearings, the structure of An Garda Síochána was raised as a barrier to the further development of a community policing service. The Commission on the Future of Policing’s report recommends the need to restructure An Garda Síochána in order to steer the force towards community policing, and Committee Members noted Garda Commissioner Harris’ desire to structurally deliver community policing across the organisation. The Committee agreed that enhancing the organisation by way of a divisional and district structure would align the force with the ethos of community policing and facilitate a more community focused service.

According to Dr Connolly, there are a number of common characteristics that define the community policing approach across jurisdictions. These are: flexibility of police structure; devolution of authority within the police and the development of localised command structures; creations of systems of local accountability; community crime prevention schemes; an increase in the number of foot patrols; cultivation of community-policing relations through continuity of service by officers in a specific area over a prolonged period; problem solving of non-crime issues; partnership between police and the public; and power sharing between community and police in respect of decision making.

This structure would allow for the delegating of authority locally so that each district provides a full front line community service through local partnerships with the support of a division, while being held accountable to senior management. The integration and collaboration of An Garda Síochána and the various services and authorities as laid out above, is inextricably linked to this proposed structure and the efficiency and success of community policing is very much reliant on this.

Assistant Commissioner Pat Leahy outlined the development of a national framework for policing which aims to provide the structure for which localised policing services can be delivered. Based on this framework, training, promotion and other front line aspects of the organisation would all show an orientation towards the community and needs of individual communities.

“It will result in our systems and structures being reorganised with the aim of having a real and deep understanding of other communities and what citizens require from a modern police service. It will reinforce that communities and their needs are at the heart of the organisation. The division will co-ordinate all community issues and develop tailored policing responses to communities based on their needs.”

It is intended that four divisions will introduce and adopt this approach in the first quarter of 2019, with a view to full reorientation within three to five years. While the Committee expressed concern that a lack of Garda stations in rural parts of the country would create difficulties in providing this community service nationally, An Garda Síochána stated that the current increase in personnel and the proposed divisional support office would ensure that resources would be available in all areas.

In the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing, it is proposed that all members of An Garda Síochána should be considered to be community police. Dr Connolly noted that under the current approach, community policing is a kind of specialist activity, with perhaps 10% of Gardaí in a district assigned as community officers. In the new district policing model proposed by the Commission, all personnel at district level, sworn and non-sworn, should be considered to be community police. All Garda personnel at district level should

work as a single district policing team to solve problems affecting community safety, reduce crime and prevent harm. They should develop their own district policing plans in consultation with local community fora: "The structure of An Garda Síochána should reflect the focus on the front line by becoming flatter and less siloed. Headquarters should set policies, broad strategy, standards and objectives. Front-line police units should decide how they can best deliver those objectives and be accountable to their supervisors for the outcomes. There must be a high degree of delegated authority, complemented by stronger local supervision ..."

However, some Members of the Committee expressed concern that this approach would not allow for community relationships to be developed, and argued that a more traditional model whereby the role of a designated community police officer as the key liaison within a district would achieve this. While clarifying that the role of a specialist community police officer would exist within their model, the Commission emphasised the importance of a cultural shift towards community policing within the whole organisation in order to better engage with community needs and local problem solving.

Rural Crime

In terms of rural crime, An Garda Síochána, in its submission, noted that some progress had already been made in tackling this issue. Addressing the Committee on 10th October 2018, Assistant Commissioner Pat Leahy stated that when the Garda introduced Operation Thor in November 2015, it represented a new approach, with a large number of units across a wide range of different areas and disciplines working together to prevent and detect burglaries based on analysis of crime trends and intelligence to target criminal gangs and repeat offenders. This saw the Gardai denying criminal gangs the use of the motorway network and increasing patrolling in areas worst affected by burglaries. According to Mr Leahy, this has achieved positive results in terms of burglaries:

“Since November 2015, more than 8,300 arrests have been made, more than 9,500 charges have been proffered, 34,000 searches and 203,771 patrols have been undertaken, and 143,231 checkpoints have been mounted. In addition, we have heavily publicised locally and nationally crime prevention advice through our “Lock up and Light Up” campaign. All of this activity has seen residential burglaries reduce by 34% and non-residential burglaries down 23% since November 2015.

We have maintained that focus in 2018. This year up to the end of August, residential burglaries are down 17% on the same period last year ... the winter phase of Operation Thor has started. There will be increased patrolling and more checkpoints with a particular focus on criminal gangs and repeat offenders ... theft from farms have fallen nationally by 8% in the past year.”

However, despite these positive statistics, a number of witnesses pointed out that a very real issue in rural areas is the fear of crime, and this does not always relate directly to actual crime levels. Mr Garvey of Muintir na Tíre stated that: “While crime obviously has rural and urban dimensions, isolation is a much greater factor in rural areas. When people do not have immediate neighbours, they are obviously more afraid of what might happen to them, whether someone will come to their aid and even about when they might be discovered.” He outlined how his organisation has operated a scheme called

Community Alert for over 30 years, in partnership with An Garda Síochána. Muintir na Tíre also plays a vital role in providing a safe environment through means such as Text Alert, the new mobile app, Cairde, and supporting other schemes such as the Seniors Alert Scheme.

Mr Garvey also highlighted the issue of the closure of rural Garda stations:

“Many rural Garda stations have closed. Initially, it was explained that resources could be better used by having more gardaí on patrol, rather than sitting in a station. There was a promise that community engagement would continue through deploying resources to have gardaí available at certain times in public buildings such as community centres, but that has never happened to any great extent. As resources tightened in Garda districts during the same period, one of the first casualties in many areas was the community garda ... it has had a long-term impact. Most people do not now know a local garda and this has serious implications in the passing of information to An Garda Síochána and increased fear of crime.”

Addressing the Committee on 17th October 2018, Mr Richard Kennedy of the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) also highlighted the real anxiety among the farming community and rural communities generally over crime in the countryside. Theft of valuables from rural homes and of livestock and machinery from farms is a major concern. The IFA believes there is considerable under-reporting of rural crime, in particular for the theft of machinery, fuels and other items from farmyards and lesser break-ins to the family home. It also believes there is a need for the more accurate reporting of crimes committed in rural areas: “All vehicle crimes are reported on the PULSE system as “Unlawful Taking of a Vehicle.” The IFA has called for the separate classification of rural crimes to give a more accurate account of the problems that exist”.

Mr Kennedy also questioned the quality of Garda investigations of certain rural crimes, which have been hampered by boundary issues and lack of specialist expertise in the area:

“Some alarming issues were noted across various districts, such as slow responses; boundary issues where incidents have occurred within

a short distance, perhaps 1km, of a Garda station and are passed on to a station 22km away, as a result of which culprits and persons of interest were not apprehended; a quite apparent lack of knowledge of industry, farming and rural practices by investigating members during follow-up investigations; and no report back or incident updates to affected persons.”

To address these issues and to improve the quality of crime investigation, the IFA recommends that An Garda Síochána be given the necessary resources and training on the nature, structure and profile of farming, agriculture and rural life. The IFA has offered to assist in supporting the development of a module and recommends that a separate rural, farming and agricultural unit be included in recruitment training at the national Garda College.

Mr Kennedy also highlighted the lack of a visual Garda presence, and under-resourcing and manpower, specifically in the rural context:

“The IFA’s network of 946 branches have made it known that the lack of Garda visibility in rural areas is worrying. There is a need for greater patrolling of rural Ireland. Farmers need to see a greater presence of An Garda Síochána on the road. The IFA proposes the deployment of additional resources in terms of manpower, vehicles and equipment. This can be achieved by increasing the Garda Reserve to achieve greater community engagement and thereby supporting An Garda Síochána with local involvement and assistance in the overall community policing plan.”

He noted that in the UK, there is a small but effective rural crime task force within police forces to tackle specific issues. The National Farmers Union there, has been actively engaged at community level in supporting the initiative by assisting the task force with intelligence and reporting of suspicious activities. The IFA called for the support of the Committee to establish a similar type of Garda operation to tackle rural crime in Ireland which would provide for additional Garda presence and resources in rural communities; the targeting of rural gangs operating in rural communities; a review of sentencing for rural crimes and repeat offenders; a review of Garda divisional boundaries; a review

of sentencing for rural crimes and repeat offenders; and a national Garda policy on criminal lurching and trespass.

The ICSA noted that the reports it has published in conjunction with Waterford Institute of Technology¹³ show that rural crime is very much underestimated in official figures. The third report showed that farmers were reluctant to report crimes to the Garda, largely due to a sense of hopelessness that anything will be done.

A key possible development to reduce fear of crime in communities while increasing crime prevention is in the area of CCTV. Mr Seamus Sherlock of the ICSA informed the Committee that a number of communities have come together to install CCTV cameras. There is a scheme to grant aid this kind of initiative but uptake has so far been low. Communities have to do a great deal of fundraising to provide matching funds, and the ongoing cost is a real problem. Ms Laura Starnes from the ICSA outlined issues with organisations securing funding through this grant scheme, with particular regard to the complexity of applying and delays in applications being authorised. Committee Members expressed concern at the inconsistency in the implementation of CCTV throughout Ireland, noting a halt in progress in part due to administrative issues with local authorities and data management.

However, In spite of the issues surrounding CCTV, Members noted that CCTV can and does have a deterrent effect on crime and gives local communities a sense of security, thus helping to reduce the fear of crime and isolation experienced in rural areas. Ms. Starnes stated:

“The sense of security that a CCTV community alert group brings to an area cannot be overemphasised. It also helps An Garda Síochána when it comes to investigating crime. It will help with regard to what Gardaí might consider a minor issue but which is significant to a farmer, particularly in terms of trespass. If there is one message that we want to impart, it is the importance of sorting out that scheme. It is so difficult at the moment. Two applications are required and it costs a community up to €2,500 just to apply to the scheme. It is so slow. We have the county

¹³ See pp.13-14.

councils clashing with An Garda Síochána as to who is responsible for it. There is an awful lot of money that needs to go into this, but it is so important and so successful, and the more of these we have throughout the country, the better it will be for the residents of the country and for crime in general. I hope community CCTV gets rectified soon so that we can get on and get the systems up and running.”

The IFA also recommended the greater use of community CCTV schemes, supported by the Department of Justice and Equality, which would give An Garda Síochána greater coverage of specific areas. Remote visual monitoring and in-station viewing would also be effective tools in combating crime.

Both the IFA and the ICSA encourage farmers to mark their vehicles and farm machinery. Some projects, such as the IFA operated Theftstop, involve the unique marking of property, and are quite effective deterrents for theft, though better engagement is needed. The ICSA explained that a marking system - CESAR – is commonly used throughout the UK and Europe with great success, and has recently been introduced to Ireland. CESAR is a marking system that can be used to trace stolen equipment across Europe through the use of police held scanners which are connected to a European-wide database. Similarly to the Theftstop project, CESAR acts as a deterrent for crime, though the ICSA highlighted the added benefit of a system linked to Europe and technology that can assist in tracing stolen goods. Ms Starnes added that whilst An Garda Síochána has welcomed the introduction of CESAR, it requires extra resources, for example, additional technology for the Garda so that members have a scanner to read it.

