



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

**Submission to the Garda Inspectorate on entry routes to the Garda Síochána
3 April 2017**

Introduction and Overview

The Government Decision of 19 July approving a Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan states the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality's intention *"to request the Garda Inspectorate to examine entry routes to An Garda Síochána for police officers from other police services and the opening up of promotion opportunities for Garda members to persons outside An Garda Síochána."* In that context, pursuant to section 117(2) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the Tánaiste requested that the Inspectorate carry out such an examination and make such recommendations as it considered appropriate.

The Policing Authority has considered the question set out in the terms of reference provided by the Minister and has decided to make this submission to support the proposition that a broad range of entry routes and entry levels to the Garda Síochána has the potential to contribute significantly to the modernisation of the Garda Síochána. In the preparation of this review, the Authority has had regard to:

- previous reports of the Garda Inspectorate;
- information regarding opening up entry to police services in other jurisdictions;
- reports from relevant tribunals and commissions of inquiry;
- Garda Síochána Human Rights Audit, June 2004;¹
- the work already underway as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme;
- the collective professional experience of members of the Authority.

The Authority has formed the view that current arrangements for recruitment of Gardaí are manifestly inappropriate for the needs of the modern Garda organisation and are not suitable for attracting the widest possible range of experience and talent. In common with other policing services the traditional entry route at trainee Garda level, and the traditional internal career path will continue to be appropriate for a large proportion of Garda sworn members. However, for a number of reasons including culture change, openness to a broad range of skills and experience, diversity and agility - which are elaborated on below – the Authority is of the view that there is significant merit in broadening the range of entry routes to the police ranks in the Garda Síochána. In this regard, the Authority would emphasise that reform of entry routes to the Garda ranks is not an end in itself.

¹ An Garda Síochána Human Rights Audit, Ionann Management Consultants, 2009

The Authority recommends that a number of different options be examined, implemented and evaluated. The Authority is happy to develop the ideas set out below with the Garda Inspectorate, including in the context of, and in response to, the proposals made by the Inspectorate once it has had the opportunity to conduct its research and set out its views.

The Authority emphasise that such reforms as are recommended by the Garda Inspectorate in due course need a strong implementation focus.

It is important to emphasise that any move to open up the entry routes into the Garda Síochána complements the work underway to implement the Government policy of “civilian by default”. In this regard, the Garda Síochána have committed to ensuring that civilian staff take up posts that are suitable to be filled by civilians. It is worth noting that many positions which require specialist skills (e.g. finance or IT skills) are suitable for civilianisation. Therefore, in most cases where a position requires specialist skills, it may be appropriate to assign a civilian to the role rather than a sworn member (either from within the Garda Síochána or by means of any future direct entry).

The Authority acknowledges that the introduction of direct entry schemes is a sensitive one for serving Garda members of all ranks who understandably will be concerned about their hopes of career progression. It will be important to listen to those views and to provide that any direct entry scheme also facilitates the progression of talent from within the Garda Síochána. In this regard, the Authority would make the following points:

- With a Government commitment to a 21,000 person Garda organisation by 2021, (15,000 sworn members, 4,000 civilian members and 2,000 reserves), the time is particularly opportune to implement recruitment reform because it is likely that there will also be significant advancement opportunities for existing members.
- The recommendations of the Commission for Public Service Appointments Audit of promotions to Garda Sergeant and Inspector need to be advanced.

Culture and Diversity

The culture of the Garda Síochána has been the subject of critical comment for very many years and in many reports and reviews. Mr Justice Morris referred to the “*monolithic origin of personnel within An Garda Síochána*” in a number of his reports, and suggested that this may have contributed to “*the situation of obstruction involving as is colloquially said ‘a circling of the wagons’*”.²

² “The Report on Explosive “Finds” in Donegal, 15 July 2004”, paras 13.123 - 13.125; Report on the Investigation into the Death of Richard Barron and the Extortion Calls to Michael and Charlotte Peoples”, paras 9.20 – 9.22.

