



An Garda Síochána

Irish Language Strategy

2022 – 2025



Commissioner's Foreword

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce our third Irish language Strategy. This Strategy demonstrates our commitment to promoting and facilitating the use of the Irish language within An Garda Síochána and the wider community. As a police organisation, we recognise that we have a responsibility to promote and support the Irish language for the communities we serve. As Irish is the first official language of the State, we also have statutory obligations placed upon us.

Our focus is on strengthening our Irish language services through recruitment, training and promotion of the language in order to provide a policing service that supports communities and staff who wish to engage through the medium of Irish. This Strategy reflects our commitment to build on the progress made since our first Irish language action plan was developed in 1988 and to fully engage with the Irish-speaking members in our communities and comply with all our statutory language obligations.

We have set out core objectives that are ambitious but achievable and that consolidate our commitment to meeting our legislative requirements and meeting the needs of all our Irish-speaking service users. An Garda Síochána is realistic in its aspirations and realises that providing bilingual services is not without its challenges. Nevertheless, we are fully committed to undertaking the work required to achieve successful outcomes.

We understand that increasing our workforce capabilities to provide Irish language services through recruitment, training, and effective allocation is essential for ensuring success. For this Strategy to succeed and to create long-term sustainable change, each member of staff has a role to play in its implementation, and we must all take responsibility for integrating the Irish language into the organisation's culture. Accordingly, new governance arrangements have been put in place, which will improve overall performance measures and increase accountability.

I would like to thank all those involved in the development of this Strategy, and I wish to acknowledge the support and assistance we received from our colleagues in the Welsh Police Forces. I am committed to the promotion and implementation of this Strategy and look forward to working with personnel throughout the organisation to ensure we build on the progress made to date to meet the needs of Irish-speakers in all communities.

JA Harris

Coimisinéir an Gharda Síochána



1. Introduction

As an organisation, An Garda Síochána has a passion for and commitment to the Irish Language.

An Garda Síochána has a long-standing tradition of developing and implementing action plans and strategies to promote the Irish language. Our previous Irish Language Strategies made commitments to provide bilingual services, particularly in Gaeltacht areas. We will continue to work and build on the progress that has already been made in this regard.

This Strategy is built on the foundation of the various statutory obligations placed upon us; however, ensuring compliance with our legal requirements is not our only intention. We also aim to promote a cultural shift towards a recognition of the benefits that an increasingly bilingual workforce can contribute to the delivery of excellent policing services. We will support all personnel and members of the public who wish to communicate through the medium of Irish.

An Garda Síochána is bound by statutory language obligations, namely; the Official Languages Act, 2003 and An Garda Síochána Act, 2005. In addition, Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 requires public bodies to develop Irish Language Schemes, and An Garda Síochána has confirmed two Language Schemes to date. These outline the steps we will take to increase and improve, on an incremental basis, the quantity and quality of services available in Irish.