Members of the Committee agreed that the utilisation of a marking system was a highly effective mechanism in providing security and preventing crime, and encourage the idea of rural dwellers and An Garda Síochána working together in this regard.

Cross-border aspect of rural crime

The IFA contended that throughout 2017, there continued to be an increase in theft of livestock, machinery, tools and equipment – and that cross-border crime continues to be a major part of this. Items recovered by An Garda Síochána in Ireland have come from the UK and Northern Ireland. Items stolen in Ireland have been intercepted *en route* to Northern Ireland. The IFA recommends additional support in the form of a more streamlined crime reporting system, immediate sharing of intelligence, and information exchange which would increase the level of visibility and awareness, particularly where agricultural crime has been reported in border areas. The IFA believes that greater interagency cross-border co-operation between the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, customs on both sides of the border, An Garda Síochána and the PSNI, would be instrumental in tackling this cross-border crime:

“As we approach Brexit D-Day, there is a requirement for a full review of all operational structures. Should border controls for trade and immigration be reintroduced, additional resources will be required, such as an increase in manpower, vehicles, aircraft and technological equipment, such as CCTV systems for vehicles. In addition, equipment will be required to ensure facial recognition to observe, monitor and manage all the border crossings by An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with other agencies.”

Mr Alan Todd pointed out that the PSNI has had for some time a rural crime lead who oversees the PSNI’s rural crime strategy. This sits alongside relationships and practices established under the original cross-border policing strategy, which the refreshed cross-border policing strategy seeks to further develop under a specific strand of work, that being policing with the community in rural areas. This work entails continuing to build on existing practical co-operation to develop a joint Garda Síochána-PSNI crime prevention strategy for the border region, which will assist the joint Garda-PSNI tasking and co-ordination group.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the hearings and broader consideration of the issues, the Committee arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:

Community Policing

1. The Committee is strongly of the view that the philosophy and practice of community policing should be at the core of policing in Ireland. This approach promotes community-based problem solving strategies to address the underlying causes of crime, whilst also addressing the fear of crime by providing reassurance to communities. Pro-actively addressing problems within communities, rather than reacting to crimes committed, should become the organising principle of police activity.
2. The Committee very much welcomes the recommendations on community policing contained in the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing: "*The Future of Policing in Ireland.*" The Committee therefore calls upon the Minister for Justice and Equality, together with An Garda Síochána, to swiftly take whatever measures are necessary to implement the recommendations and put in place the model, structures and approach outlined in the Commission report.
3. The Committee supports the district community policing model outlined in the Commission on the Future of Policing's report, whereby all police service personnel at district level should be considered to be community police. Community policing should not be viewed as a marginal or specialist activity within the service, and all Garda personnel should work as a single district policing team to solve problems affecting community safety, reduce crime and prevent harm.

However, Members believe there is still scope within this model to assign a dedicated community Garda or unit within each district with specific responsibility for taking a lead role in driving community engagement and providing a familiar first point of contact for the community.

4. It is clear that up to now, community policing has been undervalued and marginalised in Ireland. This was reflected in the decisions taken in response to the financial crisis, when a number of Garda stations were closed and community Gardaí were often deployed to other roles deemed more important, leaving many communities without access to a local, familiar Garda. It is imperative that this trend be reversed and that community policing be prioritised in terms of allocation of resources. This must require additional Gardaí within districts to replace Gardaí promoted or designated community Gardaí from within a district, and that all positions left vacant be backfilled.

5. The Committee heard considerable evidence as to the importance of having a visible police presence in communities. Local communities take a significant degree of reassurance from seeing their local Gardaí. It helps to build relationships of trust, and assists in both the prevention of crime and in reducing the fear of crime, particularly as experienced by those in remote areas.

Members welcomed evidence that Garda numbers are increasing. However, considerably greater investment is required to raise Garda numbers to an adequate level, and the reassignment of Gardaí from administrative roles to front-line district roles should be accelerated.

6. The Committee acknowledges the excellent work being carried out throughout the country through the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Gardaí who build strong, trusting relationships within the community can play a vital role in terms of early intervention with young people at risk of offending behaviour. It is particularly regrettable therefore that many community Gardaí have been redirected to other duties. The Committee calls for a renewed Garda emphasis upon early intervention, assessment of risk and crime prevention amongst young people, in co-operation with the GYDPs.
7. It is clear that the nature of frontline police work is rapidly changing, with much of police time now taken up addressing non-crime incidents, often relating to an individual's welfare. Policing issues often overlap with healthcare issues and the role of the health service in particular. This creates the need for a modern, multi-disciplinary, multi-agency approach to policing.
8. There are currently large gaps in services that are creating a barrier to an effective community policing service. One of the most pertinent issues is the lack of provision of primary health care and other services outside of regular business hours. The Committee heard evidence of a number of initiatives in the North of Ireland by way of response to the need for a more integrated, multi-agency approach, and urges the Minister for Justice and Equality and his Department, as well as An Garda Síochána, to give consideration to implementing similar initiatives here, if they aren't already. These include:
 - Custody suites which integrate nurse-led healthcare, allowing for interventions to be made and healthcare gaps to be identified; and

- Joint ambulance and police control rooms and call services.

9. The PSNI also informed the Committee of the effectiveness of local multi-agency hubs/concern hubs which have been developed in Northern Ireland in the past few years. These hubs join different agencies together to provide communities with a more cohesive service whereby information from each agency is brought together in order to find solutions. This has proved both effective and cost efficient. The Committee believes that, whilst some collaboration does exist between An Garda Síochána and other organisations to provide community-based services in Ireland, much more needs to be done to implement a properly structured and effective multi-agency model.

10. In England, Scotland and Wales, there is a statutory requirement for agencies to work together in partnership to deliver key outcomes in the community. Partnership approaches to tackling crime are now strongly embedded in the way in which local areas in England and Wales approach community safety. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) defines the core group of agencies involved in these partnerships, as well as their functions and role at the local level. The Committee recommends that serious consideration be given to introducing similar legislation in Ireland.

11. Much of police business now involves interventions with people self-harming or harming others because of mental health issues. Resources must be made available to ensure that members of An Garda Síochána are adequately trained to deal with these complex situations and that they have 24/7 access to the supports of appropriate specialist services when required.

12. The Committee believes there is great potential in restorative justice as a means of combating recidivism, and that it should be strongly incorporated into a community model of policing. It is very compatible with a model in which the emphasis is on prevention, problem solving and bringing people together. With a multi-agency approach like that of a concern hub as outlined above, restorative justice could be integrated into that service. Whilst restorative justice programmes are used primarily with youth offenders, they should be utilised more widely.

Rural Crime

13. Social isolation in rural areas intensifies the fear of crime. This has been exacerbated by the closure of many rural Garda stations. Where stations cannot be reopened, this must be compensated for by having more gardaí on patrol in rural areas and more gardaí available at certain times in other public buildings such as community centres.

14. The Committee was impressed by the evidence of the PSNI regarding the effectiveness of using social media to engage with local communities in Northern Ireland, where the PSNI has an outreach of 900,000 followers. This could be particularly effective in rural and isolated areas where Garda stations have been closed or Garda numbers reduced. The Committee recommends a greater emphasis upon use of social media as a way of increasing Garda visibility and maintaining engagement with communities.

15. At present, the real extent of rural crime is not accurately known due to the methods of recording and classifying crimes. Consideration ought to be given to introducing a separate classification for rural crimes.

16. The Committee heard evidence that in the UK, a small but effective rural task force had been established within police units to tackle specific issues. Consideration ought to be given by An Garda Síochána to establishing similar units here that would work in co-operation with farming organisations; provide specialist Garda training specific to rural issues; target criminal gangs operating in rural communities; conduct a review of Garda divisional boundaries; and provide additional Garda presence and resources in rural areas.

17. CCTV can play an important role in crime prevention and in providing reassurance to people in rural communities. However, the roll-out of community CCTV schemes is being stymied by a number of factors, including the initial start-up costs to communities; the complexities and delays in applying for grant schemes; and administrative disputes between An Garda Síochána and local authorities as to who is responsible for CCTV schemes and for data management. The roll-out of CCTV requires:

- greater funding upfront to support communities;
- a streamlining of the grants application process to make it more user-friendly and efficient; and
- legislation if necessary to clarify which State agencies have what responsibilities in the administering of CCTV schemes and data management.

18. The Committee welcomes projects such as the IFA-operated Theftstop, involving the unique marking of property. The Committee in particular recommends the expansion of the recently introduced CESAR marking system, which can be used to trace stolen equipment across Europe through the use of police-held scanners which are connected to a

European-wide database. It is essential that Gardaí are equipped with the additional technology required to utilise this system.

19. The Committee commends the work of Muintir na Tíre in addressing rural isolation and fear of crime through its Community Alert, Text Alert and other schemes. The Committee urges the Minister for Justice and Equality to ensure the future renewal of funding for the Text Alert Rebate Scheme.

20. The imminent departure of the UK from the EU creates an urgent need for a full review of all operational structures along the border. However, cross-border crime is already a serious concern, and the Committee believes there is a need for even greater interagency, cross-border co-operation between the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; between customs on both sides of the border; and between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI.

Appendix 1 – Committee Membership

Deputies



Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD

(SF) [Chair]



Colm Brophy TD
(FG)

Jack Chambers TD
(FF)

Clare Daly TD
(I4C)

Peter Fitzpatrick TD
(IND)



Jim O'Callaghan TD
(FF)

Mick Wallace TD
(I4C)

Senators



Frances Black
(CEG)

Lorraine Clifford-Lee
(FF)

Martin Conway
(FG)

Niall Ó Donnghaile
(SF)

Notes:

1. Deputies nominated by the Dáil Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Dáil on 16th June 2016.
2. Senators nominated by the Seanad Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Seanad on 20th July 2016.

Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference of Committee

JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

TERMS OF REFERENCE

a. Functions of the Committee – derived from Standing Orders [DSO 84A; SSO 70A]

- (1) The Select Committee shall consider and report to the Dáil on—
 - (a) such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and
 - (b) European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments.
- (2) The Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- (3) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such—
 - (a) Bills,
 - (b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187,
 - (c) Estimates for Public Services, and
 - (d) other matters

as shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and

(e) Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public monies, and

(f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.

(4) The Joint Committee may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:

(a) matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible,

(b) public affairs administered by the Department,

(c) policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department,

(d) Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department,

(e) policy and governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas,

(f) the general scheme or draft heads of any Bill,

(g) any post-enactment report laid before either House or both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas,

(h) statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009,

(i) strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the

Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997,

(j) annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law, and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (d) and (e) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and

(k) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.

