

1. Schedule of Records: FOI-004-24

Page No	Description of Document	Deletions	Relevant Sections of FOI Acts	Reason for Decision	Decision maker's decision
	<u>1. Opening Statement</u>				
001 - 004		n/a	15(1)(d)	Information already in the public domain. Available here .	Withheld
	<u>2. Key Messages</u>				
001 - 004	Table of Contents	n/a			Full Release
005 - 009	1. What GSOC does and does not do	n/a			Full Release
010 – 017	2. The complaints/ investigative process; Delay	n/a			Full Release
018 - 023	3. The new legislation	n/a			Full Release
024 - 025	4. Guards investigating Guards (94(1)/'leaseback')	n/a			Full Release
026 - 027	5. Section 102 Referrals	Page 027	29(1)(a)(b)	Content relating to the deliberative process of an FOI body.	Part Release
028 - 035	6. Caseload and resourcing	Page 034	29(1)(a)(b)	Content relating to the deliberative process of an FOI body.	Part Release
036 - 038	7. Your investigators	n/a			Full Release
039	8. Body cams	n/a			Full Release
040	9. Recent issue re resignation of a staff member and AGS investigation into the matter	n/a			Full Release

041 - 045	10. Likely Cases that may be raised.	n/a			Full Release
046 - 047	11. Recent criticism from GRA/AGSI (Riots, CBD1 etc)	Page 046	29(1)(a)(b)	Content relating to the deliberative process of an FOI body.	Part Release
048	12. GSOC and Data				
	<u>3. Operational Statistics</u>				
001 - 005		Page 004	37(1)(a)	Personal Information.	Part Release
	<u>4. GSOC Financial Statements 2022 - Final</u>				
001 - 024		n/a	15(1)(d)	Information already in the public domain. Available here .	Withheld
	<u>5. Management Letter – GSOC 2022 – Final Version</u>				
001 - 006		n/a	30(1)(b)	Functions and negotiations of FOI bodies.	Withheld
	<u>6. GSOC briefing for PAC briefing 8 February 2024 – Detailed version</u>				
001 - 008		n/a	30(1)(b)	Functions and negotiations of FOI bodies.	Withheld
	<u>7. GSOC briefing for PAC briefing 8 February 2024 – Amended</u>				
001 - 005		n/a	15(1)(d)	Information already in the public domain. Available here .	Withheld
	<u>8. PAC Profiles of members February 2024 concise</u>				
001 - 017		n/a			Full Release

	<u>Annual Report 2022</u>				
001 - 102			15(1)(d)	Information already in the public domain. Available here .	Withheld
	<u>Statutory Overview Report 2017 - 2022</u>				
001 - 050			15(1)(d)	Information already in the public domain. Available here .	Withheld

GSOC

Key Messages and Talking Points.

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1. What GSOC does and does not do

Q: What is GSOC and what does it do?

- GSOC was established in 2007 to provide independent oversight of policing in Ireland.
- We work out of our Dublin HQ and our regional offices in Longford and Cork. We operate in 26 counties 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.
- A vital interface between the people and an Garda Síochána. Our work is challenging and results depend on the skill and dedication of our staff, each of whom carry a heavy caseload
- GSOC is headed up by three Commissioners, one of whom serves as Chairperson.
- As commissioners, we serve as officers of the State. We are appointed by the President, on nomination by the Government and passage of resolutions by both houses of the Oireachtas.
- Committee members will be aware that the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill was recently passed by these houses. Under this new legislation GSOC will be wound up as an agency, and replaced with the new Office of the Police Ombudsman, or Fiosrú. We expect enactment to take place in the coming month, and for the legislation to be brought into operation later this year. Preparation for this huge organisational transition is our top priority.

Q: What kind of complaints does GSOC deal with?

- GSOC deals with all manner of complaints from the public, whether criminal or disciplinary.
- Cases can range from relatively minor issues, such as discourtesy, up to and including serious criminal matters such as assault and sexual offences.

Q: How can a member of the public make a complaint?

- We provide a range of ways for members of the public to make a complaint. This includes:
 - Via our telephone line, which includes an out-of-hours message service.
 - Via email
 - Via our online form, which is available in English, Irish and twelve other languages (French, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Malay, Tagalog, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese)
 - By calling into our office in Abbey Street in Dublin in person.
 - Via a Garda Station (where our forms are also made available)

Q: What measures do you have in place for accessibility:

- Our application forms are available in 15 languages
- Our caseworkers are trained to field calls in both Irish and English
- We have contracts with translation and interpretation services, and use these as required to provide assistance to complainants engaging with us in other spoken languages, or via sign language.
- Our HQ, and Cork and Longford offices are fully accessible
- Our website is regularly updated to meet the latest accessibility standards for automated machine reading and navigation. Our current website accessibility standard is 'AA' (double A)

Q: Can you look into issues where there has been no complaint?

- Yes. In addition to addressing complaints from the public, we conduct investigations into matters referred to us by An Garda Síochána, by the Minister for Justice, by the Policing Authority, as well as into matters we judge to be in the public interest to investigate.
- We also are a designated body for the receipt of protected disclosures from members and staff of An Garda Síochána.
- We make recommendations arising from the results of our investigations. We do not conduct prosecutions – those are for the DPP – nor do we or impose or enforce disciplinary sanctions, which are for an Garda Síochána, following the recommendations that we make.

