



An Garda Síochána Human Rights Strategy & Action Plan 2025-2027



An Garda Síochána
Ag Coinneáil Daoine Sábháilte - Keeping People Safe

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Foreword

As Garda Commissioner, I am proud to introduce the Human Rights Strategy & Action Plan 2025–2027. This Strategy comes at a significant moment for An Garda Síochána as we are approaching a decade since the publication of the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. That report placed human rights at the core of policing in this country and tremendous effort and progress has been made in embedding those values across our organisation.



In line with the recommendations of the Future of Policing in Ireland Report, The Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 includes measures aimed at improving the performance and accountability of An Garda Síochána by introducing a new governance and oversight framework. These measures include the creation of a Garda Board for internal governance and a new, strengthened independent oversight body, the Policing and Community Safety Authority, to replace the previous bodies as well as the creation of the National Office for Community Safety, reflecting the reality that public safety is not the responsibility of An Garda Síochána alone.

The progress of An Garda Síochána in the area of Human Rights over the last decade has been significant and it recognised that in the world of modern policing, our effectiveness depends upon the confidence, trust and support of the public. This trust is built every day through visible community policing, professional conduct in every interaction and through the way we engage with victims particularly those who are the most vulnerable.

However, embedding human rights into policing and security is not a destination we arrive at once and for all. It is a journey and one that requires us to continually listen, reflect and act. This Strategy has been shaped by extensive consultation with both colleagues and external stakeholders including those who represent minority communities and individuals most at risk of harm. Their voices and input have been invaluable in identifying the themes and priorities that will guide us over the next three years.

The actions set out in this Strategy are designed not only to protect and promote the rights of those we serve but also to strengthen accountability and transparency within our organisation. Visibility, respectful engagement and a fair, consistent response, especially for victims of crime and abuse, will remain guiding principles whilst at the same time, we must continue to vindicate the rights of those suspected of wrongdoing and continue to build our capacity to address evolving security threats in a way that is proportionate, lawful and respectful of individual rights.

As Commissioner, I am determined that this Strategy will ensure An Garda Síochána continues to protect the people of Ireland with fairness, professionalism and respect. By building upon the strong foundations already laid, we will ensure that protecting and upholding human rights remains not just an aspiration but is embedded within the daily practice of policing by An Garda Síochána in every community.

It is with this sense of purpose that I present the An Garda Síochána Human Rights Strategy & Action Plan 2025–2027.

Justin Kelly
Commissioner
An Garda Síochána

Part I

1. Introduction - the importance of Human Rights in Policing & Security

Perhaps more than any other profession, day-to-day policing and security activities and powers directly engage a broad range of human rights and freedoms as set out in the Constitution of Ireland (Bunreacht na hÉireann) and in international and domestic legislation and human rights instruments. The Report on the Commission on the Future of Policing in 2018 highlighted the centrality of human rights to policing, stating -

“The purpose of policing is to protect the human rights of all members of society to live free from violence, abuse, crime and fear”¹.

An Garda Síochána holds a privileged position in Irish society where all of its Personnel are entrusted with safeguarding and upholding the human rights of every person. Human Rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, disability, membership of the Traveller community or any other status. An Garda Síochána is uniquely placed to protect and vindicate the human rights of all persons, including those at heightened risk of exploitation or abuse, and a wholehearted commitment to so doing should be a source of pride for all Garda Personnel.

Particular policing contexts will see Garda Personnel perform the challenging role of attempting to balance competing rights and expectations of individuals, and a human rights compliant approach to policing is the most effective means of achieving this. For example, a public demonstration can see the rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression of some individuals come into conflict with the rights of other individuals or groups who hold competing views, or with the rights of uninvolved persons to freely go about their daily lives safely. Advances in technology also engage human rights and will continue to raise legitimate questions about its value to policing and security functions as against its potential to affect human rights; including the right to privacy. The right to a fair trial of an accused person is engaged throughout the investigative process and criminal prosecutions are less likely to be subject to legal challenges when a suspect is treated with respect and dignity and their human rights are vindicated. Victims and wider society are more likely to trust An Garda Síochána and the criminal justice system as a result.

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty² places a further statutory obligation on public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights not only of those to whom they provide services, but also to their staff when carrying out their daily work.

