

CIGIREACHT AN GHARDA SÍOCHÁNA  
GARDA SÍOCHÁNA INSPECTORATE

Report of the Garda  
Síochána Inspectorate

# Domestic Abuse

An inspection of the Garda Síochána's approach to prevention, protection, prosecution and victim support.

Executive Summary

October 2024

**The objective of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate is:**

*'To ensure that the resources available to the Garda Síochána are used so as to achieve and maintain the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness in its operation and administration, as measured by reference to the best standards of comparable police services.'*

(s. 117 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005)

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

### Background to the Inspection

The Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, requires the development of laws, policies and support services to end this violence. In 2022, the Government published *ZERO TOLERANCE: The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*. This whole of government approach aligns with the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention, namely, prevention; protection; prosecution; and co-ordinated policies. In 2024, Cuan, a statutory agency under the remit of the Department of Justice, was established with the aim of tackling and reducing domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

It is important to note that in Ireland there is no legal definition or specific criminal offence of "domestic abuse". At the time of this inspection, the Garda Síochána defined domestic abuse as the '*physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse of one person against another who is a family member or is or has been an intimate partner, regardless of gender or sexuality*'. The Inspectorate acknowledges that while domestic abuse may occur in a spectrum of relationships, it is predominantly gender-based, with most domestic abuse perpetrated by men on their current or former female partner.

The Garda Síochána describes domestic abuse as an organisational priority and, in recent years, it has enhanced its approach to preventing domestic abuse from occurring, protecting victims and bringing offenders to justice. Examples of developments include online training for all garda personnel, the introduction of a structured risk assessment process and the establishment of Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs), all of

which are discussed in this report. Operation Faoiseamh, the Garda Síochána's proactive operation to protect victims of domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic, reflected the importance placed on tackling domestic abuse and was praised by many support services and victims.

### Inspection Purpose and Methodology

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Garda Síochána's response to domestic abuse. It looked at how cases were dealt with from the point at which they are reported to the organisation until the conclusion of any criminal justice proceedings. The inspection considered the information, support and protection provided to victims by the Garda Síochána as well as the organisation's role in preventing domestic abuse. The organisational structure and the main roles tasked with dealing with domestic abuse are reviewed. The inspection also examined how the Garda Síochána engages and works in partnership with other bodies and agencies who share the aim of a zero tolerance approach to domestic violence and abuse.

The methodology used during this inspection included interviews and focus groups with garda personnel, meetings with stakeholders from state agencies and support services and an examination of practice in comparable jurisdictions. In addition, the Inspectorate analysed PULSE data, examined a selection of domestic-motivated crime and non-crime incidents on PULSE and listened to a sample of 999/112 calls relating to domestic abuse. As part of its victim-centric approach, the Inspectorate ran an online survey which received responses from 728 victims of domestic abuse. It also met with several victims who had reported their abuse to the Garda Síochána.

## Reporting Domestic Abuse

It is widely accepted that domestic abuse is under-reported to police services. However, as public awareness has increased, so too has the level of reporting, with the number of reports made to the Garda Síochána increasing year-on-year. Despite these

increases, 39% of victims who responded to the Inspectorate’s survey said they had not reported their most recent incident of domestic abuse to the Garda Síochána. These respondents were presented with a list of possible reasons for not doing so and invited to select all that applied to them. Figure A summarises their responses.

Figure A: Reasons for Not Reporting to the Garda Síochána

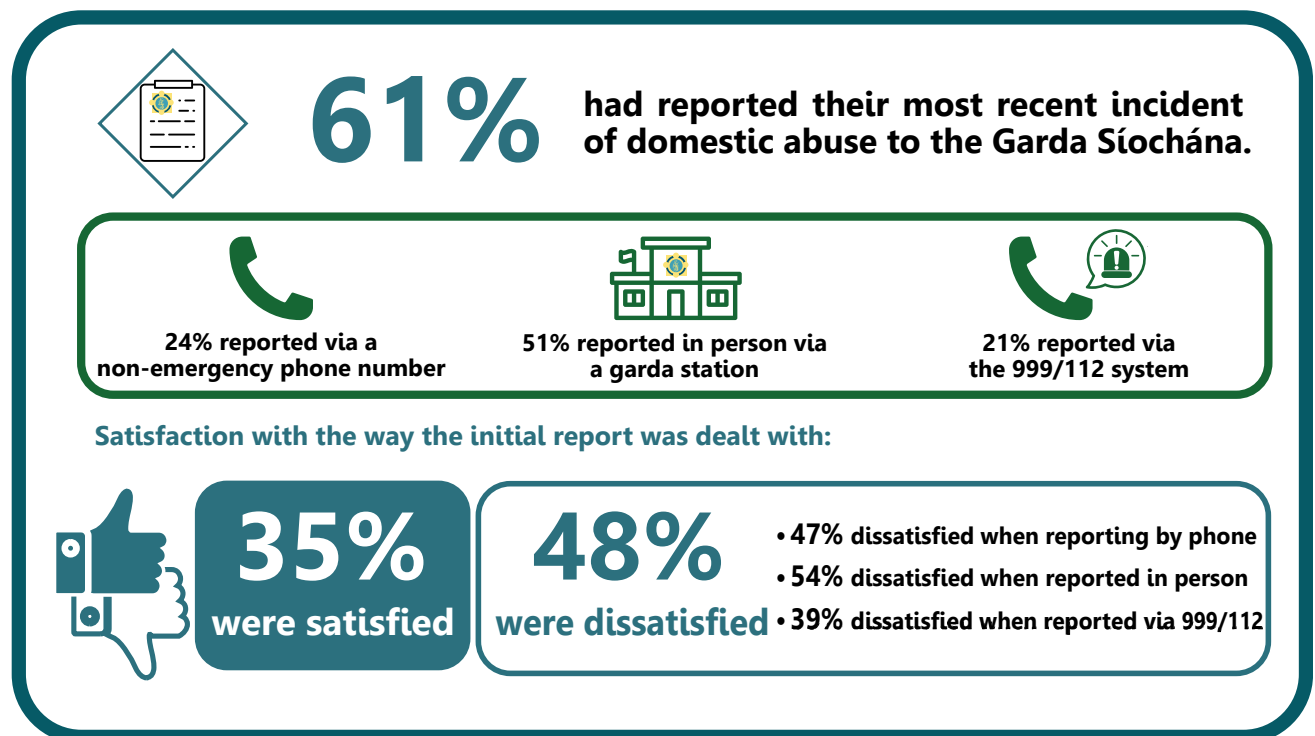


Source: Garda Inspectorate survey

The respondents who had reported their abuse to the Garda Síochána were asked how they made their report and how satisfied they were with their experience. The most common methods of reporting

and the corresponding satisfaction rates, (excluding those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or did not know), are shown in Figure B.

Figure B: Reporting Domestic Abuse to the Garda Síochána



Source: Garda Inspectorate survey

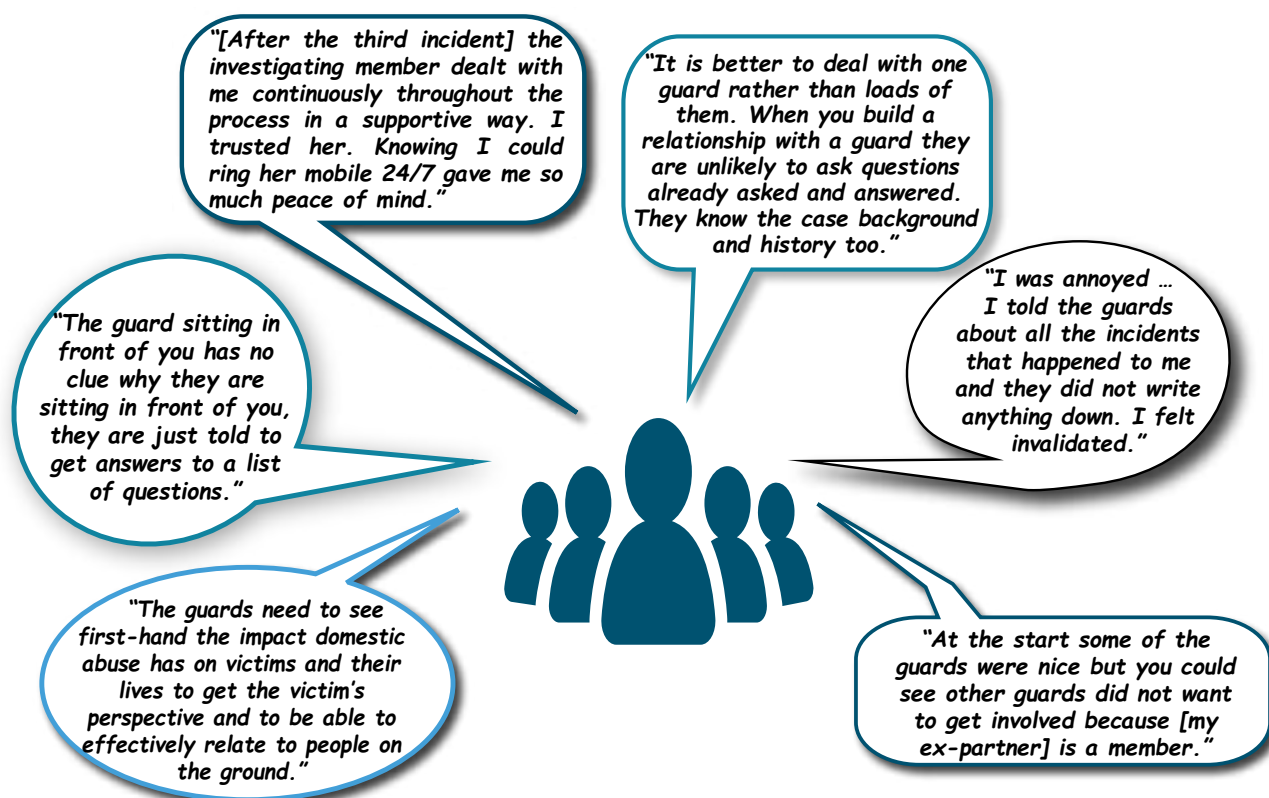
Regional Control Centres (RCCs) have been the focus of attention mainly due to the discovery of the unwarranted closure, including cancellation, of 999/112 calls. In response, much has been done to improve their operation. Calls received at RCCs are recorded and subject to a quality assurance process. However, there was no such process for in person reports made at stations. Shortcomings identified in relation to reporting at a station included a lack of privacy and different standards of treatment depending on whether a victim was accompanied by a support worker. To improve the quality of service to victims, the

Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána introduce processes to monitor, assess and improve the standard of first contact at stations.

