



Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development

ACJRD SUBMISSION
TO
THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF POLICING

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ACJRD seeks to promote reform, development and effective operation of the Criminal Justice System.

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The ACJRD

[1.1] The Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD) is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting the reform, development and effective operation of the Irish Criminal Justice System. In particular, the ACJRD encourages innovation in criminal justice and seeks to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue between agencies and practitioners in the sphere of criminal law. The ACJRD was formerly known as the Irish Association for the Study of Delinquency.

[1.2] The ACJRD's membership is varied, but is largely comprised of individuals who have direct experience of dealing with the judicial system and representatives of criminal justice agencies. These include probation officers, legal and criminological academics, social workers, members of the Gardaí, prison officers, mental health professionals and practising lawyers.

[1.3] The ACJRD's approach and expertise is therefore informed by the hands-on experience of practitioners and agencies who deal with all aspects of the criminal justice system however the views expressed in this submission are those of ACJRD in its independent capacity and are not those of the ACJRD members' organisations or their employers.

Executive Summary

Malpractice and the lack of success in implementing recommended reforms in the Irish police service have resulted in damning tribunal reports, negative media coverage, and have impelled the Irish Government to establish the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. The Commission will comprehensively examine all aspects of policing in Ireland and is due to issue its report in September 2018. This submission aims to explore the benefits of systematic research into the Garda Síochána and policing, the attitudes to and outcomes of occupational stress and the role of supervision within the service.

1. General Recommendations

The ACJRD acknowledges that many of the issues raised in this submission also concern civilian members of staff, therefore, please note that any reference to ‘officers’ or ‘members’ also includes civilian members of staff.

1. Research

- That the Garda Síochána welcomes and proactively engages in research on policing in Ireland.
- That the Garda Síochána actively promotes collaboration with other researchers, universities and organisations in researching all aspects of policing both nationally and internationally.

2. Occupational Stress

- That Garda management unambiguously acknowledge that stress is a normal part of the job of policing.
- That senior management and line managers promote the use of support structures and encourage staff to access such services as required.
- That support structures are accessible to all officers to mitigate the long-term effects of operational stress.^{1,2}

3. Supervision

- That Garda management develop and implement training in modelling the dimensions of procedural justice.
- That there is equal treatment and impartiality in decision making.
- That the opinions and suggestions of colleagues and citizens are valued.
- That colleagues and citizens are treated with appropriate dignity and respect.
- That reasoned explanations are given for the decisions that officers have made.³

¹ Loo, R. (2003). A meta-analysis of police rates: Findings and issues. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior*, 33, 313-325.

² Violanti, J. M. (1995). Trends in police suicide. *Psychological Reports*, 77, 688-690.

³ Van Craen, M. and Skogan, W. G. (2017). Achieving Fairness in Policing: The Link Between Internal and External Procedural Justice. *Police Quarterly*, 20(1), 3-23.

2. Research

Negative coverage and scandal can trigger positive momentum and motivation for reform, however, the call for reform may come before the issues and challenges are wholly understood. A deficit in systematic social research on the organisational functioning of the Garda Síochána (Manning, 2012)⁴ limits the potential to identify and study the processual and relational factors influencing accountability, governance, and organisational change in the Garda Síochána. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of either independent or Garda-sponsored literature featuring interviews, observations, or analysis by researchers with Garda members and staff detailing their experience, attitudes and opinions concerning the service.

Many academics have collaborated with police departments over the years, and the usefulness of such research partnerships is increasingly valued (Price, 2015).⁵ Policing is a relationship between the law enforcement agency and the community it serves and while some police departments are cautious regarding independent researchers many are open to collaborative partnerships because they believe in developing and using the best policing practices possible for the safety of the public (Innes, 2010).⁶ Police and university collaborations may include research studies, teaching, knowledge-transfer projects, and real-world operational practice (Guillaume, Sidebottom & Tilley, 2012)⁷, which have the potential to:

- Produce high-quality research which is relevant to policing.
- Foster and support the evidence base on which policing policy and practice are established and advanced.
- Progress policing research capability by developing the research infrastructure and improving research skills.
- Improve both the methodological integrity and practical relevance of the research undertaken for practitioners, stakeholders, and academic researchers.
- Evaluate and improve internal operations and protocols.

⁴ Manning, P. K. (2012) Trust and accountability in Ireland: the case of An Garda Síochána, *Policing and Society*, 22(3), 346-36.

⁵ Price, M. C. (2015). The Process and Partnerships Behind Insight Policing, *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 27(5), pp. 553 – 567.

⁶ Innes M. (2010). A “mirror” and a “motor”: Researching and reforming policing in an age of austerity. *Policing*, 4, 127-134.

⁷ Guillaume, P., Sidebottom, A., and Tilley, N. (2012) On police and university collaborations: a problem-oriented policing case study, *Police Practice and Research*, 13(4), 389–401.