¹ Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

² Section 42 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014

Not only is a human rights based approach to policing required by law, it is the most effective means of earning and retaining the trust, confidence, and support of all communities, which is essential to legitimate, effective, and professional policing.

2. Our Progress to Date

As An Garda Síochána embarks upon the process of delivering upon the Strategy Actions set out in Part II – Action Plan, it is useful to reflect on the progress we have already made to date. Below are just some of the important developments that have been made within An Garda Síochána since the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland:

The establishment of a dedicated Garda Human Rights Section

The appointment of both internal and external Human Rights Advisors to provide expert human rights advice in developing policies and procedures

Quarterly meetings of the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee (SHRAC) which advises on the general strategy for embedding and ensuring compliance with human rights standards in all aspects of the work of An Garda Síochána. The SHRAC meets quarterly and is chaired by the Commissioner.

The development of the Policing & Human Rights in Ireland micro-credential course, accredited by the University of Limerick and completed by 4,500 participants to date

The introduction of a Human Rights Screening Tool, which aims to ensure consistent implementation of human rights standards across the three pillars of policy, training and operations

Updating of the Garda Decision Making Model to place constitutional and human rights considerations at the heart of decision making across the organisation

Publication of the Garda Human Rights Framework which aims to ensure that all Garda Personnel are fully aware of the human rights standards which must be respected and protected in the performance of their functions

Publishing of Garda Human Rights Strategies (2020-2022; 2022-2024) with a combined total of 52 Actions, progress on which is provided to the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee

A human rights focused review of a number of organisational policies and procedures identified by internal and external stakeholders as priority areas, including custody management and risk assessment, use of force and detentions under the Mental Health Acts

Establishing a Garda Human Rights Champion Network, supported by the Human Rights Ethics & Culture Management Board, which has access to additional learning sessions in the areas of unconscious bias, neurodiversity, suicide intervention, mental health and many other relevant subjects.

3. Purpose of this Strategy & Action Plan

The Human Rights Strategy & Action Plan 2025-2027 acknowledges the work already undertaken to date; but also recognises that in order for An Garda Síochána to become leaders in human rights based policing and earn and maintain the trust of all communities, **embedding** human rights across the organisation is an ongoing process that requires investment in **training and education** for our personnel. In order to complement the Policing & Human Rights Law in Ireland course, which has been to date completed by in excess of 4,500 participants, a number of new human rights based training opportunities and targets are set out in the Action Plan. It is planned that the Internal Communications Section will also be utilised to a greater degree to **enhance visibility** of human rights across the organisation aiming to increase access to human rights materials and resources by Garda Personnel.

Incorporating feedback from internal and external stakeholders, this Strategy sets out actions to ensure that the Garda Human Rights Section has more **direct engagement** with operational Garda members across the country, who are the persons tasked with performing their policing duties in often demanding and dynamic live environments. The Action Plan also aims to strengthen the **Garda Human Rights Champion Network** so that Human Rights Champions operate as active proponents of human rights at every level in the organisation. In addition; internal mechanisms for **assessing and verifying** the integration of human rights will be enhanced including by carrying out a **Human Rights Education and Training Needs Assessment** during the lifetime of this Strategy.

Key aims of this Strategy will also be to **increase collaboration** internally and with specialist bodies to identify learning opportunities in the area of human rights, particularly in relation to persons at risk of exploitation and abuse, such as minority groups and disabled persons. There will be a renewed focus on **independent research** and monitoring developments in relation to human rights and policing matters. Various stakeholders have identified the importance of **emerging technologies** in policing that have the potential to affect human rights and this Strategy commits to keeping abreast of developments in this area including by reference to best practice and experiences internationally.

The Strategy comes at a time of significant restructuring of various **oversight and accountability** mechanisms under the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act, 2024. In addition to continuing to engage with external oversight bodies through the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee, An Garda Síochána will continue to seek to learn lessons from external oversight bodies and from adverse constitutional and human rights legal commentary in case law. Examples of positive feedback and commentary in relation to the vindication of human rights, including the rights of victims, will also be highlighted as best practice. Learnings will be disseminated through the ongoing '**learning the lessons**' bulletins.