## Providing Information, Support and Protection to Victims

Hearing directly from victims of domestic abuse who had engaged with the Garda Síochána was a critically important aspect of this inspection. Feedback from victims about the information that was given to them as well as the support and protection they received is shown in Figure C.

**Figure C: Victims' Experiences with the Garda Síochána**



Source: Garda Inspectorate meetings with victims of domestic abuse

It is also important that the Garda Síochána seeks the views of victims of domestic abuse to understand the quality and impact of its actions, but it has no formal process for doing this. To address this gap, the

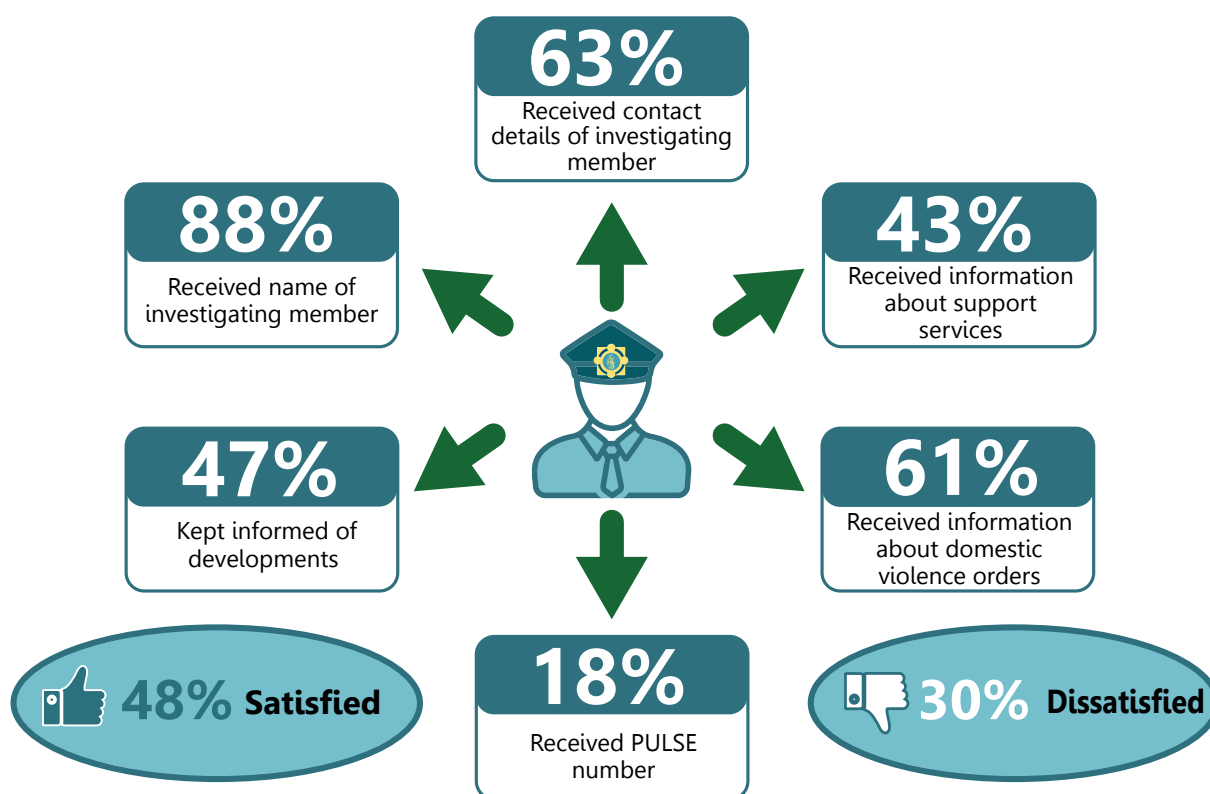
Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána commission work to hear directly from victims of domestic abuse about the service they received from the organisation.

## Providing Information

Under the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017, victims are entitled to certain information. To meet this requirement, the Garda Síochána should provide victims with the name and contact details of the investigating member, the PULSE reference number and information about domestic violence orders and support services. In addition, call-backs should be made to victims within seven days of the date of the incident, as well as one month and three months afterwards, if appropriate.

The purpose of call-backs is to keep victims informed of developments in their case, provide reassurance and collect further information on any threats or risks to the victim and dependents. Garda policy states that continued liaison by the same member is vital. The Inspectorate's survey asked victims if they had received this information and to rate their level of satisfaction with the information provided. The results, (excluding those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or did not know), are shown in Figure D.

**Figure D: Receiving Information from the Garda Síochána**



Source: Garda Inspectorate survey

Ongoing monitoring by the Garda Síochána had increased the proportion of victims of domestic abuse who received a seven-day call-back from 43% in 2019 to 73% in 2023. However, call-backs were not always made by the same person. While the inspection found some good examples of ongoing engagement with victims, it was more common that contact was sporadic, with little or no record of the interaction. Victims

had no other way to obtain information about their case apart from being contacted by garda personnel or by making contact themselves. There was no automated process to alert members that a call-back was due and the Garda Síochána was not monitoring the quality or frequency of call-backs. Tools such as automatic prompts to alert investigators to update victims at identified intervals or self-service portals were not available.



To ensure victims of domestic abuse are given sufficient information in a timely manner, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána undertake a review of how it is fulfilling its legal obligations to provide information to victims of domestic abuse. The review should assist with the development and introduction of a standardised process to monitor and assess the quality and frequency of victim updates and an automated system to prompt members when updates are due. A self-service facility for victims to obtain information on the status of their case is also recommended.

### Providing Support

To ensure that appropriate support is available to victims, the EU Victims' Rights Directive requires Member States to facilitate the referral of victims to support services in a way that is compliant with data protection legislation. While the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 enables a member of the Garda Síochána to refer a victim to a support service with their consent, there was no policy or guidance on making referrals. Apart from a few exceptions, there was no standardised referral process in place and garda members tended not to refer victims directly. In most instances, including when the victim was a repeat victim, members gave details of relevant organisations to victims to make contact themselves.

Data protection legislation was cited as the main reason for not making referrals. To improve how victims of domestic abuse are supported, the Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána, Cuan and support organisations to agree and implement a process to refer victims of domestic abuse through a single point of entry to the wraparound service proposed under the Third National Strategy. In the interim and

as a matter of urgency, the Garda Síochána should provide guidance on proactively referring victims to support services, with their consent.

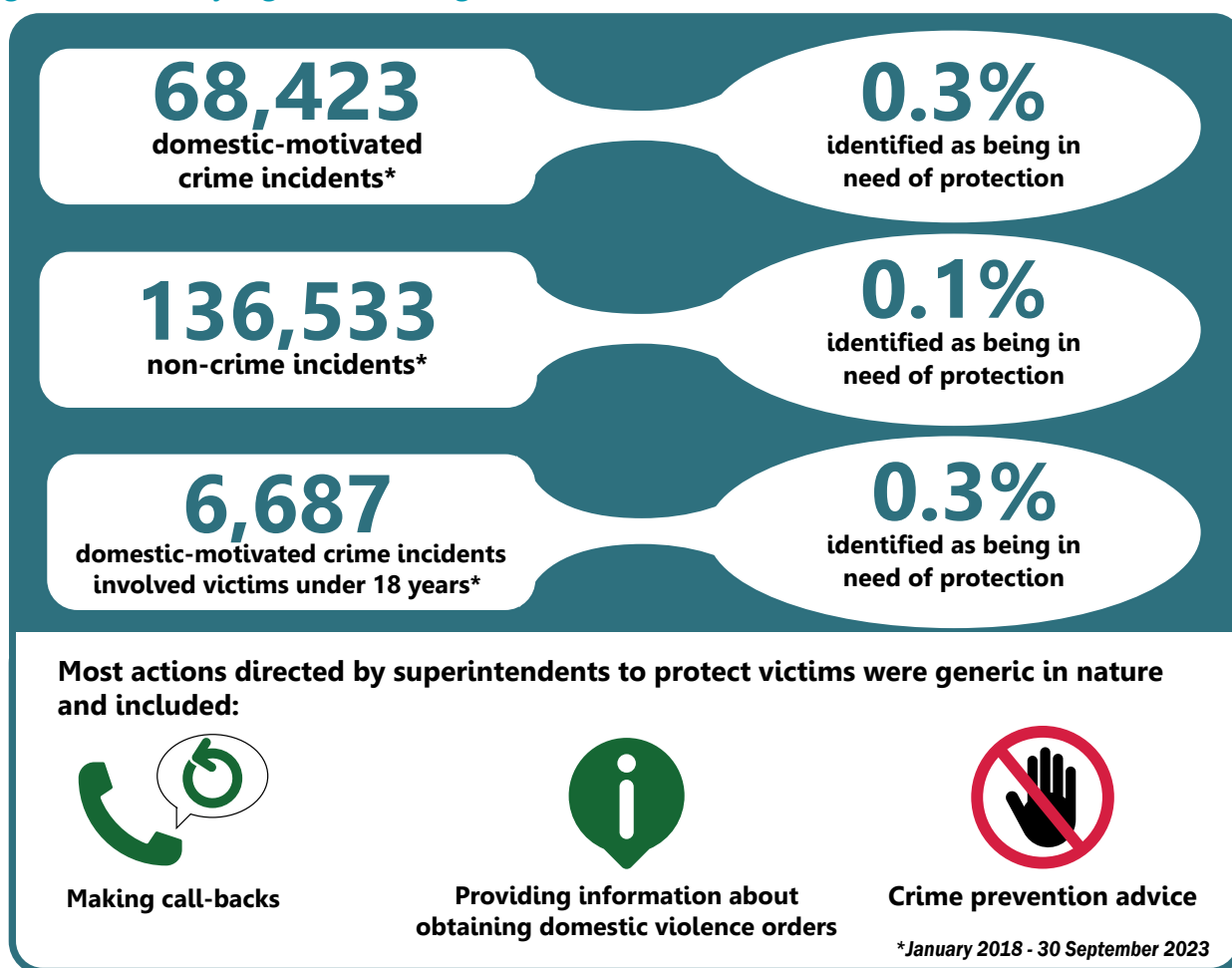
### Victims' Needs for Protection and Special Measures

The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 requires the Garda Síochána to carry out an assessment to identify a victim's protection needs and ascertain whether they might benefit from protection measures, special measures during the investigation or special measures during any criminal proceedings. The Act states that every child victim of crime is deemed to be in need of protection. The Garda Síochána has a policy of referring all children linked to a domestic abuse incident to Tusla, but in the majority of cases, this did not result in further action being taken by the Garda Síochána.

