

To Whom It Concerns,

We submitted the wrong submission could you please use this one on behalf of St Josephs Community Association Ltd Cork.

Thanks

Derek.

The following is a submission from St Josephs Community Association Ltd, Old Youghal Road, Mayfield, and Cork, in response to the call for submissions generally relative to the Policing Reform Commission. St. Josephs Community Association have enjoyed proactive engagement with An Garda Síochána in Mayfield since the opening of the Garda Station in 1985. This ongoing engagement has made a significant contribution to making Mayfield a safer area to live and has enhanced local policing on a partnership basis.

Our submission is a community perspective based on the day to day experiences of life in the Mayfield community.

The following are the salient points:

GARDA VISABILITY

Is it unanimously accepted that a Garda presence on the streets is clearly a deterrent for anti-social and criminal behaviour. It has become clearly evident in recent years that there has been a diminished presence of Gardaí on the streets and in the wider community in the Mayfield area. Is it evident to all stake holders in the community that the policing mechanism has become reactionary rather than preventative. This has presented as an issue at several local Community Safety From meetings in the last few years.. As a consequence, we believe that the lack of Garda visibility has contributed to a dramatic increase in anti-social behaviour in the area with profound implications for the quality of life for residents in the community. As a consequence, the confidence in the Garda service locally, that has taken years to develop, is now at serious risk of suffering a serious decline..

COMMUNITY POLICING

In 2009 the National Model of Community Policing was launched by the then Commissioner Fachtna Murphy. The model was consistent with the Community Policing practice which had been implemented for the previous twenty years in the Mayfield area. It was regarded locally and nationally as a model of best practice both by the police authorities and the community associates in the area.

The value of community policing to the area over the past years is unquantifiable in terms of its support and interaction with the schools, community groups, sporting organisations, youth groups and community saturatory bodies and organisations. We envisage, going forward that community policing in all districts would be a standalone and properly resourced unit.

We recommend that specially designated Gardaí should be assigned to the unit under the direction of a Community Policing supervisor. We feel that is imperative that the Gardaí attached to this this key unit are ring-fenced specifically for Community Policing roles.

Allied to this is that Community Policing can only operate at its optimum when it is unfailingly supported by senior Gardaí. We have had mixed experience of this over the years.

This unit needs an independent working roster in order to respond to local issues as they arise. This flexibility will allow the unit to engage with and to be accessible to the community for purpose of identifying presenting community safety issues in the area. The Community Gardaí need to engage with all local stake-holders on a daily basis with a view to problem-solving the issues arising. This in-turn, has to be presented back to the community to inform them of any actions and measures which will be taken to solve the problems in the area.

This model has a proven track record of building trust and confidence between the Community and the Gardaí. If this model is to succeed, it needs to be a constant and sustained.

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF A DISTRICT

There are Garda Districts that have certain needs that others may not. We are referring to facilities like airports and prisons.

The Mayfield Garda District has responsibility for the policing of Cork Prison. This means that the Gardaí have to escort prisoners to and from the remand courts. These courts sittings are held at various locations throughout various counties in the Province of Munster. When Gardai are assigned to these escort duties they are gone from the district for the remainder of their working day. These Gardaí are drawn from the regular shifts , which means that the Mayfield District is not getting the same level of service as other districts in the City. The Garda Management of this District should not have to service these prison escorts with the same number of operational Gardaí as the other districts. In our opinion there are two options:

(i) Give the District extra Gardai to cover the prison escorts.. By doing so, the Garda units in the District will not be undermanned. This will mean that Mayfield's citizens will get the same level of service as other Garda Districts in the city.

OR

(ii) Outsource the prison-escort service to an independent agency.

GARDA ROSTER

A new roster system was introduced in the recent past. It is our understanding that this was to comply

with some EU directive. We have no doubt that the EU has the welfare of all its citizens to the fore when drawing up new legislation. However, we do not believe that we should have to endure any EU directive, especially if it's not fit for purpose in our country and for our communities.

Firstly, we had a four-roster system over an eight-hour working period. As a result of this directive we took the same number of Gardaí and divided by five to get a five-shift system. This clearly reduced the effectiveness of every shift in the whole country, not just Mayfield. We have seen no increased visibility during the so called 'cross-over' periods.

Secondly this new roster has increased the Health and Safety risk for each Garda, as less back up is now available than heretofore. Why would any organisation follow a directive that clearly increases the risk to each of its members?

Thirdly the manpower levels may differ from area to area, should there be a more flexible model that is designed for local needs?

It is our view that policing is a job that requires high energy levels.. It is difficult to maintain these levels over an eight-hour shift, without increasing that shift to ten hours and expecting the same level of performance.

Garda Reserve

We welcome the Garda Reserve initiative and appreciate the contribution these volunteers make to the community's where they serve. However, we would recommend that the Reserve Gardaí should be specifically trained to perform some Community Policing duties so that they can offer significant support to the Community Policing Teams in their areas. This for example could take the form of engaging with older people's groups and offering crime prevention information to those most at risk of crime.

Conclusion.

Our delegates who attended the Police Reform seminar at UCC last December, felt the meeting was very positive and were very grateful for the opportunity to have our voices heard.

As a Community and we are totally committed to working in partnership with An Garda Síochána. Our objective is to work together with the Garda service with a view to building trust and enhancing the quality of life of the entire community. We wish to the best of luck with your unenviable task and we look forward to the positive changes that will come about in all communities as a result of your recommendations.