

CIGIREACHT AN GHARDA SÍOCHÁNA
GARDA SÍOCHÁNA INSPECTORATE

Post Implementation Review

Crime Investigation Report 2014
Recommendation 9.16

Property and Exhibit Management

July 2024

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Introduction

A Post Implementation Review (PIR) is conducted to verify if a recommendation made in an Inspectorate report has been fully implemented, and if so, whether it is achieving the intended outcome(s). Following an internal assessment process, Recommendation 9.16 in the Inspectorate's *Crime Investigation (2014)* report was selected for a PIR. To expedite the review, a decision was taken to focus on the policies, procedures and practices within the Garda Síochána for managing property and exhibits with specific reference to drugs evidence. The terms of reference for this review are set out in Appendix A.

In preparation for the commencement of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, and the establishment of the Policing and Community Safety Authority, the Inspectorate and the Policing Authority decided to jointly conduct a PIR. This review was led by the Inspectorate in line with its statutory mandate and provided a good opportunity for joint working with staff from the Policing Authority.

Background

The *Crime Investigation (2014)* inspection found that some property stores were overflowing, no clear system existed for finding individual items, and in some stations exhibits and other property were found in offices and lockers. It also identified that the staffing model for property management was an inconsistent mix of garda members and garda staff. In the view of the Inspectorate, this role did not require the use of sworn members. At the time of that inspection, the Garda Síochána was in the process of rolling out a Property and Exhibits Management System (PEMS). This was not a national property management IT system and consisted of local standalone databases operating independently from other PEMS stores, the Garda National Technical Bureau (GNTB) and Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) systems. The Inspectorate concluded that the Garda Síochána should develop an electronic system that tracks exhibits from crime scenes to laboratories for analysis and be capable of integration with other garda and key partner agency IT systems.

Crime Investigation Report – Recommendation 9.16

To address the concerns identified during the inspection, the following recommendation was made:

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conduct an urgent examination of the current process for exhibit and property management.

This recommendation contained six key actions (see Appendix A), four of which were examined during this review. These were the implementation of an integrated IT property management system, its national roll out across all divisions, the development of a national drug register, and the nomination of members with responsibility for managing forensic samples. These actions and the progress in relation to their implementation are discussed at the end of this report.

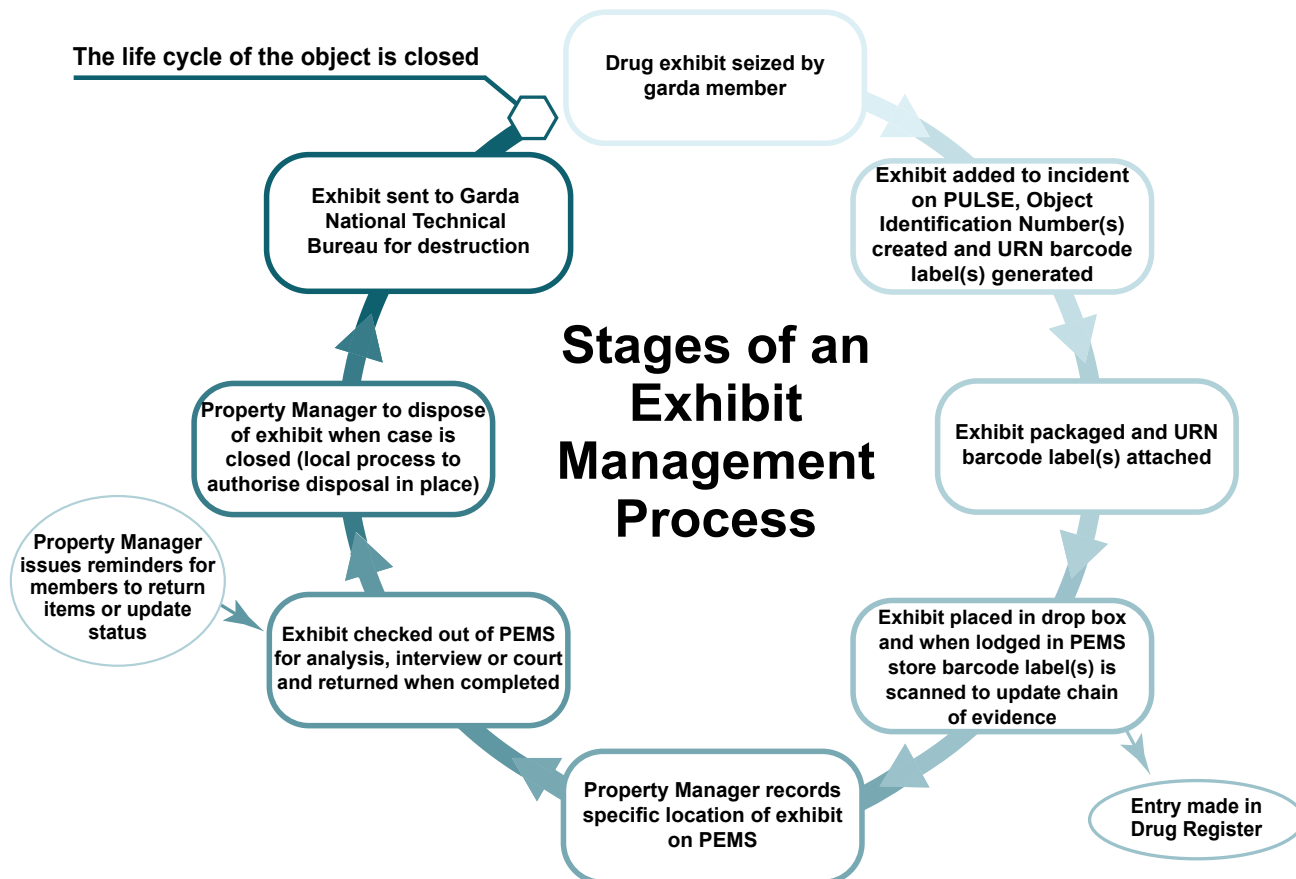
Garda Síochána Response to the Recommendation