Q: Does GSOC investigate every complaint it receives?

- We assess each and every complaint that comes into us for admissibility. Admissibility criteria are clearly laid out in the legislation. For a complaint to be admissible, the legislation requires that:
 - It must be made by or on behalf of a person directly affected
 - It must relate to behaviour by a Garda that if proved would constitute either a crime or a disciplinary offence
 - It must be made within a year of the incident
 - It must not be frivolous or vexatious
 - It must not relate to the general direction of AGS by the Garda Commissioner
 - It must not relate to off-duty conduct, unless the conduct would be likely to bring discredit on AGS
- Those deemed admissible are put forward to the next stage, ie the investigation of the complaint

For example:

- in 2021, 61% of complaints were deemed admissible. (1132 of 2189 – see AR2021 p50, chart 4)
- in 2022, approximately 50% of complaints were deemed admissible (904 of a total of 1826).
- We are currently compiling figures for our 2023 Annual Report. The headline figures for 2023 include:
 - An increase in volume of admissible cases to 962 cases (up from 904 last year). This represents approximately 61% of the total 1577 complaints received (containing 3244 allegations).
 - Of note: the number of complaints received reduced, but the number of admissible ones increased. The volume of allegations remained steady, indicating cases of more complexity.
- Of those admissible cases, certain cases undergo investigation by GSOC, while certain disciplinary matters are referred back to An Garda Síochána for investigation by them, where we consider it appropriate.
 - In 2021, 533 (just over 40%) of 1332 cases admitted that year were referred back to AGS under s94(1). See p40-41 AR2021.
 - In 2022, 417 (46%) of 904 total cases admitted that year were referred back to AGS under s94(1).
 - We are currently compiling figures for our 2023 Annual Report.
- However, it is important to note that:
 - GSOC investigates *all* criminal cases
 - GSOC investigates *all* cases of referral on foot of death or injury
- See next section for overview of passage of a complaint for more information on case pathways.

Q: How many Guards has GSOC prosecuted or disciplined in the past few years?

- GSOC *does not* prosecute. GSOC *does not* discipline.
- While GSOC has significant investigatory powers, it is important to note that we do not have the power to direct or conduct prosecutions – this is a matter solely for the DPP. We also have no power to impose or enforce disciplinary sanctions against members of An Garda Síochána – this is a matter for Garda management, following the recommendations that we make.

- *Illustrative example: 2021:*
 - *DISCIPLINE: 60 disciplinary sanctions were handed down to members on foot of disciplinary investigations carried out either directly by GSOC or on behalf of GSOC. These sanctions range widely depending on gravity of breach e.g.: docking of pay, suspension etc. (Outcomes table for 2021 pp 43-44)*
 - *CRIMINAL:*
 - *In 2021 GSOC sent 21 files to the DPP. Of these, the DPP recommended prosecutions in 10 cases, and no prosecution in 11 cases.*
 - *In 2021 five criminal prosecutions were completed:*
 - *A conviction for sexual assault*
 - *Three convictions for assault*
 - *A conviction for theft (CF pp67-68 of AR21)*

- *Illustrative example: 2022:*
 - *DISCIPLINE: 62 disciplinary sanctions were handed down to members on foot of disciplinary investigations carried out either directly by GSOC or on behalf of GSOC. These sanctions range widely depending on gravity of breach e.g.: docking of pay, suspension etc.*
 - *CRIMINAL:*
 - *In 2022 GSOC sent 27 files to the DPP.*
 - *In 2022 the DPP recommended prosecutions in 10 cases. These included prosecutions for assault, theft, and road traffic offences.*
 - *In 2022 the DPP directed no prosecution in 16 cases.*
 - *Seven further directions were pending at year end 2022*
 - *In 2022 seven criminal prosecutions were completed, including two successful prosecutions on assault charges.*
 - *At year end 2022 Gardaí were facing charges in cases pending before the courts related to 18 GSOC investigations, including charges relating to:*
 - *Assault*
 - *Rape*
 - *Theft*
 - *Road traffic offences*
 - *Further cases were pending against members of the public for provision of false information to GSOC, contrary to section 110 of the Act*

- *Illustrative example: 2023:*
 - *We are currently compiling figures for our 2023 Annual Report.*
 - *Last year we saw the first GSOC case to result in a DPP prosecution at the Central Criminal Court, where a former Garda reserve pleaded guilty to sexual offences against a minor. The conviction resulted in an 8-year sentence, with 18 months suspended.*

Q: This appears to be a very low proportion of outcomes given the number of complaints you admit. How do you account for that?

- Our role is to conduct thorough investigations and to pass on our recommendations to the DPP, AGS and other agencies.
- Our role is to ensure that complaints are received, assessed and investigated. We operate on the facts before us, not on the basis of quotas.
- More broadly, it tells us that in most cases, while a member of the public may be unhappy or unsatisfied with the conduct of a member of AGS, that no evidence of a breach of criminal law or disciplinary regulations could be proven. This is, in itself, an important insight, and something that is important for accountability, and for the maintenance of trust and confidence in policing.
- It is also the case that similar outcome numbers would be normal for any Ombudsman institution.