(5) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments—

(a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,

(b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,

(c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and

(d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.

(6) Where a Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order has been joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann, the Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

(7) The following may attend meetings of the Select or Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (5) and may take part in proceedings

without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:

- (a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern Ireland,
- (b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- (c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.

b. Scope and Context of Activities of Committees (as derived from Standing Orders) [DSO 84; SSO 70]

- (1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders; and
- (2) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil and/or Seanad.
- (3) The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993; and
- (4) any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Orders [DSO 111A and SSO 104A].
- (5) The Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—
 - (a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - (b) the principal office-holder of a body under the aegis of a Department or which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas:

Provided that the Chairman may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle / Cathaoirleach whose decision shall be final.
- (6) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives this instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Dáil Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

Appendix 3 – Opening Statements

Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice

Dr Johnny Connolly

Centre for Crime, Justice and Victim Studies, School of Law,

University of Limerick

3rd October 2018

Community Policing

Community policing is a philosophy of policing that promotes community-based problem-solving strategies to address the underlying causes of crime and disorder and fear of crime and which provides reassurance. Many community policing approaches involve the police performing a role in addressing community problems which may not be directly related to crime. Problem solving policing re-orientates the police role away from an exclusive focus on the crime. Problems, not crime, become the organising core of police activity. The concern is with preventing future harm. Similarly, solutions can be broader than simple law enforcement and involve the participation of other agencies such as housing or health agencies. Furthermore, the criminal law becomes only one means of addressing problems. Civil laws can also be utilised, planning regulations or, increasingly, mediation and restorative justice schemes can have a part to play.

Problem – solving policing requires analysis of the causes of the problem, identification of the options open to addressing it and then the development of a means of evaluation of the impact of the problem so as to assess performance.

Such an approach requires partnership between the police, the community and other relevant agencies. Through partnership structures, communities seek involvement in decision-making and problem solving. Community policing in this way involves community empowerment. It also has implications for the police in terms of structural change. To be effective such an approach requires devolution of power within the police organisation and the decentralisation of police authority to patrol officers and a far greater emphasis on

collaboration between police and community. The community policing approach emphasises ideas of consumer service, flexibility, consumer feedback and negotiation. Finally, this change in the police role necessitates training to enhance police understanding of the nature of community problems and for the development of problem-solving techniques. This was described in *The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland* (The Patten report) as the need for 'more focus on developing personal communication and negotiation skills, scenario-based problem-solving exercises, self-assessment and peer assessment'.

Also, community policing approaches require a change in the way police effectiveness is measured. The number of arrests or prosecutions are crude measurements and to fully assess community policing approaches requires more qualitative measurements such as problem resolutions but also community-oriented expectations and defined objectives.

Throughout the world, there is great variety in community policing models and approaches.

Despite this variety, a number of common characteristics define the community policing approach. These are:

- Flexibility of police structure, devolution of authority within the police and the development of localised command structures;
- Creation of systems of local accountability;
- Community crime prevention schemes;
- An increase in the number of foot patrols;
- Cultivation of police – community relations through continuity of service by officers in a specific area over a prolonged period;
- Problem-solving of non-crime issues;
- Partnership between police and public;
- Power-sharing between community and police over police decision-making.

Another illustration of this approach is 'The Nine P's of Community Policing: Philosophy, personalised, policing, patrols, permanent, place, proactive, partnership and problem solving¹⁴.

There is no single model of community policing but the philosophy is strongly linked to the concepts of democracy and policing by consent, based on respect for fundamental human rights. It also requires the entire police force to adopt a broader concept of policing and a transformation of the mind-set of all police officers.

The Commission on the Future of Policing

Many submissions received by the Commission highlighted broad public support from both outside and inside AGS for better community policing. At present community policing is very informal and dependent on the personal commitment of local management to this form of policing and the level of support provided. Other criticisms made of Community policing include the following.

- The diversion of resources to other duties would appear to vary significantly within the force. The lack of available records to quantify this is in itself a nissue of concern;
- There is a considerable lack of supporting infrastructure for community policing units;
- The work and outcome of the work undertaken by community Gardaí is inappropriately measured, if at all
- There is no clear command structure;
- That the activities of community police or the community policing structures are not sufficiently formalised within the force;
- Community policing is under-resourced;
- It does not have a proper career path or equality of status with respect to working conditions and allowances;
- Community policing personnel are moved to other policing units when the need arises, such as for sporting events or temporary transfer deals in response to

¹⁴ Trojanowicz R.C (1998) Community Policing; A contemporary perspective. New York: Anderson. See also Sirpa Virta in The Sage Dictionary of Criminology, E.McLaughlin and J Muncie 3rd ed. P55-56

pressure on policing resources and this breaks down continuity in community police service;

- The programme for recruiting suitable members to community policing is ill conceived;
- Community police do not receive adequate training, in conflict resolution problem solving or communication skills;
- There is no specific office space to conduct meetings or receive telephone calls;

In summary, in Ireland, as in many countries, Community Policing within our police organisation is marginalised and under-valued. We have extensive evidence of this and yet, the one constant theme running throughout most submissions to the Commission on the Future of Policing, particularly from AGS, is the need for community policing to be central.

The Future – Policing with the Community

The Commission has articulated a vision of policing into the future that puts Community Policing at its core. The Commission has made radical proposals that will transform the way in which policing is delivered to local communities. The term “community policing” is used in many different ways. In the report of the Commission we use the term “district policing”, which we consider to be the best fit for Irish circumstances and for the new model that is proposed.

In the current approach “community policing” is a kind of specialist activity, with perhaps 10% of Gardaí in a district designated as community police. We regard **district policing as the backbone of police work and the police mission**. In our new district policing model, all police service personnel at district level, sworn and non-sworn, should be considered to be community police. In future all Garda personnel at district level, whether sworn or non-sworn, and whether assigned to emergency response or community engagement, should work as a single district policing team, to solve problems affecting community safety, reduce crime and prevent harm. They should develop their own district policing plans, consulting with **local community fora**. They should be equipped to deliver all routine policing services, with support from the divisional level for administration and certain specialist functions.

The structure of An Garda Síochána should reflect the focus on the front line by **becoming flatter and less siloed**. Headquarters should set policies, broad strategy, standards and objectives. Front line police units should decide how they can best deliver those objectives and be accountable to their supervisors for the outcomes. There must be a high degree of delegated authority, complemented by stronger local supervision, notably at sergeant and inspector level. Innovation, initiative and new approaches should be encouraged, and evidence-based success applauded and disseminated.

Excellence on the front line should be valued and recognised. The building of genuine community partnerships should be a requirement for all Garda districts. To be effective in preventing crime and protecting people from harm, police must work in partnerships with other entities, including schools, community and volunteer organisations, businesses, human rights NGOs, youth groups, faith-based groups and others. We have seen evidence of good examples of this around the country but the practice should be universal and police leaders should be assessed on their success in building such partnerships. Gardaí should be assessed for their performance in this respect, and it should be a factor in determining assignments and promotions.

Supporting the districts will be the **division-level units. These should be large enough to be self-sufficient for all routine administrative and operational purposes.** They should also have detective teams and other specialists to support the districts. Crisis Intervention Teams, including staff from mental health and child services agencies, should be based at division level. Each division should have an information centre, supporting the districts in data collection and analysis. In effect, we envisage that a division should be, for most policing purposes, a mini-police service in its own right. The current 28 Divisions seem to us to be too many and too small. We are not more prescriptive about the structure because we believe firmly that the Commissioner must be allowed to manage the organisation, and that includes deciding on the right structure. We do believe that it should be flatter than it is now, with a lower senior management ratio.

Localised structures

Joint Policing Committees and Local Community Policing Fora - It is also important that there should be effective fora for police to engage with communities at district level. In the

new model for district policing, we envisaged that district police leaders would develop local policing plans based on local objectives and priorities agreed with Joint Policing Committees or LCPFs, involving full community participation. Currently the Policing Authority has a responsibility to coordinate and support the JPCs. It has not had the same role in respect of LCPFs. **We propose that the new oversight body, the Policing and Community Safety Oversight Commission (which will supercede the Policing Authority and Garda Inspectorate) should develop these local structures to function effectively, building capacity for participation by community stakeholders, setting standards for their operation and evaluating their performance.** The key objective would be to build community trust and address problems through authentic engagement. PCSOC should also work with local fora to promote multi-agency approaches to community safety at the local level. It should have a fund available to support local innovation and initiatives.

Removing non-core duties

The public, police and politicians all told the Commission that they want to see more police on the front line. We agree. More police working in and with the community will help prevent and detect crime, reduce fear of crime, and protect people at risk. Many police are now doing jobs that do not require police powers, and should be done by nonsworn employees or outsourced. Police also have unnecessary administration duties, such as keeping paper records, duplicating electronic ones. These should be stopped. **These steps will allow significant numbers of Gardaí to be redeployed to front line district duties.**

The Commission has heard repeatedly throughout our consultations that AGS is constantly called upon to engage in non-crime roles, many of which perhaps could be conducted by other agencies. However, it has to be acknowledged too that the professional police everywhere are often both the first port of call, in that people go to them because they don't know where else to go and are then directed elsewhere or they are the last port of call, as there are no other sources locally available or accessible due to it being the evening. The police are also unique in the extent of their extensive legal powers which can be called upon at any time in the conduct of their general or specific roles, or when a non-crime issue becomes a crime issue. It is also very important to note that AGS, like all professional police, have significant symbolic power in society. The professional police remain then qualitatively different from other forms of policing, in its symbolic power,

generalist mission and regulatory position. The key task for the Commission was to identify how this unique position can best be utilised for the benefit of those most dependent on it, which primarily are the most vulnerable in society.

A January 2015 report by the College of Policing – Estimating demand on the police service – found that 84 per cent of calls to the police were related to non-crime incidents: notably concerns over an individual’s welfare. Theresa May told the Police Federation conference in May 2015, when she was still Home Secretary, police officers were ‘not social workers... mental health nurses, or paramedics’. In reality however, they often are all of these things, or they are at least on an amateur basis and unless other professional bodies who perform these roles step up to the mark and become more engaged and accessible, AGS will continue to perform such functions.

Crime data

District police should have real time access to crime data and to information about public concerns. They should keep their residents well informed about community safety issues and engage with them proactively to solve problems affecting crime and the perception of crime, thereby leading to both the reduction of crime and stronger confidence in community safety. Front line police are a vital source of information about crime, fear of crime and vulnerabilities in the communities they serve.

Recruitment

Finally, An Garda Síochána should reflect the diversity of Irish society (socio-economic, gender, ethnicity). This will take a determined effort, including innovative marketing of the police career, and youth engagement initiatives on the lines of Police Explorer programmes. It is also recommended in the report that the organisation should work with Irish higher education institutions to develop a Garda Access Programme, aligned with the programmes of those institutions.