The Garda Síochána informed the Inspectorate in 2021 that this recommendation was implemented through the development of a PEMS IT system to electronically manage and track all property and exhibits coming into its possession. The Property and Exhibits Management System Part 2 (PEMS2) was rolled out in November 2019, accompanied by a policy and a HQ Directive. Further developments included the introduction of a drugs register, drop boxes (secure safes with an access chute through which exhibits are deposited), technology to transfer the records for crime scene exhibits such as photographs, finger and palm prints, and the identification of members responsible for managing exhibits, known as Exhibit Liaison Officers (ELOs).

Methodology

The Garda Commissioner was notified about the commencement of this PIR and the intention to visit Donegal, Laois/Offaly, Kerry and Dublin Metropolitan Region West divisions. A familiarisation visit was conducted by the PIR team to Kevin Street Garda Station in Dublin and a briefing was provided by Limerick Division, which manages property and exhibits through the divisional Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF). This provided an opportunity to confirm the key stages of the property management process for drug exhibits which are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Stages of the Drug Exhibit Management Process



Source: Garda Síochána, adapted by the Garda Inspectorate

An information request was submitted to obtain all policy and procedural guidance relating to PEMS and drugs exhibits. In addition, a self-assessment questionnaire was sent to the four divisions. During divisional visits, the majority of locations used to store property were inspected and a sample of drug exhibits seized during the first half of 2023 were checked to see if they could be easily located and were correctly packaged. Meetings also took place with the GNTB, the Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (DOCB), FSI and the business lead for PEMS and drugs. The business lead advised that a review of the PEMS2 Policy and Procedure documents had recently commenced.

Internal Audit

The Garda Internal Audit Service published an audit report into property and exhibit management in July 2023. This indicated an 'unsatisfactory' assurance level and identified the following five high-priority matters requiring attention:

- > PEMS policy governance;
- > Divisional property stores capacity;
- > Garda National Repository;
- > Items being stored outside of divisional property stores; and
- > PEMS training.

Findings and Assessment

This review focused on whether four of the six key actions in the recommendation had been implemented. This identified five areas of concern and elements of good practice.

Property and exhibit management was included in the risk registers for the four divisions inspected with actions identified to mitigate the specific risks. However, despite the unsatisfactory assurance level identified in the 2023 audit report, it was not included on the corporate risk register.

The description of risks recorded by the four divisions visited are summarised in Figure 2. The majority of these are discussed in this report and, if addressed as recommended, should be mitigated. This review recognises the requirement for divisions to have property and exhibit management on their risk registers. Each register had actions not yet complete, many of which could not be resolved locally and required organisational action.

Figure 2: Description of Risks Recorded by the Four Divisions Visited



Source: Garda Síochána, adapted by the Garda Inspectorate

Five Areas of Concern

1. Resources

This review found that there was no demand-led resourcing model in the divisions inspected. In some divisions, two garda staff were appointed, one as the PEMS manager and one as an assistant. There was no staffing to property ratio and the allocation of resources lacked any analysis of whether the number of staff was sufficient to manage the quantity of exhibits retained. This was further complicated in some divisions with multiple PEMS stores where an increased number of garda staff PEMS managers were appointed but some were not assigned on a full-time basis and were performing other administrative roles.

