



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

**Statement following the Policing Authority Meeting with the Garda Commissioner  
13 June 2016**

- Service to Victims is a work in progress; the input of victims' representatives and the planned evaluation is welcome;
- Publication of the Protected Disclosure Policy is noted; the Authority will begin a review of the policy, practice and environment for "speaking up" at the request of the Tánaiste;
- Publication of the Public Attitude Survey by the Garda Síochána is planned for Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June;
- The Authority will get an early report in relation to the matter of motorists who may have been inadvertently prosecuted for the offence of not having a valid NCT when they had already paid a fixed penalty notice.

The Policing Authority today met with the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána and her senior team as a follow up on its consideration of the O'Higgins Report and related matters.

The Policing Authority has considered this report very carefully and has previously expressed its serious concern under a number of headings at what the Report set out. The Authority remains concerned that the good work done every day by the women and men of the Garda Síochána can be set at naught while doubts remain about these issues.

Meetings in public are an important part of the responsibility of the Authority to reassure the community about the performance of the Garda Síochána. Because of its scope, the Authority decided to have two meetings in public to examine issues related to the O'Higgins report and for today's agenda we examined the service to Victims of Crime, the Garda Protected Disclosure policy and practice, and the Culture of the Garda Síochána. The Authority was particularly keen to explore what would be different now for victims and for Gardaí on the ground.

The Garda commitment in their Modernisation and Renewal programme "to put Victims at the Heart of Policing", and efforts already made in that regard, are welcomed. Positive commitment to victims is not new however. The Garda public attitude survey suggests continued poor experience by victims since the introduction of victim service offices, and accordingly the planned evaluation is extremely important as is the commitment to finalise the work this year.

The Authority did not have an opportunity to consider the Garda Protected Disclosure policy in advance of the meeting but will do so. The Authority will also seek to meet with Transparency International Ireland. The Authority is keen to understand how the environment for speaking up will be improved, and the links to Garda culture which has been described as insular, defensive and resistant to change.

While recognising the very positive elements in the current Garda culture which facilitate the doing of very important and sometimes dangerous work, the Commissioner's commitment to a culture of listening, openness, empowerment and accountability and increased transparency about that accountability was welcomed. The Authority will play its part in overseeing that change.

The Authority repeated its observation that the independent externally conducted culture audit which the Commissioner is arranging will be an important baseline. It also welcomed the intention to develop and share with the Authority a plan to identify roles which can be filled by civilian professionals.

Concluding the meeting, Chairperson Josephine Feehily said "In relation to the topics discussed today – service to victims, speaking up and culture change – the position is that they are work in progress. This was readily acknowledged by the Garda Commissioner and her colleagues, which is welcomed. For victims of crime, for Garda staff and members and for community confidence it is important that progress takes place. The Authority's engagement with these topics will continue, not least in the context of the work to prepare a Garda Code of Ethics and the report in relation to whistle blowing requested by the Tánaiste"

The focus of the next meeting in public on 30 June will include governance, performance management and supervision issues.