There is a statutory process for conducting a victim assessment. This includes consulting with the victim if the garda member assesses that they have specific needs and considers that they would benefit from protection or special measures. While PULSE has fields to record each victim's identified needs, there was no place to record if these were met or the details of any measures put in place. Several garda members said that actions would be taken to protect victims but acknowledged that these were not always recorded.

Figure E summarises the findings from the Inspectorate's examination of PULSE data in relation to protection needs.

Figure E: Identifying and Meeting Protection Needs



Source: Data provided by the Garda Síochána, analysis by the Garda Inspectorate

Due to the nature of domestic abuse cases, the Inspectorate would have expected to find that more victims had a personalised assessment and that actions tailored to meet identified needs had been directed. An examination of a sample of PULSE incidents involving victims who had three or more domestic-motivated incidents found no change in the garda response even though they were subject to further acts of violence and in some cases the violence was escalating. The lack of evidence of victims' needs being reassessed or of any variation or escalation of protection measures for repeat victims was a concern. To address this, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána take steps to improve how it protects victims of domestic abuse.

In addition, the Inspectorate found no reference on PULSE to special measures

at court being considered in any of the 137 cases it examined, regardless of the seriousness of the crimes or the level of risk to the victim. Although an assessment of the victim's need for special measures at court is included on case files submitted to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), files in cases being prosecuted by the Garda Síochána did not contain this type of information. None of the garda prosecutors or court presenters who met with the Inspectorate had applied for special measures at court. In order that the rights of victims of domestic abuse are fully met, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána proactively monitor how victims' needs for special measures at court are assessed. It should also monitor the extent to which these are applied for and provided in cases prosecuted by garda members.



## Investigating Reports of Domestic Abuse

### Allocating Cases for Investigation

While most domestic abuse incidents are investigated by members of regular units, some more serious or complex cases are investigated by specialist units such as the DPSU or the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB). The decision to assign a domestic abuse investigation to a specialist unit is usually taken at a daily management meeting chaired by the local superintendent or inspector and there is guidance about what types of crimes should be reassigned to DPSUs. However, due to the limited capacity of DPSUs, investigations that should have been reassigned to them were often retained by regular unit members. In some instances, more experienced members were asked to assist regular unit members. There were no criteria to define what types of cases should be assigned to the GNPSB for investigation.

Across the four divisions visited, different garda members were investigating separate incidents reported by the same victim even when the incidents occurred in close succession. This approach results in some victims dealing with a number of different members and could increase the risk of missing a pattern of abuse and opportunities to prefer charges for more serious offences.

To address these issues, the Garda Síochána should review and update its policy and practice for allocating investigations of domestic-motivated crimes. This should include clarification of the investigative function of the GNPSB and guidance on minimising the number of investigating members dealing with the same victim.

## Gathering Evidence

Victims who report a crime to the Garda Síochána are invited to make a formal written statement of complaint. This is usually required to initiate a prosecution against the perpetrator. In many cases, victims also have to attend court to give their evidence and some may decide not to do so due to the trauma and stress involved. Section 16 of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992 allows a video-recorded statement by a child to be admissible as evidence at a trial in certain circumstances. In some other jurisdictions, a similar provision is available to adults in domestic abuse cases. If permitted in Ireland, video-recorded statements from victims and witnesses in domestic abuse cases could help to mitigate some of the challenges of giving evidence in person. As such, the Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice consider introducing legislation that allows a video recording of a statement made by a victim or witness during interview with a member of the Garda Síochána or other competent person in relation to a domestic abuse offence to be admissible as evidence at trial.

Digital platforms provide opportunities for abusers to stalk, harass and control victims in the virtual space. As such, garda investigators need to be able to identify and secure evidence of online offending from victims' electronic devices. Although the Garda Síochána emphasised that it tries to minimise the length of time it retains devices for examination, handing over a phone or computer can be traumatising for victims and may leave them feeling even more vulnerable. The Inspectorate considers that there are additional measures that the Garda Síochána could take to minimise distress to victims such as establishing Digital Media Units in all divisions, introducing technology that can extract data immediately in the

presence of the victim and enabling victims to upload relevant material themselves.

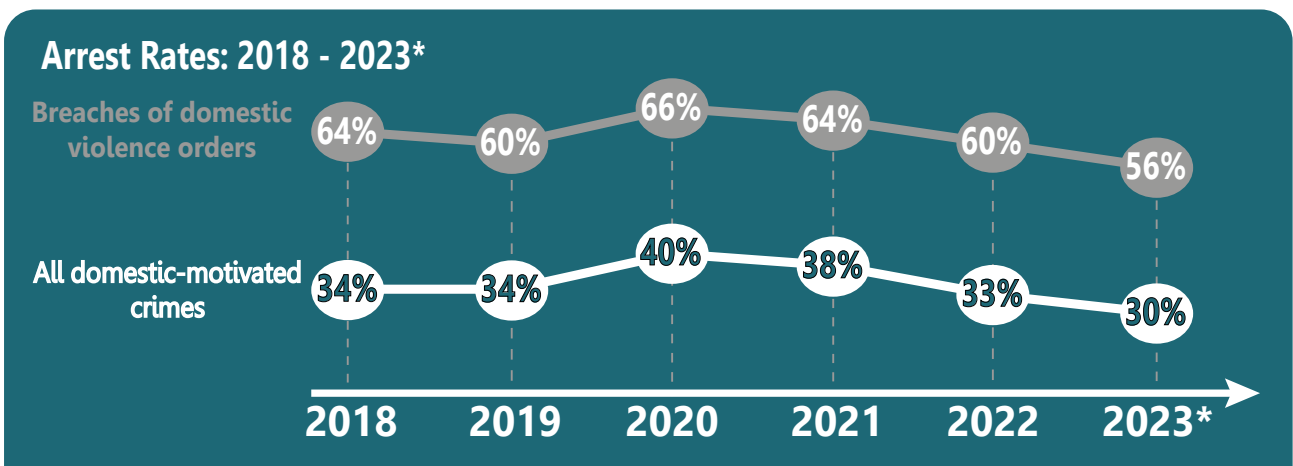
The Inspectorate welcomes the introduction of body-worn cameras. This is an important evidence-gathering tool that can be used in domestic abuse incidents. In addition to their use in criminal proceedings, the Inspectorate recommends that consideration be given to making footage available for applications for domestic violence orders.

arrest policy in relation to domestic abuse, not all domestic-motivated crimes have a corresponding power of arrest. There are also legitimate reasons why arrests do not take place in every case or are delayed. However, where there is a power to arrest and sufficient grounds to justify it, the immediate arrest of a suspect is an important tactic to protect the victim and interrupt the cycle of abuse. Information about arrests for domestic-motivated offences is shown in Figure F.

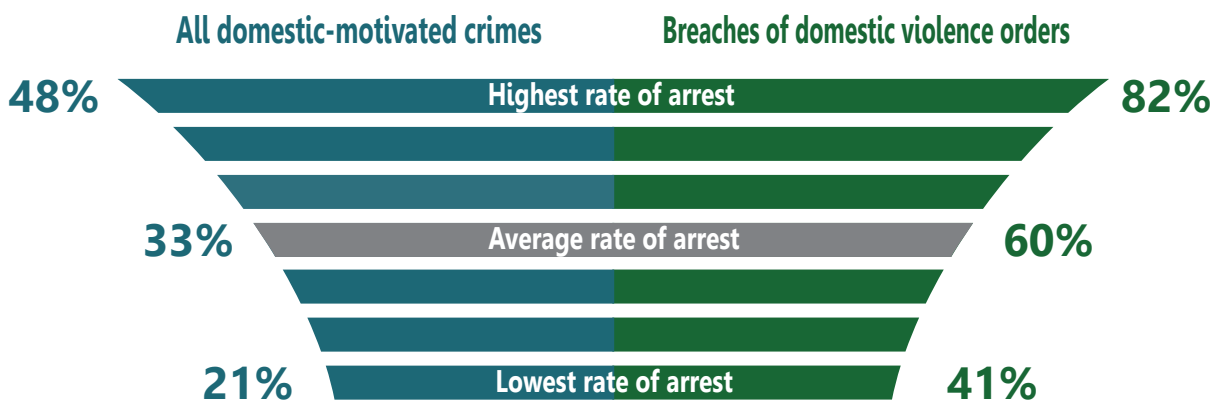
### Use of Powers of Arrest

Arresting the perpetrator is a proactive tactic that can help prevent further harm to the victim. While the Garda Síochána has a pro-

Figure F: Arrests for Domestic-motivated Offences



### Arrest Rates by Division: 2022



**79%** of arrests were made on the day of report or the following day.\*



\*as of 30 September 2023

Source: Data provided by the Garda Síochána, analysis by the Garda Inspectorate

The Inspectorate's examination of PULSE data found that an arrest was recorded for most breaches of orders, but in some instances it occurred several days after the breach was reported. For other crimes with a power of arrest, some arrests were made at the time of reporting, some took place a number of days afterwards and others had no record of an arrest. Examination of a sample of PULSE incidents identified several cases where the suspect had not been arrested at the time of reporting and a superintendent had directed an urgent arrest. In cases where there was a delay in making the arrest, there was no explanation recorded for this.