- Promote the development of national and international associations with other practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers (Fyfe and Wilson, 2012).⁸

Both the Garda Síochána and academic researchers benefit from research partnerships. The benefits for the Garda Síochána are evidence-based indicators of operational effectiveness, external validation for operational decisions, and straightforward, clear, and actionable recommendations resulting in improvements to performance and public safety (Burkhardt et al., 2015).⁹ Academic researchers benefit from access to unique and extensive sources of data and research programmes with wide-ranging impact.

Recommendations:

We are recommending that the Commission consider the extent to which the following common approaches to research already apply or should apply to the Garda Síochána:

- Proactively identify, research, and publish information on issues affecting staff and policy (subject to confidentiality)
- Develop associations with organisations, universities, and researchers with an interest in criminology/criminal justice research to produce mutually beneficial studies/publications
- Invite and promote exchange programmes with research units of national/international policing and security organisations.

⁸ Fyfe, N. R., and Wilson, P. (2012). Knowledge exchange and police practice: broadening and deepening the debate around researcher-practitioner collaborations, *Police Practice and Research* Vol. 13, No. 4, 306-314.

⁹ Burkhardt, B. C., Akins, S., Sassaman, J., Jackson, S., Elwer, K., Lanfear, C., Amorim, M., Stevens, K. (2015) University Researcher and Law Enforcement Collaboration: Lessons from a Study of Justice-Involved Persons with Suspected Mental Illness *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 61, Issue 5, pp. 508 – 525.

3. Occupational Stress

The ACJRD thinks it is important, in the overarching review of policing as a whole being carried out by the Commission, that the role of the individual member and the importance of institutional and personal professional support for such members should be given some substantial consideration, not only for the good of the individual members, and the morale of the police service as a whole, but for the benefit of Irish society, which is deserving of a police service comprised of members who feel good about their jobs and feel supported in the difficult work that they do.

Gardaí are expected to be strong and resilient and remain unaffected by the unpredictable and sometimes violent behaviours which they encounter in their work. The daily tensions associated with police work can have a debilitating effect, erode confidence and lead to a deterioration in stamina and resilience (Waters & Ussery, 2007)¹⁰. In any police service, officers need to engage with self-protective behaviours to mitigate the consequences of high-risk lifestyle. A significant difficulty occurs where management and peers fail to acknowledge or confront the negative outcomes of police work, thereby suggesting that only the weak suffer stress-related symptoms and that hiding one's feelings is a badge of courage (Hackett and Violanti, 2003).¹¹

Officers with stress related problems have a realistic basis for concern regarding their future in policing and may avoid acknowledging stress or mental health issues or contacting mental health professionals because:

4. They fear such action may be injurious to their career.
5. They may be concerned that their fitness for duty may be called into question if it becomes known that they have seen a counsellor.
6. Police culture militates against asking for help.
7. Officers question the ability of individuals outside of the field to understand the pressures of law enforcement.
8. Trusting others, even family members, is seen as a sign of weakness.
9. There is a tendency to ignore symptoms of depression.
10. There is a certain level of mistrust between officers and clinicians.

¹⁰ Waters, J. and Ussery, W. (2007). Police stress: history, contributing factors, symptoms, and interventions. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 30:2, 169-188.

¹¹ Hackett, D. P. and Violanti, J. M. (2003), *Police Suicide: Tactics for Prevention*, Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL.

11. Seeking help conflicts with the police image that members are individuals who are independent, competent, and trained to take care of dangerous situations, and to protect the public.
12. Officers may be concerned about being prescribed medications by psychiatrists to treat their symptoms due to the potential side effects of some antidepressants (Waters & Ussery, 2007)¹².

These beliefs accentuate the importance of the supervisor's role in monitoring the levels of both individual and collective stress within a police unit and being aware of emerging stress reactions that accelerate beyond 'normal' responses to stress.

Recommendations

We are recommending that the Commission consider the extent to which the following common approaches for dealing with occupational stress already apply or should apply to the Garda Síochána:

- Unambiguous acknowledgement by senior management and organisational literature that stress is a normal part of the job of policing
- Supervisor training in the principles of crisis intervention and critical incident stress debriefing procedures (to be offered while candidates are in training and on an ongoing basis)
- Peer support programmes where peer counsellors are selected based on competence, trustworthiness, sensitivity to issues of diversity and other cultural factors, and the ability to ensure confidentiality, command respect and establish rapport quickly. Such counsellors should be trained by mental health professionals with a knowledge of counselling skills, crisis intervention theory and practices, early warning signs of acute or chronic stress, suicide lethality assessment, the facts of alcohol and other drug abuse, and the issues of confidentiality
- Timely referrals to experienced mental health professionals
- Establishment of an independent confidential support programme based on the American COP-2-COP¹³ model (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

¹² Waters, J. and Ussery, W. (2007) Police stress: history, contributing factors, symptoms, and interventions, 177.

Ongoing and regular training for officers about individual coping strategies including:

- Developing reliable support systems.
- Enhancing communication skills.
- Exercise programme and diet necessary for optimum functioning.
- Activities that provide for a change of focus and positive feedback.
- Regular holidays.
- Meditation and muscle relaxation exercises.
- Participation in self-help groups.

