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Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

An Garda Síochána Recruitment Training Capacity Group

Report to the Minister for Justice, Home
Affairs and Migration

September 2025

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Foreword

The Recruitment Training Capacity Group, which I had the pleasure to chair, was established in response to the challenges faced in trying to reach the annual Garda recruitment targets of 800-1,000 set by Government each year post-Covid.

Given the urgency of the situation, it was imperative that every effort was made to increase recruitment activity as the Group deliberated. As a result, this Report, to a large extent, records the major reforms that have been implemented by An Garda Síochána and publicjobs, in particular, as the Group sat. As well as the work of AGS and publicjobs, the Government doubled the Recruit Training Allowance, increased the maximum recruitment age to 50, and increased the mandatory retirement age to 62.

Garda recruitment does not take place in a vacuum. Gardaí are recruited from the same pool as everyone else. While it is a 'Job Worth Doing', it is also a difficult and challenging job, and it is not for everyone. At a time of full employment, the competition for skilled workers is intense.

It is therefore to the credit of all involved that the numbers applying each year to become Gardaí has proven very resilient and after a lag post-Covid, the numbers entering the Garda College in Templemore reached 200 in two of the three intakes so far in 2025.

The Group is satisfied that the achievement of the Government target of 5,000 recruits over its lifetime is now achievable, but only if the current intense oversight and management continues to be applied and that quick, decisive action is taken, in response to any changes in the landscape.

In terms of further work, the Group recommends that research is conducted to get behind the decision-making process of potential recruits, to inform further reforms of the process; and that a Group is established, in my view with an independent Chair, to consider future training capacity needs, and in particular, the case for a second Training College.

To conclude, I want to record my appreciation to every member of the Group for their unstinting commitment to the task at hand, their good humour and patience, and above all their willingness to explore every possible approach to addressing the challenges faced in recruitment.

Finally, I want to thank my own team in the Department and particularly Róisín Friel for all her work as Secretary to the Group.

John O'Callaghan
Deputy Secretary General
Chair

Executive Summary

The Recruitment Training Capacity Group began its work in August 2024, the Terms of Reference having been approved by the then Minister for Justice. The Group produced an interim report in December 2024. The new Programme for Government was published on 15 January 2025 which committed the Government to provide funding to recruit 5,000 Gardaí and to continue to support and expand the Garda Training College in Templemore as the main and primary Garda training college. It also committed the Government to considering the case for a second training college. The Group has taken these commitments into account in its work.

The Group's main focus has been on improving the recruitment process to ensure that it can deliver sufficient numbers of trained new Garda Members to meet the current and future needs of An Garda Síochána in relation to its core purpose of ***Keeping People Safe***. The recruitment targets set by Government underpin this objective.

This report describes the changes made by An Garda Síochána in collaboration with publicjobs to their end-to-end processes for the 2025 Garda Trainee recruitment competition. These changes, although an operational responsibility for each organisation, were based on the analysis and discussion of key data and impacts by the Group.

In developing the programme of work, the Group considered that the behaviour and profile of potential candidates for Garda Trainees has changed. Potential new joiners are highly educated with approximately 40% of new trainees having a primary degree and typically having work experience before entering the Garda

Training College. Those who don't have a primary degree already are a mix of school leavers and people already in employment. In an era of full employment, these potential new joiners have multiple career options to consider. In order to attract these candidates, and hold them through the selection process, a shift in mindset and approach was required to significantly enhance the candidate experience; to actively and effectively communicate through all stages of the process; to bring greater certainty to candidates in terms of what to expect at each stage; and, to shorten the timeframes in the process.

The changes made by both An Garda Síochána and publicjobs over the period that the Group has been deliberating have substantially reformed the processes, delivering process improvements, reduced timelines, and implementing tailored candidate engagement. As a consequence, candidates are moving through the process much more quickly and the number of candidates being secured for each intake has increased.

Two indicators of demonstrable change are:

- A class of over 200 Garda Trainees entered the college in March 2025; the first time an intake has reached this level since 2019 and another class of similar size entered in August.
- The decreased timeline from initial application to commencing training is evident from the fact that a candidate who applied in February 2025 entered Templemore in June (15 weeks). In respect of the campaign launched in 2024, the comparable timeline was 42 weeks.

In order to secure a consistent recruitment pipeline and meet the ongoing organisational need and Programme for Government commitments it was planned that in 2025 two recruitment campaigns would run within the year. The first campaign in February 2025 targeted the experienced trainee cohort, and the campaign profiled a broad range of potential candidates with different work and educational experiences, from diverse backgrounds, and with a broad age range building upon the change in age criteria. The second campaign, which will be launched in September, will build on this approach and will also target the post-leaving certificate cohort, presenting An Garda Síochána as an employer of choice, and a credible alternative to other 3rd level choices or employment opportunities.