Although arrests in individual cases were being checked at local management meetings, there was no examination of arrest data at the strategic level to understand the reasons for the wide variation in rates. To address this gap, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána regularly compile and proactively monitor management information in relation to domestic-motivated crime, including arrest data.

## Use of Bail

Bail is another positive action that can help prevent further harm to a victim. There are two types of bail – station bail and court bail. Station bail is the process whereby a person who has been charged with an offence may be released from a garda station to appear at court on a specified date. Unlike some other jurisdictions, Irish legislation does not permit an arrested person to be released on police bail to return to the garda station pending further enquiries. In addition, when a person has been arrested and released without charge, they cannot be re-arrested for the same offence unless a court issues an arrest warrant.

Once a person has been charged and brought directly to court, they may be

remanded into custody or released by the court on bail, with or without conditions. The DPP representative or garda member who presents the case can object to bail or request that the court impose bail conditions. The Inspectorate was told that on occasions, inexperienced garda members have failed to make an effective application due to their lack of understanding of the law in this area. The remedy proposed was to ensure that court presenters (garda sergeants appointed to this specialist role) made all such applications.

It is the responsibility of the investigating garda member to monitor compliance with bail conditions. However, these were not recorded on PULSE and therefore were not readily available to all garda personnel. The importance of garda members checking compliance with bail conditions and reporting to the court was emphasised as being critical to decisions regarding the continuation or revocation of bail. To help protect victims of domestic abuse, the Inspectorate recommends that bail legislation is strengthened and that any conditions are added to the PULSE system immediately after bail is granted.

## Prosecutions, Detections and Outcomes of Domestic-motivated Crimes

Following the conclusion of a police investigation, a decision is made on whether to prosecute the suspect. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, the decision to prosecute is taken either by the DPP or by the Garda Síochána. Within the Garda Síochána, most of these decisions are taken by a superintendent or inspector. Once a decision to prosecute has been taken, court presenters attend court to present cases on their first court date and subsequent adjournments. If a person pleads not guilty

in a prosecution directed by the Garda Síochána, an inspector or superintendent usually prosecutes the contested matter. However, not all garda prosecutors and court presenters had received specific training in relation to domestic abuse cases. It was also the case that individual members of garda rank without specialist training may initiate and conduct prosecutions for breaches of domestic violence orders.

The DPP provides an advocacy service in the Dublin District Court in respect of more complex matters that are suitable for hearing in that court. These include cases where the Garda Síochána has taken the prosecution decision and decided to submit the file to the DPP for representation. At the time of this inspection, there were no criteria for referring domestic abuse cases to the DPP, the Garda Síochána was not collecting data on the number of cases it referred, nor was it examining the reason why some cases were not forwarded.

Sometimes victims of domestic-motivated crimes decide to withdraw from the prosecution of their abuser. Despite DPP guidelines on what to do when the circumstances of a case change, garda prosecutors and court presenters did not consistently follow the guidance. While a prosecution is more likely to succeed if the victim remains engaged with the criminal justice process, it is possible to bring a successful prosecution even if the victim withdraws their support. This inspection found that there was no information recorded on PULSE to identify whether a case was suitable to proceed without the victim's involvement, or to flag cases that had gone ahead without it. As a result, data on the number of victimless prosecutions taken by the Garda Síochána was not readily available. A new directive of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on combating violence against women and domestic violence states that

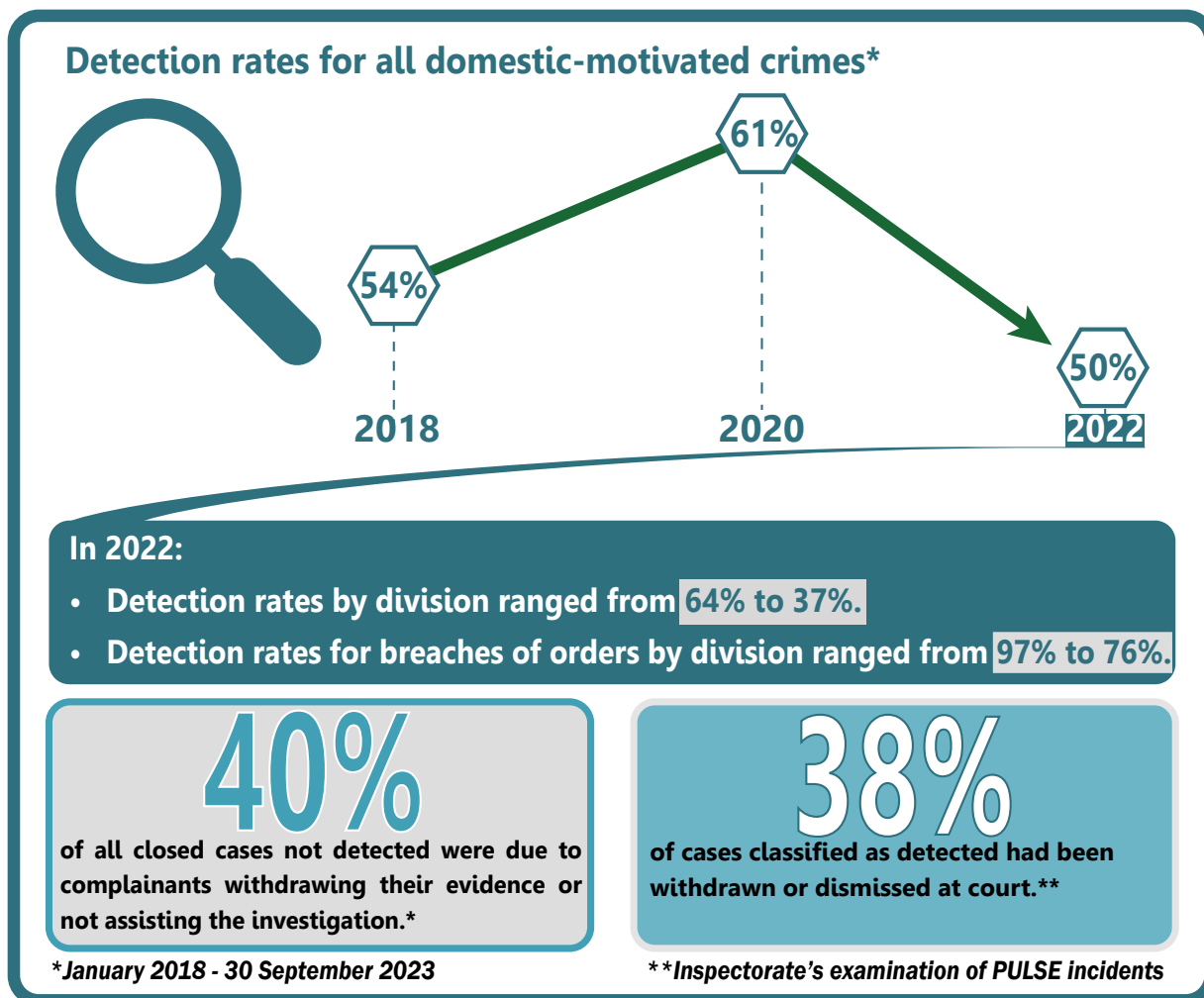
criminal proceedings shall continue even if the accusation has been withdrawn. It also provides for the issuing of guidelines to ensure that proceedings do not cause secondary or repeat victimisation.

Domestic abuse cases in the district court can be technically difficult and so the imbalance in legal knowledge and expertise between defence lawyers and garda prosecutors could lead to inequalities in how victims fare within the court system. Taking account of the complexity of many domestic abuse cases, the challenge of securing convictions without victims' involvement and the overarching "zero tolerance" approach, the Inspectorate believes that as part of its review, the Summary Prosecutions Reform Steering Committee (SPRSC) consider domestic-motivated crimes as a category that should be submitted to the DPP for a decision on whether to initiate a prosecution and provide legal representation in district courts. A phased approach, starting with representation in contested cases and direction and representation in cases in which the victim has withdrawn their support could be helpful. The SPRSC should also consider expanding the representation scheme for domestic abuse cases to all district courts outside of Dublin.

### Detections for Domestic-motivated Crimes

A crime can be classified as detected when criminal proceedings have been commenced against at least one person involved in that offence. Criminal proceedings are commenced when a person is charged with the offence or a summons is applied for. A crime can also be classified as detected when an adult, juvenile or informal caution is administered, or when there is sufficient evidence but a decision has been taken not to prosecute. Information about detections for domestic-motivated crimes is shown in Figure G.

Figure G: Information about Detections



Source: Data provided by the Garda Síochána, analysis by the Garda Inspectorate

If a prosecution does not result in a conviction, a superintendent should review the case to determine if the crime remains “detected”. The Inspectorate found no evidence that unsuccessful prosecutions had been reviewed. Garda prosecutors and court presenters who met with the Inspectorate were unaware of any formal review system. In addition, there was no analysis of the number and type of cases that were withdrawn or dismissed in court and the reasons for this. Although the Garda Síochána has introduced a new system to better understand why detections are not always achieved, it does not include an examination of the reasons why detected cases did not result in a conviction.

To improve internal oversight of the Garda Síochána’s prosecution function in relation to domestic abuse, the Inspectorate recommends that the organisation regularly compile, analyse and monitor prosecution-related information. This should include the number of prosecution decisions it takes; detection rates; the number of court convictions achieved; and reasons why prosecutions were unsuccessful. This should be done at organisational and divisional levels.



## Prevention of Domestic Abuse

### Prevention through Education

The Garda Síochána has a long history of engaging with children through its schools programme and has significant reach into communities as a result. The programme is regarded as a key part of the organisation's community engagement and crime prevention toolkit. The content of the programme is determined by the Department of Education and at the time of this inspection did not include domestic abuse. However, at the local level some garda members have been delivering presentations and information in schools on this subject. Members have also been involved in the delivery of other education initiatives with partners.