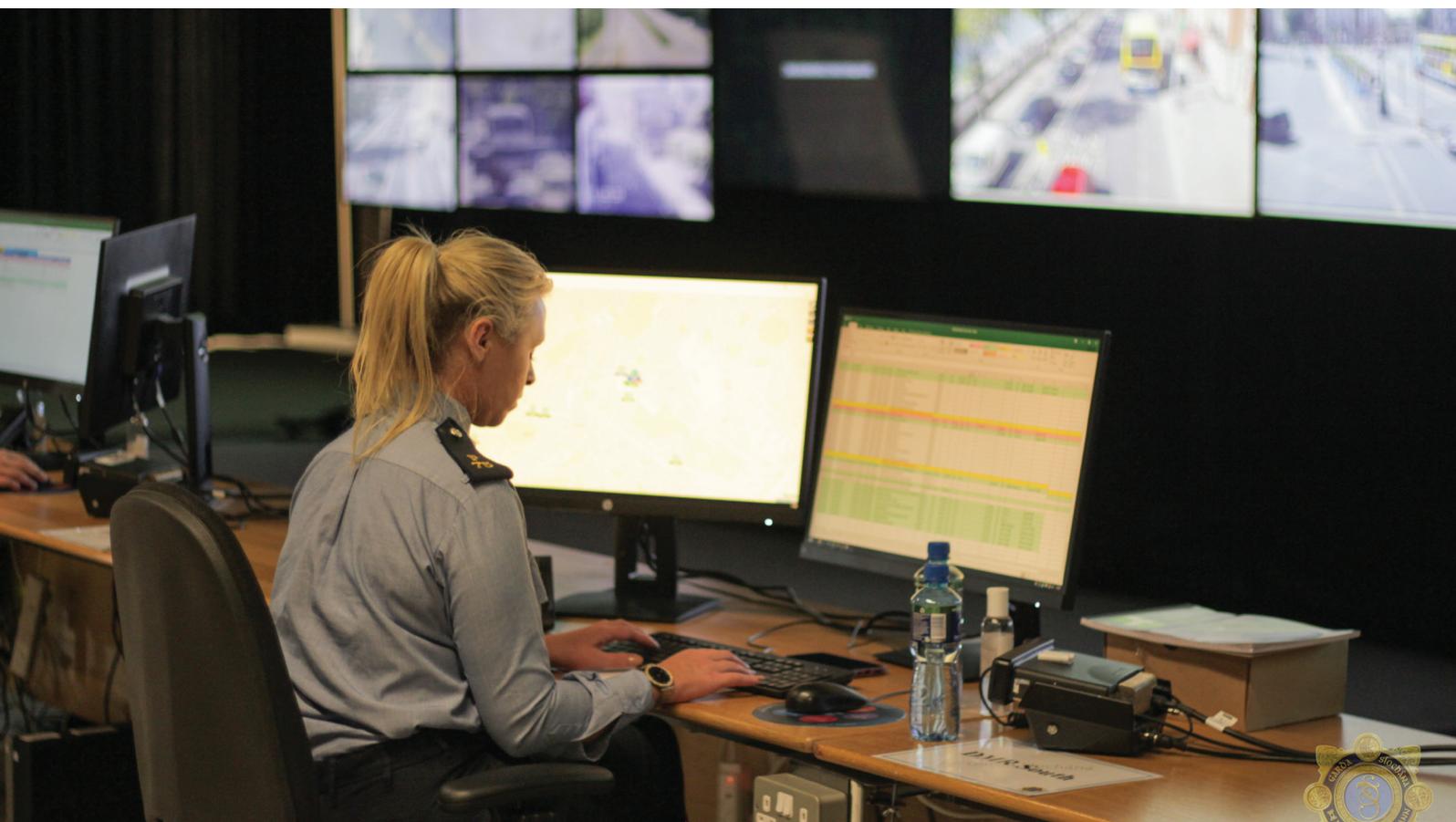
We are also cognisant of the Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language and Objective 12, which states that "the use of the Irish language by An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces will be continued and developed". The Strategy highlights how the development of the language in An Garda Síochána is of particular significance due to the symbolic importance of the force and its role in our communities. We will work with Government to ensure this objective is met.

Effective communication is vital in providing high quality policing services, and the ability to communicate with members of the public through their language of choice is a necessary skill. Our bilingual staff are a valuable resource in this regard. We believe, therefore, that the ability to speak Irish should be valued the same as other policing skills. An individual's native language is more than just a means of communication; it is an integral part of their identity and culture. It can also help build trust and relationships, which is an important part of policing work.

Respecting diversity and equality at all times is one of our core policing values. Our goal is to ensure Irish language service users feel respected, included and welcome to engage in their preferred language. Due to the nature of our work, many of our service users are in a vulnerable position when we meet them. Consequently, placing the onus on them to request a service through Irish can further burden the situation. We recognise that this is a serious issue and we are fully committed to actively offering genuine linguistic choice when possible.

Improving our bilingual services is not without its difficulties. The availability of personnel with Irish language skills is our biggest challenge. However, we are determined to increase our capacity to offer Irish language services through enhanced recruitment and training. In addition, we will promote the language internally and encourage its use within the organisation and within the wider community. We will provide leadership and clear direction to ensure that all personnel are sensitive to Irish speakers' linguistic needs.

This Strategy was informed by our legal obligations as well as our desire to promote and safeguard the Irish language in An Garda Síochána and within the communities we serve. We have focused on best practices in other organisations, namely the Welsh Police Forces. We will work diligently to fulfil all the commitments laid out in this Strategy in order to provide high-quality bilingual policing services for all our Irish speaking service users.



