

An Garda Síochána



Official Languages Act 2003

Language Scheme

2016 – 2019

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Preparation of Scheme

This scheme was prepared by An Garda Síochána based on Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”), and is the organisation’s second scheme. Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide

- Through the medium of Irish,
- Through the medium of English,
- Through the medium of Irish and English.

This Scheme sets out the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by An Garda Síochána through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed period of time.

1.2 Objectives of the Scheme

An Garda Síochána, since its inception in 1922, has endeavoured to provide a quality service in Irish, as required, to the public we serve. Over the years a series of action programmes have been developed in line with Government Guidelines, Directives and Statutory requirements. An Garda Síochána recognises the right of citizens to conduct their business in Irish and is committed to the implementation of the Official Languages Act 2003.

The focus in this scheme is on maintaining and developing the Irish language commitments and service provisions outlined in An Garda Síochána’s previous Section 11 Scheme.

A number of changes have been introduced within An Garda Síochána in order to enhance the Irish language service provided. These changes include:

- The introduction of a policy for an Irish language stream in recruitment for applicants with fluency in the Irish language to assist with Irish language requirements in An Garda Síochána. Garda trainees who enter An Garda Síochána through this stream will be in a position to assist with the Irish language requirements as necessary on completion of their probationary period.

- The appointment of an Irish Language Officer for An Garda Síochána.

The nature of the core function of An Garda Síochána will demand an inbuilt flexibility in this scheme to cater for emergency situations. An Garda Síochána will encounter difficulty in having personnel with the necessary skills at every location of interface with the public, and therefore a reasoned approach will be taken to meet our responsibilities under the Act and provide a quality service in Irish and English. An Garda Síochána must continually adapt to meet the needs, expectations and challenges of a modern society and this second scheme sets out the measures to be carried forward from An Garda Síochána's Official Languages Act 2003, Section 11 Scheme in addition to further commitments that will assist the organisation in future compliance with the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

1.3 An Garda Síochána - Background

An Garda Síochána has a proud tradition of serving communities and protecting the State with a staff of 16,000 dedicated and committed Garda members, staff and reserves. An Garda Síochána regularly go above and beyond the call of duty to protect our communities, tackle criminality, keep our roads safe, and maintain national security and is fortunate to have many staff members who carry out these functions every day through the medium of Irish and English.

1.4 Mandate Vision and Mission

Section 7 of An Garda Síochána Act 2005 sets out the function of An Garda Síochána as providing policing and security for the State with the objectives of:

- a) Preserving peace and public order,
- b) Protecting life and property,
- c) Vindicating the human rights of each individual,
- d) Protecting the security of the State,
- e) Preventing crime,
- f) Bringing criminals to justice, including detecting and investigating crime,
- g) Regulating and controlling road traffic and improving road safety.

For the purpose of achieving the objectives referred to above, An Garda Síochána shall co-operate, as appropriate, with other Departments of State, agencies and bodies having, by law,

responsibility for any matter relating to any aspect of that objective and shall provide any other service for which it has been given legal responsibility.

1.5 Commencement Date of Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed on 08 August 2016 by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It will commence with effect from this date and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new Scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

CHAPTER 2

ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF SERVICES ALREADY AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH

2.1 Main Provisions of Current Garda Policy

- Personnel in Gaeltacht Stations – The policy of An Garda Síochána is to ensure a high standard in oral Irish proficiency for members serving in Gaeltacht areas.
- Telephone calls – In Gaeltacht stations a comprehensive service in Irish is available. In non-Gaeltacht areas an informal structure exists to facilitate a caller who seeks to have business transacted through Irish.
- Personal Callers – In non-Gaeltacht areas an informal structure exists to facilitate personal callers.
- Correspondence – All letters, facsimile transmission and electronic mails (e-mails) received in the Irish language are responded to in Irish.
- Publications – All major reports issued by An Garda Síochána are in Irish and English. Forms are now in Irish and English.
- Website – The static information on the website of An Garda Síochána is in Irish and English.

2.2 Rannóg na Gaeilge – Irish Language Section

This is a special section in the Garda College which provides assistance to the organisation in dealing with Irish language matters.

An English/Irish dictionary of specialist and legal terminology used by Gardaí has been issued to the organisation.