Another focus of this Strategy will be to enhance the organisational understanding of **reporting** in relation to the **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty** under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

4. Consultation Process and Summary of Submissions

As part of the preparations for this Strategy, an internal and external consultation process was undertaken. A number of carefully considered, detailed submissions were received (as set out at Appendix 1) and have been instrumental to the development of this Strategy. While the submissions were extremely diverse, some consistent themes were identified as follows:

The need for ongoing human rights based training and education	A focus on equal access to policing for minority groups and those at risk of exploitation or abuse	The need to strengthen the means of assessing and verifying the impact of human rights training
Increased collaboration internally and with external experts to identify human rights based learning opportunities	The need for more direct engagement with operational personnel to enhance awareness of human rights issues	Increased visibility of human rights in internal communications and infrastructure
Compliance with our obligations under s.42 of the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission Act, 2014	Concerns regarding the potential impact of emerging technologies on human rights	Ensure the Human Rights Section does not operate in a 'silo'

5. Overview of the Action Plan

Part II of this document sets out an Action Plan containing 28 separate actions under the three overarching goals; Embedding Human Rights, A Learning Organisation, and Measuring Our Success.

1. Embedding Human Rights

These goals relate to the ongoing process of embedding human rights principles at the heart of the work of An Garda Síochána. A recommitment to strengthening of the Garda Human Rights Champion Network is fundamental to this goal. A human rights based review of priority policy areas identified by internal and external stakeholders will ensure that human rights considerations are to the fore. Effective use of internal communications will contribute towards heightening awareness of human rights issues. The need for ongoing collaboration with colleagues such as the Garda Culture and Ethics Bureau, the Garda National Diversity Unit, and the Garda College is reflected in the action plan.

Specific actions will also aim to enhance the policing service for vulnerable persons and persons at particular risk of exploitation and human rights abuses, including persons with a disability, Irish Sign Language users, and persons experiencing mental health crises.

2. A Learning Organisation

This goal reflects the commitment of An Garda Síochána to providing personnel with a high standard of human rights based training; listening to and learning from the experiences and expertise of internal and external stakeholders.

New training related actions in relation to the rights of freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and mental health are set out. A pilot programme to raise awareness of sexual and gender based misconduct will see Human Rights Champions undertake a University College Cork course in 'Bystander Intervention' and provide feedback to the Human Rights Section. A new Garda Human Rights Champion Seminar will not only increase opportunities for direct engagement with personnel by the Garda Human Rights Section, but will see external stakeholders relay their knowledge and share their experiences directly with operational personnel.

The actions in this goal area also reflect the importance of keeping abreast of human rights developments and a commitment to participating in independent research is set out in the action plan, with specific actions in the area of mental health, emerging technologies, and unique identifiers.

3. Measuring our Success

This goal relates to implementing Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, and strengthening the mechanisms for assessing and verifying the integration of human rights within An Garda Síochána. Not only should this take place internally through robust governance and accountability structures, but An Garda Síochána must also remain receptive and open to external feedback and constructive criticism, including at the SHRAC.

A Human Rights Education and Training Needs Assessment will take place during the lifetime of this Strategy to assess the impact of initiatives undertaken to date and identify opportunities for further improvement. The Human Rights Section will work with the Garda College to utilise the course content with the aim of promoting a wider Human Rights understanding within the organisation.

Part II – Action Plan

Goal 1 – Embedding Human Rights			
Action	How action will be achieved	Delivery	Ownership
1.1 Develop a ‘Human Rights Champion’ Seminar	Deliver information seminars on a Regional basis to Garda Human Rights Champions to include expert speakers from external human rights and advocacy groups. Assess the impact of the seminar through feedback questionnaires.	Ongoing Pilot	Human Rights Section, Garda College with input from Garda National Community Engagement Bureau
1.2 Increase visibility of human rights and engagement with human rights resources and materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage with Garda Communications to review and update the internal Garda Human Rights Portal page and content and improve their presentation and accessibility. 2. Develop a quarterly Human Rights newsletter update for release on the Human Rights Portal page. 	Q4 2025	Human Rights Section
1.3 Review of Human Rights Screening Tool procedure to ensure consistent application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a review of the Human Rights Screening Tool, the Human Rights Framework and the Human Rights Operational Guidance Document to ensure consistent application by policy owners. 2. Update training materials to support users of the screening tool to complete human rights screening in a consistent manner. 	Q1 2026	Human Rights Section
1.4 Increase uptake of available Garda Educational Training System (GETS) and raise awareness regarding supports for Irish Sign Language (ISL) users	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage with ISL and the Garda College to promote ISL training materials, produced in conjunction with Centre for Deaf Studies, available on the Garda GETS system. 2. Increase visibility in public areas of Garda Stations of ISL supports available for service users and engage with relevant external agencies in this regard. 	Ongoing	Human Rights Section, Garda College