In one division, where the new Garda Operating Model had been fully introduced and a single PEMS store operated, the resourcing model was easier to manage and worked better. The single store required the use of garda members in satellite stations to support the PEMS manager by regularly transferring exhibits from drop boxes or secure temporary stores to the divisional store.

This review found PEMS managers to be very committed to the role and working hard to deliver a professional service. The majority of PEMS stores were open and accessible during office hours; however, there was still a requirement for members to safely lodge exhibits at other times. This presented challenges to garda members requiring access and resulted in an over reliance on drop boxes or other temporary store arrangements.

An additional challenge was identified with drug items as there remains a legal barrier preventing garda staff from handling them. To address this, a garda member was assigned the role of Drugs Liaison Officer (DLO) in each division. This person supports the ELO in the transport of all exhibits including drugs to GNTB or FSI.

Corrective Action Required

This review recognises the restriction imposed on establishing a single divisional PEMS store when working within the confines of the existing estate and the complexities presented by the larger three-county divisions. Where a single divisional store existed, there was greater consistency in the end-to-end process for managing exhibits. Irrespective of the number of PEMS stores in a division, the role of the PEMS manager should be performed by garda staff. In order to enable this, a legislative amendment is required to empower PEMS managers to handle drug exhibits. Each division should have sufficient resources allocated to meet the property management demands of its respective geographical area.

2. Training and Awareness

PEMS IT training was delivered through an online course but at the time of conducting this review only 18% of the garda workforce had completed it. The review team was told of incorrectly packaged exhibits being presented to PEMS managers by untrained members and the lack of training manifested itself in other ways such as insufficient knowledge about the disposal process.

Prior to 2019, in-person training for PEMS managers was available through the Garda College. However, the review team was told that this had stopped when everyone who required training at that time had received it. While the majority of personnel working in PEMS in the divisions visited had completed online PEMS training, only a few had received in-person training. The review team also met PEMS managers who were assigned without the provision of any training.

The PEMS2 policy states that the benefit of PEMS2 is that it will deliver *'more effective management information reports for property, exhibits and pertinent vehicles'*. The trained managers who met the review team did not know how to run such reports and this review was unable to establish if the generation of management information reports from PEMS was included in the training course. The absence of a PEMS managers' course since 2019 coupled with the fact that PEMS managers could not access or generate some of the reports that PEMS is capable of producing, raised concerns in relation to the oversight and management of the system. The absence of comprehensive training for PEMS managers is a risk that must be addressed. The review team was told that a PEMS manager training approach document has been submitted to the Garda

College and an offer has been made by the College to assist in whatever way required in the delivery of this training. A technical issue had existed as a barrier to the delivery of PEMS training but this is reported as resolved and an online PEMS manager IT training platform is now available for use.

Insufficient training in PEMS has also manifested itself in some unnecessary arrangements that have been put in place to deal with matters the system is capable of addressing. These include retaining separate excel databases in order to address specific divisional needs; however, this results in inconsistencies between divisions and in some cases within districts in the same division. Some PEMS staff had introduced procedures which enhanced the efficiency of the property management process or self-developed an awareness of PEMS and used features that others were not aware of. Unfortunately, there was no organisational mechanism for sharing good practice or upskilling staff, and learning was not shared across the organisation.

Corrective Action Required

Organisationally, there is a training need in relation to PEMS for the entire workforce. While the online module provides some key learning, supervision of the training through PAF involvement is needed in order to ensure the training is completed by the 82% of the organisation yet to do so. While the online training course provides an introduction to PEMS for PEMS managers, they require more comprehensive training in order to utilise the system effectively and efficiently to deliver the policy requirement of providing 'more effective management information reports...'. Additionally, the learning and experience of some PEMS managers needs to be communicated to their peers through a good practice and knowledge sharing forum.

3. Processes

As shown in Figure 1, there are a number of stages involved in the exhibit management process including seizure and packaging, recording, storage and handling and disposal. The review team conducted a drug exhibit sample audit during each PEMS store visit. This included an examination of the storage, packaging, labelling and chain of evidence for each item. Across all stages of the process, the review team found inconsistencies and variations, as well as evidence of good practice. While specific issues presented across different divisions, there was an overall lack of clarity regarding the correct process to be followed at each stage.