Under the Third National Strategy, the Department of Education leads on developing domestic abuse material. While there is a role for the Garda Síochána in highlighting that children can be both victims and in some cases perpetrators of domestic abuse, the messaging must be age-appropriate and consistent irrespective of who delivers it. The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Education, working with the National Council for Curriculum Assessment, Cuan and the Garda Síochána, develop domestic abuse content for delivery through the Garda Schools Programme. In addition, the Garda Síochána should use the key messages from the programme when it engages with young people outside of the formal school environment.

### Media and Awareness-raising Campaigns

Media and awareness-raising campaigns were described as central to how the Garda Síochána prevents domestic abuse and are key elements of the role of the GNPSB. The

Garda Síochána has been positively involved in the delivery of a number of multi-agency campaigns such as Go Purple Day and the Safe Pharmacy initiative. However, the Inspectorate considers that there is scope for the Garda Síochána to further enhance this work by developing bespoke awareness-raising initiatives that focus on its role in relation to domestic abuse and is tailored to individual communities. In terms of national campaigns or press conferences, it should ensure that these are adapted for local delivery. Conversely, to avoid missing opportunities to expand local initiatives, the Garda Síochána should also create a mechanism through which examples of good practice can be evaluated and promoted across the organisation. To achieve this, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána continue to develop and implement a tailored awareness-raising and communications plan to increase awareness of domestic abuse across all communities and highlight the role of the Garda Síochána in relation to domestic abuse.

### Offender Management

The aim of offender management is to hold perpetrators to account and reduce their offending behaviour. It can involve law enforcement tactics such as arrest and bail as well as behavioural change programmes. This section considers how the Garda Síochána manages domestic abuse offenders.

### Strategic Approach to Offender Recidivism

The Strategic Approach to Offender Recidivism (SAOR) is a garda process whereby a case manager is appointed to manage a repeat offender with specific emphasis on co-ordinating the offender's court appearances and providing advice on bail conditions. It is not specific to domestic



abuse. Awareness of SAOR in the garda divisions inspected varied and there was no reliable data on the number of domestic abuse offenders who were managed by this process.

## Perpetrator Programmes

Perpetrator programmes can reduce offending behaviour by domestic abuse offenders. In Ireland, a perpetrator programme called CHOICES is delivered by two non-governmental organisations on behalf of the Probation Service. While the Probation Service most often deals with court-mandated attendees, perpetrators may self-refer to the programme. The Inspectorate was advised that it was possible for the Garda Síochána to refer perpetrators to the programme with their consent, but found little awareness of this option among garda members. The possibility of developing a garda referral stream had been raised with the Garda Síochána by one non-governmental organisation but had not been progressed.

The Third National Strategy commits to developing a national perpetrator programme for convicted and non-convicted perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence offences as required by the Istanbul Convention. As advocated by the Convention, the Garda Síochána should be involved in the delivery of such programmes.

## Multi-agency Approach to Offender Management

The Offender Management Strategy and Governance Group oversees the national approach to offender management. This high-level group includes senior representatives from the Department of Justice, Garda Síochána, Probation Service and Irish Prison Service. It oversees two established multi-agency offender management programmes: the Joint Agency Response to Crime (JARC)

and Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management (SORAM). While there was no multi-agency offender management programme specifically for perpetrators of domestic abuse, the group advised that it was planning to introduce one that incorporated best practice from JARC and SORAM. This would bring Ireland more in line with other jurisdictions where agencies come together to identify perpetrators causing most harm and agree to apply the most appropriate tactics to reduce offending behaviour.

The Inspectorate considers that the Garda Síochána needs to place a greater emphasis on managing domestic abuse offenders. It therefore recommends the introduction of a domestic abuse offender management strategy that defines prolific and high-harm offenders; a process to assess the risk posed by each offender; and a menu of tactical options that includes referrals by the Garda Síochána to perpetrator programmes. A further recommendation is made for the Department of Justice to work with partners to introduce a multi-agency approach to offender management at pre- and post-conviction stage.

## Protecting Victims of Domestic Abuse

### Assessing Risk

The Garda Síochána has a three-tier process for assessing risk in relation to domestic abuse. Tier 1 occurs when a call for service is received. Although the Inspectorate identified weaknesses in gathering information to inform risk assessments, the Garda Síochána advised that its new computer aided dispatch system, known as GardaSAFE, would help to address these matters. Tier 2 involves the first responder considering and, if appropriate, completing a risk assessment form known as the Risk

Evaluation Tool (RET). The RET consists of 22 questions designed to provide an insight into the risk or perceived risk the victim faces or may face. The member who completes the RET assesses the level of risk to the victim as either standard, medium or high. They do this by using the RET, information from garda systems about the victim and perpetrator and their professional judgement. A sergeant then reviews the member's assessment. Tier 3 is a review of the incident and the assessed level of risk by a superintendent or inspector at a daily management meeting. Here, the risk grading can be changed if necessary and additional protective actions directed.

The RET was introduced by the Garda Síochána during the course of this inspection. In divisions where it had been rolled out, members were completing the RET but risk assessments were based on garda information only and were rarely repeated or reviewed. While garda members had completed online training in the RET, it was not sufficient to enable members to elicit information in a trauma-informed and responsive manner. At all levels, members highlighted the limitations of online training for such a complex and sensitive task.

## Managing Risk

To protect a victim of domestic abuse, action should be taken to mitigate or manage the identified risk. The Garda Síochána explained that it uses a number of different tactics to do so and that these are considered at daily management meetings. However, as illustrated in Figure E, very few victims were identified on PULSE as having specific protection needs, actions to protect them were rarely tailored to the individual and there was no record on PULSE of specific actions having been carried out.

In other jurisdictions, high-risk victims are usually supported through a formal multi-agency approach to risk management. Although this is not standard practice in Ireland, Operation Sabháilte is a good example of partners working together to provide additional support and advice to those at serious risk of harm. Operation Sabháilte is a local initiative developed by Limerick division and a local domestic abuse service. In the view of stakeholders, it improved the protection of victims and increased their confidence in how the State responds to domestic abuse. Police in other jurisdictions are also involved in developing and supporting safety plans for victims of domestic abuse, while in Ireland there is an inconsistent level of involvement by garda personnel.

To better protect victims, the Inspectorate recommends that risk assessments are reviewed and updated when significant new information comes to light or when a significant event takes place. The Garda Síochána should develop a tailored risk management plan for each victim based on their assessed level of risk, with actions drawn from a toolkit of tactical options. As other agencies and organisations are often in a position to contribute to the risk assessment and management processes, the Inspectorate recommends the introduction of a multi-agency approach to identifying and protecting victims who are at high risk of harm.

## Domestic Violence Orders

Domestic violence orders are a critically important tool to protect victims of domestic abuse and act as a deterrent. For example, orders can exclude perpetrators from the home or require them to have no contact with the victim. Providing victims with information about orders is a key part of the

garda response. However, garda members had an inconsistent level of understanding of the different types of orders, which consequently caused difficulties for some victims and court staff.

When an order is granted, it is required to be served on and notified to the respondent for it to enter into force. The court determines the method of service, one of which is personal service by the Garda Síochána. However, variations in arrangements for conveying orders from the court office to the relevant garda station sometimes led to delays. The Garda Síochána had developed a system to track orders sent to it for service, but the absence of the respondent's date of birth and Eircode sometimes made it difficult to correctly identify the respondent and locate them. Delays in service can have negative implications for victims.

Explaining the terms of orders to respondents and making a record of this was highlighted as a way of encouraging compliance and thereby protecting victims. However, in some instances there was a reluctance among members to do so. The introduction of body-worn cameras provides an opportunity to secure evidence of service and record the member explaining the terms.

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the domestic violence order process, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána deliver additional awareness raising for all front-line personnel in relation to the different types of orders and how to explain the terms of the orders during service. It should also direct members to activate body-worn cameras when serving orders and explaining the terms to the respondent. A standardised electronic system for transmitting domestic violence orders from the court to the Garda Síochána is also recommended.

Unlike police services in a number of other jurisdictions, the Garda Síochána is unable to issue an immediate short-term notice to exclude a perpetrator from the home or apply to a court for a substantive order that extends the period of exclusion. These powers would increase the ability of the Garda Síochána to protect victims. As such, the Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice introduce legislation to allow the Garda Síochána to issue short-term exclusion notices and apply for substantive orders.

### Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

To help protect victims of domestic abuse, some jurisdictions operate a domestic violence disclosure scheme. These schemes facilitate disclosure of a perpetrator's domestic abuse history to their partner or a relevant third party on a 'Right to Ask' and 'Right to Know' basis. Although Ireland does not operate this type of disclosure scheme, the Garda Síochána runs Operation Devise that aims to identify and, where necessary, take action to protect the new partner of a person connected to a domestic homicide. The remit of the operation was expanded on 1 August 2024 to include persons charged with coercive control. The GNPSB identifies such perpetrators and notifies the relevant garda division, which then puts measures in place to protect the perpetrator's current partner. The operation is confined to a narrow cohort of offenders and knowledge of it outside the GNPSB appeared limited. Unlike domestic violence disclosure schemes in other jurisdictions, members of the public who have a concern about their partner cannot ask the Garda Síochána if they are at risk. To help protect victims, the Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána to introduce a disclosure scheme that is broader in scope than Operation Devise.

## Engagement and Partnership Working

### Stakeholder Engagement

Tackling domestic abuse necessitates a whole of society approach that requires relevant organisations and agencies to engage, learn from each other and work together.

At the national level, the GNPSB is the main conduit through which the Garda Síochána engages with other state bodies and support services in relation to domestic abuse. Primary responsibility for engagement lies with the detective chief superintendent, who is supported by a detective superintendent and other personnel from the bureau. The GNPSB had previously organised a forum with victims groups but this was no longer in operation. Instead, the bureau regarded the Department of Justice-led Victims Forum as a means to engage with domestic abuse support services. While many positive examples of stakeholder engagement were provided during this inspection, the overall approach was unstructured and often depended on individual garda members.

Stakeholder engagement at divisional level was similar to the national level. Although good examples were provided, support services described an ad hoc approach that was often dependent on relationships built up with individual garda members. Although engagement with victim support organisations at this level was under-developed, there was a general recognition by garda personnel of the need to build and maintain relationships with all external stakeholders.