Types of departmental strategies deployed in other organisational settings/other police services that should be considered:

- Open communication channels between officers and supervisors.
- Realistic job-related training in police functions.
- Training for supervisors in good management techniques.
- Opportunities for ‘debriefing’ sessions at the end of the shift.
- Stress management training.
- Opportunities for meaningful input into departmental decisions whenever possible.
- Reassessment of shift hours.
- Constructive feedback on job performance.

The effectiveness of these approaches and strategies could be developed and assessed by integrating supervisor responsibilities for mental health strategy and personnel management into testing and promotional requirements. Also, include information about personnel actions in relation to stress and mental health issues in senior staff meetings.

¹³ COP-2-COP, the first confidential 24-hour hotline for police officers and their families was established in New Jersey in 2000. It employs retired police officers trained in clinical assessment and crisis intervention techniques to support officers. These volunteer counsellors respond to calls from officers requiring assistance which can lead to referrals to licensed mental health professionals experienced in assisting police officers. Confidentiality and integrity in practice are basic components of the programme. The reputation of COP-2-COP has made it a model for other emergency service crisis intervention programmes (Waters and Ussery, 2007: p 171).

4. Supervision and Procedural Justice

The Report of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate (2015)¹⁴ found that many Gardaí considered that the selection processes within the Garda Síochána were unfair, lacked transparency and lead to uncertainty regarding candidate selection. These concerns were global, relating to assignment to detective and specialist units, and selection and promotions both local and national. Concerns were also expressed relating to the lack of encouragement to ‘speak-up’.

There is an increasing interest in the link between supervisors’ actions and the behaviour of their officers. Research by Tyler (2011)¹⁵ indicates that employees’ trust in supervisors and management is strongly influenced by perceptions of fair decision making and just interpersonal treatment. Van Craen and Skogan (2017)¹⁶ examined whether fair policing could be plausibly related to fair supervision. They identified supervisor modelling as a mechanism that explains how internal procedural justice can promote external procedural justice. The supervisor modelling thesis draws on elements of social learning theory (Bandura, 1971)¹⁷ which argues that most behaviours that people display are learned through the influence of role models.

Research indicates that organisations that have policies and practices in place which are aligned to support and reward their officers in the conduct of their duties are generally more successful in the application of procedural justice principles (Mastroski & Ritti, 1996)¹⁸. Furthermore, fair supervision increases officers’ compliance with both supervisors and policies of the organisation (Bradford, Quinton, Myhill, & Porter, 2014¹⁹; Tyler, Callahan, & Frost, 2007²⁰).

¹⁴ Garda Síochána Inspectorate (2015) Changing Policing in Ireland, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.gsinsp.ie/en/GSINSP/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf/Files/1286-ChangingPolicinginIreland_Low-Full.pdf

¹⁵ Tyler, T. R. (2011). Why people cooperate. The role of social motivations. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

¹⁶ Van Craen, M. and Skogan, W. G. (2017). Achieving Fairness in Policing: The Link Between Internal and External Procedural Justice. *Police Quarterly*, 20(1), 3-23.

¹⁷ Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.

¹⁸ Mastroski, S. D., & Ritti, R. R. (1996). Police training and the effects of organization on drunk driving enforcement. *Justice Quarterly*, 13(2), 291–320.

¹⁹ Bradford, B., Quinton, P., Myhill, A., & Porter, G. (2014). Why do ‘the law’ comply? Procedural justice, group identification and officer motivation in police organizations. *European Journal of Criminology*, 11(1), 110–132.

²⁰ Tyler, T. R., Callahan, P. E., & Frost, J. (2007). Armed, and dangerous (?): Motivating rule adherence among agents of social control. *Law & Society Review*, 41(2), 457–492.

Recommendations

We are recommending that the Commission consider the extent to which the following approaches, which are used in other organisational settings/ other police services already, apply or should apply in the Garda Síochána:

- Development and implementation of policies and practices which support internal procedural justice.
- Operating 360 degree appraisal (where appraisal is from lower to higher rank and vice versa) to ensure supervisors engage in procedurally fair behaviours.
- Teaching and training supported by organisational practice through the introduction of accessible two-way communication between the rank-and-file and their superiors.
- Ensuring greater transparency and fairness in job assignments.
- Safeguarding openness and transparency in promotion and selection by publishing conditions, expectations, and the process of competition in advance of application deadlines.
- Operating fair disciplinary processes by maintaining up to date and accessible supports, policies, and procedures.
- Assessing and considering the quasi-military culture of the organisation which demands conformity and potentially limits the inclination to ‘speak-up’ and may be unlikely to promote leadership based on the principles of voice and accountability.
- Broad implementation of participative and transformational leadership styles.
- Identifying and eradicating cronyism and discrimination from decision-making.

Summary and Thanks

All of the above research and requested recommendations are encapsulated in the Executive Summary at the commencement of this document and will not therefore be re-iterated here.

The ACJRD would like to thank the Commission on the Future of Policing for the opportunity to submit its views for their consideration.

In particular, we would like to thank Maura Finnie, recent graduate of the DIT Masters in Criminology, who compiled this submission for consideration by ACJRD.

Council of the ACJRD

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