3.1 Seizure and Packaging

The process for seizure and packaging of an exhibit requires it to be placed in a secure, tamper-proof bag with the object number and corresponding barcodes and QR codes clearly visible. It is then placed in the drop box/temporary storage facility or lodged directly in the PEMS store.

Generally, garda members who regularly seize exhibits and prepare them for lodgement in the PEMS store were familiar with the correct packaging and labelling requirements. PEMS staff told the review team that if they received exhibits which were incorrectly packaged, they refused to accept them and returned them to the garda member or their supervisor for

correction. This was more common with less experienced members and it was reported that packaging issues were usually resolved quickly. This quality assurance role is welcomed.

The availability of exhibit bags was identified as a challenge in some busier divisions as once a drugs exhibit is subjected to a presumptive drugs test (PDT), a second bag is required. A PDT is forensically validated and approved drug testing equipment for cannabis and cocaine. It provides a relatively instantaneous result which informs but is currently not binding in the criminal justice process. The process involves cutting open the exhibit bag, testing the substance and placing the exhibit and original bag inside a new bag. This makes the bags single use, and a good suggestion was made to create bags with a second seal to allow the original exhibit bag to be resealed following a PDT.

3.2 Recording

The HQ Directive states that PEMS *'maintains a full electronic chain of evidence for all exhibits associated with a PULSE Incident'*. Members raised concerns that the integrity of the chain of evidence could be compromised as a result of the use of both electronic records and paper notebooks to record the transfer of exhibits. It was not possible to consistently use PEMS to record the transfer of exhibits between members as to do so electronically requires easy access to barcode scanners and there was limited availability of this equipment. The PEMS2 procedure document states *'the chain of custody (evidence) of exhibits will be electronically recorded resulting in improved accountability'*; however, this has not been achieved through the current process. Concerns regarding the chain of evidence of exhibits presented across all four divisions. There was no clear guidance on how long an exhibit can be removed from PEMS and held in the custody of a member or where the exhibit should be stored during that period. No national audit has been conducted of the items temporarily checked out of the store into the custody of individual members. This is an organisational risk.

In most of the PEMS stores visited, no audit had taken place to verify if items recorded on PEMS are actually lodged in the stores. There was also a lack of awareness of the process to be followed if an exhibit was missing. Good practice was identified in one location where the PEMS store is subject to an ongoing audit. This consists of staff selecting a part of the store every few days and checking to ensure it reconciles with what is recorded on PEMS.

While there is no national drug register, each division operates at least one drug register managed by a nominated person. This is a record of all drugs seized and presented to the DLO. Where the Garda Operating Model had not been introduced, these were kept in each district. Some registers captured slightly different information but generally they were well maintained. The majority of registers reviewed were paper-based or excel documents retained on a personal hard drive, with one division operating a digital version stored on an internal platform. However, while all divisions operated a drug register, the entries did not always correlate with the records held on PEMS. Accordingly, given the national implementation of PEMS, this review has concluded that drugs registers provide no benefit and duplicate information that should be retained and recoverable from PEMS, if it is used correctly and to its full potential. As such, the practice of retaining drug registers should be ceased and any policy requiring the use of them should be updated.

3.3 Storage and Handling

Generally, PEMS managers had a good knowledge of how their store was organised, and where exhibits were located. While the vast majority of drugs exhibits checked by the review team were correctly stored, easily found and properly packaged, a small number were unaccounted for. The details were shared with the relevant divisional chief superintendent and while updates were provided that some items have been subsequently found, others remained outstanding at the time of completing this review.

In some divisions, there was a lack of clarity regarding the correct procedure for lodging or taking exhibits in or out of PEMS, and the timeline associated with this process. For example, in one store a significant number of exhibits were registered on PEMS a few days prior to the visit of the review team despite being seized well before that time. In another division, a practice existed where drugs exhibits were entered into the drug register but not registered on PEMS or lodged into the PEMS store until after they had either returned from FSI or gone through the PDT process. In the interim, exhibits remained in a locked cabinet in an office for long periods of time with no record of them on PEMS.