In order to foster relationships and create more effective communication with relevant stakeholders, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement a national-level domestic abuse stakeholder engagement plan. This should

be delivered through the establishment of a national stakeholder engagement group and a structured engagement process. This approach should be replicated in each division.

### Working in Partnership with External Agencies and Organisations

The Garda Síochána is already working well with a number of external partners in relation to domestic abuse. However, in contrast with comparable jurisdictions, multi-agency working is under-developed in Ireland. As such, the Inspectorate considers that there is a need for more formalised multi-agency working structures between the Garda Síochána and stakeholders, both state bodies and support services. This report contains several recommendations to expand collaborative working to prevent domestic abuse, protect victims and hold perpetrators to account. However, the ability to share information lawfully was often described as a barrier to effective partnership working. This creates a risk that victims are not protected to the extent that they could otherwise be. There are positive examples of information sharing, such as the Joint Working Protocol between Tusla and the Garda Síochána and the arrangements underpinning JARC. However, there are very few formalised arrangements for sharing information with victim support organisations.

Actions under the Third National Strategy aim to address the challenge of information sharing and the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, once commenced, will enable the Garda Síochána to share information, including personal data, with another relevant body or a prescribed body. Pending these developments, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána review its information sharing policies to facilitate multi-agency approaches to tackling domestic abuse.



## Strategy, Governance and Accountability

### Garda Strategies and Policies

Although the Garda Síochána indicated that it was going to develop an overarching strategy setting out how it will prevent domestic abuse from occurring, protect victims from harm and bring offenders to justice, this was not progressed. Instead, a decision was taken to adopt the Third National Strategy as the garda strategy. The Inspectorate considers that this is too high level to drive day-to-day operational activity and recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a whole of organisation domestic abuse strategy. It should be accompanied by an action plan with measurable outcomes that sets out and co-ordinates the activity of national and local resources.

The Garda Síochána's Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy was last updated in 2017. This was prior to landmark developments including Ireland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention; the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 2018; the introduction of DPSUs; and publication of the Third National Strategy. At the time of the inspection, an updated policy was being finalised. This needs to be completed and published as a matter of urgency.

### Governance and Accountability

Many parts of the Garda Síochána are involved in tackling domestic abuse. In addition to geographical divisions, a number of national and regional units have an important role. These are shown in Figure H.

**Figure H: National and Regional Level Units with a Role in Tackling Domestic Abuse**



Source: Information provided by the Garda Síochána, adapted by the Garda Inspectorate

Each unit operates its own governance and accountability structure within a corporate framework. Agendas for meetings required under this framework mirror the pillars of the annual policing plan and may not include domestic abuse.

All garda policies have an owner whose responsibilities include monitoring levels of compliance. The domestic abuse policy owner is Assistant Commissioner, Organised and Serious Crime, while Detective Chief Superintendent, GNPSB is the national lead for domestic abuse. The GNPSB has a Governance Unit whose remit includes monitoring and reporting on national performance against relevant policing plan targets, as well as reviewing divisional performance and identifying areas for improvement. While this small unit had carried out several domestic abuse-related reviews, it was not monitoring divisional performance apart from seven-day call-back rates. In spite of having defined governance and oversight responsibilities, in practice the policy owner and the national lead had limited involvement in monitoring compliance with the Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy. Nor did they have any significant role in reviewing performance in relation to domestic abuse.

There was also a lack of comprehensive management information to assist with assessing performance and making decisions. To help understand how well the organisation is performing and what improvements are needed, the Garda Síochána needs to make better use of the large volume of domestic abuse-related data it holds. Although some analysis had been undertaken, this was limited in scope. Furthermore, as analysis was based exclusively on the Garda Síochána's data, it provided an incomplete picture of a problem that is significantly under-reported.

To contribute more effectively to achieving zero tolerance of domestic abuse, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána establish a Strategic Domestic Abuse Group, chaired by a person of at least assistant commissioner rank. The group should co-ordinate a whole of organisation approach to domestic abuse, ensure consistent standards of practice and drive continuous improvement. It should focus on outcomes such as reducing repeat victimisation, serial offending and attrition rates as well as improving victims' experiences.

To support this approach, the GNPSB should be assigned an enhanced role in relation to the strategic governance and oversight role of domestic abuse. To inform the work of the group, the Garda Síochána should develop a comprehensive management information framework that is linked to the recommended domestic abuse strategy and action plan.

## Divisional Level Roles and Responsibilities

Regular unit members deal with the majority of domestic abuse incidents reported to the Garda Síochána. To help improve how domestic abuse is dealt with, a number of additional roles have been introduced at divisional level. These are shown in Figure I.



Figure I: Divisional Roles



Source: Information provided by the Garda Síochána, adapted by the Garda Inspectorate

The responsibilities of domestic abuse inspectors are described in the 2017 Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy. Inspectors assigned to this role undertake these responsibilities in addition to their core role. Although many aspects of the role had been superseded by the introduction of daily management meetings and the RET, those who met with the Inspectorate were endeavouring to fulfil this important role as well as other additional responsibilities.

The responsibilities of domestic abuse champions are also additional to their core role. Champions were envisaged as being experts in this area and were appointed

to support the introduction of the RET and improve the organisational culture in relation to domestic abuse. However, there was inconsistency in relation to who was appointed as a champion and role-specific training had not been provided. While the concept has value, many champions had not been utilised as envisaged and there was a degree of uncertainty as to their role.

Domestic abuse co-ordinators only operate in some divisions in the Dublin Metropolitan Region. It was explained that their primary role was to review cases, assess the risk to each victim and then provide support to those at high risk of harm. While none of

the co-ordinators conducted investigations or managed offenders, there were notable differences in how they operated. Positive feedback was received from stakeholders about the work of co-ordinators and the GNPSB was considering supporting an expansion of the role. However, it is important that the Garda Síochána determine the need for this role in light of the roll-out of the RET and the implementation of the victim support network envisaged under the Third National Strategy.

There are standard operating procedures for how GVSO personnel deal with victims of domestic abuse, which are different from their role in relation to most other crime types. Although there were some variations in how GVSOs operated in the four divisions inspected, personnel were committed to providing information and support to victims. GVSOs had made an important contribution to Operation Faoiseamh during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Inspectorate recognises that the Garda Síochána has taken positive steps to improve how it deals with domestic abuse. However, the full potential of these additional roles has not been fully realised. In addition, the introduction of local practices means that the service to victims varies depending on their location. To continue this improvement and ensure consistency of service, the Inspectorate recommends the development of a divisional model for tackling domestic abuse that is cohesive, coherent and that better co-ordinates the roles and responsibilities of available resources.

## Domestic Abuse Involving Members of the Garda Workforce

Garda policy in relation to members of the workforce who are involved in domestic abuse as victims or perpetrators is contained within the 2017 Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy. The policy requires members who are subject to a domestic violence order or become aware of any court proceedings against them to self-report to their divisional officer. There is no such reporting requirement for garda staff.

In general, the policy requires supervisors to monitor domestic abuse incidents, but they are not assigned any additional responsibility regarding the response to or investigation of an incident involving garda personnel. There is no requirement for a member of the garda workforce who is involved in a domestic abuse incident, as either a perpetrator or victim, to reveal their occupation to the attending unit. It is also the case that the PULSE system cannot easily identify if either party is a member of the workforce, nor can it flag if the applicant or respondent of a domestic violence order is a member of the workforce. As a result, the Garda Síochána cannot be certain that it would know if the perpetrator or victim in a domestic-motivated incident is a member of its workforce.

The 2017 Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy does not comment on the type of support that should be provided to members of the public who make a report against a member of the workforce. Members interviewed for this inspection failed to recognise the additional challenge facing these victims and the importance of reassuring them that the matter will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. The policy is silent on who should investigate domestic abuse incidents involving garda personnel.

Consequently, there was an inconsistent approach to the allocation of such cases and no criteria to inform the decision about who should investigate them.

In November 2021, the Garda Commissioner announced a review of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence cases involving garda members; this was ongoing at the time of this inspection. This retrospective review aimed to ascertain whether policies and procedures had been followed and victims received the necessary standard of service. Notwithstanding the outcome of the Commissioner's review, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop, implement and publish a comprehensive policy on domestic abuse involving garda personnel. It should include requirements that:

- > Garda personnel who become aware of domestic abuse involving other members of the workforce report this to a supervisor;
- > Garda personnel disclose being under investigation for domestic abuse in any jurisdiction;
- > The duty status of personnel under investigation, their access to garda IT systems and to firearms is examined and kept under review; and
- > Supervisors are made aware of and attend all domestic abuse incidents involving garda personnel where practicable.

It should also include an allocation policy for investigations involving garda personnel and details of how the Garda Síochána will support members of its workforce who are victims of domestic abuse.

## Training, Learning and Development

### Training for Garda Personnel

Given the complexity of domestic abuse and the vulnerability of victims, it is important that garda personnel are skilled to deal with reports effectively. Personnel should also be able to operate in a trauma-responsive manner, meaning that they are aware of the signs of trauma, respond in a way that ensures impacted individuals feel safe and supported and minimise the risk of further trauma.

Overall, there was a good level of training in relation to domestic abuse available for garda personnel. It forms part of the foundation programme for new recruits and is included in promotion courses and specialist training for roles including call-takers, dispatchers, DPSU members and detectives. The Garda Síochána has also developed a domestic abuse online learning programme consisting of 14 modules, covering legal and procedural requirements. All garda personnel are required to complete a selection of modules based on their role and rank or grade. The completion rate for the modules was over 90%.

However, several weaknesses were identified in relation to training. It is not trauma-informed or responsive; the shift to online training has removed opportunities to enhance learning through discussion and sharing of operational experience; and domestic abuse support services are no longer involved in developing and delivering training. To address these weaknesses and enhance the skills and ability of garda personnel, the Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a domestic abuse-related training plan in partnership with relevant agencies and support services.