2. Vision

Our vision is to support, increase, and promote the use of the Irish language in An Garda Síochána and facilitate genuine language choice to our Irish-speaking users by actively offering and promoting our bilingual services. We aim to create a culture within the organisation where the value of providing services through Irish to members of the public is recognised and fostered.

3. Strategic Areas

In implementing this strategy, we will rely on the following three strategic areas to foster positive transformational change in promoting, facilitating and increasing the use of Irish in An Garda Síochána:

Strategic Area 1: Recruitment and Workforce Planning

Strategic Area 2: Irish Language Development and Awareness

Strategic Area 3: Irish Language Promotion and Engagement





4. Strategic Area 1 – Recruitment and Workforce Planning

An Garda Síochána has long recognised that increasing our workforce capabilities to provide Irish language services through recruitment is essential to meet our Irish-speaking users’ needs and ensure compliance with our statutory language obligations. Accordingly, the Irish Language Stream in our recruitment process was established in 2013, which currently reserves up to 10% of each intake for fluent Irish speakers.

The Irish Language Stream is an important initiative, and we will continue to support and promote it in order to attract more Irish-speaking applicants. A vital element of this strategy is to increase the number of Irish-speaking personnel through the Irish recruitment stream, thus ensuring further bilingual services. To achieve this goal, we aim to work, in partnership, with external organisations, including Irish medium schools, to develop initiatives to attract bilingual speakers to join the organisation.

With a view of increasing the number of bilingual personnel in Gaeltacht stations, An Garda Síochána issued a Directive in 2018. This Directive is the current guiding policy around allocations to Gaeltacht stations. The Irish Language Proficiency Panel (ILPP), established under the Directive, consists of fluent Irish-speaking members who wish to work in a Gaeltacht area. Members who joined through the Irish Language Stream are included automatically and others who did not enter through the Stream, but who now wish to be transferred to a Gaeltacht station, can be assessed for inclusion. The Directive specifies that “allocations to all Gaeltacht stations will be made from this Panel, except for in exceptional cases, where there are particular skills required”. The ILPP will continue to be used in the short-term, and a working group will be established to identify ways to encourage personnel to apply for inclusion on the Panel.

One of our long-term goals is to ensure that all our Gaeltacht stations are fully bilingual and that stations situated outside of a Gaeltacht boundary but which serve that area, Gaeltacht Service Garda Stations, can also provide adequate bilingual services. We will work with Language Officers and language planning committees to ensure those communities linguistic needs are being met. The organisation has compiled a list of Gaeltacht Service Garda Stations, and we will carry out a full audit of the linguistic skills of the workforce in those stations. In consultation with the language planners and committees in those areas, we will assess the level of services required and determine the percentage of members needed to provide those services both in regular and specialist units.

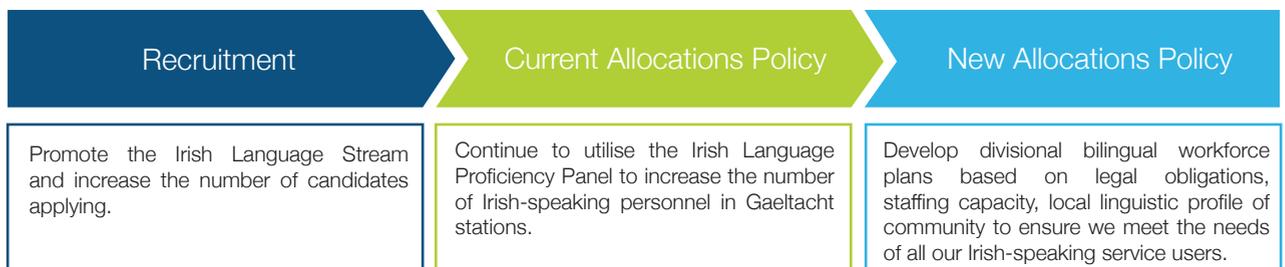
In addition, we are cognisant that Irish-speaking service users also require services through the medium of Irish outside of those areas. And therefore, our goal in those areas is to match the Irish language representation of our personnel with the communities we serve. An Garda Síochána will develop a new Irish Language Allocations Policy to realise this critical goal and ensure effective bilingual workforce planning.