1.6 Policy reviews	Review and revision of priority policy areas including: 1. Evictions & Repossessions. 2. Missing Persons. 3. Custody Management (including consideration of easy to read Notice of Rights). 4. Covert Surveillance (carried over from previous Strategy).	Ongoing	Policy & Governance Coordination Unit, Each policy owner
1.7 Discriminatory Profiling Guidance	1. Further develop and disseminate unconscious bias resources to our Human Rights Champion network. 2. Develop guidance in relation to discriminatory profiling and circulate to all Personnel.	Q2 2026	Human Rights Section
1.8 Identify opportunities to make the Policing and Human Rights Law in Ireland course content more accessible within the organisation	1. Engage with University of Limerick to update the Policing and Human Rights Law in Ireland course. 2. Work with the Garda College to utilise the course content to further promote a Human Rights understanding within the organisation.	Ongoing	Human Rights Section, Garda College
1.9 Neuro-diversity Points of Contact	Pilot initiative where Regional Neuro-Diversity Points of Contact will undertake additional sessions to raise awareness of the needs of neuro-diverse persons and identify ways of enhancing policing interactions.	Q3 2026	Human Rights Section
1.10 Enhance timely completion of Section 15 Assessments for Victims – Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime Act 2017)	Utilise internal communications to promote timely completion of the ‘victim assessment’ section contained within form CM13, which is used when An Garda Síochána submit a file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.	2026	Human Rights Section

Goal 2 – A Learning Organisation			
Action	How action will be achieved	Delivery	Ownership
		Q2 2025	

<p>2.1 Develop a new bespoke accredited micro-credential on Policing and the Rights to Freedom of Expression and Assembly</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a framework of specifications for this course and invite tenders from interested external partners. 2. Complete tender evaluation and award contract for services to successful tender submission. 3. Build on the success of the existing Policing and Human Rights Law in Ireland course to co-create with the successful tenderer and the Garda College a comprehensive Human Rights syllabus for this course. 4. Achieve Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) approval and accreditation for this course. 5. Commence delivery of the course. 	<p>Q3 2025</p> <p>Q4 2025</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Q3 2026</p>	<p>Human Rights Section, Garda College</p>
<p>2.2 Deliver World Health Organisation Quality Rights e-training to Garda Human Rights Champions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Mental Health Commission to co-create induction video on World Health Organisation Quality e-training. 2. Launch training video on GETS and assess engagement. 	<p>2025</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>
<p>2.3 Publish report regarding Irish Sign Language pilot and disseminate to Human Rights Champions and Garda Portal</p>	<p>Collate findings from pilots in Cabra and Tralee and publish the report internally on the Garda Portal Page.</p>	<p>Q1 2026</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>

<p>2.4 Progress actions in relation to 'Bystander Intervention' in relation to sexual misconduct</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sample group of Human Rights Champions to complete external training and report feedback to Executive Director Legal. 2. Utilise feedback to inform future internal learning opportunities on Bystander Intervention. 	<p>Q4 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>
<p>2.5 Updates from the Community Access Support Team (CAST) project</p>	<p>Human Rights Section will engage with CAST team and any developments and updates will be presented to the SHRAC.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Human Rights Section to liaise with CAST team</p>
<p>2.6 Review reports of UN, Council of Europe or other international bodies recommending action relevant to the work of An Garda Síochána in the field of human rights</p>	<p>Seek expert advice from the Human Rights Advisor and SHRAC on as to whether they are aware through their experience and research by their respective agencies of any Reports that AGS ought to be aware of and need to consider.</p>	<p>Q1 2025- Q4 2027</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>
<p>2.7 Keeping abreast of human rights developments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review recent case law and judgments of the Irish Superior Courts, European Court of Human Rights and Courts of the Justice of the European Union to identify human rights and constitutional issues that impact on policing and security. 2. Work with relevant State partners to share important Human Rights research and developments. 3. Developments will be circulated on a quarterly basis to all Personnel via various forms of internal 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>