## Domestic Homicide Reviews

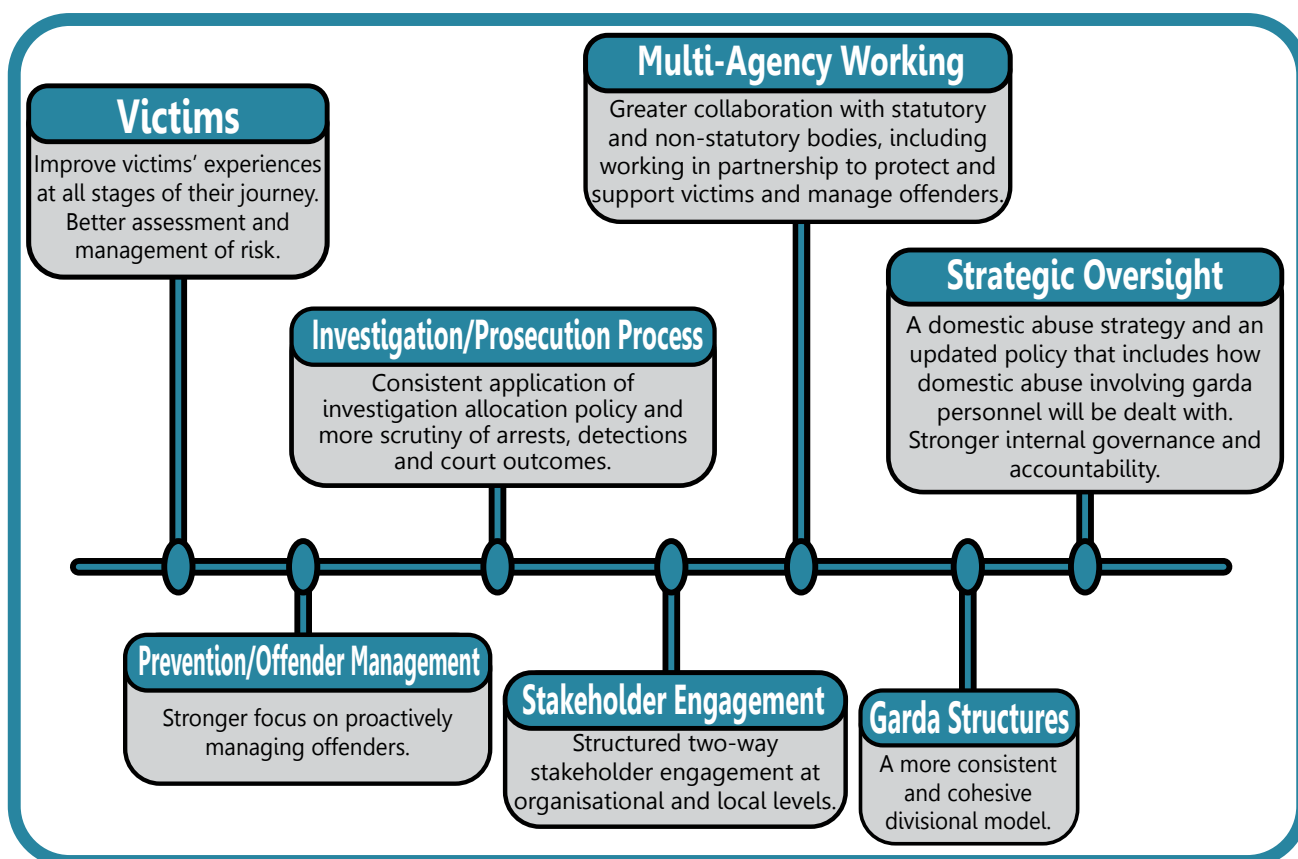
Domestic homicide reviews provide an opportunity to examine if a police service or other agency have had contact with a victim of a domestic homicide and, if so, to review the contact to learn lessons and improve standards of service. Reviews may be conducted by an individual agency or collaboratively by all agencies that had contact with the victim. Multi-agency reviews do not occur in Ireland, although the Department of Justice is considering their introduction. The Garda Síochána has carried out a small number of internal domestic homicide reviews and the Inspectorate recommends that this practice should continue in a systematic and timely way.

These reviews will identify learning for the Garda Síochána and help it to be prepared for the introduction of multi-agency reviews. To assist this action, the Garda Síochána's draft policy on domestic homicide reviews should be formalised.

## Conclusion

The Garda Síochána is committed to tackling domestic abuse and has taken steps to enhance its response. However, this inspection has identified a number of key areas in which its approach can be further improved. The areas and how they should be developed are summarised in Figure J.

Figure J: Summary of Areas for Improvement



Source: Garda Inspectorate

# Report Recommendations

Chapter 1 Reporting Domestic Abuse	
<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement processes to monitor and assess the standard of first contact at garda stations when victims call in person or by telephone to report their domestic abuse incident. Results of the assessments should be used to drive continuous improvement in standards of service.</p>
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conduct an assessment of the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the Regional Control Centres. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Review staffing levels, systems and processes and examine the extent to which the operational requirements of the workforce and the needs of the public are met;</li><li>&gt; Be followed up with periodic reviews to assess the extent to which relevant objectives are being achieved and to embed a culture of continuous improvement;</li><li>&gt; Assess how GardaSAFE contributes to better identification of risk and how this information is used in operational decision-making; and</li><li>&gt; Examine the effectiveness of the Performance and Quality Assurance Group.</li></ul>
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána review the Garda Charter and, if necessary, update the commitments within it. Following the review, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Introduce routine compliance monitoring of the charter commitments;</li><li>&gt; Re-launch the charter; and</li><li>&gt; Publish regular updates on how it is meeting the charter commitments.</li></ul>



## Chapter 2 Providing Information, Support and Protection to Victims

<b>Recommendation 4</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána undertake a review of how it is fulfilling the requirements of Sections 7 and 8 of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 to victims of domestic abuse. The review should assist with the development and introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; A standardised process to monitor and assess the quality and frequency of victim updates; and</li> <li>&gt; An automated system to prompt members to update victims.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána, Director of Public Prosecutions and Courts Service to develop a self-service facility for victims to obtain information on the status of their case.</p>
<b>Recommendation 6</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána, Cuan and support organisations to agree and implement a process to refer victims of domestic abuse to a single entry point to the proposed wraparound service.</p>
<b>Recommendation 7</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement a standardised process to refer victims of domestic abuse to support services, with their consent.</p> <p>To achieve this it should engage with the support services whose details it provides to victims.</p>
<b>Recommendation 8</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána take steps to improve how it protects adult and child victims of domestic abuse. To achieve this it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Ensure that the individual protection and special measure needs of each victim are properly identified;</li> <li>&gt; Take action to meet those needs; and</li> <li>&gt; Record and report on how the needs have been met.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 9</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána commission work to obtain the views of victims of domestic abuse about the service they received from the Garda Síochána and use this information to improve its services.</p>



## Chapter 3 Investigating Reports of Domestic Abuse

<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána review and update its policy and practice for allocating investigations of domestic-motivated crime incidents. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Clarification of the investigative function of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau; and</li> <li>&gt; Guidance on reassigning investigations involving repeat victims to minimise the number of investigating members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána ensure its domestic abuse pro-forma and the Director of Public Prosecutions' guidance document are integral to procedures for investigating domestic-motivated crimes. In particular, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Ensure that the pro-forma is used when a victim reports in person to a garda station;</li> <li>&gt; Take proactive steps to ensure all investigators are familiar with the guidance document; and</li> <li>&gt; Link the guidance document to the Investigation Management System task list for domestic-motivated crimes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice consider introducing legislation that allows a video recording of a statement made by a victim or witness during interview with a member of the Garda Síochána or other competent person in relation to a domestic abuse offence to be admissible as evidence at trial.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13</b></p>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a range of options to facilitate the forensic examination of devices belonging to domestic abuse victims that minimises the impact on them and does not compromise their safety.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14</b></p>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána regularly compile and proactively monitor management information in relation to domestic-motivated crime incidents. This should include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Arrest rates, including arrests for breaches of domestic violence orders; and</li> <li>&gt; The length of time from when an offence is reported until the suspect is arrested.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 3 Investigating Reports of Domestic Abuse

<b>Recommendation 15</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice include the following in its review of emerging and outstanding law reforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The ability of the Garda Síochána to attach conditions to station bail;</li> <li>&gt; The availability of a power for the Garda Síochána to release a person on bail to enable enquires to be completed. This power would compel the person to return to a garda station on a set date;</li> <li>&gt; The ability of the Garda Síochána to impose conditions on a person released on bail to return to a garda station; and</li> <li>&gt; A remedy to the bail judgement that would enable the Garda Síochána to bring all those suspected of breaching a domestic violence order to the next available court.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 16</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána and the Courts Service to have all bail conditions and any amendments to those conditions immediately uploaded to PULSE.</p>

## Chapter 4 Prosecutions, Detections and Outcomes of Domestic-motivated Crimes

<b>Recommendation 17</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice bring the following proposals to the attention of the Summary Prosecutions Reform Steering Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; That consideration be given to classifying domestic-motivated crimes as a category of crime that should be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for prosecutorial decision-making and legal representation; and</li> <li>&gt; That the Director of Public Prosecutions consider expanding representation in domestic abuse cases to all areas outside Dublin.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 18</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that pending the implementation of Recommendation 17, the Garda Síochána:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Develop specific domestic abuse-related training modules for garda prosecutors and court presenters and ensure that only those who are appropriately trained perform these roles;</li> </ul>