The new Irish Language Allocations Policy will identify the level of Irish proficiency required for certain posts within An Garda Síochána, for example, all new posts or newly vacant posts in Gaeltacht Stations will be considered “Irish essential” posts. In addition, a certain percentage of Gaeltacht Service Garda Stations posts will be regarded as “Irish essential”, while others will be considered “Irish desirable”. When consideration is being given to the language requirements in Divisions that don’t include a Gaeltacht area, the linguistic profile of those communities will be examined.

Over the next three years, we will identify our workforce’s current Irish language skills, monitor those skills, analyse the linguistic profile of our communities through census data, and develop Divisional workforce plans based on that information to ensure we determine effective measures to close any gaps. By evaluating the organisation’s bilingual capabilities and measuring them against our communities’ linguistic profile, we will ensure that over time we meet all the needs of our Irish-speaking users. These Divisional workforce plans will also consider the number of Irish-speakers required in specialised units that serve Gaeltacht areas.

The introduction of an Internship for graduates with fluent Irish will bring new skills into the organisation whilst providing opportunities to gain experience in roles designed to support our Irish languages initiatives.

As with most language planning processes, this will be a long-term endeavour, and results will not be instantaneous. However, we are confident that we will meet these ambitious targets through strong leadership and effective workforce planning.



Strategic Area 1

Recruitment and Workforce Planning

Objective:

Increase the number of Irish-speakers employed through the recruitment process and ensure workforce plans are informed by community linguistic profiles.

Outcome:

A more effective delivery of services through Irish.

No.	Goals	Responsibility	No.	Actions	Target	Timeframe
1.1	Support and enhance the continuation of the Irish Language Stream in the recruitment process.	HRPD	1.1.1	Develop a targeted campaign for the Irish Stream before each competition to include engagement with external organisations to increase awareness of the Irish Stream and the range of roles within An Garda Síochána.	Increase of 100% from previous campaign of candidates recruited through the Irish Stream	Q4 2022
			1.1.2	Develop long-term initiatives to attract Irish-speaking candidates.	Minimum 10 candidates per campaign through Irish Stream and to continually increase	Q4 2025
1.2	Increase awareness around the Irish Language Proficiency Panel and increase interest from personnel to be included on the Panel.	HRPD	1.2.1	Continue to create awareness around the Irish Language Proficiency Panel internally.	Numbers increased on panel by 20% in 2022	Ongoing
			1.2.2	Establish a working group to identify ways to encourage personnel to apply for inclusion on the Irish Language Proficiency Panel.	Active transfers of Personnel as soon as suitable vacancies arise continues	Q1 2023
1.3	Increase the availability of bilingual services through effective workforce planning.	HRPD	1.3.1	Undertake a workforce audit of current Irish language skills among the entire Garda workforce.	Audit Completed	Q3 2022
			1.3.2	Complete an analysis of the linguistic profile of our communities through census data.	Analysis Completed	Q4 2022
			1.3.3	In consultation with the language planners and committees, and using the data identified by action 1.3.2., assess the level of Irish language services required across the organisation.	Fluency targets for Gaeltacht Service Stations defined.	Q4 2023
			1.3.4	Develop an Irish Language Allocations Policy for An Garda Síochána (Garda Members, Staff and Reserves), which will be informed by the results of 1.3.1, 1.3.2, and 1.3.3.	Increase of fluency in Gaeltacht Stations to over 50% and continuous movement towards 100% fluency	Q4 2025
			1.3.5	Continuously monitor the percentage of Irish-speaking personnel against the number of Irish-speaking members in our communities to ensure we have sufficient bilingual personnel in each area including specialist units with a particular focus on Protective Service Units and Roads Policing.	Fluency targets for specialist units defined	Ongoing
			1.3.6	Examine the possibility of engaging volunteers that are fluent Irish speakers, through the Garda Reserve and other avenues.	10% of overall Reserves recruited with Irish fluency	Q4 2024
			1.3.7	Inclusion of a fluent Irish pathway into future internship programmes.	Internship for fluent Irish speakers launched	Q1 2023

5. Strategic Area 2 – Irish Language Development & Awareness Programme

The Irish language has always been an integral part of our training programme for Garda Trainees and will now be expanded to all new entrants. All new entrants will be made aware of all our commitments pertaining to the language, emphasising the importance of demonstrating linguistic courtesy at all times.

One of the objectives of our Strategy is to enhance Irish language development. We recognise that increasing the language capacity of the workforce will contribute significantly to the delivery of Irish language services for the communities we serve.