As a result of the changes made, confidence is building in the resilience and reliability of the pipeline to deliver in the short to medium-term. With continued commitment and focus, the capacity to recruit an average of 1,000 trainees annually to the Garda College is achievable.

The Group is satisfied that in relation to both the pipeline of trainees and the capacity to provide training, current indications are that An Garda Síochána can secure the trainees it needs to operate effectively and to meet the recruitment targets set by Government.

However, although confidence is building in the capacity to deliver fit-for-purpose recruitment, a consistent recruitment pipeline is also dependent upon external factors, including, in particular, labour market trends.

The Group is of the view, that achieving the targets set will require continued close monitoring and attention, so that adjustments can be made to meet the challenges and opportunities of evolving employment market conditions. A much stronger focus has been placed on data collection and utilisation to inform decision making and identifying priority areas for improvement.

It is intended that the Department, An Garda Síochána and public jobs will continue to meet regularly to keep progress under review and to take action, if it is required, to address any issues that may arise, particularly if there is any slippage in the trainee numbers.

Insofar as training delivery is concerned, further work is required to increase the capacity at Templemore, and this will be progressed by An Garda Síochána and the Office of Public Works with the support of the Department of Justice.

Separately, it is proposed to establish a Working Group to specifically consider the case for the establishment of a second Garda training facility and the role that the tertiary system could play in the delivery of Garda training. That Group should report by July 2026.

Finally, the Group is of the view that the development of new approaches to Garda recruitment would be better informed by better understanding the motivations of prospective recruits. To that end, it is intended to commission research during the coming year.

1 Introduction

The Government is committed to building stronger, safer communities and strengthening An Garda Síochána is a key aspect of this. One of the priorities is to continue to support An Garda Síochána as the body charged with delivering on national security and policing, in protecting communities from crime, through increased resources and a stronger and more diverse Garda workforce.

The current targets for the AGS Workforce were set in 2016 and are as follows:

- 15,000 Gardaí; 4,000 Garda staff; and 2,000 Garda Reserves. An interim target of 1,000 Reserves to be reached by end-2026 has also been set.
- Most recently the new Programme for Government commits to recruiting 5,000 more Gardaí.

In order to reach the target for Gardaí, and having regard to the Programme for Government commitments, target intakes of 200-250 have been set for the Garda College.

It is important to ensure continued recruitment of high calibre Garda Trainees, with the skills, capabilities and commitment to meet the needs of a top performing policing and security organisation. The Recruitment Training Capacity Group was established to review and assess existing processes; and to identify opportunities to streamline and speed up the recruitment process, taking into account up-to-date and evolving research and analytics and international best practice in police recruitment.

The *An Garda Síochána Recruitment Training and Capacity Group* was established by the Minister for Justice in late 2024. The Group had senior representatives from An Garda Síochána (AGS), publicjobs, the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER). The Group was chaired by the Department of Justice.

The membership of the Group and terms of reference are included in the appendices to this report.

In developing its approach, the Group took careful account of recommendations from previous reviews, including those contained in reports by the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (COFPI) and the Garda Inspectorate. The CoFPI report examined and outlined a number of key principles for the future of policing in Ireland.

The 7th key principle “*The people of An Garda Síochána are its greatest resource*” provided a catalyst to implement reforms in the area of recruitment and training of Garda members. COFPI further emphasised the importance of recommendations made by the Garda Inspectorate in relation to the training, education and recruitment of Garda members in its report “*Changing Policing in Ireland*”.

These reviews provided a critical foundation, highlighting systemic challenges and identifying opportunities to strengthen recruitment and training capacity within An Garda Síochána. Many of the key recommendations from these reports have since been implemented, creating an enabling environment for further progress.

Building on this work, the Group was able to focus on delivering additional practical and operational improvements, ensuring that the recruitment process is

not only aligned with strategic reform goals, but also responsive to current and emerging needs on the ground.

The Group acknowledges that its original Terms of Reference (TOR), as outlined in Appendix 2, were focused on supporting the achievement of recruitment targets and improving recruitment and training processes within An Garda Síochána. While the Group has responded to evolving policy commitments—such as those introduced in the Programme for Government 2025—by incorporating broader strategic considerations into its work, it is important to distinguish these developments from the Group’s original TOR. Accordingly, this report differentiates between actions undertaken within the original TOR and those that reflect recommendations for future planning or the remit of newly proposed oversight and working groups.