The Smithwick Tribunal also highlighted a problem of “*a prioritisation of the protection of the good name of the force over the protection of those who seek to tell the truth*” and a culture where loyalty is prized above honesty.³

More recently, in 2015 the Garda Inspectorate referred to the need for the Garda Síochána to shift from an organisation where there is a perception of:

- *Slowness to change*
- *A blame culture*
- *Unfair processes*
- *Insularity and defensiveness*

to an organisation where:

- *All staff implement the values and behaviours of HARP and the Code of Ethics*
- *That embraces and drives change*
- *That delivers a customer-centric service*
- *All staff feel valued and internal processes are viewed as open, fair and transparent*⁴

The Garda Síochána Human Rights Audit, 2004 found that “*Tackling institutional discrimination is clearly a key concern at present for the organisation. Despite recognition of diversity and the changing nature of Irish Society, many members reported negative and stereotypical views of certain communities, which were based on their own experiences and perceptions rather than any hard statistical evidence*”. That report recommended improved contacts with, and understanding of, diverse groups including recruiting more minority Gardaí.⁵

Commentary of this nature about culture is not in any way confined to the Garda Síochána or to policing organisations. For example,

“The Review Group found the culture of the Department to be closed and unnecessarily secretive (even taking into account the important and confidential nature of some of the work). This has resulted in an inward looking organisation with limited learning capacity and reduced openness to new ideas – the Review Group found that although there has been a challenging expansion of work, the overall Departmental culture has not changed or adapted to the world in which it now operates.

³ Smithwick, Report of the tribunal of inquiry into suggestions that members of An Garda Síochána or other employees of the state colluded in the fatal shootings of RUC Chief Superintendent Harry Breen and RUC Superintendent Robert Buchanan on the 20th March 1989; at para 10.6.11

⁴ Report of the Garda Inspectorate, Changing Policing in Ireland, November 2015 at p179

⁵ An Garda Síochána Human Rights Audit, Ionann Management Consultants, 2009, p119 and p115

Report of the Independent Review Group on the Department of Justice and
Equality, July 2014

Closed organisation cultures have strengths, including stability, appropriate loyalty and strong identification with the values and philosophy of the organisation. However, overly closed organisations and cultures bring risks of groupthink, inappropriate loyalty and resistance to/suspicion of external actors. Closed cultures are often hallmarked by a high degree of homogeneity whether by reference to gender, ethnicity, or social background.

Training, external challenge, exposure to other ideas, diversity of a workforce and transparency are among the tools which may be used to change and renew cultures. Not to exploit the possibilities offered by recruitment in this regard would be a missed opportunity.

Agility

Large organisations with unpredictable demand cycles typically need to build agility into their resourcing model. The Garda Síochána has faced, and will inevitably from time to time again face, the need to “ramp up” resources quickly to meet a policing challenge or to respond to unexpected staff shortages.

Frequently, temporary reassignment or overtime are the appropriate response but sometimes they are not, including when a new unit is being established, for example, or when there are an atypical number of vacancies. Recruitment options with shorter cycles have the potential to add agility.

Options and proposals for consideration

We have set out below a range of options for consideration. The Authority is aware that a number of these approaches have previously been referenced by the Garda Inspectorate in its report “Changing Policing in Ireland” or are currently under consideration by it, but they are included here for completeness in representing the Authority’s position. The Authority would emphasise that the options are not mutually exclusive, and several could be advanced in parallel. Whatever option is favoured, the Authority considers that it is crucial that entry be opened up to allow direct entry to different levels of the organisation, particularly leadership ranks.

New approaches to recruitment will also require new approaches to training, including perhaps establishing a second campus, outsourcing, modular training, credits for previous education, and

partnerships with other agencies. The Authority is aware that the College of Policing in the UK has some experience of the value of pre-joining courses and considers that its experience could be drawn on to develop this proposal further: see also the section on targeted recruitment below.

The Authority recognises that to be effective, new approaches to recruitment may also require thought to be given to terms and conditions of appointment, including pension arrangements.

- *Entry at all levels by trained and qualified police officers from other policing services without having to begin as an untrained student Garda.*

This option has the potential to address issues both of culture and agility. It will require the development of shorter tailored training options perhaps on a modular basis which would enable appropriate differentiation depending on prior experience. It would seem sensible to begin by including policing services in other common law jurisdictions. As part of this option, specific provision should be made for re-entry by previously trained Gardaí.

In this regard, it should be noted that the Authority has previously recommended to the Department of Justice and Equality that the relevant regulations⁶ for promotion to the senior ranks should provide for open recruitment to these ranks, continuing the practice established by Government whereby the most recent selection competitions for Garda Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were open to candidates with appropriate experience.

- *Direct entry at Inspector and Superintendent levels.*

Changing and renewing Garda culture, which has been acknowledged to need specific attention, is a key responsibility of leadership and of the senior management ranks. In any organisation, it is arguably more difficult to generate pace and depth around change and modernisation when all the leaders are a product of the existing culture and are, by definition, immersed in it.

The Superintendent and Inspector ranks require a mix of policing knowledge with management and leadership skills. The current Garda model is built on the premise that on promotion, the policing knowledge/experience is a given and training in management and leadership is required. There is much to be offered by reversing this principle in appropriate cases by recruiting skilled managers and leaders, and giving them the necessary training in policing.