Conclusion

There is a historic challenge and opportunity facing us in terms of the future of policing. As we move to the centenary of the establishment of AGS: how to transform our policing model from the highly centralised and hierarchical Colonial model we have inherited, to a

Community Policing model with all that the latter entails. The Commission has set down a transformative vision, whereby the philosophy, principles and processes that define Policing with the Community can be effectively delivered in an Irish context.

Joint Committee on Justice and Equality

Opening Statement

Presented by: Bernie Meally, Foróige Area Manager, South East

3rd October 2018

Introduction

Good morning. Thank you for inviting Foróige to speak to this Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on the topics of community policing and rural crime. Given our experience with Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP's) I will be focusing on community policing.

Foróige is a national youth development organisation, whose purpose is to involve young people consciously and actively in their own development and the development of society. This is carried out through a range of supports from universal volunteer led clubs to targeted interventions engaging with some of the most vulnerable and at risk young people and families in their communities.

Our primary experience with community policing is through the provision of GYDP's. There are 105 GYDP's nationally managed by a range of Community Based Organisations. Funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community based, multi-agency, youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people involved in criminal/anti-social behaviour away from the criminal justice system by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects (IYJS, 2017). Foróige manages 42 GYDP's nationally and is also funded by IYJS to provide a range of supports to GYDP's through the GYDP Best Practice Development Team.

Community Policing

The community policing service provides vital support to many of the young people, families and communities that we work with. Community Gardaí actively contribute to the diversion of young people from offending or further offending. This is done through building positive, trusting relationships in the community, engaging in partnerships with local agencies both voluntary and statutory and by being visible and accessible. The role of Community Gardaí in the early intervention and prevention of youth crime should not be underestimated. Children and young people tend to follow a pathway towards offending behaviour. There are also characteristics which make it possible to predict the likelihood of future offending (Hodge & Andrews, 2010). These developmental pathways and characteristics give families, communities and system the opportunity to intervene and prevent the onset of criminal and anti-social behaviour while also building strengths and resilience in young people. Focusing on the development of assets and strengths in young people while reducing the risks not only delivers positive outcomes for young people and families, but also contributes to the overall quality of life in a community and reduces the likelihood of the escalation of a young person's offending behaviour, thus reducing the burden of crime on society and the significant financial costs associated with that.

The research has clearly evidenced that the more contact a young person has with the justice system, the poorer their outcomes long term (McAra & McVie, 2010). It is important to intervene as soon as possible and as little as possible with a young person who is at risk of offending, to bring about a change in behaviour. Through their presence on the ground, Community Gardaí can monitor behaviour and identify young people who may be at risk of offending before their behaviour escalates to the point that they come to the attention of their other Garda colleagues. Quite often, the Community Gardaí will deal with incidents of anti-social behaviour in an informal manner with a young person, and this low level intervention is enough to have a positive impact on their behaviour. Where a young person or family may require a greater level of intervention, the inter-agency approach of the community policing service allows Community Gardaí to make timely referrals to appropriate services which can meet the needs of the young people and their families.

GYDP's have greatly benefitted from the relationship with Community Gardaí, particularly in relation to early intervention with young people as outlined above. The partnership approach of the Community Gardaí has also been effective in identifying young people under the age of criminal responsibility who may be engaging in risky or antisocial behaviour. This has ensured that the appropriate supports are put in place for those young people under 12 years and has allowed us to address their risks and needs at an earlier stage using their strengths and interests to build skills, increase protective factors and reduce the likelihood of future offending. Engagement with Community Gardaí has allowed for frank informed conversations enabling us to monitor behaviour, respond quickly and appropriately and ensure better outcomes for young people

Community Gardaí contribute to youth projects and services and other community agencies in a wide variety of ways. By sitting on local committees they can contribute to a co-ordinated response to meeting community needs. Community Gardaí in many areas support GYDP's to develop a comprehensive analysis of youth crime in their catchment area using both PULSE data and local knowledge, which ensures that plans are designed which meet the specific needs of the community and take account of the nuances of their particular context. Across the country, Community Gardaí are involved in delivering a range of educational programmes in both the school and community setting. These ensure that young people and communities are aware of their rights and responsibilities, but also build trust and relationships between community members and An Garda Síochána. In our experience, Community Gardaí have accompanied Youth Justice Workers on visits to families experiencing chaos and trauma, have engaged with both mainstream and high risk young people in a positive, meaningful and non-judgemental manner, and have responded quickly and sensitively to young people and families in crisis. On a very practical level, there are many community projects and services who would be unable to engage in activities outside their meeting space were it not for the Community Gardaí supporting them with the use of the local Garda bus.

In a police force where there is a level of mistrust in many communities, the Community Gardaí are the exception to this. As the visible, approachable, friendly face of An Garda Síochána many young people and community members will reach out for help and advice from the person they have met at a local meeting, in the school corridor, in the community centre or walking through their estate, before they would ever consider going to the local Garda station for same. The ability to access the support of the Community Gardaí has benefitted many communities enormously from both a crime prevention and quality of life perspective. Those in the community policing service have

managed to build positive effective working relationships with the community, voluntary and statutory agencies working in partnership with them. But equally, if not more importantly, they have built positive personal relationships with community members, young and old.

Challenges

With the many benefits outlined above, it has been disappointing to see the gradual erosion of community policing across the country over the past number of years. Many Garda districts and divisions do not have a dedicated community policing service, which results in a system which is constantly 'firefighting' and responding to issues as they arise, rather than pro-actively engaging in crime prevention and reduction measures.

Where Community Gardaí are present in communities, the benefits are tangible. However, with a reduction in resources and increased demand, we have seen many Community Gardaí pulled out of community duties in response to frontline operational needs. This prioritisation of regular policing duties has resulted in a loss of the preventative work of relationship building within communities. Many Community Gardaí who have retired or moved position have not been replaced. We have seen first-hand the challenges for Community Gardaí who wish to have a greater level of engagement with communities but because of the demands placed upon them can only engage in an ad hoc manner. Many communities are suffering as a result of the reduction in resources put into community policing.

Conclusion

Where present Community policing plays a significant role in crime prevention. In our experience with GYDP's the benefits in terms of targeting, early intervention, assessment of risk and need and intervention are clear. Community Gardaí identify young people at risk before they have been detected offending, often under the age of criminal responsibility, they support Youth Justice Workers to carry out assessments, engage with young people and families through the projects and deal with issues informally at local level before they escalate. They support interventions, in very practical ways as well as providing advice, support, information and educational programmes. Their partnership approach with community groups and other voluntary and statutory agencies ensures that community needs can be responded to in a co-ordinated and consistent manner leading to better outcomes for young people, families and communities. The main challenge that we see is the lack of resources put into community policing over the past few years, the fact that many areas do not have a service and where there is a service Community Gardaí are often directed to prioritise frontline operational duties to the detriment of their community duties.

Because of the vital role they play in early intervention and crime prevention, Foróige strongly advocates that appropriate and adequate community policing resources should be allocated in every Garda division and district so that all communities can benefit from the service. Foróige welcomes the new community policing framework and the establishment of the new Community Policing Offices in the 28 Garda Divisions. We believe that this is a positive development and are hopeful that it will support the allocation of appropriate resources to this essential community service.

References

Hoge, R. D. & Andrews, D. A., 2011, Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0, User's Manual, Multi-Health Systems, Ontario.

Irish Youth Justice Service, 2017, *Garda Youth Diversion Projects Operational Requirements*, IYJS.

McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2010) Youth Justice? The Impact of system contact on patterns of desistence from offending, *SAGE Youth Justice*

Éarlámh: Micheál D. OhUiginn
Uachtarán na hÉireann

Founded in 1937 by
V. Rev. J.M. Canon Hayes



Muintir na Tíre

Empowering Communities

1 October 2018

Mr Damian Byrne
Clerk to the Committee
Joint Committee on Justice and Equality
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Dear Mr Byrne

Opening Statement

I attach an opening statement from Muintir na Tíre in advance of our appearance on 3rd October next. If you require any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Yours sincerely

Niall Garvey

Niall Garvey
CEO



Muintir na Tíre
Empowering Communities

**Opening Statement to
Joint Committee on Justice and Equality
From Muintir na Tíre
3 October 2018**

INDEX

1. Overview
2. Introduction
3. History of Muintir na Tíre
4. History of Community Alert
5. Current Operations and Structure of Community Alert
6. Issues arising in Community Alert Groups
7. Community Policing
8. Recommendations for Action

Appendices



1 Overview

1.1 Muintir na Tíre has operated Community Alert for over 30 years, in partnership with An Garda Síochána. Community Alert is the largest crime prevention initiative in Ireland. While relying on the age-old principle of neighbours watching out for each other, Community Alert has also been quick to utilise modern tools such as Text Alert.

1.2 Statistics show that levels of rural crime are not increasing in general. However, any levels of crime can be reduced. A very real issue in rural areas is the fear of crime. This does not always relate directly to actual crime levels. For example, whenever there is a high profile crime, or indeed reporting of a court case relating to a particularly heinous crime from several years earlier, we notice an increase in activity in Community Alert groups.

1.3 While crime obviously has rural and urban dimensions, the fear is a much greater factor in rural areas. This is because of isolation. When a person does not have an immediate neighbour, they are obviously more afraid of what might happen to them, whether anybody will come to their aid, and indeed when they might be discovered. Cases of elderly people being tortured, robbed, and left tied up, are thankfully rare, but they do occur, and further fuel these fears. Therefore, crime prevention and detection are important, but equally important is creating an environment that feels safe.

1.4 Muintir na Tíre and Community Alert play a vital role in providing this safe environment, through means such as Text Alert, the new mobile app, Cairde, and supporting other schemes such as the Seniors Alert Scheme. While communities can do a lot for themselves, they still need improved support from An Garda Síochána and the judicial and legislative bodies.

1.5 Muintir na Tíre has a memorandum of understanding with an Garda Síochána for the operation of Community Alert. This partnership, which also includes our funders – the Department of Justice and Equality and the HSE, works well. It has allowed for efficient and effective solutions to problems, such as the recently introduced Text Alert Rebate Scheme. It should continue to be the platform for providing solutions to rural crime and community safety.

1.5 The area of Community Policing is vital in providing this support. In the years of financial restraint from 2008, Community Policing has been hit particularly hard, locally and centrally. When resources were limited, the Community Garda was often the first role to be hit, as resources were directed towards what were thought to be more urgent areas. This has had the effect of damaging the relationship between communities and An Garda Síochána. This needs to be rebuilt urgently.



2 Introduction

2.1 Muintir na Tíre continues to actively promote the Community Alert programme in partnership with An Garda Síochána since 1985. This programme continues to harness the voluntary input of community members to provide a community crime prevention programme in over 1,400 Community Alert groups nationwide. Each Community Alert group has an elected committee and an associated Liaison Garda; it is a recognised structure in a local community. Collectively these groups represent an active and organised social partnership network contributing significantly to crime reduction efforts and support communities to actively help themselves.