1.1 First Interim Report to the Minister

The Group provided an interim report to the then Minister in January 2025 on its initial analysis of available recruitment data and work being undertaken to accelerate increases in the number of candidates being recruited to AGS. This report reflected the recruitment process at the time and outlined the timeframes at that point in time for candidates to be processed from beginning to end. The Group used this analysis as a foundation to accelerate changes, monitor progress and increase throughput to the Garda College.

The Terms of Reference were written in the context of achieving the Government’s target of 15,000 sworn members of An Garda Síochána. In the interim, the Government has adopted new targets for recruitment which are outlined in the following section. For the purposes of the Group’s work, it assumes that there are

now two complementary targets. Firstly, to reach the 15,000 target as soon as possible and secondly, to recruit 5,000 members over the lifetime of the Government. All things being equal, the achievement of the 5,000 target is likely to result in there being around 16,000 Garda members, though this is dependent on a number of factors, including the number of retirements in the coming years.

1.2 Programme for Government Commitments

The work of the Group has been directly informed and driven by the commitments set out in the Programme for Government 2025 '*Securing Ireland's Future*', which prioritises a focus on ensuring everyone has the right to be safe in their communities and in their homes. Government has committed to support this through building stronger, safer communities by strengthening An Garda Síochána. These commitments recognise that a modern, responsive, and well-resourced police service begins with a robust and accessible recruitment process and continuous professional development.

Some of the key commitments that are directly relevant to the work of this Group are:

- Funding to recruit at least 5,000 new Garda recruits and additional Garda Staff over the next 5 years;
- Continue to support and expand the Templemore Garda College, reforming Garda recruitment and training processes to increase capacity and widen talent pool – includes expanding capacity at Templemore;
- Consider the establishment of a second Garda training college;

- Consider allowing Garda trainees to undergo part of their training course in regionally based Universities or Technological Universities;
- Make the Gardaí more attractive to new recruits by increasing the Garda training allowance;
- Support additional Garda recruitment and measures to increase Garda visibility;
- Significantly boost Garda numbers in Dublin.

1.3 Summary of recruitment challenges

At the end of 2019, Garda numbers stood at 14,300. All things considered, there was justifiable optimism that the target of 15,000 Gardaí was close to being achieved. Covid-19 intervened in early 2020. Those in Templemore were attested early and the College was all but closed to new recruits. No recruitment competition was held in either 2020 or 2021 and the first competition since 2019 was advertised in 2022. The first recruits from that competition entered Templemore in 2022 and attested in 2023. Overall Garda member strength fell below 14,000 in 2023 with the pre-Covid progress reversed. The table below reflects Garda Member headcount for 2020 to 2024.

Table 1: Garda Members Headcount 2020-2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Joiners	522	147	361	383	599
Leavers^[1]	338	403	463	518	406
+/-	184	-256	-102	-135	193
Strength Year End	14,491	14,235	14,133	13,998	14,191

As can be seen, there is a lag after recruitment restarts in 2022 and the workforce increases in 2024. This lag is accounted for by the fact that at the time, it was taking almost 12 months from the time a competition was held until the first recruit entered Templemore and a further 36 weeks from then until the recruit attested. The effective closure of the College to recruitment in 2020/21 meant that it took until 2024 before reasonably strong numbers were attesting again.

Like other parts of the public and private sectors, AGS is facing a challenging recruitment environment, given near full employment in the economy, changing ways of work, including remote working and increased competition for candidates as other sectors have also ramped up recruitment.

^[1] Leavers includes mandatory retirements on reaching 62 years old (previously 60), cost neutral early retirements, retirements at completion of full service of 30 years, resignations and dismissals from AGS among other reasons for departure from the service. At the time of this analysis the leavers rate was steady at 3-4% of the overall available members, with a very low resignation rate within those figures of approximately 1%.

With that said, application levels remain high, as can be seen in the Table below.

The total number of applications since 2022 is over 28,000.

Table 2: Garda Recruitment Competition Application Rates 2022-2025

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
No. of Applications	10,565 ¹	4,664	6,382	6,784