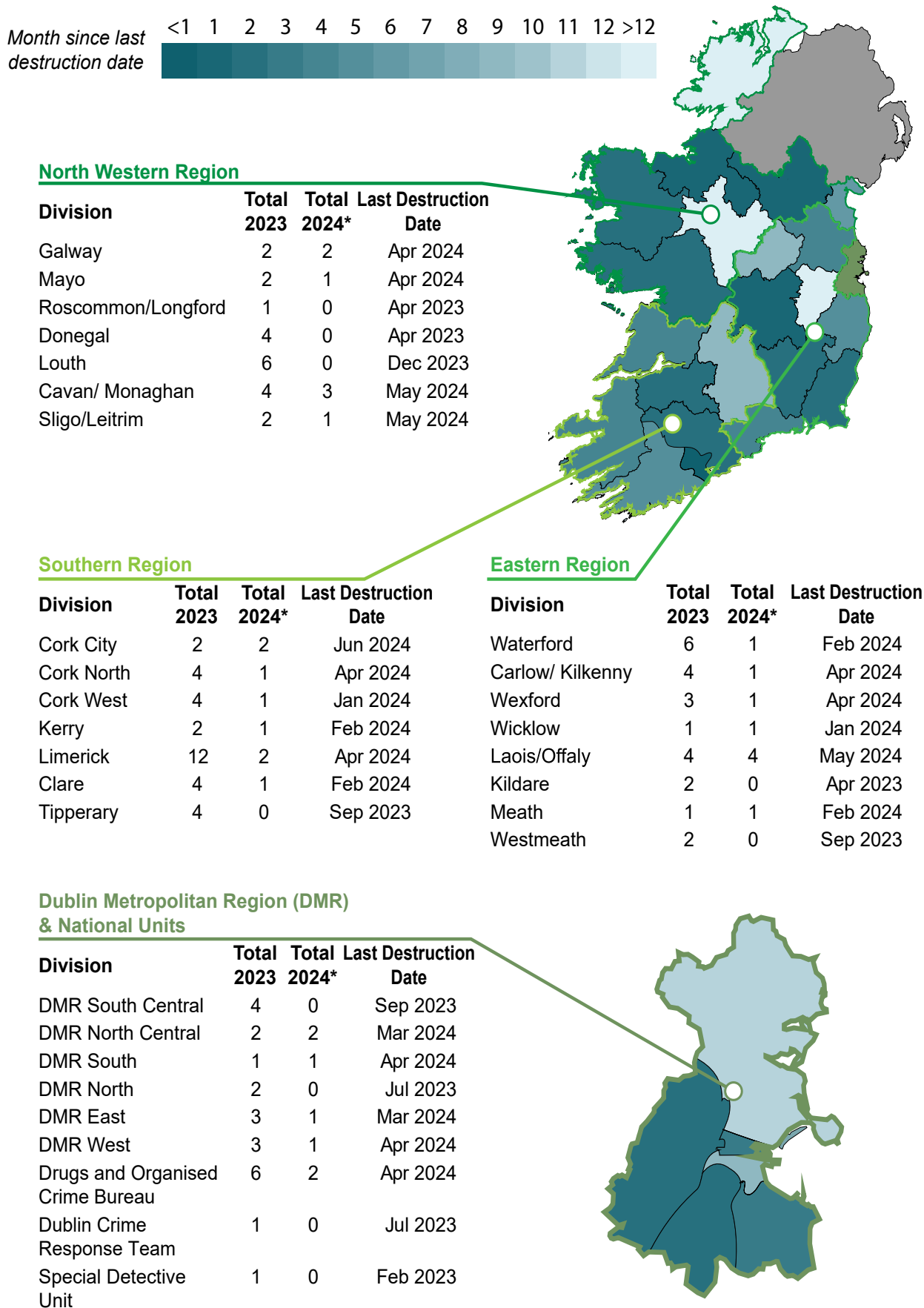
Exhibits checked out of PEMS into the custody of members remain the responsibility of that member until they are returned to the PEMS store. This review identified a high number of cases where items were checked out to members for significant periods of time with no clarity on why the item had been out for so long, or where it was stored during that time.

Although not specifically included in this review, the review team observed fridges containing forensic exhibits and cash and firearms storage arrangements. Most fridges were full, exhibits dated back several years and no one was assigned overall responsibility for the management of them. Unnecessarily large amounts of cash were stored, some of which could be lodged in banks. Firearms and ammunition were securely stored. A number of these types of exhibits had been retained for extended periods.

3.4 Disposal

In order to appropriately dispose of drug exhibits, cross-checking and sign-off from either an inspector or superintendent is required. Once authorised, items are checked out of the PEMS store and into the custody of the DLO who transports them to the GNTB for destruction. While this process is effective, due to the requirement for supervisory sign-off PEMS managers often wait until they have multiple exhibits for destruction before asking for authorisation to proceed. Data relating to the destruction of drugs exhibits is reflected in Figure 3. This shows the total number of destruction processes undertaken by each division from 1 January 2023 to 5 June 2024. It also shows the length of time since the most recent disposal, illustrated in a heat map, with the most recent in 2024 being darker in colour through to the lightest colour showing those dating back to 2023.