The organisation will provide opportunities for personnel to improve their language skills through blended training methods. This will support just in time training and alleviate the challenges that the 24/7 nature of policing presents for attending formal in-person training. We will develop an Irish language training programme outlining the options and supports available to personnel who wish to improve their Irish language skills. In addition, various sections or departments may request specific Irish language training, and a course tailored to the requirements of those offices will be made available.

Personnel who wish to obtain a recognised qualification in Irish from an external organisation will be encouraged subject to affordability. Programmes where learners have a clear progression path, such as Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge and the Certificate in Professional Irish, will be promoted and supported. Personnel who wish to undertake other courses to improve their Irish language skills, such as a Diploma or Masters, will continue to be accommodated under the existing mechanisms, i.e. annual funding provided in relation to educational courses.

Our first online Irish language learning resource aimed at learners at level A2 on the Common European Framework was developed in 2021. We will continue to develop this important resource next year, allowing personnel to enhance their skills and confidence at their own pace. We will also continue our Irish language immersion courses, which take place in Gaeltacht communities around the country up to four times a year. Furthermore, the organisation will provide additional support to personnel by introducing an Irish language mentoring scheme where confident Irish-speaking personnel will mentor and support less confident personnel in an informal setting.

We will also continue to ensure language awareness among all employees. Revised Irish Language awareness material will be incorporated into the Irish language training programme in the Garda College, and new awareness material will be developed for the Portal. The new awareness sessions will address our legal requirements and focus on the cultural aspect of the language and its importance as a community language. Emphasis will also be placed on the importance of the language as a valued policing skill in providing an effective policing service to Irish-speaking service users.

The use of the Irish language by members of an Garda Síochána should be considered as part of the goal setting under the Performance, Accountability and Learning Framework (PALF) process for 2023 and beyond. This issue will be submitted to the working group who will review PALF in 2022.



Strategic Area 2

Irish Language Development and Awareness

Objective:

Increase and promote the availability of Irish language training courses and awareness programmes for all personnel.

Outcome:

An Garda Síochána is recognised as an organisation that is at the fore of Irish Language development for its workforce.

No.	Goals	Responsibility	No.	Actions	Target	Timeframe
2.1	Enhance Irish language training for all new entrants.	HRPD	2.1.1	Review effectiveness of and continue to build on the Irish language training provided to Trainee Gardaí to include online training for all new entrants.	Online induction for Garda Staff updated to include piece re Irish Language obligations	Q2 2023
			2.1.2	Extend the current awareness raising on the importance of demonstrating linguistic courtesy at all times within the Irish language training programme to all personnel.	Online Linguistic Courtesy Training developed for new entrants	Q2 2023
			2.1.3	Develop documentation and publish on the Garda portal to support the demonstration of linguistic courtesy.	Documentation Published	Q4 2022
2.2	Develop and enhance Irish Language development resources available to all personnel.	HRPD	2.2.1	Continue to develop and introduce a suite of online Irish Language resources at various levels for all personnel.	Levels aimed at learners at B1 and B2 developed and online	Q4 2025
			2.2.2	Develop organisational outreach and communications approach to promote Irish Language Development opportunities.	Information and communications issued	Q2 2022
			2.2.3	Secure funding and develop approach to ensure personnel can undertake Continuous Professional Development in the Irish Language.	Funding approved and application process publicised	Ongoing
			2.2.4	Identify opportunities to incorporate Irish language activities/learning into performance management (PALF/ ePMDS) goals.	Opportunities identified and agreed	Q4 2023
2.3	Undertake a review of the Irish Language Gaeltacht Programme and apply lessons learned to build on the existing programme.	HRPD	2.3.1	Continue to deliver optional Irish language immersion courses in various Gaeltacht communities each year.	Courses identified and supported	Q2 2023
2.4	Ensure a pathway for personnel to informally improve their Irish language skills and gain confidence in using the language.	HRPD	2.4.1	Develop an Irish speakers mentoring scheme (including reverse mentoring) matching fluent Irish speaking personnel with less confident speakers.	Mentoring scheme initiated	Q1 2023
			2.4.2	Provide support and resources for personnel participating in the Mentorship scheme.	Supports and resources provided to Mentors	Q1 2023
2.5	Enhance awareness in the organisation of statutory language obligations and the importance of delivering bilingual services.	HRPD	2.5.1	Develop new Irish language awareness material for personnel regarding statutory language obligations and the importance of Irish as a community language and the importance of being able to deliver bilingual services to our Irish-speaking service users.	Build on material for Induction Training and provide access on Learning Management System for all personnel	Q1 2024