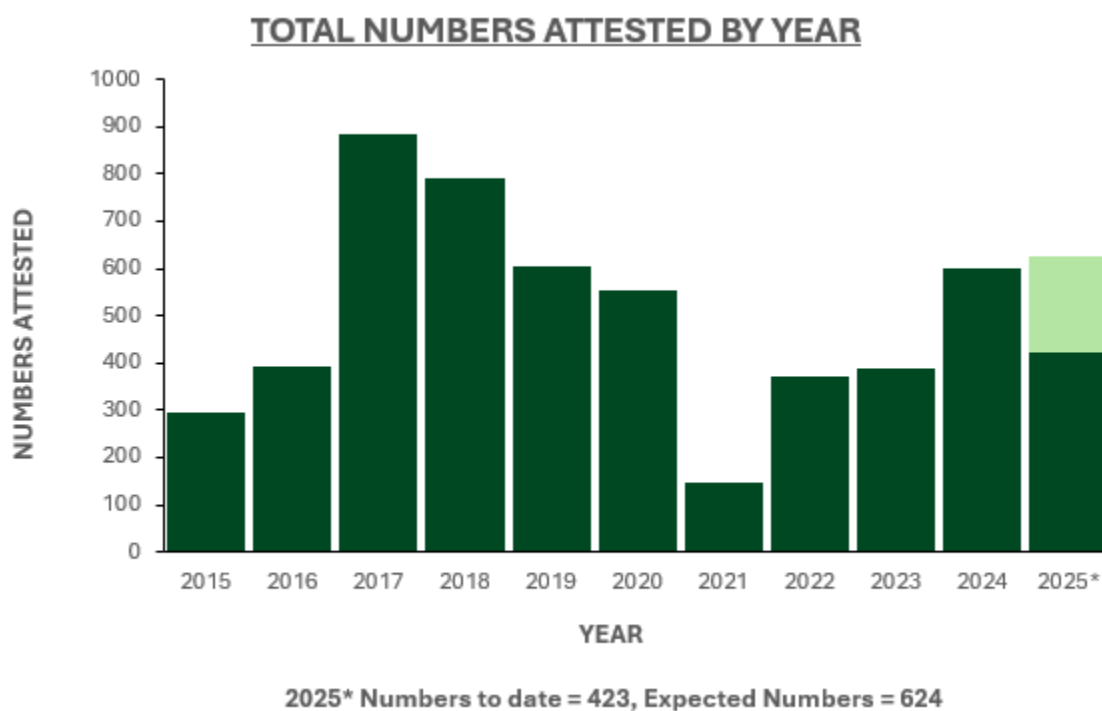
Although this report focuses on Garda Member recruitment, the delivery of the Programme for Government, and ability to effectively resource An Garda Síochána is inclusive of Garda Staff recruitment. While Garda Member numbers reduced through the period to 2024, there was growth in Garda Staff numbers which increased from 3,389 to 3,678 between December 2021 and December 2024. In that regard, it is to be noted that the almost doubling of Garda Staff numbers since 2016 has facilitated the release of 900 Gardaí to frontline duties.

Aligned to the implementation of the Organisational Operating Model, Business Services Functional Areas were established to ensure that essential processes relating to Finance administration, Human Resource administration, and general processes were managed by skilled Garda Staff, freeing up Garda Management and Members for front-line policing needs.

¹ 2022 was inflated due to the fact that there had been no competition in either 2020 or 2021.

In relation to Garda Members, the Group sought to examine potential challenges faced in the recruitment pipeline in order to identify ways to increase the pipeline of candidates to start training in the Garda College and contribute to the achievement of the recruitment targets in the timelines envisaged.

Graph 1: Total number of Garda Members attested 2015-2025



2 Reforming the Garda Recruitment Process

The Group's first interim report outlined the actions being taken at that time to increase recruitment and made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the position. As a result, the Garda recruitment process has undergone significant change over the last year.

The Group has overseen and provided support, as appropriate, for a range of measures taken to improve the recruitment process and increase the pipeline of candidates available to An Garda Síochána for intakes in 2025 and beyond. These improvements are particularly visible in the results achieved by publicjobs and AGS in the first recruitment campaign of 2025.

The Group would, in particular, like to acknowledge the significant work completed by the An Garda Síochána Garda Trainee team and the recruitment team in publicjobs to identify and implement changes made for the promotion and running of the first recruitment campaign in 2025. All aspects of the recruitment campaign were examined and a range of changes made by both organisations. This is reflected in the very significant number of candidates who applied for the competition in February 2025, which amounted to over 6,700. The campaign was underpinned by streamlined processes, enhanced data-sharing across the two organisations, and a more candidate-focused approach.

A key outcome of the changes has been a reduction in the time from application to offer of a place in the Garda College for 2025 applicants. By reducing the 'waiting period' from application to offer, the risk of the loss of qualified candidates to other opportunities, particularly at a time of full employment, is mitigated to some extent.

2.1 Selection Process Reforms – publicjobs

The key changes implemented by publicjobs in 2025 were:

The introduction of a role play exercise to test applicants' practical ability to manage a potential scenario facing a newly attested Garda;

Enhanced candidate communication to significantly improve the candidate experience and to keep them engaged through the process;

Larger groups of interviews, supported by trained panels with nominees from publicjobs and Inspectors from An Garda Síochána to accelerate the process with the majority of all candidates interviewed within a 3-month period.