	communication informing them of any changes and how it may impact the discharge of their duties.		
2.8 Research Project – Analysis of Mental Health detention custody records and present findings	Undertake a review of sample of custody records in relation to persons detained under the Mental Health Act 2001. Present findings to the SHRAC.	Q1 2026	Human Rights Section, Assistant Commissioner Southern Region
2.9 Maintaining consistency and application of standards	Consider and review reports of Fiosrú and other state agencies to identify themes and patterns of behaviour and learn lessons that will enhance human rights based policing.	Ongoing	Assistant Commissioner Governance & Accountability
2.10 Ensure bodies newly established under Policing Security and Community Safety Act 2024 are represented at SHRAC	Engage with existing and newly established stakeholders to nominate their representatives.	Q3 2025	Human Rights Section
2.11 Human Rights Section Researchers to keep abreast of policing and academic research in order to provide assistance to policy formation, as required	Focus on following areas of research: 1. Digital Evidence and Body-Worn Camera Technology. 2. Use/limitations of 'Unique Identifiers'. 3. Stop and Search. 4. Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in policing.	Ongoing	Human Rights Section
2.12 Increase external access to policy documents	Assist policy holders to audit their public facing policy documents to ensure they are available for external access on Garda website.	Ongoing	Policy & Governance Coordination Unit, Each policy owner

<p>2.13 Enhance mechanisms for identifying persons with a disability at risk of domestic violence and abuse</p>	<p>1. Work with GNPSB to review Risk Evaluation methods to better identify persons with a disability who may be at risk of domestic violence and abuse.</p> <p>2. Develop awareness initiatives to assist with identifying persons with a disability who may be at risk of domestic violence and abuse.</p>	<p>Ongoing Q2 2026</p>	<p>Garda National Protective Services Bureau, Human Rights Section</p>
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Goal 3 – Measuring Our Success			
Action	How action will be achieved	Delivery	Ownership
<p>3.1 Conduct a Human Rights Education and Training Needs assessment for Operational Personnel</p>	<p>Conduct survey to identify understanding of human rights issues and areas where further education and training required.</p>	<p>Q4 2027</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>
<p>3.2 Continue to support reporting under Section 42 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the Human Rights Screening Tool to reflect AGS's commitment to our public sector duty under Section 42 of the IHREC Act 2014. 2. Work with Risk Management Section to develop guidance on the utilisation of a Section 42 lens when completing risk assessments. 3. Work with Strategic Transformation Office to provide guidance to Divisions on the utilisation of a Section 42 lens when completing Divisional Policing Plans. 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Human Rights Section, Garda Risk Management and Strategic Transformation Office</p>
<p>3.3 Conduct an ongoing 'Capturing the Impact' assessment of human rights training to date</p>	<p>Human Rights Section to seek feedback and input from Human Rights Champions regarding their training experience.</p>	<p>Q1 2027</p>	<p>Human Rights Section</p>

<p>3.4 Review progress and implementation of Strategy Actions</p>	<p>Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee to be kept updated on Strategy Actions and advice sought regarding implementation as appropriate.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Director Legal</p>
<p>3.5 Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee to report annually</p>	<p>Publish annual report to inform personnel and public of the work of Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>Annual Report</p>	<p>Executive Director Legal</p>

Appendix 1 – Consultation Process

As part of the preparations for this Strategy, an internal and external consultation process was undertaken and submissions were sought from the following:

- Each Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and Executive Director within An Garda Síochána
- Chief Corporate Officer, An Garda Síochána
- Garda Chief Medical Officer
- Garda Human Rights Champions Network
- Human Rights Ethics & Culture Management Board
- External Human Rights Legal Advisor
- Members of the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee. External membership at the time of the consultation process was as follows*:
 - Department of Justice
 - Bar Council of Ireland, represented by a nominee of the Bar Council Human Rights Committee
 - The Law Society of Ireland
 - Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
 - Garda Inspectorate
 - Policing Authority
 - Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
 - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
 - National Disability Authority
 - Mental Health Commission
 - Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway
 - Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- External bodies and advocacy groups, including an open call for submissions from all interested parties including members of the public.

**the commencement of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act, 2024 saw the Garda Inspectorate and the Policing Authority superseded by the Policing & Community Safety Authority who will have access to all SHRAC materials*