Figure 3: Number of Destruction Processes and Date of Most Recent Destruction by Division, 1 January 2023 to 5 June 2024



*As of 5 June 2024

Source: Garda Síochána, adapted by the Garda Inspectorate

The frequency with which divisions and units send exhibits for disposal differed significantly. Other than a small number of divisions, the disposal dates for the majority reflect an ad hoc approach to what should be a regular and formalised process. For example, in one PEMS store visited, items awaiting disposal dated back to 2018. There was no indication that any associated criminal justice processes had required the retention of these items for six years.

There was also a lack of clarity regarding retention periods for exhibits once a court case is completed. There is no policy detailing the retention timeframe for exhibits and as a result members in the divisions visited referred to timeframes ranging from two weeks to six months. Good practice was observed in some divisions where PEMS managers had developed processes to remind members to review their requirement to retain items. Some items had been retained for long periods of time, even when a destruction order was issued by a court but either the destruction order was not shared with the PEMS manager or the member failed to act on it or ignored reminders.

The destruction process managed by the GNTB was thorough and administered efficiently with a high level of integrity.

Corrective Action Required

Generally, the standard of seizure and packaging in the divisions visited was acceptable. The environmental and cost benefits of adjusting the exhibit bags used to extend their use by including a secondary seal appears to be worth exploring.

PEMS is operational across the Garda Síochána but evidence found in the divisions visited highlighted that it does not deliver the policy requirement of recording an electronic chain of evidence. As indicated by the exhibit audit completed by the review team, items were missing from stores; without a full audit of items lodged in the store or in the possession of individual members, the Garda Síochána is not in a position to be able to account for all items in PEMS. While reconciliation of property items in PEMS stores should take place on a regular basis, the Garda Síochána needs to conduct an audit of all stores to account for all items in its possession.

Drug registers provide an unnecessary level of duplication and should be removed, as PEMS, if used correctly and to its full potential, can record this information.

The retention of exhibits unnecessarily impacts on the amount of space available in PEMS stores. If disposal and destruction processes were formalised as part of the regular property management process, then the creation of space would be as routine as the introduction of new exhibits. To improve governance arrangements, the Garda Síochána needs to monitor property and exhibit management, including drugs seizures as a key performance indicator within PAF.

4. Facilities and Access

Across the divisions visited, the review team examined a range of storage facilities such as divisional PEMS stores, drop boxes, external storage containers and office-based stores. Good practice was identified in purpose-built stores where a system of electronic moving shelves maximised the space available and made it easier and safer for staff to move around.

The review team found different levels of security at the facilities inspected, ranging from lock only to lock, keypad and swipe access. Most PEMS stores were monitored by CCTV and access was restricted to certain members of staff. This review found that PEMS stores were holding large quantities of cash, drugs, firearms and ammunition. In one store, a secure cage had been introduced within which drugs, firearms and cash were stored. The garda staff managing this store operated a policy of only entering the cage when two or more people were present. In another store, a PEMS manager expressed concern about their personal safety given the value of exhibits, including money held in storage.

Secure drop boxes were used in all divisions, and in some locations there were also internal safes available for use when the PEMS store was closed. As the drop boxes were a standard size, they could not be used for larger packages. Alternative storage arrangements were in place in most divisions, including locked cabinets.

The PEMS stores and associated storage required attention in most of the divisions visited. There were issues such as ineffective management of storage space and unsuitable facilities causing risks to health and safety. In addition to full stores and overflowing storage, some stores were inaccessible and the working environments were unsafe and unsuitable. In a lot of cases, the PEMS stores had a shortage of natural light and appropriate ventilation and heating. In addition, given the nature of items stored, there was often a strong smell of drugs or other substances which PEMS staff are exposed to. In one station, the divisional chief superintendent was informed that the review team had a concern that a PEMS store was an unsafe working environment. The review team was informed that the Garda National Repository is full and can no longer accept property that needs to be retained for extended periods.

Corrective Action Required

The review team was advised that a health and safety inspection had been conducted in most PEMS stores in the past three or four years; however, health and safety must be a dynamic and ongoing process. Accordingly, there should be a health and safety audit of all PEMS stores as well as any temporary storage facility. This should include facilities for the storage of drugs in occupied offices or PEMS stores where there is insufficient ventilation. The disposal of unnecessarily retained items would alleviate some of the current storage space pressures on PEMS stores.