The introduction of the **role play exercise** has increased the robustness of the assessment process and is expected to achieve two important outcomes. First, it is intended to enhance the quality of candidate being successfully selected to move forward to AGS. Second, it gives candidates an insight into the work of a member of AGS and, in some cases, candidates may decide that it is not the job for them.

In terms of **communication and engagement**, a dedicated Garda Trainee microsite was created on the publicjobs website. This dedicated Garda Trainee homepage allowed candidates to access information on each stage of the process in real-time and provided additional resources about the benefits of joining An Garda Síochána. Candidates were encouraged to visit this microsite throughout the competition and publicjobs also ensured that AGS had input to the content shown.

In addition, all successful candidates following Stage 1 of the process (online testing) received details of their interview (day, date and time) in April, May or June with their result. This was introduced to provide greater certainty and allowed publicjobs, AGS, and, most importantly, the candidates to plan around those dates.

To create further efficiencies within the pipeline, the details of candidates successful at interview were submitted to An Garda Síochána at more regular intervals. This allowed An Garda Síochána to commence their processes earlier.

In advance of the closing date of the competition publicjobs held three in-person information sessions in conjunction with An Garda Síochána. This was to enable greater information-sharing about the process and included a panel discussion with Garda Trainees and Probationer Gardaí which was hugely beneficial.

An Garda Síochána and publicjobs also made additional efforts to ensure consistent communications with candidates to enhance the candidate engagement process.

In terms of throughput of candidates, publicjobs introduced ***larger interview groups*** which involved interviewing larger numbers of candidates in a shorter timeframe. In 2024, it took 42 weeks from the closing date of the campaign for all candidates to complete the interview process. **For the 2025 competition, this was reduced to 22 weeks for the vast majority of candidates.** 2,960 candidates were invited to interview across April, May and June which at its peak saw publicjobs operating 23 interview boards working in parallel for up to 10 days and interviewing up to 1,000 candidates.

The introduction of these changes has reduced the timeline as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Timelines for publicjobs stages 2022-2025

	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Number of weeks taken			
Completion of Stage 1 (assessments)	5.86	4.5	4.5	4.4
Start of Stage 2 (interviews)	13.5	11	9	7.8
Initial successful candidates being passed from publicjobs to AGS	22.8	15	11	8.7
Final successful candidates being passed from publicjobs to AGS	79	43	56	22*
Number of successful candidates passed from publicjobs to AGS	1,806	1,042	1,339	1,551**

*Approximately 170 candidates remain in the clearance process

** Total number of names sent as of 25 July 2025

This reduction in time spent within the publicjobs elements and the improved communications management offers an improved candidate experience and supports the retention of quality candidates for consideration by An Garda Síochána for entry to the Garda College.

2.2 Application Process Reforms – An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána continued to drive enhancements to the recruitment process in 2025, implementing a series of targeted reforms designed to streamline the selection process, enhance the applicant experience, and support increased recruitment demand. These actions reflected a shared commitment to continuous improvement and were informed by learnings from the previous cycle. The key changes implemented by AGS in 2025 included:

- Acceleration of candidates through the process through early engagement with candidates to ascertain availability for the next Intake into the Garda College;

- The introduction of an advanced vetting process, enabling conditional offers to be made to candidates bringing greater certainty and reducing timelines;
- A reformed Physical Competency Test (PCT) model was introduced to more appropriately reflect the requirements of a Garda Member engaged in front-line duties;
- Digital booking systems for Physical Competency Tests, Medical and Substance Misuse Testing (drug testing) enabling the candidates to take control of the process and to manage their own schedules;
- The testing of “Assessment Centre” and support days, whereby candidates completed physical competency and drug testing on the same day, book in for their medicals, meet experts from the Vetting Team to assist them with their applications and generally to be supported by professionals to help them navigate the selection process.

These measures have enabled An Garda Síochána to make offers to the first candidates from the 2025 competition within 2 to 4 weeks from entering the An Garda Síochána selection stages. As the stages are ongoing at present it is not yet possible to compare with the average from previous competitions.

An advanced vetting and conditional offer model was implemented by AGS to allow candidates who had been cleared through phase 1 of the Garda vetting process, together with the other selection stages, to be made conditional training offers and to commence training in the Garda College.

It is important to note that no candidate will attest as a sworn Garda member unless their full vetting is satisfactorily completed. The vetting process remains under review to meet changing needs, the details of which are confidential within An Garda Síochána for operational policing and security reasons.

Another significant change has been the introduction of an updated ***Physical Competency Test*** (PCT) following an externally-led review. The review was initiated to ensure that the test was aligned to modern best practice in relation to policing needs. The purpose of the review and subsequent changes was to ensure that gender-neutral, role-based, physical competency tests were carried out, reflecting the needs of a front-line Garda. The success rate at 1st attempt, since the revised PCT was introduced, has increased significantly as set out in Table 5.