2. The complaints/ investigative process; Delay

Q: We have heard criticism of GSOC and delays in its investigations. What is behind this?

- Delay can sometimes be an issue with our work. There are many factors which contribute to delays in investigating and bringing cases to a close
- **Firstly – there is the legislation.** We conduct our work according to the processes governed by the 2005 act.
 - These procedures and processes are unusually convoluted and time-consuming setting us apart from other oversight and investigatory agencies in the state.
 - We are obliged to first examine any criminal element of a case. Only on conclusion of this can we go back and address any disciplinary matters arising. This leads to very drawn out processes.
 - This is unsatisfactory for us, for the Garda member, for the complainant, and more generally, for the public.
 - We have raised concerns regarding the impact this has on the time taken for completion of investigations.
 - A core element of the new legislation, which we very much welcome, will be to streamline this process in order to allow criminal and disciplinary matters to be examined concurrently. This would bring us in line with what would be considered standard investigative practice in other agencies, including the AGS and revenue.
- **Secondly, and related, there is resourcing.**
 - The issue of resourcing has been the subject of heightened concern for the organisation for a number of years. Despite a welcome growth in the organisation over recent years, resourcing at a scale adequate to fulfil our remit efficiently remains a significant challenge for GSOC.
 - By their very nature, some investigations are straightforward and some are not. Some can be dealt with reasonably quickly. However some are quite complex and require a commitment in terms of staff, resources and time that we know can be frustrating to all concerned.
 - We are charged with oversight of an institution of over 15,000. We do so with a staff of around 160, of which, we have a few dozen investigators and a few dozen caseworkers. This is simply not enough to do our work as speedily as we would like. We have been very upfront about this, and will continue to be.

- Over the years the volume and, in particular, complexity of our cases has increased.
- With expanded powers, we can fully expect this increase in volume and complexity to continue.
- **(See more in section 6 below regarding caseload and resourcing)**
- **Thirdly, there are the factors outside GSOC's direct control, including:**
 - Non-cooperation or delays in cooperation by complainants, witnesses or Members
 - Delays in accessing the necessary technical assistance and services for evidence gathering and analysis (eg vehicle forensics, ballistics, digital surveillance, medical evidence etc)
 - Delays in inter-agency information sharing
 - Legal challenges
 - Inter-jurisdictional issues
 - Other statutory processes to which we are obliged to adhere, and whose outcomes we are obliged to await (eg coronial proceedings, criminal trials etc)
 - Delays in the courts system

Q: Give us a sense of some of the factors that have contributed to the increase of cases and their complexity?

- There are numerous factors that we are aware of, and likely other social and other factors that we are not in a position to guess. But here are a few factors that our colleagues have raised with us:

Emerging issues

- We are seeing an increase in some types of complaint that are particularly sensitive and complex to deal with, requiring heavy levels of resourcing. This would include complaints relating to domestic violence, sexual violence, coercive control or complex referrals of incidents that involved death or serious injury.

Scattergun complaints

- There has been an increase in contacts that are not necessarily within GSOCs remit, usually where GSOC are cc'd along with a large number of other organisations. Sometimes, it is not clear what the complainant's intention is, and they have to be contacted to enquire if they wish to make a complaint about Garda misbehaviour. This is important but time consuming.

Q: Talk us through the lifecycle of an investigation

- We have a flowchart which we are happy to furnish which illustrates the complexity.
- However, in simplified form, a case could follow the following path:
- Complaint is made → Caseworkers assess it for admissibility (we sometimes call this the screening stage). → Case then assessed on the basis of allegations for criminal and disciplinary elements.
- For a complaint to be admissible it must be made by (or on behalf of) someone who is affected by or witnesses the alleged incident; it must relate to the conduct of a Guard which if proven would consist of a criminal or disciplinary offence; it must be made within a year of the incident; it must not be frivolous or vexatious; it must not relate to the general direction of the AGS by the garda Commissioner; it must not relate to an off-duty member, unless such conduct would bring discredit to AGS. (see AR22, pp37-38).
- In 2022, approx. 50% of complaints were deemed admissible. In 2023, around 61% were deemed admissible.
- If disciplinary only – depending on circumstances, this may be investigated by GSOC, or handed back to AGS for either supervised or unsupervised investigation (see section on this)
- If the allegation is criminal, it is investigated by GSOC as a criminal matter, much as the Gardaí might investigate a criminal matter.
 - Time consuming: Witnesses, securing evidence, statements, dealing with other agencies; coroners court etc etc.
 - Resourcing – we are a very small agency, and have no forensic, road traffic collision, or other technical resources. We rely heavily on AGS for assistance on these matters.
 - *Vignette: When we meet Garda Technical Bureau colleagues on a complex incident, they will often have convened a dozen people in an incident room. We will have maybe 2. This is met with surprise by Garda colleagues – how are you to do an investigation with so few people? **This is an operational reality. Only resourcing will fix this.***
 - On conclusion a file goes to the DPP, who may or may not prosecute. This decision, out of our hands, and it can take months.
 - If no prosecution is directed, only then can we go back to square one and look into the disciplinary aspect of the complaint.
 - Colleagues can appreciate how drawn out this can become.

Q: On average how long does an investigation take to complete?

