

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

An Garda Síochána recognises that in building confidence in its work among members of the community, it has a duty to engage with many and diverse stakeholders. We must also communicate about our actions, policies and priorities. This communications strategy outlines how we will deliver on these requirements.

This communications strategy has been developed in order to support the achievement of the strategic objectives which are outlined in An Garda Síochána's Corporate Strategy 2010 – 2012. Effective internal and external communications strategies will contribute to the successful delivery of the Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Strategy has identified four core values and these will inform the tone of all communications undertaken by the organisation.

- **Honesty** - Being honest and ethical and adhering to the principles of fairness and justice
- **Accountability** - Accepting individual responsibility and ensuring public accountability
- **Respect** - Having respect for people, their Human Rights and their needs
- **Professionalism** - Providing a professional policing service to all communities

While we will be guided by the principles of openness and transparency, all communications activities will take account of the need to respect the integrity of Garda operations and investigations. We will ensure that all communications activities respect the sensitivities of Garda work. Nothing in our communications should risk prejudicing an ongoing criminal investigation or trial, compromising an operation or infringing the privacy or human rights of any individual.

Our communications will support frontline policing in the prevention and detection of crime. They will assist investigations through the issuing of appeals to the public for information and help ensure public safety through the dissemination of road safety messages, crime prevention advice and other public information. All communications will be directed at reassuring the community and building confidence in An Garda Síochána.

Information will be presented in clear, concise and plain language in order to ensure that all messages are easily understood by members of the community.

In implementing this Communications Strategy, An Garda Síochána can explain to a wide and diverse audience how it carries out its key functions and how we work in partnership to achieve our vision, mission and associated policing goals.

Vision: Excellent people delivering policing excellence

Mission: Working with communities to protect and serve

POLICING GOALS

- Ensuring our nation's security
- Confronting crime
- Effective roads policing
- Ensuring a peaceful community
- Working with communities
- An excellent organisation

RATIONALE

A strong communications programme that disseminates timely, accurate and reliable information is required if An Garda Síochána is to maintain the support of the community. It will also encourage greater debate, dialogue and feedback from key stakeholders and communities, which will assist in making better judged and informed decisions. By listening to the community, we can work together in partnership to find shared solutions to shared problems and achieve a safer and more secure environment for everyone.

The strategy outlines our communications aims, methods and how we intend to communicate both internally and externally. It will also enable the organisation to deal with the communications implications of inevitable unforeseen emergencies.

The Director of Communications undertakes to work effectively with all staff, stakeholders and members of the community to promote our vision, mission and values and identify those areas that need to be explained and promoted internally and externally through a variety of communications channels and tools. We will also support An Garda Síochána's consultative role in listening and feeding back information to the community.

COMMUNICATIONS AIMS

This communications strategy seeks to provide an approach which will:

- Support frontline policing objectives
- Contribute to public confidence in An Garda Síochána
- Respond to challenges in an effective and efficient manner
- Support An Garda Síochána's commitment to openness and honesty
- Promote understanding among the target audiences about the role achievements and effectiveness of An Garda Síochána
- Contribute to a positive public image for the organisation with the public and a wide range of partner organisations
- Use evaluation and two-way dialogue to drive improvement

AUDIENCES

The key audiences for An Garda Síochána include but are not limited to:

- Members of the community
- Members and staff of An Garda Síochána
- Media
- Government and Oireachtas members
- Local authorities and other public bodies
- Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
- Garda Inspectorate
- Other Emergency services
- Representative associations and trade unions
- Partner organisations
- International partners

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

An Garda Síochána currently uses, and will develop, a variety of methods of communicating with key audiences. The principle methods include:

- **Website** – the website has recently been significantly improved, and further improvements are being developed.

- **Annual Report** – published once per year and available on www.garda.ie, includes information about crime and policing at national and regional levels
- **Working with the media** – An Garda Síochána seeks to develop positive relationships with the media, locally and nationally. To this end it issues press releases to publicise its actions and holds press conferences. Training is available for members who deal with the media.
- **Garda Portal** – provides information to staff on a range of issues including the Garda organisation, human resources, education and missing persons.
- **Internal newsletter** – to highlight initiatives, provide information on internal developments and share good practice and achievements.
- **Liaison with communities** – meeting members of the community in their local area to address matters of concern is a positive means of communicating on key Garda messages.
- **Attending roadshows and conferences** – An Garda Síochána attends conferences and roadshows throughout the year to engage with key partner organizations and members of the community.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

External communications

- Support investigations by generating a good public response to appeals for information.
- Secure public cooperation on matters of safety and crime prevention.
- Promote the work of An Garda Síochána and raise awareness and understanding of and support for its role.
- Maintain a good working relationship with media representatives and our partners so that we can share information that promotes greater understanding and support.
- Provide a press and public relations service during agreed hours, and an on-call duty press officer available at all other times.
- Provide a strategic overview of our communications strategy and management of internal and external communications in all its forms.
- Advise members of An Garda Síochána and staff on all media and communications issues.
- Develop and implement specific communications strategies in relation to the work of the organisation and, where necessary, its partners.

- Provide a rapid rebuttal service to counter inaccurate or misleading information from third parties.
- Oversee media monitoring to provide alerts on notable current and contentious issues.
- Oversee the production of An Garda Síochána's Annual Report.
- Act as custodian of the corporate logo and house style.
- Liaise with our partners on all aspects of communications as they affect the work of An Garda Síochána.
- Look for opportunities to issue positive statements that will help reassure members of the community that we are working towards establishing an effective and efficient police service that offers fairness, transparency and professionalism.
- Write and issue statements, press releases and articles on a wide range of relevant topic areas.
- Identify key initiatives and work that would benefit from external publicity.

Internal communications

- Promote awareness and understanding among staff of the organisation's vision, mission and goals.
- Generate confidence and 'buy in' among staff.
- Encourage feedback.
- Engage in effective reputation management for An Garda Síochána.
- Develop effective methods to promote and share Garda achievements.
- Ensure the consistency and quality of information distributed to An Garda Síochána members and staff, officers, support staff, partners and other internal stakeholders

MONITORING

The effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored by the Director of Communications. Communications activity will be evaluated and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Sinéad McSweeney

Director of Communications

16 November 2009