

Opening Statement by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality on the findings and recommendations of the Report by the Inspectorate on Crime Investigation

Good afternoon Chairman, Deputies and Senators. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting the Garda Inspectorate here today. Firstly, I would like to introduce the Inspectorate team. I am Robert K Olson Chief Inspector of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate and I was appointed to this position in June, 2012 having previously served as a Deputy Chief Inspector on the establishment of the Inspectorate in 2006 and held Chief of Police/Commissioner positions in several large US cities, retiring from active policing after 38 years service in 2004.

Today I am joined by our two Deputy Chief Inspectors Mark Toland and Debra Kirby.

Deputy Chief Inspector Toland, who was the lead on this Crime Investigation inspection, joined the Inspectorate in June, 2012 having retired at the rank of Chief Superintendent from the London Metropolitan Police Service after 30 years of service. He was awarded the Queen's Medal for Distinguished Police Services in 2010.

Debra Kirby was appointed as Deputy Chief Inspector in January last year, having served with the Chicago Police Department for 27 years. She retired at the rank of Chief having served in a variety of commands including General Counsel to the Superintendent (Commissioner).

Crime Investigation Report

On 11th November 2014, the Minister for Justice and Equality published the Inspectorate's report, *Crime Investigation*.

For over 2 years, the Inspectorate examined the policies, practices and procedures used in the prevention and investigation of crime. The inspection also included a

review of the allocation of Garda resources, the use of technology, the management of caseloads and monitored the progress of individual investigations.

The report runs to more than 500 pages and contains eleven parts dealing with every aspect of crime investigation, from crime prevention, crime recording, the experience of victims, through to crime detection and final disposition. Following the appointment of Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D in May, 2014, the Inspectorate was requested to consider the issues identified in the Guerin Report. It was not within the Inspectorate's remit to duplicate Mr Guerin's work but rather to review the process issues identified in the report relevant to Garda Síochána practices and procedures. Consequently the contents of the Guerin Report were considered against the backdrop of the Inspectorate's ongoing Crime Investigation inspection and the report includes an addendum covering same. The Inspectorate references best international practice throughout to inform our national standards and to ensure consistency in victim care and crime investigation practices.

The report identified many areas of good practice in different garda divisions and in different parts of the country. These include a new Community Policing Model, a range of Crime Prevention Initiatives, cross-district Crime Operations, a new approach to integrated briefings and a number of technological initiatives including a Garda Portal for Criminal Intelligence Officers. Such elements of good practice, however, while used in some divisions and in some units, are not consistent across the Garda Síochána. In any organisation of this size, it is important to ensure that good practice is consistently observed.

The report identifies many deficiencies in systems and practices. These include:

- Serious failures in the recording, classification and reclassification of crime incidents;
- Inconsistencies in the claiming of detections;
- A lack of oversight of the decision making process;
- No standardised crime management process for reviewing, allocating and monitoring of investigations and ensuring each investigation is effective;

- An absence of intrusive supervision of crime investigations;
- Inexperienced gardaí investigating serious crimes;
- A new roster that does not adequately support the investigative process;
- Concerns over the timeliness of investigations;
- Inconsistent approach to updating victims of crime;
- Foundation training provided pre-2014 for investigating crime does not adequately equip gardaí for the task;
- Lack of IT and equipment to support the investigation of crime;
- Deficiencies in offender management practices particularly in the taking of fingerprints.

This Report should be viewed as a watershed opportunity in Irish policing it contains more than 200 significant recommendations to be implemented on an interim, short, medium and long term basis, to ensure that crime investigation in the Garda Síochána is in line with, and can exceed international best practice. Some of these recommendations have been made in previous Inspectorate reports, but have not been fully implemented, and are, as a result, even more urgent today. Our objective with this report is to help make the Garda Síochána a better service – better for the public, for victims of crime, for the members themselves and for the criminal justice system in Ireland. A victim of crime anywhere in Ireland should receive the same high quality service.

Several of the crime investigation issues in the report are not the sole responsibility of the Garda Síochána and the report highlights how other parts of the criminal justice system can influence the investigation of crime. Inefficiencies in the system must be addressed in a holistic manner by regular collective collaboration between all criminal justice partners. Twenty-two of the report's recommendations request action from a combination of criminal justice partners to improve the standards of crime investigation in Ireland on a wide variety of issues.

Some of the key recommendations in the report relate to technology, restructuring and improved decision-making and supervision. Several significant recommendations are made on the crime counting process. Important recommendations are made on

improving the service to victims of crime. Training is also targeted as an area for improvement. There are critical process areas including custody, fingerprinting, bail and warrant management that need to be enhanced.

Many of our recommendations depend on the acquisition of modern technology used by most international police services. This technology can provide the modern tools the Garda Síochána needs to inform more efficient and effective operational decisions. Technology cannot, however, take the place of strong management practices, intrusive supervision and robust governance in the investigation of crime. The Inspectorate welcomes Minister Fitzgerald's and the Government's commitment to secure funding to upgrade garda IT systems and for the new police authority and the Cabinet Committee on Justice Reform to oversee the Garda programme of reforms recommended by the Inspectorate.

It should also be pointed out that the Inspectorate was impressed by the hundreds of hard working and dedicated rank and file officers, reserves and support staff we met in every region, that were doing their best to get the job done, notwithstanding these inefficient processes, dated technology and poor management practices identified in the report.

To date the Inspectorate has received a substantial amount of positive feedback from stakeholders and particularly from garda rank and file members. The full report has been downloaded approximately 10,000 times from our website and has also been hosted on other websites. The Inspectorate remains committed to ensuring it recommends those improvements that will advance the Garda Síochána to a police service recognised for international best practice.

My colleagues and I are happy to take any questions from you.

ENDS

14th January, 2015