- By their very nature, some investigations are straightforward and some are not. Some can be dealt with quickly and some require a commitment in terms of staff, resources and time.
- The time taken on some investigations can be frustrating to all concerned. This is understandable from the point of view of complainants, who are anxious as to the outcome, and members of An Garda Síochána whose careers can be, in effect, on the line.
- GSOC is, however, bound by the principle of due process and Human Rights legislation: we cannot and should not prioritise speed at the expense of rigour in completing our investigations.
- Given the broad range of circumstances, an average is not always a useful indicator. Some cases can wrap up in a matter of days or weeks. For some, it can be years. It is entirely dependent on the facts and complexity of the case. Some are incredibly complex. Some are delayed by matters outside our control. Some go on for a long time because current legislation means that we cannot address discipline issues in cases which also have criminal allegations.
- Our annual reports provide median figures for our cases – representing the middle point in a graph. The median time for all investigations has increased in the past year. (below table from 2022 Annual Report showing median times between 2016-2022)
- Median closure time is calculated against file closure. A case file can remain open well after the conclusion of GSOC's investigatory role while we await other statutory process or decisions. This could include other non-GSOC related statutory processes, such as AGS disciplinary proceedings, coronial hearings, or court proceedings, all of which require continued GSOC engagement and over which GSOC has no direct control. Final technical closure of a case file can therefore be dependent on others.
- For example, in criminal investigations, there can often be a significant lag between the completion of an investigation and a DPP decision. Where prosecution is directed, there can be a significant time lag between the direction and the trial itself, often owing to delays within the courts and judicial system. None of these factors is in GSOC's control.
- The vast majority of investigations we undertake wrap up in under 2 years. Of our current active caseload, approximately a quarter have been open for over two years. Of these, over half represent cases where our work is concluded and other statutory processes are underway (whether AGS disciplinary hearings, criminal trials, or coronial proceedings). The remainder remain open and active. Therefore GSOC-led/supervised cases that have been open for more than 2 years and remain in the investigative phase represent approximately 1/8 of our total caseload.
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Table F: Median Closure Time

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Criminal investigation (s.98)	99	115	147	140	162	311	366
Unsupervised disciplinary investigations by Garda Síochána (s94(1))	266	256	268	279	244	199	250
Supervised disciplinary investigations by Garda Síochána (s94(5))	250	273	281	332	289	288	336
GSOC-led disciplinary investigations by GSOC (s.95)	260	203	253	290	265	265	320

Q: Does GSOC appreciate the impact of delays with investigations on complainants – what does GSOC do to keep complainants informed when there is a lengthy delay in investigations.

- Yes, GSOC appreciates the impact of delays on all the persons involved in a complaint investigation, both complainants and members of AGS. We share their frustrations. We endeavour to keep all parties informed on a regular basis during the course of an investigation, either in writing or via telephone contact.

Q: What does GSOC do when it makes an error or mistake, resulting in delay? (such as delays in decision making, misplaced documents etc)

- If and when such a situation arises, those affected are entitled to an explanation and an apology.

Q: Annual report figures over the past few years would suggest about 10% (1 in 10) Garda members are under either criminal or disciplinary investigation – is this a fair assumption? Is it not concerning that that proportion of AGS is under investigation?

- This assumption would not be correct.
- There are some members who are the subject of more than one investigation during a calendar year.
- It is not fair to look at the complaints received against the number of AGS members. The number of complaints received is just that – those received. The public is entitled to make a complaint, and we take these complaints seriously and in good faith, assessing them for admissibility and further action, as needed.

- If anything, the volume of complaints demonstrates that the public knows its rights, and is willing to make complaints when dissatisfied. This is a healthy thing for society, and for the Gardaí.

Q: you mentioned your Local Intervention Initiative. Could you tell us more about that?

- The idea behind the Local Intervention initiative is that many complainants are not interested in a drawn-out formal investigation, nor in disciplinary matters. Rather, they have a particular problem which they want to see swiftly resolved.
- The Local Intervention initiative was set up as a pilot in 2018 to address this, creating a process where swift resolution was the primary aim. It has gone from strength to strength ever since. In 2022 148 cases were resolved in this way.
- Usually the complaints that lend themselves to this process are low-level cases that require a simple solution. Only service level issues would be eligible such as: Poor standard or service, inefficient/no service, incivility/rudeness, lack of communication or follow-up.
- Examples included in our 2022 Annual Report would include, for example:
 - o Rudeness at a traffic stop. The intervention by an appointed Garda Inspector resolved the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant. An apology was all that was necessary.
 - o Another case arose due to missing paperwork, resulting in delays in processing immigration documentation. The intervention resulted in identifying the cause of the delay, and its swift resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- How it works:
 - o Case workers identify suitable complaints and suggest this approach to complainant, who can refuse.
 - o If the complainant consents, GSOC refers the matter to a Garda Inspector who looks into the matter – contacting the complainant on the phone, discussing the issue with the member in question, and seeking to settle the matter.
 - o The process is not about apportioning blame, but addressing the issue, fixing it, and learning lessons to prevent recurrence.
 - o If the complainant refuses this process, or is unhappy with the outcome, the complaint remains subject to standard GSOC admissibility processes as normal.
- While the new legislation does not provide for local intervention, we hope to replicate this successful formula in the work we undertake in the new Office Police Ombudsman.
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Q: The competency of GSOC's staff has been called into question in this house and in the media recently. How would you respond?