2.2 The Community Alert volunteers regularly visit older and vulnerable Persons in their own home to alleviate loneliness and isolation. They organise the supply of socially monitored pendant alarms and other safety/security measures including smoke alarms for older people. Community Alert volunteers annually source almost 50% of the national budget for the Seniors Alert Scheme. There are approximately 130,000 older persons in possession of socially monitored pendant alarms. Community Alert areas throughout Ireland are readily identifiable by Community Alert Road signs on the roadways, as one travels throughout Ireland.

2.3 Muintir na Tíre through the Community Alert programme actively participates in crime prevention and reduction on behalf of communities. The programme actively encourages visits to vulnerable persons, providing a vital element of community care and encourages the provision of a safe community environment.

2.4 Muintir na Tíre communities also actively participate in, and contribute to, a civil society and in so doing improve the quality of life of their communities. Communities through Ireland have seen a reduction in services in the community arena by many statutory agencies, and this has led to an increased fear among rural dwellers, especially the older and vulnerable, of the consequences. This increasing isolation leads to illness, depression and loneliness among this cohort of the population. This in turn leads to excessive demands on other services as they feel they can no longer live in their own homes. Whilst modern Ireland must adapt to changing economic conditions it must also consider the fundamental implications on the social fabric of its society.

2.5 Community Alert has thrived over the last 33 years as a practically minded and responsive programme. Its success is in large part due to its practical nature and ready recognition that communities are prepared to help themselves with support and guidance from our network of Development Officers.

2.6 In the last 12 months, Muintir na Tíre had to step in to prevent the collapse of Text Alert. We took on the service formerly provide by Grapvine Communications Ltd, who are now in liquidation. This sees us issuing approximately three quarters of the total Community Text alerts issued. The service has been rebranded as “BeAlert” and automated. Following on from that we have developed a mobile app, Cairde, which incorporates Text Alert and many other features.

2.7 The Department of Justice and Equality has just renewed the Text Alert Rebate Scheme for the third year. This scheme, which was lobbied for, and is administered by, Muintir na Tíre, provides much needed support for Community Alert Groups.



3 History of Muintir na Tíre

3.1 Muintir na Tíre is a national voluntary organization dedicated to promoting the process of community development. The organisation was founded in 1937. Muintir na Tíre aims to enhance the capacities of people in communities, rural and urban, to become involved in local social, economic, cultural and environmental development

3.2 Muintir na Tíre has been making a very real, positive and practical contribution to local and national development in Ireland for the last 78 years. From its involvement in the Rural Electrification and Group Water Schemes to the Building of Community Halls and Centres, to social service provision and local enterprise development, Muintir has always actively encouraged a bottom up approach.

3.3 Muintir is a membership-based organization, with 200 Community Councils and 1,400 Community Alert Groups entitled to membership. These groups elect the voluntary Board of Directors of the National body on an annual basis. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the organization and is supported by a small but dedicated staff.

3.4 Muintir na Tíre has always been to the forefront in identifying community needs and providing workable solutions. The Community Alert programme is yet again an example of the Muintir na Tíre ethos of self-help whereby the community engages and works alongside other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide services in addition to those already being provided for those who are in greatest need in communities.

3.5 Muintir Na Tíre established the Community Alert programme in 1984 in partnership with An Garda Síochána. It evolved in response to a rise of crime in rural Ireland, particularly attacks on vulnerable people (including the elderly) living alone. It is a voluntary crime prevention programme for rural communities and it encourages the community to actively participate with Muintir na Tíre and An Garda Síochána in improving the quality of life and safety of the community in general. An agreed Memorandum of Understanding between the partner organisations, which was signed on April 23, 2002, has strengthened the partnership.



4 History of Community Alert

4.1 This is a brief history of how Community alert evolved.

4.2 On the 19th November 1984, two major bridges were officially opened across the river Lee in Cork. Those bridges were used that very first night, to gain access to the rural countryside by a vicious gang. The gang drove from the city in a stolen car to the townland of Ballycureen, Glounthaune, in the parish of Carrigtwohill Co Cork. The three men in the gang forced a side window of the bungalow where John Willis (77) and James Willis (75) lived since retirement almost ten years previously from their farming career. Repeatedly, each brother in turn was beaten savagely until James died.

4.3 In Co Roscommon a week later in what was almost a copycat attack, two elderly unmarried sisters were savagely beaten with an iron bar; one of them died. The following night in Co Sligo, a relatively young 65 year old woman was attacked in her home by a gang.

4.4 The need for action was taken up by the leaders of the community organisation Muintir Na Tíre. At a meeting of Imokilly Region Muintir na Tíre, held in Dungourney on Friday 22nd November 1984, attended by eleven Community Councils, it was decided to initiate a series of open public meetings throughout East Cork, to discuss the tragedy and the concern about safety of the elderly especially in isolated areas. After this meeting it was Muintir na Tíre Imokilly Region Development Officer Mr Kevin Hickey who coined the term Community Alert. The term was first used on the posters advertising the various meetings, and was accepted as the actual organisation name later.

4.5 A meeting was held in Carrigtwohill December 6th 1984 where a large crowd, estimated at over 300, packed into the Community Hall. They listened to speakers, such as Muintir na Tíre National Secretary Sean Hegarty, and Chief Superintendent Tom O'Reilly who had come down from the Garda Community Relations section based in Dublin. Local T.D Michael Ahern spoke, he was a member of Carrigtwohill Community Council at the time and he gave valuable support to develop Community Alert from day one.

4.6 This meeting in Carrigtwohill was also significant due to the decision by RTE to record in Carrigtwohill the following morning a Nationwide program dealing with the robbery and murder aftermath. Much of the Community Alert ethos and ideas, which were coalescing over the past two weeks hardened into a "to do" list that night. It was a unique moment in time, and in the lives of those present that night - Community Alert was born.

4.7 Community Alert has continued to develop since that time and, perhaps unfortunately, is just as relevant today. The issues of rural crime have not changed significantly in those 33 years, but the methods of dealing with it have. A constant though is the desire and ability of local communities to deal with these issues themselves once they are given the framework in which to do so. Muintir na Tíre and An Garda Síochána continue to provide that framework through continuous review and improvement, including the provision of new services, such as Community Text Alert.

5 Current Structure and Operations of Community Alert

5.1 Mission Statement

The current Community Alert Mission Statement is as follows:

“Prevent crime and increase social cohesion”

5.1.1 Community Alert Objectives:

- To promote measures to reassure people living in rural Ireland, particularly older and vulnerable people.
- To raise the level of awareness amongst all people of the need for greater social inclusiveness including crime prevention measures.
- To foster greater collaboration between the Community and An Garda Síochána.
- To seek to involve young people to ensure continuation of groups in local areas.
- To foster the involvement of national and secondary school pupils, their teachers and youth clubs in the process.

5.1.2 Partnership in Action:

That Community Alert will promote the best quality of life for people, and particularly older people, in rural communities by:

- Crime Prevention
- Neighbourliness and Self-reliance
- General Community Safety and Well Being
- Accident Prevention
- Promotion of Personal Safety
- Anti-Poverty Focus and Awareness of Social Inclusion

5.2 Principal Partner Organisations

There are five principal partners to the program, as follows:

Muintir na Tíre	Co-manages the program. Provides the staff and resources to deliver the program.
An Garda Síochána	Co-manages the program. Provides liaison through Community Relations division.
Department of Justice and Equality	Provides financial support.
Health Service Executive	Provides financial support.
Local communities	Provide the manpower, enthusiasm and financial resources necessary for anything to happen at a local level.



5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Community Alert Program is delivered through a partnership structure between Muintir na Tíre and an Garda Síochána, with the following key personnel:

Garda Community Relations:

- Chief Superintendent
- Sergeant

Muintir na Tíre:

- CEO, and National Co-Ordinator
- Development Officer – Northern Region
- Development Officer – Southern Region
- Development Officer – Western Region
- Development Officer – Eastern Region
- Development Officer – South Eastern Region



5.4 Muintir Support Structure

Muintir na Tíre is managed by a CEO who also acts as National Co-Ordinator for Community Alert. The five Community Alert Development Officers report to him. A number of other Muintir na Tíre staff support the Community Alert Programme but are not currently funded for doing so.

5.5 Partner Liaison

5.5.1 The President and CEO of Muintir na Tíre meet with the Senior Garda Management Team (usually the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Assistant Commissioner) as the need arises.

5.5.2 There is a National Steering Committee consisting of the CEO and the Chief Superintendent from the Garda Síochána. This meets approximately twice per year and has overall responsibility for policy and strategy.

5.5.3 The Management Committee consists of the above plus the Community Alert Development Officers. This group meets formally approximately 6 times per year to review work and identify common issues. There is informal contact between these group members on a daily basis.

5.5.4 The CEO meets with funders (Department of Justice and Equality and the HSE) approximately twice per year.

5.5.5 Community Alert Development Officers liaise with the Joint Policing Committees in all of their counties and attend as many meetings as possible. Recent structural changes mean there is no formal representation for national bodies on JPC's and therefore we must try to get representation through Public Participation Networks etc. This is an area that needs further debate and action.



5.6 Regional Development Officers

5.6.1 The Community Alert programme is delivered by 5 Regional Development Officers – one for each Garda Region excluding Dublin City. They hold an average of over 3 formal meetings per week, with many more informal meetings and telephone support. Formal meetings can consist of:

- Garda focused meetings (e.g. Divisional and District meetings).
- Meetings with individual Community Alert Groups (either new or existing).
- Other meetings with a Community Alert focus (Older persons' fora etc.).

They also promote Community Alert through media interviews, attendance at events, and other activities.

5.6.2 Each Development Officer at local level has regular interaction with HSE, Public Health Nurses, Home Helps, Caregivers, Day Care personnel, An Post staff, Clergy, Local Partnership Companies, County Development Boards, Community Fora, Government Departments, Vincent de Paul, Fire Service, Lions Clubs, Social Services, Community area based services (e.g. Warmer Homes) and County Councils to meet the demands of individuals and communities. Each Development Officer is in regular contact with Community Alert District Sergeants and Divisional Inspectors in all divisions.

5.6.3 Development Officers continue to assist many groups with issues concerning the Seniors Alert Scheme of Grants for personal monitored alarms. This scheme allows elderly people to continue living independently but securely in their own homes. Muintir na Tíre groups constitute the majority of groups offering this scheme.

5.6.4 Groups are also encouraged to actively seek out grants which could help to alleviate isolation in their communities and also provide small scale services such as friendly call service or a community visitor programme.

5.6.5 Our Development Officers fulfil a critical role in local government, beyond what was ever expected of them. They act as a liaison between community groups and individuals and the new formal Local Government structures through engagement with Public Participation Networks, LEADER partnership companies, SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation) providers and many other bodies. They operate where there is often inadequate engagement with communities and often provide the link between citizens and supports. Having supports available is essential but informing citizens of those supports, informing the providers of potential recipients, and linking them is even more important.