Computer generated official forms are translated into the Irish language. An externally contracted Irish language translation service is also available to An Garda Síochána.

2.3 Irish Language Officer

An Garda Síochána has appointed an Irish Language Officer to support and enhance the overall work of The Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee and assist in ensuring that An Garda Síochána fulfils its obligations under the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Irish Language Officer is charged with assisting the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee in raising the profile and status of the Irish language in An Garda Síochána.

CHAPTER 3

ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY

Continuation / Enhancement of Services to be Provided Bilingually

The objectives of An Garda Síochána's second language scheme are to build on the progress achieved since 2009 in the provision of quality services to our Irish-speaking citizens and to broaden the range of services available bilingually over the lifetime of the scheme. However, it must be acknowledged that delivery on these commitments may be negatively affected by financial and staffing changes that may occur in the future, which are beyond the control of An Garda Síochána.

3.1 Telephone system:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.2 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

“An Garda Síochána” is seen as readily identifiable and presents an implied invitation to the caller to continue in either Irish or English. Staff will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and arrangements are in place to put members of the public in touch speedily with whatever office or officer is responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.2 Official forms and notices:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.3 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

All new forms, public notices and information leaflets issued by An Garda Síochána will be in Irish and English on one document, except where for reasons of design or size this is not possible and in such instances separate Irish and English documents will be produced. The new versions of forms will be produced when current stocks are expended.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.3 Fixed charge notices:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.4 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

An Garda Síochána will produce all Fixed Charge Notices in bilingual format. This will be achieved in co-operation with the Garda ICT section and other relevant outside agencies.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.4 Press office:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.5 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

A local media spokesperson will be made available to provide a service in Irish where reasonable notice is given.

All press releases pertaining to Garda policy matters will be provided in Irish and English.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.5 Computer systems:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.6 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 however some alterations have been made as outlined hereunder:

Newly acquired computer systems having an interface with the public will be capable of handling Irish.

Existing computer systems having an interface with the public will be made compatible with Irish.

Any interactive services which allow the general public to make applications on line will be introduced simultaneously in both languages.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme

3.6 Website:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.7 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

The static information on the Garda website will continue to be made available in Irish and English.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.7 Public meetings:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.8 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

It is the policy of An Garda Síochána when holding public meetings/consultations in Gaeltacht areas to do so through the medium of Irish.

Where a public meeting is being held outside of Gaeltacht areas, An Garda Síochána will facilitate a person who wishes to make a contribution or submission in Irish. To provide this service there will be a need for an application to be made prior to the meeting so that the necessary arrangement can be put in place.

Advertisements for meetings will invite people to make requests for a translation service in advance of such meetings.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.8 Gaeltacht placenames:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.9 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

All Garda Stations situated in the Gaeltacht will use the official Irish language name of the town/village as set out in the Placenames (Ceantair Gaeltachta) Order 2004.

Timeframe: Commencement of this Scheme

Within each Garda sub-district in Gaeltacht areas the Irish language name of all townlands, as set out will, where not already used, be brought into usage in all registers and databases.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.9 Persons attending at Stations:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.10 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

An Garda Síochána must deal with persons who can be categorised as: arrested persons, complainants, witnesses, other.

Arrested persons have a legal entitlement to have their business conducted in Irish.

Where a person wishes to make a complaint in Irish a service in Irish will be provided subject to the provisions of Paragraphs 3.11 (2) & (3) below.

Witnesses and other persons seeking a service in Irish will be facilitated subject to the provisions of Paragraphs 3.11 (2) & (3) below.

3.10 An Ghaeltacht:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.11 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 sets out at Section 33(2)

“The Garda Commissioner shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that members of the Garda Síochána stationed in a District that includes a Gaeltacht area are sufficiently competent in the Irish language to enable them to use it with facility in carrying out their duties”.

In Gaeltacht areas a comprehensive service in Irish will be made available to the public subject to the provisions of Paragraph 3.11 below. This includes provisions for personnel already based in Gaeltacht areas being offered an opportunity to obtain the necessary qualifications in Irish.