- GSOC's staff are skilled and dedicated. They are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provide an important public service in often difficult circumstances.
- Our staff interact with the public daily – often assisting people in crisis on our phonelines and through our case work. Our investigators attend critical incidents, secure evidence, conduct interviews and engage with the coroner, the pathologist, local Gardaí, local community groups and other stakeholders. Our Family Liaison Officers provide comfort and support to victims and families. Our team in HQ ensure that all our administrative systems are in order to deliver a service to the public. They moved mountains as COVID hit to ensure that we could get on with our work in the most challenging of national crises. And over the past two years, they have effectively been working two parallel roles – maintaining our current work, while preparing the organisation for significant once-in-a-generation reform.
- GSOC's work is difficult, detailed and demanding. Our staff deserve the highest respect and recognition. It is a privilege to work with them.
- GSOC's work is complex and challenging. It is also essential in democratic society. Our aim in the coming period is to ensure that as GSOC's functions and remit expand, so too does our staff complement and skillset to ensure we are fit for purpose.

Q: How does GSOC investigate systemic issues?

- If GSOC uncovers issues of a systemic nature in the course of an investigation, it will send recommendations to AGS with a view to reducing complaints and improving service to the public. This is done on a non-statutory basis.
- While it has been our practice to publish systemic recommendations in summary in its Annual Reports, last year GSOC adopted a new approach to the preparation and issue of systemic recommendations. Following issue to the Garda Commissioner, GSOC will now forward the recommendation, and any information or update arising, to:
 - The Department of Justice
 - The Policing Authority
 - The Garda Inspectorate
 - The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- Where a GSOC Systemic Recommendation is relevant to other strategies to improve policing or community safety – for example The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence – the Commission will also share its recommendations with the relevant agencies and officials.
- The recommendations will thereafter be published, on a periodic basis, on the GSOC website.

- GSOC can also open examinations of Garda practice, policy and procedure under S106 of the Act

How is GSOC's work relevant to the National Strategy on Domestic and Gender Based Violence?

- GSOC's role and remit as an independent policing oversight agency are included in the Government's implementation plan for the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- The Plan indicates that GSOC, as an independent oversight body,
 - o "will work in accordance with its statutory remit to improve the safety of victims of domestic/sexual abuse and the policing response through investigation of complaints, including complaints about the adequacy of An Garda Síochána's response to Domestic Abuse/ Sexual Violence incidents and complaints about members of the Garda service as perpetrators".
- It also refers to GSOC's practice of issuing systemic recommendations:
 - o "GSOC will examine and make recommendations in relation to Garda Síochána policy/practice relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, with a view to improving service levels for victims and improve the effectiveness of Garda investigations, and thereby improve confidence in policing."
- It also commits An Garda Síochána to: "give effect to improvements in policy and practice and in training to respond to GSOC's findings and recommendations."
- GSOC engages regularly with the Department on its implementation programme for the strategy.

3. The new legislation

Q: What do you think about the new draft legislation?

- We welcome it. It addresses clearly defined, and long-signalled gaps in the police oversight infrastructure in Ireland.

Three key positives, whose inclusion we welcome:

1. **Enhancing our independence.** The proposed legislation will significantly enhance the institutional independence of the new Office of the Police Ombudsman, giving it its own accounting officer and budget vote. This would bring our institution more in line with global standards for independence in ombudsman and oversight institutions and we welcome it.
2. **Automatic referral of complaints.** This means that, while an agreed and publicly available list of low-level disciplinary and service level matters will be returned to AGS to resolve, all complaints will be channelled through the new Police Ombudsman. This means that the Ombudsman will have visibility on all complaints made about AGS, and the manner in which these are dealt with will be predictable, transparent, and susceptible to medium and long term trends analysis. This will be coupled with an enhancement of Garda management's role in effectively addressing service-level issues.
3. A focus on timely and effective completion of investigations, especially through the **streamlining of the investigative process**, allowing disciplinary matters and criminal matters to be examined concurrently. This is a significant development, and will tackle one of the primary barriers to timeliness we currently face. It will bring GSOC in line with the industry standard in oversight, aligning our processes to international best practice and with other agencies that have criminal and civil investigative powers in Ireland, including the AGS themselves, and agencies such as Revenue.

Q: Any issues or concerns with it?

- We published detailed observations on the Bill in February last year, outlining some core concerns. Some issues have been resolved, which welcome. (For example the question of joint investigations).
- Some concerns remain, and those are on the record. The legislation has now, however, passed, and we fully intend to put all our energy into making the legislation work.
- As the legislation beds in, we will continue to engage with the Department and other stakeholders to ensure it works, and to flag up areas where issues have arisen, so we can address challenges constructively.