Labhair í Is Linn í

6. Strategic Area 3 – Irish Language Promotion and Engagement

One of this strategy's ambitions is to expand the regard for the Irish language for employees and service users alike by increasing its visibility and providing more opportunities to promote and use the language. A major element to help achieve this will be establishing a process in which any future policy or service is evaluated for the impact it may have on the Irish language to ensure that the language is promoted and not negatively impacted in any way. This process will ensure that the language is promoted, protected and mainstreamed.

We will develop a culture within the organisation where all employees recognise the value of providing bilingual services and our obligation to do so where required. We will create a supportive ethos that encourages staff to use the language among themselves and to function through the medium of Irish whenever possible. The Fáinne Gaeilge initiative will play a crucial role in achieving this.

A significant public awareness campaign will be launched to promote this positive development. This initiative aims to encourage all personnel to use whatever Irish they have and provide an effective way for members of the public to identify Irish-speaking personnel easily. In addition, wearing the Fáinne will inform members of the public of the availability of a bilingual service, thus ensuring we are proactively offering members of the public genuine language choice. Finally, this initiative will also fortify the organisation's commitment to Irish speakers' linguistic rights.

The annual An Garda Síochána Policing Plan will incorporate Irish language objectives, and each Division will include Irish as a strand in their own policing plans. Incorporating the Irish language into our policing plans will ensure each Division is continuously aware of our obligations and the need to constantly improve the delivery of bilingual services for the communities we serve. Focus will be placed on areas such as Community Policing, where there are direct links with Irish speaking communities.

An active communication approach will help ensure that personnel are aware of all Irish language development opportunities available to them. In addition, it will be made known to personnel that the use of Irish internally is supported, with bilingual email signatures and out-of-office replies encouraged.

We will continue to develop our internal and external communications strategy, focusing on creating awareness of our commitments and any progress we make. Focus will be placed on ensuring members of the public are aware of the services available to them, and we endeavour to actively offer those services whenever possible. We will take tangible steps to increase the visibility of our Irish language services by ensuring there is a standardised sign in each Garda station indicating the level of service available there.

A targeted plan to communicate information to personnel concerning the Irish language within the organisation has begun. Our internal newsletter, Newsbeat, has been utilised to cascade important messages. Over the past year and a half, we have increased the use of Irish on our social media pages. We have also trained a panel of fluent Irish speakers, which are now available to conduct media interviews locally and nationally through the medium of Irish. In a further effort to promote the language, members from the Galway Division are participating in a new crime prevention segment that airs on Raidió na Gaeltachta twice a month. This segment complements the one already being carried out by members in Donegal for the last number of years.

We will engage with other organisations with similar language obligations and Irish language planning committees/Officers from Gaeltacht communities. Through these processes, we can exchange views on how best to develop our bilingual services. We can also learn from each other and assist one another in achieving high-quality services in the Irish language. An Garda Síochána, will actively encourage feedback in relation to the bilingual services we provide so that learnings may be applied to support continuous improvement.

An Irish Language Champion Network will be developed nationally to promote and support the use of Irish in the workplace. The Irish Language Strategic Working Group will support the Champions. We will develop useful resources to encourage personnel's use of the language, including the exploration of introducing an Irish language app for Garda mobility devices. In addition, we will provide opportunities for personnel to engage with each other through the medium of Irish with the introduction of Tionól na nGardaí, a yearly gathering aimed at personnel interested in the Irish language and culture.



Strategic Area 3 – Irish Language Promotion and Engagement

Objective: Increase opportunities for personnel and members of the public to use Irish within the organisation and in the provision and delivery of services.

Outcome: Creating an organisational culture in An Garda Síochána that embraces and actively promotes the use of the Irish language.