Table 4: PCT success rate 2023-2025

Element/Year	2023	2024	2025 (to date)
PCT Success Rate at first instance	57%	53%	70%

New service level agreements were put in place to provide for enhanced capacity for ***medical and Substance Misuse Testing (SMT) procedures*** which have increased throughput. In addition, all candidates who have successfully passed the selection process with publicjobs can immediately book the physical, medical and SMT assessments, enhancing control of their own experience. Candidates are also provided with a finite amount of time to book these assessments prompting candidates to take action. Candidates are also provided with support as required.

Assessment and Support Centres were run to enable those available for the June 2025 Intake to undergo their Physical Competency and Substance Misuse tests on the same day, while also receiving advice and support from the Vetting and Recruitment Teams. They were also given assistance with the completion of the vetting forms. Medical assessments were arranged for the days immediately before or after a candidate attended an Assessment and Support Centre.

The attendance of vetting professionals at the Assessment and Support Centres to support candidates with the vetting application process has resulted in a marked improvement in the quality of the vetting forms being submitted by Garda Trainee candidates helping to expedite the Stage 1 Vetting. Early feedback also suggests a significant reduction in the number of queries arising during the processing of completed forms.

A key indicator of the success of the Garda Trainee program itself is that the vast majority of those who have entered the Garda College in Templemore in recent years have completed their training and attested as sworn members as set out in Table 5 below. The Garda College, supported by the University of Limerick ensure that new Trainees are encouraged and supported through the 36-week training process through to attestation as probationers.

Table 5: Garda Trainee retention rates

Year	Month Attested	Intake	Attested	% Retained
2023	January	24	25	100
	July	92	86	94
	October	135	126	93
	December	154	151	98
2024	March	174	157	90
	June	174	157	90
	September	109	108	99
	December	186	169	91
2025	March	157	149	95
	June	125	120	96
	August	162	154	95

* Intake numbers reflect position of final acceptances for each Intake. Numbers will fluctuate slightly due to, for example, non-attendance, early withdrawal, suitability for An Garda Síochána, personal reasons and academic failure.

In addition to the Garda Trainee Intakes, to date in 2025 8 former members have been re-attested as Garda Members and a number of further applications are in progress.

3 Garda Recruitment Growth Trajectory

Based on the reforms already made to the recruitment and selection processes, and assuming that the same level of interest is maintained in future competitions over the coming years, the Group is satisfied that intakes in the range of 200-250 is achievable across the years to 2029.

Obviously, there are many factors outside the control of AGS, publicjobs or the Department that can impact either positively or negatively on the numbers, but all things being equal, the Group is satisfied that the targets can be met. However, this will require close management and oversight and it is proposed that the Department, AGS and publicjobs will continue to review progress and should the need arise, take further action to support the achievement of the targets.

The retention of Garda members in the workforce is also an issue that has been raised by various stakeholders and this relates to two primary concerns: (a) an increase in resignations in recent years and (b) the age profile of the Garda workforce which will see a higher proportion of Gardaí becoming eligible to retire.

In terms of resignations, these increased from 69 in 2020 to 171 in 2023. There was a decline in resignations in 2024 compared to 2023 and the downward trend is continuing in 2025. The resignation rate for An Garda Síochána is considered very low when compared to other police services in the UK, US, New Zealand, and Canada, which have reported significantly higher resignation rates.

In relation to retirements, it is correct to say that a higher number of Gardaí will become eligible to retire in the coming years with an estimated 1,650 Gardaí becoming eligible to retire by 2030. That, of course, does not mean that that number

will retire over the next 5 years, only that they will be eligible to do so and an individual's decision to retire is influenced by a range of factors.

The impact of the relatively recent increase in the retirement age to 62 will make it easier for Garda members to stay in service for an additional two years and the uptake of this change, and requests to stay beyond 62, will have to be monitored as part of the work on projections out to the 2030s.

The data does show that the number of compulsory retirements will start to climb from 2030 onwards and this will have to be factored into longer term workforce planning.

The number of intakes currently planned in the period Q3 2025 to Q4 2029 is nineteen, with five intakes planned for 2027 and four in other years. It is assumed that seventeen intakes will attest by the end of 2029, with the remaining two intakes attesting in 2030.

Table 6: Garda Members 2025 & 2026 Expected End of Year Position

Garda Members 2025 and 2026 Expected End of Year Position			
Year	Joiners*	Leavers	End of Year Position
2024 (Actual)	599	406	14,191
2025 (Estimate)	630	370	14,460
2026 (Estimate)	800	430	14,830

***Joiners refers to those trainee Gardaí that have successfully attested. The number entering Templemore will be higher in 2025& 2026 but not all intakes attest in the same year.**

Given the expected end of year position for 2025 and 2026 set out in Table 7 above, it is reasonable to assume that the number of Garda members will exceed 15,000 by the middle to end of 2027, taking into account potential numbers of joiners and leavers. Continuing on this trajectory would bring the number of Garda members to in excess of 16,000 by 2029 assuming intakes in the region of 1,000 to 1,250 in future years.