5.7 Community Text Alert

5.7.1 Community Text Alert was formally launched as a Community Alert programme in 2013, in partnership with IFA, Neighbourhood Watch, and an Garda Síochána. It has certainly caught the public imagination. Over 700 groups have registered for the initiative in that time and it receives regular positive media attention. Currently well over 1,000,000 texts per annum are being issued. Text Alert is often quoted as having provided the vital cog in crime detection, and local Garda management often point to reduced crime in areas where Text Alert is properly implemented.

5.7.2 Text Alert areas are highly visible through the erection of highly visible and identifiable signage. This signage includes the telephone number of the nearest 24 hour Garda station to which suspicious activity can be reported. On receipt of such a call, the Gardaí will verify the information and can then issue an SMS text to all registered recipients in the area. There is also the option to include surrounding areas where this might be useful (e.g. with a moving vehicle).

5.7.3 The success of Text Alert is due to the fast and efficient dispersal of information between communities and the Gardaí. There is also a deterrent effect through the visible signage. However equally effective, though less obvious, benefits arise through the very organisation of Text Alert groups – volunteers visiting houses to explain and gather contact numbers, neighbours watching out for older or more vulnerable neighbours, etc.

5.7.4 The last 12 months have seen much change in Text Alert, with Muintir na Tíre having had to take over the role as the main issuer of texts, and also with new technology being introduced. The new Cairde mobile app from Muintir is an example of this.

5.8 Other Community Alert Activities

The projects undertaken by Community alert groups are many and varied, with one common theme – to improve the quality of life in their areas. Examples include:

5.8.1 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms. We have recently been awarded funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund to roll out these vital devices to elderly and isolated people. This will be done through the Community Alert structure.

5.8.2 *Crime Prevention Ambassadors*. A number of Community Alert Groups have participated in this pilot project. The initiative selected and prepared active older people and community representatives to become Ambassadors to support older and vulnerable people in their community by delivering crime prevention information to them. The project was specifically designed to empower older people within the community by working in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

5.8.3 *Community CCTV*. There is growing interest around the country in providing community CCTV as a crime deterrent and detection measure. Community Alert Groups have been particularly active in this area. However, administrative difficulties have meant the grant programme has practically ground to a halt.

5.8.4 *Bottle in the Fridge*. This is an initiative where people store their medical information in a specially marked bottle in the fridge and place a special sticker inside the front door so that emergency responders will know they are participating in the scheme.

5.8.5 *Remove all Valuables*. This campaign by Cork Community Alert Groups saw the groups, in partnership with Cork county Council, erecting signs to warn owners parking cars to remove or secure their valuables.

6 Issues Arising in Community Alert Groups

6.1 The vast number of contacts between Muintir na Tíre and community groups, enable us to identify the many issues arising. There has been much publicity in recent years suggesting an increase in rural crime. For the first time in several years, recent CSO figures have shown certain crimes increasing in certain areas. This has given credibility to some groups who were being told that the statistics did not support their fears. It is also worth noting though that many areas have shown decreases.

6.2 While rural crime should be highlighted and dealt with, it should not be over hyped as the fear of crime can be almost as harmful as the actual effects of crime, particularly amongst vulnerable and isolated people. However Muintir na Tíre supports the rights of communities to seek to have no crime, or at least a negligible amount.

Appendix A details many of the issues being reported by Community Alert groups around the country. Some may have practical solutions, some many not. We have highlighted what we believe may be practical solutions in the recommendations section. Issues may be broadly summarized as:

6.3 *Seniors Alert Scheme* – the recent fundamental changes to the Seniors Alert Scheme were carried out without adequate consultation. While it led to some improvement, it also created difficulties, particularly for smaller groups, such as Community Alert groups. However Muintir na Tíre will continue to support groups in making applications in any way we can. This programme, which provides socially monitored alarms (eg panic buttons and pendants) to the elderly, has long been a core activity of Community Alert groups, who are the main users of the programme.

6.4 *Garda resources* – the closure of rural Garda stations was rationalized as leading to better policing, with the existing resources being deployed patrolling the area rather than confined to a physical building. Unfortunately this coincided with a general reduction in Garda resources and the public perception is that there was no increase in patrolling. Recent announcements on new recruits and vehicles will hopefully represent an improvement in this area.

6.5 *Judicial system* – these is major concern over the issue of repeat offenders. Several recently reported cases have involved individuals with huge numbers of convictions, often reoffending while on bail for another charge. Similarly there is concern over free legal aid being granted without restriction or any consideration of previous offences. There is a feeling that some of this cost could be re-directed into other areas of the judicial system. There is also much concern over the amount of time taken to get to trial.

6.6 *Deterrent* – There is seen to be a lack of real deterrent to committing crime, particularly for repeat offenders where the punishment is obviously not a deterrent. Recognising that prisons are expensive, we need a suite of solutions which might include lower grade prisons, community service, tagging, curfews, restriction on transportation and other innovative solutions.

6.7 *Funding* – communities are concerned at the imbalance of funding given towards preventative measures such as Community Alert or Text Alert, where the communities themselves have to pay the full costs, including VAT, and the funding given towards the rights of the criminal. This has been alleviated somewhat by the Text Alert Rebate Scheme.

6.8 *Victim support* – there have been some recent improvements in feedback to victims but this needs to be expanded further. Rather than just a letter at the end of the process, victims would appreciate updates along what can be a long process. Also communities who support the Gardaí through Text Alert would value feedback by text, but not at their own expense.

7 Community Policing

7.1 Policing in Ireland is famous for its reliance on the support of communities and the public at large.

7.2 In previous decades, most rural communities had a resident Garda. This changed because of the financial constraints since 2008. Many rural Garda stations were closed. It was explained that resources could be better used by having more Gardaí on patrol rather than sitting in a station. It was promised that community engagement would continue but using such resources as Gardaí being available at certain times in public buildings, such as community centres. This never happened to any great extent.

7.3 During the same period, as resources tightened in Garda districts, one of the first casualties in many was the Community Garda. These were reassigned to roles that were seen as more pressing. While this might have been necessary in the very short term, it has had a long term impact. Most people do not now know a local Garda and this has serious implications for fear of crime, and indeed for the passing of information to An Garda Síochána. Text Alert has alleviated this somewhat, but this is currently a one-way communication tool. Note that this change primarily affected rural communities – greater numbers in urban communities meant community engagement could continue to a great extent.

7.4 During the same period, resources for Community Policing at a central level were also severely cut. The Garda Community Relations office has reduced in numbers to now having only one sergeant responsible for the entire country. While we greatly appreciate his help, and work very well together, this severely curtails what can be achieved in our partnership.

7.5 These inadequate resources, coupled with the Garda management structure, hinder the central dissemination of best practice. This leads to practical difficulties in areas such as Text Alert. None of this is a criticism of individual Gardaí, with whom we have an excellent working relationship. It is simply the end result of inadequate resources.

7.6 We would like to see increased resources at a central level. We would also like to see a return to each community having an allocated Garda, who is known to the community. We appreciate these are operational matters, outside of the direct control of this committee, or indeed the Department itself. However, we believe the issues must be highlighted. In this regard, we welcome the recent report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, particularly in relation to District Policing.

8 Recommendations for Action

8.1 We suggest the establishment of a special purpose committee to examine rural crime. This could be similar to the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) which had a limited time and budget but was asked to make specific and practical recommendations. This would allow for more public consultation that this committee has time for and would instil a sense of participation in communities who took part.

8.2 We strongly support the recommendations of the Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Bill with regard to consecutive sentencing and refusal of bail for repeat offenders. We agree that the rights to freedom and the presumption of innocence need to be weighed against the constitutional protection afforded to a citizen's dwelling and feel that this bill offers a balanced approach to these often conflicting rights.

8.3 We welcome the establishment of the second Special Criminal Court and hope it will significantly reduce the time to process cases. However it must be adequately resourced and not simply see a reallocation of resources from elsewhere in the Courts Service.

8.4 We request a review of the Free Legal Aid programme; of its costs and efficiency of delivery. While recognising a right of legal representation we feel this should be reviewed for repeat offenders, similar to the review of bail above. Consideration should be given to reducing the representation for repeat offenders and treating the costs of such representation as a repayable loan.

8.5 We also request a review of the allocation of resources between crime prevention and crime detection and punishment. We believe a slight shift towards prevention could have significant impact. This would include an expansion of programmes such as Community Alert, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Prevention Ambassadors, etc.

8.6 Such a review should also value voluntary input and examine ways of recognising it. For example it may be possible to make a contribution towards the costs of properly established Text Alert programmes where the communities must cover all costs (texts, insurance, signage, etc.) including the addition of VAT.

8.7 We request a review of the prison system, including a review of the cost/security mix. Such a review should also consider non-custodial options which might be appropriate in certain cases – tagging, curfews, transport restrictions, expanded community service programmes etc.

8.8 We suggest a review of anti-social behaviour in built-up areas, villages or estates, and how it is currently dealt with. In particular the issues of practical and fast sanctions should be examined, as should expediting the ability of a landlord to terminate the lease of an undesirable tenant.

8.9 Current difficulties in the Community CCTV grant scheme need to be resolved. There is funding available to establish new schemes, and many communities ready to do so. However, difficulties, particularly over the role of Data Controller, mean this scheme has effectively ground to a halt.

Appendix A

Specific Issues Arising at Community Alert Meetings

These are issues which have arisen repeatedly at meetings in the recent past. We are reporting them as issues without necessarily commenting on how they can be solved.

1. The need for strategic policy to have adequate deterrents for criminals with multi agency support.
2. Reform of Legal Aid There is a sense of serious imbalance in rights of victims of crime compared to offenders. The public see situations very differently and more often than not all detail is not publicly available. Therefore people feel the system is in favour of the criminal Consider deductions from Benefits. Consider each application as a separate loan.
3. Consider limitations to the abuse of its use. For example, a gang convicted for a raid in Tipperary, had 315 previous convictions.
4. Cease the practice of having multiple Solicitors covering different charges of same individual. One solicitor per client.
5. Provide Legal Aid to Victims of Crime.
6. Provide regular updates to Victims of Crime.
7. Publish submissions made to shorten a convicted criminal's sentence. By this we mean that names of applicants and the submissions that they make on behalf of a criminal be on the record, particularly where public figures are involved.
8. Reform Bail Laws.
9. Introduce GPS / SIM Tagging of graded low risk, early release, or on licence prisoners.
10. Privatise the monitoring of tagged individuals.
11. Introduce a range of alternative unwelcome deterrent options where a fine has not been paid.
12. Develop the use of Community Service Orders as a deterrent particularly for minor local offending.
13. Provide the resources required by the Prison Service and the Probation Service to fund the reforms sought.
14. Introduce a lengthy driving ban (loss of licence) on all individuals who are identified as having been in a vehicle used during the course of a robbery.
15. Introduce a confiscation of passport scheme, for habitual criminals.
16. Extend the Scrap Metal legislation.
17. Restorative justice is seen as a possible solution but at the same time there is a fear of it.
18. Call for a Retail Theft bill to impose a minimum sentence for those found guilty of retail theft while organized as group or gang.
19. Adopt a positive attitude that Reforms will be made, rather than quoting reasons why not.
20. The theft of metal and cable has been prolific and costs to replace and repair are out of proportion to the value taken.
21. Create a specialised unit to combat export of stolen property.
22. Provide more X-ray units at our ports to examine container traffic into and out of the country.
23. Advocate that a three tier system of Low Security - Low Cost, Medium Security and High Security High Cost jails be created. Low Risk offenders are presently taking up high security space that should be put to better use. Prisoners to make a working contribution to society rather than simply enjoy free education.
24. Provide adequate resources to foster rather than barely support Community Alert.



