



CIGIREACHT AN GHARDA SÍOCHÁNA
GARDA SÍOCHÁNA INSPECTORATE

Press Release

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

- *The Garda Inspectorate found that the Garda Síochána is committed to supporting and protecting victims of domestic abuse and many of its personnel are delivering a high-quality service, but this was not consistent across the organisation.*
- *This inspection identified that more needs to be done by the Garda Síochána to prevent abuse from occurring, protect victims, manage perpetrators and ensure that all victims of domestic abuse receive a trauma-informed service when they report to the Garda Síochána.*
- *The Inspectorate recommends that the Garda Síochána improve its service to victims; develop more effective multi-agency working arrangements; be more proactive in disrupting and managing offenders and put in place a dedicated garda domestic abuse strategy.*

Date 20th March 2025

Today the Minister for Justice has published the Garda Inspectorate's report "***Domestic Abuse: An inspection of the Garda Síochána's approach to prevention, protection, prosecution and victim support***".

Commenting on the inspection, Chief Inspector Mark Toland said; "***The Garda Síochána has taken a number of important steps to prevent abuse from occurring, increase protection for victims and bring offenders to justice. These include a pro-arrest policy, the introduction of a structured process to identify risk to victims, investment in training for personnel and the creation of a number of new roles to enhance the organisation's response to domestic abuse. However further improvements are required to ensure that all victims receive a trauma-informed service that is of a consistently high standard.***"

The experience of victims was a key focus of this inspection and the Inspectorate met with a number of people who shared their deeply personal experiences of abuse. In addition, through an online survey the Inspectorate received over seven hundred direct responses from victims of domestic abuse. This provided an invaluable insight into the experience of victims and while many reported a positive engagement with the Garda Síochána, 50% of survey respondents

who had reported their abuse to the Garda Síochána were dissatisfied with their overall experience. The highest level of dissatisfaction was among those who had reported their abuse in person at a garda station.

Commenting on feedback received from victims and support services, Chief Inspector Toland said, *“Our engagement with victims and support services highlighted the inconsistency of service that victims receive when they report their abuse to the Garda Síochána. It is concerning that half of victims who responded to our survey were dissatisfied with the service provided and in particular, the experience of victims who report their abuse at a garda station needs to be examined.”* Mr Toland continued, *“I would like to be clear that during this inspection we met many garda personnel who were committed to delivering a high quality service. The challenge now for the Garda Síochána is to ensure that all victims receive a high level of trauma-informed service regardless of how or where their abuse is reported.”*

The Inspectorate has found that there is room for further improvement across a number of key areas. To support the Garda Síochána to improve how it deals with domestic abuse, the Inspectorate has made 52 recommendations to the Garda Síochána, the Department of Justice and other agencies. These recommendations are directed at the following areas:

- **Victims** – improve victims’ experience at all stages and better assess and manage risk in order to protect victims;
- **Prevention/Offender Management** – put a stronger focus on proactively managing and disrupting offenders and continue to raise awareness;
- **Investigation and Prosecution Process** – ensure the Garda Síochána consistently applies its investigation allocation policy so that more serious cases are dealt with by specialist members and put in place greater scrutiny of arrests, detections and court outcomes;
- **Multi – Agency Working** – develop greater collaboration with statutory and non-statutory bodies, including working in partnership to protect and support victims as well as to manage offenders;
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – put in place a structured two-way stakeholder engagement at organisational and local levels;
- **Strategic Oversight** – develop a garda domestic abuse strategy, stronger internal governance and accountability, and an updated domestic abuse policy that includes how domestic abuse involving garda personnel will be dealt with; and
- **Garda Structures** – develop a more consistent and cohesive divisional model to deal with domestic abuse.

Chief Inspector Toland stated; *“If fully implemented, these recommendations will help the Garda Síochána and other agencies to work more collaboratively to protect and support victims of domestic abuse. They will also contribute to greater collaboration in tackling offenders ensuring that they are more effectively managed and their abusive behaviour is*

interrupted. I would also take this opportunity to encourage anyone who is or has been subjected to domestic abuse to report it to the Garda Síochána and to seek assistance from the relevant state services and their local domestic abuse support service.

“Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to those victims of domestic abuse who shared their deeply personal experiences with the inspection team. It was critically important that this report captured the experiences of victims of domestic abuse.”

Ends

Notes for Editors

Please see link to report <https://www.gsinsp.ie/domestic-abuse/>

The terms of reference are available here – <https://www.gsinsp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Domestic-Abuse-Inspection-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>

The 38 recommendations for the Garda Síochána and 14 recommendations for the Department of Justice and other relevant bodies are contained at page XXIX in the report.

A short video outlining the main findings in this report is available at <https://youtu.be/j5pA63qe35M>

For any follow up requests for information, please contact: Ms Kayleigh Canning, 0871494247, kxcanning@gsinsp.ie.

Key Findings

This was a self-initiated inspection to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Garda Síochána’s response to domestic abuse. Key findings included:

- The standard of service received by victims of domestic abuse was not consistent. This inconsistency of service was evident in all areas including initial reporting, keeping victims informed about their case, support for victims and the victims’ need for protection and special measures.
- The Inspectorate’s survey found that 48% of people were dissatisfied with how their initial domestic abuse report was dealt with by the Garda Síochána. This increased to 54% for people who reported in person at a garda station. Overall 50% of people who engaged with the Inspectorate survey were dissatisfied about the overall service they received.
- The Inspectorate examined 68,423 domestic-motivated crime incidents recorded on the garda PULSE system. Of these, only 0.3% were identified as being in need of protection.
- Most domestic abuse incidents are investigated by members of regular units. There are protocols in place to allow for more serious cases to be re-assigned to Divisional

Protective Services Units. However, due to their limited capacity, investigations that should have been reassigned were often retained by regular unit members.

- There was a significant variation in the rates of arrest across the garda divisions, including for breaches of domestic violence orders. The Garda Síochána did not examine arrest rates at the strategic level to understand the reasons for variation in rates.
- The garda approach to managing perpetrators of domestic abuse was under-developed when compared to other jurisdictions. For example, the Garda Síochána does not work as closely with other organisations to manage and disrupt high harm offenders. Similarly, there was no multi-agency approach to evaluate the level of risk to victims, provide support to or meet the protection needs of victims who are at highest risk of abuse.
- The awareness of perpetrator programmes and their use as a means to reduce offending behaviour was under-developed within the Garda Síochána.
- The Garda Síochána had introduced the Risk Evaluation Tool (RET) which seeks to assess the risk to each victim of domestic abuse, but it does not take account of information from or risk assessments conducted by other agencies. Its operational effectiveness had not yet been assessed.
- The Garda Síochána did not have an organisational strategy to tackle domestic abuse, its domestic abuse intervention policy was outdated and it made limited use of available data to inform its approach.
- Nationally and locally, the Garda Síochána had good engagement with support services and other organisations dealing with domestic abuse. However, this was often on an ad hoc basis and built on individual relationships. The Garda Síochána needs to build a national-level stakeholder engagement plan to ensure a structured engagement process. This should be replicated at the local level.

Reporting Domestic Abuse

If you wish to report an incident of domestic abuse, please contact the Garda Síochána on 112/999, visit your local garda station, or for further information visit [the domestic abuse section of the Garda Síochána website](#).

If you have been affected by any element of domestic abuse or know of someone you believe may be affected, there are organisations that can provide support and advice. Details of these can be found at <https://www.alwayshere.ie/>