The holding of large quantities of cash, drugs, firearms and ammunition presents a significant risk. To address this, crime prevention officers should be tasked to conduct a review of the security arrangements for all places where property and exhibits are stored. Any recommendations to mitigate identified risks should be actioned as a priority.

5. Technology

Many people who met with the review team held a view that PEMS has revolutionised the way in which property and exhibits in particular are managed. Despite this, the full capability of PEMS is unknown to most users and the review team only met one person who believed that they were fully conversant with the system. If the training and awareness recommendation in

this report is implemented, then PEMS managers would be able to avail of all of the features within PEMS, including the provision of relevant data and reports that the system can provide. Some PEMS managers described how, in the absence of the necessary training, they had identified aspects of functionality within the system which enabled them to conduct searches and which supported their role in managing property.

While PEMS is technologically capable of conducting search enquiries, such as identifying exhibits relating to various crime types, or items linked to specific garda members or units, none of the divisions visited could provide specific details of the total number of exhibits held. For example, any PEMS search is limited to 10,000 results and one division estimated that they had up to 30,000 drugs exhibits. Some PEMS managers had developed ways of conducting searches by limiting the search criteria but this workaround was not shared through a good practice discussion forum or training platform.

A consistent concern from those who met with the review team was the inability of PEMS to integrate with other garda and criminal justice partner IT systems. As PEMS is not integrated with the garda email system, alerts or prompts created within PEMS for members to review whether exhibits are still required for retention cannot be automatically emailed. Consequently, PEMS staff must send emails, or print alerts or prompts and send them to the member involved. For exhibits taken by members to FSI, a printed receipt is provided to the member which must be scanned and attached to the PEMS record for the exhibit. As this applies to over 10,000 cases each year, this is a level of bureaucracy that needs to be resolved.

Corrective Action Required

A technological solution is required to integrate PEMS with other garda and criminal justice IT systems. The limited availability of barcode scanners is forcing members to make written notebook entries to record their handling of exhibits. This additional bureaucracy could potentially be solved by undertaking work to explore if it is technically feasible to provide access to PEMS on the mobile devices issued to members along with an app to read barcodes. This could provide a mechanism for each member to scan exhibit barcodes when taking possession of the item, thereby ensuring a live electronic chain of evidence as they update PEMS. This could address the concern discussed in this report under recording.

Overall Assessment of Progress

The findings from this review have been considered and progress assessed. While there remain challenges with standardising processes and consistent implementation of policy, work undertaken to date in implementing the PEMS technology to improve the exhibit management process is considered to have impacted positively on the Garda Síochána's Section 42 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty as well as supporting the European Convention on Human Rights Article 6 right to a fair trial and Article 1 of the First Protocol right to protection of property.

Although the original recommendation is assessed as having been generally implemented, not all of the key actions examined are considered to have been implemented to the extent expected or required. Figure 4 shows the review team's assessment of each key action.

Figure 4: Assessment of Actions Contained in the Recommendation

Key Action	PIR Assessment
Implement an integrated IT solution to record all property seized and to track its movements across all of the systems.	Partially implemented – there is a national PEMS system. This is working but not operating to its full potential. Further work is required to integrate PEMS with other Garda Síochána and criminal justice IT systems.
Complete the roll out of the Property and Exhibit Management System (PEMS) across all divisions and national units.	Implemented.
Develop a national drugs register to ensure consistent inventory and data entry by all drugs units.	This review considers that this action is no longer required as PEMS, if used correctly and to its full potential, provides a platform for recording this type of information.
Review the production of exhibits at court and seek opportunities to use technology to reduce costs.	This action was not examined as it was outside the terms of reference for this review.
Introduce technological opportunities to provide immediate transfer of crime scene exhibits for examination.	This action was not examined as it was outside the terms of reference for this review.
Nominate a person at national/divisional level to have responsibility for forensic samples to ensure they are sent for analysis.	Implemented – Exhibit Liaison Officers appointed in each division.

Source: Garda Inspectorate

Recommendations

In order to improve the processes and practices identified during this Post Implementation Review, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána identify a single PEMS store for each division with an appropriate level of dedicated resources to ensure the proper management, storage and disposal of exhibits.

Recommendation 2

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána deliver a comprehensive and consolidated in-person training course for all PEMS managers and staff. This should cover the use of the IT system as well as processes and procedures. PEMS managers should also be supported by a good practice and knowledge sharing forum.