As more data becomes available, and in particular, as the impact of the increase in both the entry and retirement ages works through, projections will be updated.

4 Garda College Capacity

The Programme for Government (PFG), *Securing Ireland's Future*, makes a number of commitments in relation to training capacity issues:

- *Continue to **support and expand the Garda Training College in Templemore** as the main and primary Garda Training college;*
- ***Consider the establishment of a second Garda training college;***
- *Consider allowing Garda trainees to undergo part of their training course in **regionally based Universities or Technological Universities.***

Recruiting 5,000 Gardaí over the lifetime of the Government will routinely require Intakes in the range of 200 to 250, a level that has not been achieved in recent years.

The Garda College is operating at near full capacity, currently in the range of 800-900 trainees per annum.

To meet the Government's recruitment targets, capacity to accommodate in the region of 1,000 recruits each year, or a maximum of 250 per intake, is required.

An Garda Síochána has advised that there are currently constraints both in terms of the teaching, classroom and accommodation capacity of the College.

A plan to address short-term capacity issues in the Garda College, as well as address required maintenance works, has been put in place by AGS who are engaging intensively with the Office of Public Works (OPW) on the requirements for classroom space in particular.

An Garda Síochána are also working to address other operational requirements for 2025 and 2026. Works commenced on the campus in Templemore during the summer of 2025 and will be overseen by OPW. These measures are being funded from within the existing Garda budget for 2025 and will be prioritised for funding from within the Garda allocation in 2026. The intention is that when this work is completed, the College will be able to accommodate up to 250 trainees per intake.

Separately, it is recommended that a Working Group be established to specifically consider the case for a second training college and the role that the tertiary system could play in the delivery of Garda training. It is recommended that this Working Group complete its work by July 2026.

5 Conclusions

In completing its work, the Group has reached the following conclusions:

1. Impact of Covid and new measures taken

It is clear that Garda recruitment was significantly impacted by Covid and that substantial changes have been made across the board in recent years by Government, An Garda Síochána and publicjobs to address the issues that may militate against the achievement of Garda recruitment targets, including:

- Increased recruitment age to 50;
- Increased training allowance;
- Shortened publicjobs recruitment timeframes;
- The offering of conditional offers by AGS;
- Reform of the physical competency test;
- Assessment Centre approach to AGS elements of the process;
- Two recruitment competitions in 2025.

The changes listed above have significantly improved the situation and the Group is satisfied that the process has been made much more efficient. There is potential for further improvements, particularly through the use of integrated ICT solutions for candidate management and in the context of broader priorities for the implementation of a Human Capital Management (HCM) solution by An Garda Síochána.

2. A relentless focus on sourcing talent

The pipeline is now strong and there is reason to expect that, all things being equal, the recruitment targets set by Government can be met. However, the situation is fluid and dynamic and there is no sense that the achievement of the target of 5,000 will be anything but challenging. It is not the case that achieving 200-250 in successive intakes can be taken to mean that the work is done. It is the Group's view that achieving the targets will continue to require a relentless focus by AGS and publicjobs to ensure that the pipeline remains strong and that those candidates who pass the publicjobs process actually convert into trainees quickly.

3. Evidence informed decision-making

The Department, An Garda Síochána and publicjobs will continue to meet to review progress and monitor data and ensure projections are updated. Understanding the recruitment market for Gardaí requires research, and the Department and An Garda Síochána will consider how best to undertake that research. This work will inform recommendations for further actions as required.

4. Capacity Planning

While there are constraints on the capacity of the Garda College in Templemore, these are being addressed by An Garda Síochána and the Office of Public Works, and this should not be an impediment to the achievement of the targets.

A Working Group should be established to consider the case for a second training facility and the role that the tertiary system could play in the delivery of Garda training. It should report by July 2026.