25. Early intervention community development led safety programmes.
26. Further development of crime prevention aspect of community planning.
27. Determine the cost of State funding given in various ways, by various providers of services to the minority of the Irish population who commit an enormous percentage of burglaries, robberies, and fraud.
28. Determine the real extent of cross jurisdiction policing and how this operates on the ground. This is particularly important in anticipation of Brexit.
29. The need for a better and more practical system of property marking and tracing.



ALAN TODD
ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE
OPERATIONAL SUPPORT DEPARTMENT

Oireachtas Committee on
Justice and Equality
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Our Ref: 2504495

Your Ref:

5 October 2018

I am Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), currently heading the Operational Support Department and based at PSNI Headquarters in Belfast.

I have had senior responsibility for the delivery of local policing for over 12 years, as the Operational District Commander for Newry, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, and as both the Chief Superintendent and Assistant Chief Constable for local policing across Northern Ireland. I am also the National Lead in the UK for Police Contact Management and am a Director with the Police ICT Company in London.

I have had the privilege to work closely with An Garda Síochána (AGS) over many years on cross-border investigations, cross border operations and cross border major event planning. I am a graduate of the AGS Executive Development Programme with The Smurfit Business School at UCD, and am the co-author of the Cross-Border Strategies involving AGS, PSNI and the respective Justice Departments.

Since Early 2018, I have been involved in a review of Local Policing within PSNI. This review became necessary because, our society is changing, crime is changing and how we deliver policing is changing.

While crime in NI has reduced significantly over the last ten years, we know from experience, that the complexity and type of work faced by policing has become more challenging, including;

- Public protection work - increasing vulnerability in society is also having an impact on policing. PSNI regularly deal with around 150 calls for service each day every day linked to a person with identified mental health issues or related vulnerability.
- The growth of cyber enabled crime

- More diverse communities and
- An ageing population

In addition to these changing and growing demands, we have a reducing police budget and fewer police officers and police staff.

These impacts are felt right across policing and indeed our partners. I would, however, contend that the biggest impacts are likely to be felt in local policing, where there is something of a triple impact.

The first impact is, that in organisations where resources are under pressure, then local policing, as a resource intensive area, will be required to make savings/reduce numbers. This may also be accompanied by consolidation or centralisation of some functions/resources to achieve economies of scale.

The second impact is that, with the increasing complexity in demand, more specialists skills and roles are being deployed within policing to meet these demands. This increase in specialism (public-protection, cyber-crime, inter-agency working) inevitably serves to draw further resources away from local policing.

The third impact, is that with increasing demands and reducing resources, the amount of reactive service provision required to be delivered through local officers and its increasing complexity, does put added pressure on proactive & preventative work and community engagement roles. It is my view that is reflected in;

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue services (HMICFRS) National Effectiveness Review 2017 – Recommendation #1 on the functions of Neighbourhood Policing Teams,
- The United Kingdom's College of Policing's 'Modernising Neighbourhood Policing' guidelines published in 2018
- The Police Foundations Report – The Future of Neighbourhood Policing also published in 2018

Whilst these choices have a sound basis in 'Threat, Risk and Harm' and in policing keeping people safe, the inevitable reduction in the visibility of local police, perhaps combined with local station closures has an impact of public confidence in policing and satisfaction in local services previously based on visibility, accessibility and familiarity. I think it can also be argued that some of these impacts are felt more in Rural Communities including Rural Border Communities. In recognition of this PSNI have had, for some years a 'Rural Crime Lead' who oversees the PSNI's Rural Crime Strategy & related delivery. This sits alongside established relationships and practices established under the original Cross Border Policing Strategy and which the refreshed Cross Border Policing Strategy seeks to further develop under a specific strand of work;

Assistant Chief Constable Operational Support Department
PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT5 6LE
 Tel: (028) 9070 0048 Email: alan.todd@psni.pnn.police.uk

Policing with the Community in Rural Areas

- 3.1 Continue to build on existing practical cooperation to develop a joint An Garda Síochána / Police Service of Northern Ireland Crime Prevention Strategy for the border region which will assist the joint An Garda Síochána / Police Service of Northern Ireland Tasking and Coordination group.
- 3.2 To share training and experience in relation to liaison with minority communities, including joint-training of Ethnic Liaison Officers.

In conclusion, funding for policing is a political choice. There are pressures, there are challenges but there are also opportunities and answers. Policing will need to change. Service delivery will need to change. Choices will have to be made. Communities and other stakeholders need to be part of that discussion. It is my view that there are opportunities which if properly considered and well delivered can continue to keep people safe and continue to build confidence in policing.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



ALAN TODD

Assistant Chief Constable Operational Support Department
PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT5 6LE
Tel: (028) 9070 0048 Email: alan.todd@psni.pnn.police.uk

Chair, Committee Members,

Thank you for the invite to meet with you today.

As the people who deal with the victims of rural crime and particularly burglaries every day, An Garda Síochána is acutely conscious of the impact this crime has on people, families and communities, both urban and rural, particularly vulnerable victims.

Burglary is not just an economic crime, it is one that can have a devastating impact on people emotionally and personally.

That is why we are so determined to tackle it:

In November 2015, An Garda Síochána introduced Operation Thor. It was a new approach with a large number of units across a wide-range of different areas and disciplines working together to prevent and detect burglaries based on analysis of crime trends and intelligence to target criminal gangs and repeat offenders. It saw us deny criminal gangs the use of the motorway network and increase patrolling in areas worst affected by burglaries:

It has resulted in many of those involved in burglary being arrested and charged.

Under Operation Thor, since November 2015:

- Over 8,300 arrests have been made
- More than 9,500 charges preferred
- 34,000 searches undertaken
- 203,771 patrols undertaken
- 143,231 checkpoints mounted

In addition, we have heavily publicised locally and nationally crime prevention advice through our "Lock Up and Light Up" campaign.

All this activity has seen residential burglaries reduced by 34% and non-residential burglaries down 23% since November 2015.

We have maintained that focus in 2018. This year up to the end of August, residential burglaries are down 17% on the same period the year before.

But we won't be complacent, particularly when we are coming into the time of the year when burglaries traditionally increase due to the longer winter nights.

We also know that while we have significantly reduced burglaries, this is no comfort to those who are burglary victims or are in fear of being a victim, particularly elderly people living in isolated areas.

In this regard, the Winter Phase of Operation Thor has started. This will see increased patrolling and checkpoints with a particular focus again on criminal gangs and repeat offenders.

The Assistant Commissioner, Special Crime Operations, is meeting with all Detective Superintendents from across the country tomorrow to re-enforce this message.

I hope you don't mind Chair, but I would also like to take this opportunity to ask the public to Lock Up and Light Up, particularly at evening time. During the winter, nearly 40 per cent of burglaries happen between 5pm and 10pm. Burglars also are most likely to enter homes through the rear door or a window. So I would ask the public to use timer switches to make your homes look occupied, lock your doors and windows, and not to keep large amounts of cash in your home. We also ask people

to mark their property so when we do recover property – and we do recover a lot of property each year – we can return it to them.

Lastly, it is vital that people report crimes. We can only investigate crimes reported to us and each and every crime is investigated.

Thefts from farms have fallen nationally by 8% in the last year, but again we are not being complacent.

We fully recognise the terrible impact theft from farms can have on the livelihoods of farmers and their families sense of security, so we are continuing to work with local communities, community groups and farming bodies to reduce farm theft. For example, this was a major focus for us during the recent Ploughing Championships.

Again, we would advise the farming community to restrict access to their yard, lock gates when not in use, and ensure the property is well lit as more farm thefts occur at night than during the day.

Farmers should also ensure that machinery, tools and vehicles are secured properly, and details such as serial numbers or property markings are recorded and photographed.

Community Policing

On community policing, An Garda Síochána is dedicated to policing with the consent and support of the community.

We have a strong connection with the community we serve and maintaining and enhancing that bond is one of our key priorities.

But we recognise that we do need to change in this area. Society is changing at a rapid pace and we have to keep up. Society is demanding a more responsive service and we will meet that demand.

With our numbers starting to increase we can put in place measures to deliver a policing service that is better positioned to address the concerns of local communities.

We will ensure community policing is the ethos of policing in Ireland.

As identified by the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, like many police services around the world, An Garda Síochána has struggled to put in place structures and practices that supports a truly community-orientated police service.

The Commission acknowledged the work done and innovation shown by many excellent Gardaí in this area, but found that our implementation of community policing lacked specific direction.

As international research has shown, changing this requires more than just a technical fix. It needs restructuring, decentralisation of decision making, greater empowerment of front-line officers, and, most critically, having an external focus where we actively and regularly listen and react to the needs of the community.

It requires that all our personnel have a strong community-orientation.

As the Commissioner has said, the Commission on the Future of Policing provides us a pathway in this area and in other areas to improve our service in conjunction with our policing partners.

In this regard, following extensive research, we are developing a new model of community policing based on delivering localised policing services to meet the differing needs of different communities.

It will see our systems and structures re-organised with the aim of having a real and deep understanding of what our communities and citizens require from a modern policing service. It will reinforce that communities and their needs are at the heart of the organisation.

The Division will co-ordinate all community issues and develop tailored policing responses to communities based on their needs.

This approach will be part of the new proof of concept divisional policing model that we will be introducing in four divisions – Galway, Mayo, Cork city, and Kevin Street – in the first quarter of 2019.

We are a public service and must provide a quality service that meets the needs of the public. That is the focus of our approach to community policing and policing in general.

Thank you.



**Opening Statement by IFA President Joe Healy
to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality on
Community Policing and Rural Crime**

Wednesday 17th October 2018

Chairman, Deputies and Senators,

Thank you for the invitation to IFA to address you today.

I know that you are well aware of the real anxiety among the farming community and rural communities generally, over crime in the countryside.

Theft of valuables from rural homes and of livestock and machinery from farms is a major concern. Many farmers and other rural dwellers are living in real fear for their personal safety and the safety of their families. That is why it is so important it is addressed as a matter of urgency.

