

Submission from My Lovely Horse Rescue

Customer Service and Communication

There is a lack of consistency when reporting an incident to Gardaí, regardless of whether this is in person or on the phone. Some Gardaí can be dismissive and rude (e.g. hanging up the telephone, smart remarks regarding how they have more serious issues to deal with). This deters members of the public from reporting incidents, leads to a lack of confidence and trust in Gardaí and leads to incidents not being reported and followed up in a timely manner, therefore affecting the welfare of a horse and wasting time.

On the positive side, some Gardaí are polite, professional, helpful and courteous. Effective communication skills are a key requirement for front line personnel.

Documenting Incidents

When reporting an incident, frequently no note or record is made in the station - as an example, a horse wandering around a housing estate was reported. When a call was made to the same station some time later to give an update on the incident, the caller was told no report had been made to that station. Note keeping on paper or notebooks at the desk is not being recorded online.

Dealing with Incidents

If a Garda who dealt with an incident is off for a few days, it seems that no other member of the team can assist. This can lead to delay in receiving or sending information and progressing matters. If all information/logs are documented on PULSE, then there should be no reason other Gardaí cannot assist in same matter.

Knowledge of Legislation & Authority of Gardaí

Knowledge of current legislation varies greatly - some Gardaí are aware of the Animal Health and Welfare Act and the Control of Horses Act. Other Gardaí have no knowledge of the Acts at all - resulting in no follow up or investigation. Many are completely unaware that under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, they are Authorised Officers and have powers to seize under both Acts. The default action is that Gardaí refer public to the Council or local SPCA, which unfortunately are not always available. Gardaí are the out of hours point of contact with regards to dealing with stray horses, cruelty etc.

A course at during Templemore training and CPD days for all Gardaí should be mandatory.

Training needs to be provided regarding the links between animal cruelty and domestic abuse. (Please see <http://www.themakingthelinkstudy.org/> for more details.)

Lack of Procedures re: Horse Seizure

Many Garda stations do not have the correct telephone number to contact the Council's horse pound contractor or it is on a piece of paper somewhere that cannot be found. Crucial information like this should be in a permanent and clear visible place or online.

Many Gardaí are not aware they are authorised to contact the Horse Pound Contractor.

Resources

Gardaí are unable to attend to incidents or to support the Horse Pound Contractor in a timely manner due to the lack of squad cars and staff. Garda stations are ill equipped and in some cases not fit for purpose.

Items such as microchip scanners go missing at stations. There needs to be a way to ensure important items are kept securely.

Community policing

Community policing needs to be a priority, with regular contact between community Gardaí and the public.

Investigation Tools/ICT

Gardaí cannot access social media e.g. Facebook; when links regarding evidence that may assist them are sent they cannot open it and have to use their own personal mobile to do so.

The file limit on receiving files to Garda email addresses is extremely low. There needs to be ability to receive e.g. video files.

Investigation

Creation of a dedicated Garda Unit/Units proactively involved in investigating animal cruelty/welfare issues and identifying owners/keepers of animals who are breaking the law in any way. Also tasked with carrying out spot checks for equine ID, licencing and proactively enforcing legislation relating to the keeping of equines and training other Gardaí who are interested in this area.

Garda Website

The website is completely outdated and not mobile friendly.

The website should allow user to contact a specific Garda or team and to CC stations/Gardaí and to upload attachments.