Timeframe: Continuation

The exigency of An Garda Síochána service will take precedence. An Garda Síochána has implemented a recruitment policy which introduced an Irish language stream in recruitment for applicants with fluency in the Irish language to assist with Irish language requirements in An Garda Síochána. Garda trainees who enter An Garda Síochána through this stream will be in a position to assist with the Irish language requirements as necessary on completion of their probationary period.

In compliance with Section 13(2)(e) of the Official Languages Act 2003, arrangements will be put in place to ensure the Irish language becomes the working language of every Garda Station in a Gaeltacht area.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.11 Human Resource Management:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 3.12 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 some of which have all ready been carried out as outlined hereunder:

Human Resource Management will:

(1) Update the allocation policy to reflect the plans for enhancing the provision of a Garda service through the Irish language.

This will be achieved by an analysis of the personnel records database to ensure that it captures the level of Irish language proficiency of personnel in An Garda Síochána.

Timeframe: Continuation

(2) Have a comprehensive Garda service in Irish available in all Garda Stations in the Gaeltacht. This will be achieved by maximising the efficiency of the personnel allocation policy with a focused training approach.

(a) All personnel working in the Gaeltacht will be provided with the necessary upskilling and equipment to assist them to be proficient in the use of the Irish language.

(b) The Garda Commissioner will endeavour to prioritise the selection of personnel proficient in the use of the Irish language for allocation to Gaeltacht stations.

Timeframe: Continuation

(3) Draw up and maintain a panel of proficient Irish speakers in each Garda Division. This panel will be available to provide a full Irish service as soon as is practicable after a request for such service has been made.

Timeframe: Continuation

3.12 Training courses and staff development:

An Garda Síochána is committed to ensuring that the Irish language is retained as part of the core programme for Garda Student/Probationer training. In order to facilitate Human Resource Management in the proportionate allocation of Irish speaking Probationer Gardaí throughout the country, the Oral Irish Proficiency Test will be moved to Phase I of the Student Probationer training programme.

Timeframe: Continuation

Training Review

To progress the organisational responsibilities under the Official Languages Act, 2003, the Human Resource Management Section will review training needs of staff and will identify suitable Irish language courses for staff to meet the service requirements needs. Study courses in the Irish language will be selected and approved for financial aid as part of the educational fund scheme.

Timeframe: Continuation

CHAPTER 4

MONITORING AND REVIEW

4.1 Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 4.1 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

The responsibility for implementation and monitoring of this scheme rests with the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Change Management, who will chair the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee.

Each Assistant Commissioner will be responsible for implementation of the Scheme in their respective areas. Each Regional Inspector will act as the Irish Language Liaison Officer for their respective Region or Section. Each Divisional Officer will nominate an Inspector to coordinate the implementation at Divisional level, and to monitor achievements against the specific commitments set down in this scheme, and report to the Regional Irish Language Liaison Officer. It is the function of the Liaison Officers is to assist with the structured implementation of this Scheme as directed by the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee.

The Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee will ensure through briefings and newsletters that all staff within the organisation are aware of the commitments contained in the agreed scheme.

4.2 Feedback

A facility is available on the Garda website to enter feedback or comment. Suggestions of interested parties will be welcomed.

4.3 Human Resource Management annual review:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 4.3 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

Human Resource Management will conduct an annual review of progress towards the objective of full compliance with the Act and will present this report to the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee at the end of each year of the Scheme.

4.4 Garda Annual Report:

An Garda Síochána will continue to implement commitments outlined in Section 4.4 of An Garda Síochána's Section 11 scheme 2009 – 2012 as outlined hereunder:

The Garda Commissioner will report in the Garda Annual Report on performance against commitments in the Scheme in accordance with the Guidelines issued under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

An Garda Síochána will continue to actively seek the views of Gaeltacht communities, other interested parties and groups that work in the area of advancement of the Irish Language.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLICISING OF SCHEME

An Garda Síochána will circulate copies of this Scheme to all stakeholders of the organisation.

The content of this Scheme will be available to the public on the Garda Síochána website, in Irish and English, and the public may make submissions about the Scheme on a dedicated webpage.

Copies of this Scheme will be available to any member of the public, by contacting the local Superintendent's Office.

A Press Release will announce the launch of this Scheme and publicise locations where full details of the Scheme are available.

This Scheme will be available to all staff of the organisation on the Garda Síochána Information Portal on the PULSE system.