Recommendation 3

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conduct an urgent audit of property and exhibit management in order to ensure the processes are applied consistently. This should cover all property including drugs, cash, firearms and exhibits retained in forensic fridges to ensure that:

- > All property, including found property, is recorded on PEMS and is accounted for; and
- > All checked-out exhibits are accounted for.

Recommendation 4

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána include property and exhibit management as a key performance indicator to be monitored as part of the Performance Accountability Framework and actioned as necessary. This should include responsibility for ensuring that garda workforce members complete the PEMS online training course.

Recommendation 5

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána update the Property and Exhibit Management System Part 2 (PEMS2) policy and procedures documents to provide direction on each element of the property and exhibit management process including:

- > The timeline for recording property on PEMS;
- > The timeline for lodging property in PEMS stores or other official temporary storage facilities where immediate access to the PEMS store is not available;
- > The timeline for disposal of property;
- > The procedure to be followed when an item is missing or unaccounted for; and
- > The procedure for entering all drugs exhibits onto PEMS without delay and ceasing the use of paper or electronic drugs registers.

Recommendation 6

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conduct a full health and safety audit of all PEMS stores as well as any temporary storage facility, and undertake any remedial action identified.

Recommendation 7

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána task crime prevention officers to conduct a review of the security arrangements for all places where property and exhibits are stored; this is particularly relevant to the storage of cash, drugs, firearms and ammunition. Any recommendations to mitigate identified risks should be actioned as a priority.

Recommendation 8

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána deliver an IT solution that integrates PEMS with other garda and relevant criminal justice partner systems. In addition, the feasibility of using an electronic solution to reduce the bureaucracy involved in providing the chain of evidence, should be explored with criminal justice partners.

Appendix A

Terms of Reference

Management of Property and Exhibits with Specific Reference to Drugs Evidence

In accordance with Section 117(2) (a) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, the Garda Síochána Inspectorate considers it appropriate to carry out a Post Implementation Review of Recommendation 9.16 of the Garda Inspectorate *Crime Investigation Report (2014)*. This is designed to verify if this recommendation was fully implemented and whether it is achieving the intended outcome.

Recommendation 9.16:

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conducts an urgent examination of the current process for exhibit and property management.

To achieve the above recommendation, the following key actions need to be taken:

- > Implement an integrated IT solution to record all property seized and to track its movements across all of the systems;
- > Complete the roll out of the Property and Exhibit Management System (PEMS) across all divisions and national units;
- > Develop a national drugs register to ensure consistent inventory and data entry by all drugs units;
- > Review the production of exhibits at court and seek opportunities to use technology to reduce costs;
- > Introduce technological opportunities to provide immediate transfer of crime scene exhibits for examination; and
- > Nominate a person at national/divisional level to have responsibility for forensic samples to ensure they are sent for analysis.

To expedite this review, it will focus on the Garda Síochána's policies, procedures and practices for managing property and exhibits with specific reference to drugs evidence.

In particular, this review will examine the following areas:

- > The national and local drugs registers;
- > Recording of seizures;
- > Production of exhibits for criminal justice processes;
- > Suitability, security and availability of storage facilities;
- > The use of technology, including the Garda Property and Exhibit Management System; and
- > Retention, and disposal of exhibits.

While the Inspectorate will lead this review, it provides an opportunity for joint working with staff of the Policing Authority. A report on the findings of this review will be prepared under Section 117(2) (b) and shall contain, if appropriate, recommendations for any action that the Inspectorate considers necessary.

In line with the Inspectorate's commitment to its duties under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, this review will assess the Garda Síochána's performance in fulfilling its Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána task crime prevention officers to conduct a review of the security arrangements for all places where property and exhibits are stored; this is particularly relevant to the storage of cash, drugs, firearms and ammunition. Any recommendations to mitigate identified risks should be actioned as a priority. Appendix A

In particular, this review will examine the following areas:

- > The national and local drugs registers;
- > Recording of seizures;
- > Production of exhibits for criminal justice processes;
- > Suitability, security and availability of storage facilities;
- > The use of technology, including the Garda Property and Exhibit Management System; and
- > Retention, and disposal of exhibits.

While the Inspectorate will lead this review, it provides an opportunity for joint working with staff of the Policing Authority. A report on the findings of this review will be prepared under Section 117(2) (b) and shall contain, if appropriate, recommendations for any action that the Inspectorate considers necessary.

In line with the Inspectorate's commitment to its duties under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, this review will assess the Garda Síochána's performance in fulfilling its Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.



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