

Chair,

Before I outline the detail of this problem, on behalf of An Garda Síochána I want to apologise to the more than 3,000 individual and corporate victims that we let down. They expected us to pursue the crimes committed against them to the fullest extent possible and in their cases we did not do this.

Each and every one of these crimes should have been investigated. The public expects that if something is reported that it is investigated. I expect the same.

We also let society down by not fully pursuing these crimes, some of them serious, committed by young people.

I also want to apologise to those young people that we let down – these were generally vulnerable children who had committed crimes in the past and would commit further crimes. We should have done better by them at the time.

This examination by An Garda Síochána has found that this issue was caused by organisational and individual failings. An Garda Síochána discovered this problem, and active measures we put in place significantly reduced the instances of this issue to 0.7 per cent of all youth referrals by 2017. We put further measures in place in 2018 and in the last two weeks including the establishment of the National Bureau of Child Diversion headed by a Chief Superintendent on a full-time basis.

We will continue to closely this matter at local and national level to prevent any re-occurrence.

The Policing Authority and the Department of Justice have been kept informed of this examination and the issues arising. In addition, An Garda Síochána has appointed Crowe Ireland to validate the examination process. They started work on this last week.

What is being presented today is an interim report and the final figures may change as a result of further examination and the outcomes of individual disciplinary processes that may arise from this issue.

We will keep the Policing Authority and the Department of Justice regularly informed on the outcomes of those disciplinary processes and also provide re-assurance that the system is continuing to work correctly.

It should be said that while this examination has found serious issues with how some crimes committed by young people were processed by An Garda Síochána, this should not take away from the significant and important work that has been done and is being done by the Garda Youth Diversion programme in preventing crime, protecting communities and steering thousands of young people away from a life of crime. Almost two-thirds of children receiving an informal or formal caution as their first caution under the Diversion Programme do not re-offend.