The concerns we had raised (for reference)

1. **Independence.** The direction of travel in the Bill is very positive. However, we have noted a number of areas where our independence will need further strengthening to ensure the recommendations of the Commission for the Future of Policing are met. For example:
 - a. We remain concerned that the draft legislation has not fully embraced the principle of institutional independence that should underpin an Ombudsman institution. GSOC is concerned that while institutional independence has been enhanced in the Bill, it still imposes a degree of Ministerial, and occasionally Garda, involvement in the governance and operations of the Police Ombudsman that is not consistent with the independence envisioned in the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing or with the Council of Europe's Venice Principles.
 - b. GSOC is further concerned about provisions within the draft Bill handing significant powers to the Garda Commissioner to block or overrule the operations and decision-making of the Police Ombudsman. Of particular concern are the provisions in the draft Bill for the search of Garda premises, which represent a significant regression from the powers enjoyed by GSOC under the current Act. In addition to presenting unworkable practical difficulties, these provisions seriously undermine the principle of independent civilian oversight of policing.
 - c. the draft legislation provides for a 3-year review of the provision for automatic referral to the new Ombudsman body. In our view, placing a 3-year lifespan on such a fundamental provision risks undermining the enhancement of police oversight which is the aim of this Bill.
2. **The obligation to conduct investigations in a timely and efficient manner.** This is crucial and welcome. However, in order for an investigation to be timely, all participants need to play their part. It will not be effective if the obligation for timeliness is only placed on one organisation in the process. Obligations for timely completion of investigations and provision of information, need to be accompanied by matching statutory obligations for transparency and cooperation on all other parties, including An Garda Síochána and the proposed Independent Examiner of Security Legislation.
3. **Resourcing.** We need to be sure that the expansion of the reformed body's functions and competencies is accompanied by a commensurate expansion of capacity in the form of resources, personnel and expertise that guarantee our ability to deliver. Limitations on resourcing during the lifetime of GSOC have contributed to the issues it has faced in delivering on its mandate. These limitations have been the subject of regular discussion in this house. Adequate resourcing of GSOC is a core recommendation of the Commission for the Future of Policing.

Q: What additional functions/ duties with the new reformed institution be undertaking and what resourcing will it require?

- the new legislation will see all complaints against Gardaí routed through the new Office of the Police Ombudsman in the first instance. This will entail a significant administrative

burden on the new agency in terms of assessing all complaints, as well as a resource burden in terms of progressing them.

- The new legislation provides for a new mechanism permitting the review of negative admissibility decisions. This will represent a brand new, and potentially resource-heavy strand of work for the new organisation, requiring the staffing and resourcing of a new reviews function.
- The current practice of referring incidents of death and serious harm will be expanded, with the definition of 'serious harm' to be expanded to include incidents involving:
 - Sexual offences
 - Abuse of power for sexual gain

Such cases will now fall to Fiosrú to investigate in all instances.

- The new legislation has also created a new category of referral called 'Incident of concern'. This category goes beyond death and serious harm, and can represent a wide range of matters where Garda conduct may be suspected to be a serious breach of discipline, or of criminal law. AGS will be obliged to refer such incidents to the new Fiosrú/Office of the Police Ombudsman. *This is a significant expansion of the potential matters that the new office will have to investigate, and has the potential to significantly expand the new office's caseload, especially in the immediate term. In addition, it is likely to expand the range and complexity of cases before the new Ombudsman, and the technical and specialist expertise we require to investigate them.*
- Once the new legislation comes into effect this summer, we can expect an immediate impact on workloads. We are expecting, especially in the first instance, a significant volume of referrals into us from An Garda Síochána, both in terms of standard complaints and incidents of concern, who will be eager to fall in line with the new legislation's provisions that place Fiosrú as the agency of first instance in all such matters. We can also fully expect members of the public whose complaints were ruled inadmissible immediately to avail of the right of review. We cannot yet quantify the workload this will entail, but the preparatory work we have undertaken to date leaves us in no doubt that it will be significant.
- Fiosrú will also have a markedly different status as an agency. It will no longer operate under a Departmental Grant, but will instead be its own vote-holding body, directly answerable to the Oireachtas, with a CEO as Accounting Officer. The structural, Governance and institutional capacity to carry this independent financial role is being built, and will require sustained resourcing.
- Fiosrú will also have new functions to conduct research and analysis of its work, requiring capacity and expertise in data analysis, research, trend analysis and public facing reporting of facts, findings and insights.
- Outreach and proactive public engagement and education will also form an important part of Fiosrú's work, particularly in its launch and bedding-in phase.

- We need to be sure that the expansion of the reformed body's functions and competencies is accompanied by a commensurate expansion of capacity in the form of resources, personnel and expertise that guarantee our ability to deliver. Close monitoring of how we manage in the organisation's early days, agility in the face of challenges, and willingness to back us both in terms of staffing and resources, will be crucial.

(see section 6 below for more on resourcing)

Q: Should the reformed ombudsman tackle legacy issues – the Troubles, or institutional abuse for example?

- Under current legislation, GSOC has no functions in this regard
- The new legislation does not propose to change this.
- Contemporary policing oversight, and historical investigations, are very different functions, requiring very different resourcing and legislative underpinnings.
- Our view is that expansion of the reformed body's remit beyond that of contemporary police oversight body, into the investigation of historical cases, would be a significant step.
- Such a step would not be practicable without a significant and dedicated allocation of resources and specialist expertise to such a function, distinct from the body's other functions. It would, in effect, require the establishment of a separate body.
- The new organisation, as with the current iteration of GSOC, could in theory look at incidents in the more distant past, but these would be considered against the standard admissibility criteria and other considerations.