I am joined here today by IFA Deputy President Richard Kennedy and who has responsibility for Rural Crime within the organisation and Barry Carey IFA Crime Prevention Officer.

Farm crimes reported include:

- instances of farm machinery being reported as stolen and vehicle theft;
- theft of livestock, including instances of cattle rustling, and
- burglaries or break-ins to farm houses.

We believe that there is considerable under-reporting of rural crime, in particular for the theft of machinery, fuels and other items from farmyards and lesser break-ins to the family home.

The increase in the theft of agricultural equipment and livestock can be financially devastating for farmers, who like all rural dwellers are very vulnerable when it comes to criminality.

This vulnerability is compounded by geographic and service isolation. It is IFA's contention that rural dwellers and farmers are not at present guaranteed the same level of service and security that applies in urban areas.

There is also a requirement for the more accurate reporting of crimes committed in rural areas. Currently, all vehicle crimes are recorded on the PULSE system as "Unlawful Taking of a Vehicle".

IFA has called for the separate classification of Rural Crimes to give a more accurate account of the problems that exist.

IFA Submission to the Policy Authority

Earlier this year, we made a submission to the Policing Authority on the Policing Plan for 2019, where we set down key priorities and made recommendations on:

- Organisational Development and Capacity Improvement
- Confronting Crime
- Roads Policing
- Community Policing and Public Safety

IFA also presented our proposals to the *Commission on the Future of Policing*.

Organisational Development and Capacity Improvement

Over the last year, several serious incidents have occurred in on farms. The quality of crime investigations in such incidents needs to be addressed.

Some alarming issues were noted across various districts such as:

- a. **Slow Responses**
- b. **Boundary Issues** - where incidents have occurred within a short distance of a Garda Station (1Km) and are passed on to a Station 22km away. As a result, culprits and persons of interest were not apprehended.
- c. **Lack of Industry / Farming / Rural practices knowledge** by investigating members was quite apparent during follow up investigations.
- d. **No report back** or incident updates to affected persons.

To address these issues and to improve the quality of crime investigation, IFA recommends that *An Garda Síochána* be given the necessary resources and training on the nature, structure and profile on farming, agriculture and rural life.

IFA has offered to assist in supporting the development of a module and recommends that a separate Rural / Farming / Agricultural unit be included in recruitment training at the **National Garda College**.

Confronting Crime

- Cross Border Crime

Throughout 2017, there continued to be an increase of thefts of livestock, machinery, tools and equipment. Cross border crime continues to be a major part of this.

Recovered items by *An Garda Síochána* in Ireland have come from the UK and Northern Ireland. Items stolen in Ireland have been intercepted on route to Northern Ireland.

IFA recommends additional support in the form of:

- a more streamlined crime reporting system,
- immediate sharing of intelligence, and
- information exchange, which would increase the level of visibility and awareness, particularly where agricultural crime has been reported in border areas.

IFA believes that greater inter-agency cross-border cooperation between the Departments of Agriculture North and South, Customs on both sides of the border, *An Garda Síochána* and the Policing Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) would be instrumental in tackling this type of cross border crime.

- **Brexit Preparedness**

As we approach Brexit D-Day, there is a requirement for a full review of all operational structures.

Should border controls for trade and immigration be reintroduced, additional resources will be required such as an increase in manpower, vehicles, aircraft and technological equipment such as CCTV systems for vehicles.

In addition, equipment will be required to ensure facial recognition to observe / monitor and manage all the border crossings by the *An Garda Síochána*, in conjunction with other agencies.

- **Cybercrime**

The level of sophistication of Cyber Crimes both here in Ireland and internationally is of great concern to all communities.

IFA believe it is important for *An Garda Síochána* to be fully resourced on all aspects of the risks associated with the Department of Agriculture's payment systems and specifically, the increasing volume of farm business that is now carried out online.

Community Policing and Public Safety

- Crime Prevention

IFA has been very proactive in the area of crime prevention in joint initiatives with *An Garda Síochána* such as Crimestoppers, Community Text Alerts and Theftstop.

IFA recommends that *An Garda Síochána* engage with rural communities more frequently to promote a greater awareness of crime prevention. That there would be:

- a national and local communications plan using TV, radio and print to demonstrate crime preventative measures, give updates on current crime trends and highlight successful preventions, convictions and prosecutions.
- continued engagement with communities through meetings, events, rural shows etc.

Roads Policing

- Preventing Criminals the use of Roads

There is a major requirement for the development of a national strategy around community visibility and supports available to local communities.

The recent success of operations, known as THOR is proof that intense patrolling of national primary routes is vital in the fight against crime. The identification of road networks used by criminal elements and the ease by which they can travel from city to city in short periods must be curtailed.

IFA recommends the greater use of community CCTV schemes, supported by the Department of Justice which would give *An Garda Síochána* greater coverage of specific areas. Remote visual monitoring and in-station viewing would also be effective tools in combating crime.

- Garda Visibility

The lack of Garda presence / patrols in certain communities is affecting public confidence. IFA's network of 946 branches have made it known that Garda visibility or the lack of it is a worrying fact in rural Ireland.

There is a need for greater patrolling of rural Ireland. Farmers need to see a much greater presence of *An Garda Síochána* on the road.

IFA proposes the deployment of additional resources in terms of manpower, vehicles and equipment. This can be achieved by increasing the Garda Reserve to achieve greater community engagement and thereby supporting *An Garda Síochána* with local involvement and assistance in the overall Community Policing Plan.

In the UK, the various police constabularies have exactly the same rural crime issues as we have here in Ireland. To address this, a small but very effective Rural Crime Task Force has been established within the police forces, to tackle specific issues.

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) has been actively engaged at community level in supporting this initiative, by assisting the Task Force with intelligence and reporting of suspicious activities.

Chairman, today, I am calling for the support of this Committee to establish of a similar type of Garda operation to tackle rural crime in Ireland which would provide for:

- additional Garda presence and resources in rural communities;
- the targeting of criminal gangs operating in rural communities;
- a review of sentencing for rural crimes and repeat offenders;
- a review of bail conditions for repeat offenders;
- a review of Garda divisional boundaries, and
- a national Garda policy on criminal lurching and trespass

Chairman, IFA will continue to campaign for support from elected representatives and Government to protect rural dwellers and businesses.

Today, we are seeking further engagement from this Committee on IFA's activities on rural crime prevention, together with your support for IFA's initiatives in this area.

We look forward to a constructive discussion with you all.

Thank you.



ICSA presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice & Equality

Community Policing and Rural Crime

17 October 2018

Further Details:

*Eddie Punch (General Secretary)
Seamus Sherlock (Rural Development Chair)
Laura Starnes (Operations Manager)*

*ICSA
3 Gandon Court,
Fairgreen,
Portlaoise.
Phone: 057-8662120*

www.icsaireland.com

Thank you chairman for the invitation to this meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Justice & Equality Committee. We welcome the opportunity to engage with you on the topic of Community Policing and Rural Crime.

There is no doubt that many in rural communities are living in fear of violent assault and crime. Many more are frustrated at the level of theft of property in isolated rural locations. There is a sense that the Gardai are under-resourced leaving rural communities vulnerable. Worse, there is a sense that criminals are operating with impunity. They rarely get caught because the resources to investigate are too scarce, and when they do, the justice system seems to bend over backwards to be lenient.

Last year ICSA, in conjunction with Waterford Institute of Technology, published a series of reports on agricultural crime. The reports were authored by Dr Kathleen Moore Walsh and Louise Walsh of WIT.

The reports were based on a survey of 861 farmers across Ireland and make for stark reading.

The farmers were surveyed in late 2016. The first report outlined the following findings:

- Of the 861 respondents, 66% had experienced some form of crime which impacted them or their farms.
- 41% of respondents had been the victim of a crime more than once.
- While theft, vandalism and criminal damage were the most prevalent types of crime, 5% experienced criminal assault, which in actual terms was 76 cases.

The second report quantified the average value of theft on farms at €1,818 and that incidents of vandalism and criminal damage cost the farmer on average some €360.

This report also highlighted the fact that a significant level of agricultural crime does not get reported to insurance companies. 94 incidents of theft and 348 incidents of vandalism, criminal damage or trespass was not reported to insurance. This reflects that fact that the cost of claiming against you own insurance is perceived as not being worth it, due to fears of a higher insurance premium in the future.

However, the third report showed that farmers were also reluctant to report crime to the Gardaí. 45% of respondents did not report instance of agricultural crime to Gardaí. The reasons can be summed as a sense of hopelessness that anything could be done.

In fact, the level of recovery of stolen assets was 8% among the respondents.

What the ICSA/ WIT reports show is that rural crime is very much under estimated by official figures from An Garda Síochána.

It also very much indicates that criminal activity is widespread and the impact is felt by many people in rural Ireland. Farmers are especially vulnerable.

While we are all aware of the terrifying ordeals of individuals attacked in their own homes or on their properties, there is a lot less awareness that farmers are regularly intimidated by trespassers on their land. We in ICSA regularly hear from members about uninvited individuals coming on to

their land, with lurchers or with the apparent intention of shooting birds or lamping foxes. However, in reality, many feel that this is just a front to size up a farm and its assets.

I don't want to over-dramatise it; but most country people will tell you they are living in fear of someone driving in; or in fear of being on their own in the middle of the night.

There is no doubt that people feel that the Gardai have inadequate resources. The problem is not so much the closure of Garda stations but the time it takes to get a squad car out when something goes wrong.

The feeling among many is that it is better to call your neighbour than to call the Gardaí when you feel threatened.

Many farmers are spending money trying to make their premises more secure. However, solutions are not cheap for individual farm families.

A number of communities have come together to install CCTV cameras. There is a scheme to grant aid this kind of initiative but so far uptake has been low.

A real problem is that communities have to do a lot of fundraising to provide matching funds and that there is an ongoing cost.

ICSA also encourages farmers to mark their vehicles and farm machinery. There are a number of ways of doing this so that a stolen vehicle can be identified, but it is not obvious to thieves when they are stealing it.

However, there is no substitute for having Gardaí on the ground. We need local communities to be on first name terms with Gardaí. ICSA is concerned that restrictions on Garda overtime is impacting the ability to fight crime and to be on the case rapidly.

We want to see a higher Garda presence in rural areas, and the ability to respond to calls for help as fast as possible.

ICSA is also concerned that criminals who continuously re-offend get treated too lightly by the criminal justice system. All too often, we see crime committed by individuals who should be in jail. We want to see stiffer sentencing for repeat offenders. The purpose of the criminal justice system should also be about protecting innocent people in their homes.

If there is one message I want to get across loud and clear, it is that rural crime continues to be a major issue. I think the ICSA reports show that we should not assume that Gardai figures on crime tell the whole story.

People in rural Ireland are living in fear and it is time to prioritise the fight against crime, it is time to deliver enough resources to the Gardai and it is time to crack down on re-offending.

Thank you .