## Chapter 4 Prosecutions, Detections and Outcomes of Domestic-motivated Crimes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Ensure that where representation is available, all relevant cases are forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions;</li> <li>&gt; Record the rationale for each decision to not forward a case for representation; and</li> <li>&gt; Compile statistics on the number of cases sent or not sent for representation</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 19</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána proactively monitor how victims' needs for special measures at court are assessed. It should also monitor the extent to which these are applied for and provided in cases prosecuted by garda members.</p>
<b>Recommendation 20</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána permanently assign a court presenter to Court 18 in the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin and to all vulnerable witnesses' courts that are established by the Courts Service.</p>
<b>Recommendation 21</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána collate and analyse data in relation to the length of time taken from the date an offence is reported until the date the corresponding file is submitted for a prosecution decision. This information should be used to monitor and improve performance.</p>
<b>Recommendation 22</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána regularly compile, analyse and monitor management information in relation to its prosecution function for domestic-motivated crimes. This should be done at organisational and divisional levels. The information should include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The number of prosecution decisions it takes;</li> <li>&gt; Detection rates analysed by detection category;</li> <li>&gt; Reasons why prosecutions were unsuccessful;</li> <li>&gt; The number of court convictions achieved;</li> <li>&gt; The number of victimless prosecutions taken, along with results of these cases; and</li> <li>&gt; Where the Garda Síochána takes a decision to prosecute and representation is available from the Director of Public Prosecutions, the number of cases sent for representation, the number not sent and the reasons for not sending.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 4 Prosecutions, Detections and Outcomes of Domestic-motivated Crimes

<b>Recommendation 23</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with Cuan, the Garda Síochána and the Central Statistics Office to regularly compile and publish additional data in relation to domestic-motivated crimes. As a minimum, this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The number of prosecution decisions taken;</li> <li>&gt; The detection rate broken down by detection category;</li> <li>&gt; The number of cases where a charge or summons was issued and the proportion that resulted in a conviction at court; and</li> <li>&gt; The number of victimless prosecutions taken, along with results of these cases.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 24</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána implement a robust quality assurance process as part of its outcomes-based reporting system.</p>

## Chapter 5 Prevention of Domestic Abuse

<b>Recommendation 25</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Education work with the National Council for Curriculum Assessment, Cuan and the Garda Síochána to add domestic abuse to the Garda Schools Programme in an age- and stage-appropriate way.</p>
<b>Recommendation 26</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána continue to develop and implement a tailored domestic abuse awareness-raising and communications plan to increase awareness of domestic abuse across all communities. The plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Highlight the role of the Garda Síochána in relation to domestic abuse;</li> <li>&gt; Complement actions under the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; and</li> <li>&gt; Be evaluated to ensure that it is achieving its objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 27</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and introduce a process to manage domestic abuse offenders.</p> <p>This should include:</p>

## Chapter 5 Prevention of Domestic Abuse

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; A definition of what constitutes a high-harm or prolific offender;</li> <li>&gt; A method to assess the risk posed by each domestic abuse offender;</li> <li>&gt; A menu of tactical options that can be applied to offenders;</li> <li>&gt; Assignment of responsibility for the management of high-harm or prolific offenders; and</li> <li>&gt; The development of direct referrals by the Garda Síochána to perpetrator programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 28</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with all partners including Cuan to introduce a multi-agency approach to offender management that is not only at the post-conviction stage.

## Chapter 6 Protecting Victims of Domestic Abuse

<b>Recommendation 29</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána ensure that risk assessments are reviewed and updated when significant new information comes to light or when a significant event takes place. It should also ensure that there is clarity about who is responsible for the ongoing assessment of risk.
<b>Recommendation 30</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána conduct an evaluation of its risk assessment and management processes. This should include the operation of the Risk Evaluation Tool and take account of feedback from victims, domestic abuse support services and relevant statutory agencies.
<b>Recommendation 31</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a tailored risk management plan for each domestic abuse victim based on the assessed risk to the victim. To support these plans, the Garda Síochána should develop a toolkit of measures that could be employed to protect victims of domestic abuse and prevent such abuse from continuing.
<b>Recommendation 32</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice, in conjunction with Cuan, establish multi-agency risk assessment and management structures that bring together relevant agencies, including the Garda Síochána, to support high-risk victims of domestic abuse.

## Chapter 6 Protecting Victims of Domestic Abuse

<b>Recommendation 33</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the domestic violence orders process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Delivering additional awareness-raising for all front-line personnel in relation to the different types of orders;</li> <li>&gt; Delivering additional awareness-raising on how to explain orders to a respondent when serving a document on them; and</li> <li>&gt; Directing garda members to activate body-worn cameras when serving domestic violence orders and explaining the terms of the order to the respondent.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 34</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána work with the Department of Justice and the Courts Service to put systems and processes in place that enable relevant footage from body-worn cameras to be available in a timely manner for applications for substantive domestic violence orders.</p>
<b>Recommendation 35</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána and the Courts Service to introduce a standardised electronic system for transmitting domestic violence orders to the Garda Síochána.</p>
<b>Recommendation 36</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice consider introducing legislation to allow the Garda Síochána to issue immediate short-term notices to exclude domestic abuse perpetrators from the home and to apply to the courts for substantive orders.</p>
<b>Recommendation 37</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána raise awareness amongst garda personnel of Tusla’s power to apply for a domestic violence order in certain circumstances.</p>
<b>Recommendation 38</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice work with the Garda Síochána to introduce a domestic violence disclosure scheme.</p>
<b>Recommendation 39</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána expand the scope of Operation Devise to include the most harmful and prolific domestic abuse offenders. It should also raise awareness of the operation within the organisation.</p>



## Chapter 7 Engagement and Partnership Working

<b>Recommendation 40</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement a national-level domestic abuse stakeholder engagement plan. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The establishment of a national stakeholder engagement group comprising key domestic abuse and other victim support organisations;</li> <li>&gt; A structured communication process that includes group events, bilateral meetings and meetings convened in response to a significant development or critical incident; and</li> <li>&gt; Assigning responsibility for each aspect of engagement to specific posts.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 41</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement a domestic abuse stakeholder engagement plan in each division. This should mirror the national plan set out in Recommendation 40, be led by a single superintendent and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The establishment of a divisional stakeholder engagement group comprising local domestic abuse and other victim support organisations;</li> <li>&gt; A structured communication process including group events, bilateral meetings and meetings convened in response to a significant development or critical incident;</li> <li>&gt; The domestic abuse awareness-raising and communications plan in Recommendation 26; and</li> <li>&gt; Assigning responsibility for each aspect of engagement to specific posts.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 42</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Department of Justice, in consultation with Cuan, the Garda Síochána and other relevant organisations, consider introducing legislation to enable the appropriate sharing of information to support multi-agency approaches to tackling domestic abuse.</p>
<b>Recommendation 43</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that, as an interim measure, the Garda Síochána review its information sharing policies and procedures to allow for more information sharing with partner organisations.</p>

## Chapter 7 Engagement and Partnership Working

<b>Recommendation 44</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a structured process for sharing information across the organisation about new initiatives, lessons learned and good practice.
--------------------------	--

## Chapter 8 Strategy, Governance and Accountability

<b>Recommendation 45</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop and implement a whole of organisation domestic abuse strategy and action plan.
--------------------------	--

<b>Recommendation 46</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána update and publish its Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy and Victim Service Policy as a matter of urgency.
--------------------------	---

<b>Recommendation 47</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána introduce an organisation-level Strategic Domestic Abuse Group, chaired by an assistant commissioner.</p> <p>To support this approach, the Garda National Protective Services Bureau should be assigned an enhanced role in the strategic governance and oversight of domestic abuse.</p>
--------------------------	--

<b>Recommendation 48</b>	The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a comprehensive management information framework to assist in the management, monitoring and assessment of how it deals with domestic abuse.
--------------------------	--

<b>Recommendation 49</b>	<p>The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop a divisional model for tackling domestic abuse which is cohesive, coherent and that better co-ordinates the roles and responsibilities of available resources.</p> <p>The model should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Divisional Protective Services Units that have the capacity to deal with the volume of domestic-motivated crimes referred to them in accordance with garda policies;</li> <li>&gt; Capacity for the management of prolific and high-harm offenders;</li> <li>&gt; Clearly defined roles for the domestic abuse inspectors and domestic abuse champions;</li> </ul>
--------------------------	---

## Chapter 8 Strategy, Governance and Accountability

- > An enhanced role for the Garda Victim Service Offices in relation to engagement with victims and victim organisations; and
- > Consideration of the future role of domestic abuse co-ordinators.

### Recommendation 50

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána develop, implement and publish a comprehensive policy on domestic abuse involving garda personnel.

It should include:

- > A requirement for all garda personnel who become aware of domestic abuse involving other members of the workforce to report this to a supervisor;
- > A requirement for garda personnel to disclose being under investigation for domestic abuse in any jurisdiction;
- > An allocation policy for investigations involving garda personnel;
- > A requirement that the duty status of personnel under investigation, their access to garda IT systems and to firearms is examined and kept under review;
- > A requirement for supervisors to be made aware of and attend all domestic abuse incidents involving garda personnel where practicable; and
- > Details of how the Garda Síochána will support personnel who are victims of domestic abuse and the support services available to them.

The policy should be accompanied by a communications plan to ensure personnel are aware of their responsibilities.

## Chapter 9 Training, Learning and Development

### Recommendation 51

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána enhance the skills and ability of all garda personnel involved in tackling domestic abuse through the provision of a domestic abuse-related training plan. The plan should be developed in consultation with relevant agencies and support services and include:

- > The introduction of trauma-responsive training for all personnel;

## Chapter 9 Training, Learning and Development

- > Provision of enhanced training to ensure garda members complete the Risk Evaluation Tool in a sensitive and trauma-responsive way;
- > Supplementary interactive sessions to accompany online training to enable garda personnel to share and discuss concerns and experiences;
- > The establishment of forums for peer-to-peer learning; and
- > Regular briefings and presentations to garda personnel at the local level by agencies and support services.

### Recommendation 52

The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána undertake a systematic review of all homicide cases with a domestic motivation and suicides with a domestic abuse background. To assist this action, it should formalise its Domestic Homicide Review Policy.



CIGIREACHT AN GHARDA SÍOCHÁNA  
GARDA SÍOCHÁNA INSPECTORATE

**Ríomhphost:** info@gsinsp.ie  
**Suíomh Gréasáin:** www.gsinsp.ie

**Email:** info@gsinsp.ie  
**Website:** www.gsinsp.ie

Lean muid ar: [www.x.com/gsinsp](https://www.x.com/gsinsp)

Follow us at [www.x.com/gsinsp](https://www.x.com/gsinsp)