Q: The Guards have raised concerns about their constitutional rights where proposals for streamlined are concerned. What is your view?

- The proposed new powers are similar to those already enjoyed by An Garda Síochána in the context of their own investigations. In fact, in many ways they remain far more circumscribed. Far from giving rise to procedural or constitutional concerns, they have provided protection and reassurance to members of the public.
- It is appropriate that An Garda Síochána should be subject to the same standards, safeguards and procedural processes as the wider public. What is good enough for the broader public should be good enough for members of An Garda Síochána.

- GSOC does not believe the office of the Attorney General would stand over proposed legislation that trampled on constitutional rights. This bill does nothing of the kind.
- A police service committed to the principle of independent police accountability and oversight should have no difficulty with the proposed legislation.

Q: When will the new legislation come into effect?

- Our best information from the Department of Justice is that the new legislation will commence this summer, bringing the new Office of the Police Ombudsman into existence, and we are actively working towards this timeline.
- Ultimately the timing is for the Oireachtas and the Department to decide. But, as far as we are concerned, our Transition is already well underway, and our aim is to be ready to go in terms of institutional structure, resourcing and staffing to meet our new remit once it is handed to us.

Q. How are your plans for the transition to the OPO taking shape?

- GSOC has been actively engaged with the Department of Justice's inter-agency and cross-departmental Implementation Programme for the Bill.
- This is a complex multi-strand programme, drawing in the Department, GSOC, An Garda Síochána, the Policing Authority and the Garda Inspectorate.
- In addition to being represented on the Programme's Board and Implementation Steering Group, GSOC has been a core participant in two projects of particular strategic importance:
 - The Office of the Police Ombudsman Operating Model project, to prepare the institutional and governance structures for the Office of the Police Ombudsman, an agency with an independent Oireachtas vote; and
 - The Office of the Police Ombudsman Process Reform project, to establish, in close cooperation with An Garda Síochána, the reformed systems, procedures, protocols and agreed lines of communication necessary for effective inter-agency cooperation in the delivery of the new legislation's statutory functions.
- With commencement of the legislation expected this summer, the work of these groups is gathering pace
- A significant part of this work has been the development of a detailed business case for resourcing, based on a detailed structural review and business analysis we commissioned last year from Grant Thornton.
- No such exercise had been carried out in the organisation's 16 years of operation, and we saw it as an essential step in identifying precisely what our current structures and workload

are, what gaps currently exist, and then the degree to which these structures will expand in the new organisation.

For more on the Business Case, and our 'ask', see section 6 below on caseload, resourcing and optimal 'ask'

4. Guards investigating Guards (94(1)/ 'leaseback')

Q: Do you think it is appropriate that GSOC gets Gardaí to investigate wrongdoing?

- It is what the current legislation provides for.
- We have long recommended a different approach, and signalled that the return of cases to AGS on the current scale is not optimal. Changes both to legislation and resourcing are necessary to change this. It was closely examined by the Commission on the Future of Policing.
- Post-CofPI, it is a matter of both political and policy consensus that this needs to be changed. We are glad to see that such reform is a key aspect of the new legislation which we welcome.
- The new legislation will see all complaints routed through the Office of the Police Ombudsman in the first instance.
- Of these complaints, the bill provides that lower level and service level complaint types – all outlined and published in an approved list – will be sent back to be dealt with by Garda management. The remainder will be retained for investigation by the Office of the Police Ombudsman.
- This process will be more transparent, and will encourage a more proactive customer service practice within AGS. It will also ensure that all complaints about AGS are recorded by the new Ombudsman, to ensure effective analysis of trends and issues that come up between AGS and the public.
- We look forward to working with stakeholders to putting the new system into practice.

Q: What does “Service level complaints” under the new system mean?

- Fundamentally, this is a recognition in CofPI that certain matters would not need escalation if more effective local line management practices were in place in AGS.
- However, where better local supervision and management can address problems as they arise, this is good for the public and AGS.
- We can already see the potential for this in our own Local Intervention initiative

What proportion of cases are currently handed back to AGS?

- Currently, approximately 40% percent of admissible complaints are referred back to AGS.

- It is important to stress that referral of investigations back to An Garda Síochána takes place in the context of disciplinary matters only. All criminal matters are dealt with by us.
- We send complaints back to AGS according to clear standards. Common items for referral would be matters such as discourtesy or neglect of duty. We take a graduated approach. Serious disciplinary matters are retained by us.

How does GSOC currently decide what cases it keeps and what cases it sends to AGS.