⁶ Garda Síochána Act 2005 (Appointments to the ranks of Assistant Garda Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and Superintendent) Regulations 2016

Direct entry schemes can help bring skills and experience which those wanting to embark on a second career will have. Moreover, such schemes serve to widen the talent pool from which leaders can be selected and allow a focus on the need for excellent leadership skills.

- *Accelerated progression.*

Two approaches are suggested for consideration. It would be important that for either model, candidates undertake rigorous assessment in advance of acceptance onto any such fast-track programme and carefully designed probationary processes.

- The Authority recommends that consideration be given to putting in place a Cadet model similar to the Defence Forces whereby a cadre of trainee leaders are recruited with a view to their appointment as Inspectors and/or Superintendents on completion of a specific training and education programme with strong focus on strategic leadership. The experience/education profile of recent intakes of student Gardaí suggest that a potential pool of candidates for such a programme exists.
- In addition, leadership talent should be identified from within the ranks of trainee Gardaí and sergeant for enrolment in a specific accelerated progression programme for speedy appointment to senior ranks.

- *Targeted recruitment to increase diversity including gender and ethnic diversity.*

It is important that the Garda Síochána is representative of the communities it serves. The existing “single front door” recruitment is unlikely to provide a diverse mix of recruits in line with the increasingly diverse Irish community for a very long time. The Authority recommends the development of a programme of positive action to actively encourage a more diverse applicant pool – including, for example, more candidates from ethnic minorities and under-represented socio-economic groups and more women. Such a programme would include targeting marketing, visiting schools and communities and auditing existing recruitment tools to ensure that there are no inappropriate barriers to entry.

An approach which includes targeted “pre-joining” training or education opportunities for minority communities would seem to be particularly worthy of consideration.

In addition, introducing members with experience of working in more diverse professions could further change the culture in a way that will help talented officers from under-represented groups to fulfil their potential.

- *Garda Reserve as “Apprentice”*

The Garda Reserve is an underdeveloped cadre with acknowledged potential to make a stronger contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Garda Síochána, and to enhance diversity and deepen community engagement. The Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016 - 2021 notes that many reserves come from minority communities and have a wide range of skills and experience in areas such as technology, finance and training.

The Authority agrees with the view of the Inspectorate expressed in “Changing Policing in Ireland”, November 2015, that there is room to develop a more strategic process for recruiting Garda Reserve members as a means to engage diverse communities in policing .

Recent changes to Garda recruitment to give a degree of recognition to Garda Reserve service is welcome. In the context of the Government decision to double the approved strength of the Reserve, an opportunity arises to build on those changes to provide a career path for suitable members of the Reserve and at the same time enhance the agility of the Garda recruitment model for example by having a Garda recruitment competition confined to the Reserve.

The current recruitment model can take up to 12 months from advertisement to entry to the Garda College which is understandable given the typical scale of applications to be processed and the necessary rigour in selection. A competition confined to existing Reserve members with a much reduced number to be processed, and which built on prior documented vetting and performance management /assessment of Reserve Gardaí would significantly shorten the timespan that currently applies to the large-scale Garda recruitment competitions.

Combined with training credits for prior reserve training and experience, this would have the potential to significantly enhance the agility and responsiveness of the Garda recruitment model if additional resources are required quickly. Furthermore, a specific opportunity for reserve service to be a potential career pathway, subject to good performance, could enhance its attractiveness to applicants.

Conclusion

Policing today is more complex and demanding than ever. In addition to policing skills, police leaders need skills and expertise that are similar in some respects to other sectors. The Garda

Síochána also needs to reflect the communities it serves in order to be able to support the policing needs of those communities

The Authority acknowledges that there are many examples of men and women working within the Garda Síochána who have come in through the traditional entry routes and gone on to demonstrate excellent leadership capability. However, when all or most of the senior leaders in an organisation have had minimal or no exposure to other working cultures and do not fully reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, it can lead to a relatively insular and closed culture. Many other public and private sector organisations use sophisticated and effective systems and programmes to identify and quickly develop individuals from inside and outside their organisations to leadership positions. The Authority believes that this should also be the ambition of the Garda Síochána.

The proposed expansion of the Garda organisation to 21,000 by 2021 represents a once in a generation opportunity to develop and implement new entry paths and new advancement paths. Not to avail of such an opportunity would be regrettable.

The Authority will be happy to develop any aspect of this submission in further discussions with the Inspectorate if that would be considered useful.