

Garda - Statement of Commissioner Nóirín O'Sullivan

An Garda Síochána today (Saturday March 25) confirmed that, as of April 2016, new processes and systems are in place for gathering and collating statistics on breath testing to obviate the possibility of recurrence of the discrepancies found in an internal investigation.

The Garda Commissioner has written to the Policing Authority seeking further review by the Garda Inspectorate of the discrepancies between real and claimed breath testing by the service.

"We're looking at a problem that goes back more than a decade," the Garda Commissioner said today. "This is an issue - as the Authority has pointed out - which is more than systemic. It's about ethics. It's about supervision. It's about measurement. Most of all, it's about trust. Accordingly, I've asked the Authority to consider requesting the Garda Inspectorate to:

1. Examine the processes and methodology utilised to identify the nature and extent of the problems.
2. Review the control measures put in place designed to address the issues.
3. Examine if the current processes regarding roadside breath testing are in line with best practice."

In parallel, the Commissioner has directed newly promoted Assistant Commissioner Michael O'Sullivan and a team to undertake a further detailed analysis of the work undertaken to date; consider whether any further remedial actions need to be taken; and confirm whether the issues identified were the result of individual or system failings. An Garda Síochána will provide an initial report to the Policing Authority on this work within one month.

"What we've found thus far is totally unacceptable and not in keeping with the standards of a modern and professional police service," the Garda Commissioner stated. "The Policing Authority and Garda management are ad idem that this is a matter of individual and collective ethical behaviour and not one of occasional systems failure. It is a matter of grave disappointment that this has apparently been happening for so long, unchallenged. Every single member of the organisation must recognise that their individual actions, in all areas of policing, reflects on the organisation as a whole and impacts on the trust between ourselves and the communities we serve. However, as evidenced this week, I am determined that where we identify problems in the organisation, we admit these issues publicly, take whatever corrective action is necessary and ensure they do not recur. That is what I expect of the organisation and what is demanded of us by the community."

The Garda Internal Audit Section has also been tasked with examining the computer issue which led to wrongful legal cases being taken against drivers and their findings will be provided to the Authority on completion.

A help line to provide information to drivers affected will be up and running from Monday 03 April and more information will be provided on this in due course.

A detailed report and timeline which confirms when all these issues were identified; the approach to examining the issues; and the nature of the actions taken is being provided to the Tánaiste and the Policing Authority.

"We have taken corrective action," Nóirín O'Sullivan concluded. "We are asking that the corrective action be externally validated. That will reassure the public. However, it is important to state at this point that when an organisation like An Garda Síochána is on a journey of radical reform, as it is under my Commissionership, it is inevitable that we will identify more examples of bad practice. In addition to correcting these issues, we must share that information, no matter how negative it is, not just with the Authority, but also with the public. Only through that openness can we sustain public trust."