



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA POLICING AUTHORITY

Policing Authority publishes Review of the Garda Síochána Adult Cautioning Scheme

4 February 2021

The Policing Authority has today published a [Review of the Garda Síochána Adult Cautioning Scheme](#), along with its own [commentary on the Review](#). The Review was commissioned by the Policing Authority and conducted independently by Crowe.

An Adult Caution is an alternative to prosecution in relation to specified offences, whereby an individual is informed that it is not proposed to prosecute him/her, if he/she is prepared to accept both a reprimand in respect of the matter and a warning that any future behaviour of a criminal nature is more likely to result in a prosecution.

The Review highlights the value of the Adult Cautioning Scheme and the achievement of its purpose in dealing with low level offences efficiently, and reducing the burden on the courts system. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence is presented which indicates low levels of recidivism among recipients of Adult Cautions. The success of the Scheme is also apparent by its recent expansion to include additional offences, as well as by the value placed on it by the Garda Síochána and the wider justice sector. Despite the weaknesses uncovered by the Review, it is important to note that no evidence was presented of inappropriate use of the scheme or deliberate non-compliance with rules by individual Garda members.

The findings of the Review reveal significant challenges in the operation of the Scheme:

- Governance of the Adult Cautioning Scheme was found to be weak, with a lack of awareness of ownership of the Scheme within the Garda Síochána at either a centralised or national level. It was also found that there is insufficient data and management information to support the effective governance of the Scheme within the Garda Síochána.
- In the Divisions examined, there was considerable variance in processes used to administer Adult Cautions at a local level. This was largely attributed to a lack of guidelines issued at the national level and a lack of training throughout the organisation.
- The recording of data for Adult Cautions and the systems to support this were found to be inadequate. Due to the inconsistency by which Adult Cautions were entered into PULSE, there is no way of determining the number of Adult Cautions that have been issued to date. It was also reported that there was insufficient quality review taking place for incidents.
- It was found that no formal training has been provided to members to operate the scheme.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented on the publication of the Review:

“As well as highlighting a number of significant challenges in the operation of the Adult Cautioning Scheme, this Review speaks to wider, systemic weaknesses in the Garda Síochána in relation to

governance, data quality, training and allied areas. This is consistent with themes identified by the Authority in other areas as part of our ongoing oversight of the Garda Síochána. The Authority welcomes the Garda Commissioner's commitment to addressing the challenges identified by this Review."

The Garda Síochána has responded to the Review and outlined a number of remedial initiatives and actions to the Policing Authority, relating to such areas as internal communications, training, and updates to the PULSE system. These actions, which have the potential to positively impact on the administration of the Scheme, will form the basis of ongoing oversight by the Authority. The Authority will continue to engage with the relevant sections of the Garda Síochána to ensure the recommendations in relation to the Adult Cautioning Scheme are addressed.

The next meeting in public between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner will take place on Thursday 25 February and will be live-streamed on www.policingauthority.ie.