Appendix 1: Group Membership

Name	Department/Agency
John O'Callaghan, Deputy Secretary General	DoJ
Deirdre McDonnell, Assistant Secretary	DoJ
Martin McDermott, Principal Officer	DoJ
Siobhán Toale, Chief Corporate Officer	An Garda Síochána
Yvonne Cooke, Executive Director, People and Development	An Garda Síochána
Éilís Gilvarry, Head of Governance, People and Development	An Garda Síochána
Margaret McCabe, Chief Executive	publicjobs
Sinéad Coleman, Head of Talent Acquisition for the Public Service	publicjobs
Shirley Comerford, Assistant Secretary	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
Daniel O'Callaghan, Principal Officer	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
Ben Breen, Assistant Principal Officer	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
<i>Secretariat</i>	
Róisín Friel, Assistant Principal Officer	DoJ
Eimear O'Dwyer, Administrative Officer	DoJ
Niamh Burton, Assistant Principal Officer (until Jan 2025)	DoJ

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference

AGS Recruitment Training Capacity Group

1. Purpose

A new Recruitment Training Capacity Group has been established to focus on recruitment and retention in An Garda Síochána and to support the achievement of recruitment targets, with membership at a senior level from AGS, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, to provide initial recommendations to the Minister for Justice by End September;

2. Context

The Government is committed to a sustainable path toward building stronger, safer communities and strengthening An Garda Síochána to deliver on that commitment. One of the priorities is to continue to support An Garda Síochána as the body charged with delivering on national security and policing, in protecting communities from crime, through increased resources and a stronger and more diverse Garda service.

As of June 2024, the AGS workforce is made up of 14,100 Garda Members and 3,374 Garda Staff, with 329 Garda Reserves reported at end May 2024.

The current targets for the AGS Workforce were set in 2016 and are as follows:

- 15,000 Gardaí; 4,000 Garda staff; and 2,000 Garda Reserves. An interim target of 1,000 Reserves to be reached by end-2026 was recently set by the Minister.

In order to reach the target for Gardaí, target intakes of 200-250 have been set for the Garda College for 2024.

There is also an expectation that targets will evolve over the next 1-2 years, to take cognisance of evolving policing and security context including demographics.

It is important to ensure continued recruitment of high calibre Garda Members, and thus the Recruitment Training Capacity Group will review and assess existing processes to identify opportunities to streamline and speed up the recruitment process, taking into account up-to-date and evolving research and analytics and international best practice in police recruitment.

For An Garda Síochána to achieve its recruitment targets they will require significant partner support and expeditious actions. In particular, the Group will consider how to promote AGS as an attractive career option, how to speed up the pace of recruitment and consider any issues that then impact on retention. As recruitment needs to take place at scale and speed, capacity for recruitment and training will be a focus in the short term.

3. Terms of Reference

The Group is being established to support the achievement of existing recruitment targets set out for AGS in the first instance.

The Group will also be charged with delivering on the Government decision that all necessary measures are taken to support increased recruitment into An Garda Síochána, which is essential to maintaining the security of the State.

The Group will:

1. Consider all necessary measures to support increased recruitment into An Garda Síochána;
2. Provide a forum for discussion of significant issues that impact on workforce planning, retention and recruitment for AGS and how best these can be tackled;
3. Evaluate initiatives both for short term and longer term implementation, to respond to constraints in the system which have already been identified, or are identified as part of the work of the Group;
4. Consider the existing training model for AGS, the expansion of the Garda Training College to cater for larger numbers, and possible alternative training models;
5. Oversee a programme of actions together with identified targets, outcomes and timeframes;
6. Provide any additional policy or other recommendations for further consideration by the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána, as

required. New proposals will also be considered in the context of the Estimates process where relevant;

7. To provide initial recommendations to the Minister for Justice by end September;
8. Report progress to the Minister for Justice at regular intervals thereafter.

The Group will have due regard to the estimates process in progressing actions and recommendations and the requirement for specific business cases. The focus of the Group's work will be on recruitment and retention within An Garda Síochána. It is acknowledged that any issues related to pay are outside the scope of the Group's work and are covered by Public Service Pay Agreements.

The Group will consider the above points based on the available budget and allocation to ensure the optimal use of available resources. The Group will have due regard to the Public Sector Pay Agreement and Estimates process and the requirement for specific business cases where relevant.

A key measure to improve front line capacity has been civilianisation. The civilianisation programme has freed up almost 900 Garda members from back-office work for front line policing work since 2015.

Garda Management remain committed to identifying posts currently filled by sworn members which could be filled by Garda staff and to the policy of 'civilian by default' under which all new positions are filled by Garda staff, unless they require police powers or experience.

The Group will have regard to the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland and the earlier Changing Policing in Ireland report; and international best practice in recruitment and retention in police services and may consult with interested parties as part of their work.

4. Membership of the Group

The Group will be Chaired by the Department of Justice at Deputy Secretary General level with membership at a senior level from AGS, Department of Justice, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and publicjobs. Other officials will be asked to attend as required.

The work of the Group will be supported by staff in both the Department of Justice and AGS. The Group will meet fortnightly initially to prepare initial recommendations for end September and the frequency of meetings thereafter will be agreed by the Group.

July 2024