No.	Goals	Responsibility	No.	Actions	Target	Timeframe
3.1	Ensure the impact on the Irish language is assessed when formulating or revising policies and projects.	Assistant Commissioner North Western Region	3.1.1	Develop an Irish language impact assessment tool.	Impact assessment tool developed	Q3 2023
			3.1.2	Establish processes to incorporate the results of Irish language impact assessments into policy development.	Impact assessment tool fully implemented	Q2 2024
3.2	Include an Irish Language strand in Divisional Policing Plans.	Assistant Commissioner North Western Region	3.2.1	Introduce Irish language objectives into Divisional Policing Plans.	Irish language obligations incorporated into 2023 Policing Plans	Q1 2023
3.3	Promote bilingual services.	Assistant Commissioner North Western Region	3.3.1	Ensure the continuation of our Fáinne Gaeilge – ‘Labhair í. Is linn í’ initiative by reviewing and promoting it on a regular basis.	2000 Garda Personnel wearing a Fáinne in 2022 and 5000 by 2025	Ongoing
3.4	Continue to develop and implement an Irish Language internal and external Communications Strategy	Communications	3.4.1	Develop a communication strategy to promote bilingual services and to incorporate annual calendar of tailored communications.	First strategy developed	Q4 2022
			3.4.2	Create greater awareness among the public of our commitments and the bilingual services currently available to them.	Continuous communications approach implemented	Ongoing
			3.4.3	Increase the use of the Irish language on our social media platforms.	25% of all posts will be in Irish	Ongoing
			3.4.4	Identify more Media spokespersons who are able to provide a service through Irish.	Speakers identified and actively engaged in Media activities	Q2 2022
			3.4.5	Develop an Irish Language Section on the Garda Website.	Irish Language Section launched	Q4 2022
3.5	Build relationships with external groups.	Every Divisional Officer, Regional Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing & Community Engagement	3.5.1	Undertake an Irish language stakeholder analysis.	Analysis completed	Q4 2023
			3.5.2	Build a bilingual presence at key events in conjunction with Community Engagement / local Community Policing.	Fluent Irish Speaker present at all events attended	Q4 2023
			3.5.3	Develop an effective feedback mechanism on bilingual services from members of the public.	Approach implemented and actively used	Q4 2022
			3.5.4	Establish networks and regular meetings with Gaeltacht Language Planning Officers / committees.	Meetings regularly occurring	Q1 2023
			3.5.5	Build a police service network with organisations with similar responsibilities, e.g. Welsh Police Forces, PSNI, other Emergency Services, Defence Forces.	Network established	Ongoing
			3.5.6	Introduce a mechanism of peer review.	Peer review active	Q4 2025

No.	Goals	Responsibility	No.	Actions	Target	Timeframe
3.6	Introduce an Irish Language Champions Network across the organisation to assist in promoting the language internally.	HRPD (Irish Language Office) & every Chief Superintendent / Principal Officer	3.6.1	Develop the Irish Language Champions Network to ensure the language is normalised within the organisation.	Network established	Q4 2022
3.7	Develop resources to support personnel with Irish language matters.	ICT	3.7.1	Explore the development of an Irish language app for mobility devices.	Opportunities for App development determined	Ongoing
			3.7.2	Review and update the Irish language page on the Garda Portal.	Page updated at regular intervals	Ongoing
			3.7.3	Develop resources for the Irish language portal page.	New resources published	Ongoing
			3.7.4	Support the use of technology to facilitate language choice for personnel, for example, provide Irish language Spellcheck software to personnel who wish to use it.	Opportunities for use of technology identified and implemented	Ongoing
3.8	Hold events for personnel to use Irish in informal settings.	Assistant Commissioner North Western Region	3.8.1	Organise events internally and throughout the year to provide personnel opportunities to engage with each other through the medium of Irish, e.g. Tionól na nGardaí, coffee mornings etc.	Calendar of events established for 2023 and continues annually	Q4 2022



7. Conclusion

The action plan outlined in this strategy stipulates how we will meet our objectives, and progress will be monitored every quarter by the Irish Language Strategic Working Group to ensure sustainable development. Members of the Senior Leadership Team will be assigned as Action Sponsors for the deliverables with ownership for the implementation resting with Action Managers and Divisional Officers. Overall governance and accountability for our Irish Language obligations rests with the Irish Language Governance Group chaired by the Garda Commissioner.

Shifts in organisational culture require determination and cooperation, and this type of change is never instantaneous. However, we are determined to maintain our high professional standards by meeting all the linguistic needs of our Irish speaking service users. We aim to do this by increasing our bilingual workforce capabilities, increasing opportunities to use the language and promoting our bilingual services. This undertaking will be a long-term process and will be successful through strong leadership and cooperation.

