



Commission on the Future of Policing,  
Second Floor,  
St. Stephen's Green,  
Earlfort Terrace,  
Dublin 2,  
D02 PH42.

9<sup>th</sup> August 2018

To whom it may concern

Please find attached a submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing in relation to An Garda Síochána entry requirements. We trust that the Commission will give this equality based issue due consideration, and would be very happy to meet with the Commission to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rosie Bissett'.

Rosie Bissett

CEO

**Received**  
**14 AUG 2018**  
Commission on the Future of  
Policing in Ireland

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This is the registered office of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. DAI is also a charity with CHY number 10044.

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DAI is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered in Dublin, Ireland, with registered company number 185795.



## **Submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing on the need for change to the An Garda Síochana Language Entry Requirements**

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability which primarily affects the acquisition of literacy skills. Learning additional languages is often very challenging for students with dyslexia, especially at school while they are still struggling with their first language. This is why the Department of Education and Skills makes exemption from Irish available to students with significant dyslexia. In the same way, third level colleges, including the NUI, grant students with dyslexia (and other learning difficulties) exemptions from additional language requirements. Many college departments are now removing irrelevant language requirements for course entry for some courses in engineering and science for all students, not just those with dyslexia. In addition, the Irish Defence Forces (e.g. Army and Air Corps) recognise NUI exemptions, where students with dyslexia are given an exemption from additional language requirements.

Exemptions from various language matriculation and entry requirements have been critical in enabling students with dyslexia to enter third level education and a range of professions and careers which were previously denied to them. The provision of such language exemptions recognises that due to the nature and degree of an individual's dyslexia, it is fair and right that they should be made exempt from the study of additional languages. This principle is well established and recognised across the wider education and public sector in Ireland, and internationally.

However, An Garda Síochana currently requires two languages and no exemptions are currently made available for students with dyslexia. This essentially means that entry into An Garda Síochana is effectively barred for many individuals with dyslexia and related learning disabilities.

People with dyslexia often had a wide range of strengths in other areas such as interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, and also develop great determination and resilience in the course of learning to manage their own dyslexia and learning. Many would make truly excellent candidates, and these talented individuals are currently being discriminated against.

We welcome the positive work that has been done by the Garda Training College in trying to make their training more dyslexia friendly, and we were very happy to work with the Garda

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Training College to help in this regard over the past year. However, until the entry requirements are fair and in line with practice across the education and public sectors, countless excellent applicants will continue to be denied access to a career in An Garda Síochana.

If An Garda Síochana wants to attract the best applicants, then surely the recruitment process should aim to seek individuals with the relevant strengths, rather than penalising those with weaknesses which are largely irrelevant to the day-to-day work of a guard. The fact that a candidate didn't do a European language, or Irish, at school because of his/her dyslexia does not mean that they are not an excellent potential guard. Frankly, An Garda Síochana is losing out on many excellent candidates by retaining the current out-dated language requirements.

An Garda Síochana rightly seeks to be representative of all of Irish society, and this should include the 1 in 10 of the population who have dyslexia. We have been contacted by many individuals who have been personally affected by the current discriminatory language entry requirements. On their behalf we would ask the Minister to immediately review the appropriateness of the current language requirements and to make the necessary changes to cease this discriminatory practice.

We would ask the Commission to recommend either:

1. Removing the second language requirement for all students (which we consider to be the most sensible, equitable and almost no-cost option), OR
2. Removing the second language requirement for students with dyslexia, and related learning disabilities. This could be done by simply applying the NUI matriculation requirement exemptions as is done by the Defence Forces.

We trust that the Commission will give full and due consideration to this important equality-based issue, and we would be delighted to meet with the Commission to discuss this further.

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