- (THIS PROCESS WILL BE SCRAPPED UNDER THE NEW LEGISLATION, WHERE A PUBLISHED LIST OF MATTERS SUITABLE FOR REFERRAL TO AGS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE. The new legislation will require that all complaints are routed through the Police Ombudsman, even if they come into AGS. It will also require the agreement and publication of the categories of lower or service level complaints that the Ombudsman sends back to AGS. This will increase transparency and ensure full visibility of the issues that arise. This category list is in the process of being finalised and approved at ministerial level.)
- GSOC takes a graduated approach to this. Firstly, once the complaint is made admissible, it is assessed, and if it contains a criminal allegation then the law requires that GSOC conduct a criminal investigation under s98. If there is no appearance of an offence on the part of Gardaí, there is then a further assessment as to the disciplinary matters that may arise.
- If the complaint contains very serious allegations, in particular failure to investigate domestic violence, sexual violence and gender-based violence, failure to investigate deaths, or an allegation that a person has suffered significant harm due to the alleged failings, then GSOC will conduct a fully-independent investigation under s95 of the Act. The decision to initiate a s95 investigation is taken at Deputy Director level.
- Broadly, lower-level, 'service-level' disciplinary matters, such as discourtesy or neglect of duty, are addressed using 94(1), and where in the view of GSOC it is in the public interest to do so, GSOC may choose to supervise this investigation (under s94(5)). The decision to initiate a supervised investigation is taken at Deputy Director level. There are a large number of factors which can be considered. These include the seriousness of the allegation, the protected grounds/vulnerability of the complainant, and the potential wider impact of the allegations.

5. Section 102 Referrals

Q: Under what circumstances do the Guards refer an issue to you?

- There are a few avenues for this. Firstly, under section 102 of the Act, the Garda Commissioner shall refer a matter to GSOC for investigation where it appears the action of a member “may have resulted in the death of, or serious harm to, a person”.
- In practice, this power is delegated to Chief Supers or Supers.
- It is a matter for the Guards to refer – it is ultimately their call as to whether the circumstances demand referral.
- Therefore, the number of referrals to us does not necessarily reflect the number of deaths/ serious injury arising from Garda contact.
- Once such a referral is made, GSOC is required under statute to investigate the matter.

Q: What kind of incidents get referred?

- A very wide range of incidents. It can include road traffic incidents, injuries in custody, medical emergencies etc.
- Many of the referrals follow loss of life. We are an important element in ensuring the state’s obligations under Article 2 ECHR are fulfilled.
- Referrals can be very complex, and can involve liaison with the pathologist, coroner’s court etc.
- Referrals often require the deployment of our on-call investigative teams at any hour of the day or night. Deployment to scenes in the small hours is a common occurrence.
- Majority of cases find no wrongdoing on part of AGS. Some, indeed, highlight that actions of AGS saved a life. Our 2021 annual report, for example, included an example of an investigation that established that the actions of two Gardaí on patrol likely saved the injured party’s life.
- Referrals tend to illustrate a number of challenging scenarios AGS find themselves in while performing their duty on the front line:
 - The challenge of rendering assistance to people in crisis – for example drink and drugs.

- Numerous such interactions end in hospitalisation and death, with Garda involvement being the fact that they were on the spot. Such scenarios result, appropriately, in s102 referrals.

- 
- Where no wrongdoing is found, it is often nonetheless the case that systemic issues of policy and practice are uncovered. These referrals therefore assist us in identifying systemic issues and recommending changes that will make people safer in the future.
- Per the process already outlined, referrals can be investigated either as a disciplinary or a criminal matter, with appropriate files prepared either for the garda Commissioner or the DPP.

Q: Are there other referrals by AGS?

- Yes. Under s85, if a member of the public makes a complaint directly to AGS related to garda misconduct, the AGS then forwards the complaint to GSOC.

Q: Will the referrals system look the same under the new legislation?

- The current practice of referring incidents of death and serious harm will continue, however the definition of ‘serious harm’ will be expanded to include:
 - Sexual offences
 - Abuse of power for sexual gain
- The new legislation has also created a new category of referral called ‘Incident of concern’, which AGS will be obliged to refer to the new Office of the Police Ombudsman. This category goes beyond death and serious harm, and can represent a wide range of matters where Garda conduct may be suspected to be a serious breach of discipline, or of criminal law. *This is a significant expansion of the potential matters that the new office will have to investigate, and has the potential to significantly expand the new office’s caseload, especially in the immediate term.*

6. Caseload and resourcing

Q: What is GSOC's current staff complement, and how much of it is dedicated to operations/ investigations.

Current staffing numbers – as at 1 February

Figures based on briefing from HR, drawing on data included in February Commission report.

- As at 1 February 2024, GSOC's staff complement is 162.3 FTE (163 persons). This is of a total sanctioned staff number of 186.3 FTE, meaning we are carrying a number of Vacancies.
- Staffing is broadly split across two directorates – Administration and Operations, which are led by eight members of the Senior Management Team, and by the Commission.
- **Commission and Senior Management Staffing:**
 - 3 Commissioners
 - Director of Operations
 - Director of Administration
 - 3 Deputy Directors of Operations (PO)
 - 2 Admin POs (Deputy Director of Admin; Knowledge Management)
 - Head of Legal (PO)
- **The Operations Directorate** has a current total of 112.6 FTE staff capacity, and is carrying 11 vacancies. Operations is in charge of the delivery of GSOC's core statutory policing oversight functions. A breakdown of staffing is as follows:
 - Casework has a total of 35 staff currently in-post, and is carrying 5 vacancies. Casework is in charge of processing complaints and queries and assessing them for admissibility. Casework is the engine room of GSOC's work, and the primary interface between the public and our work.
 - Investigators conduct, direct, supervise and manage investigations undertaken by GSOC. The investigations team consists of:
 - 8 Senior Investigative Officers (civil service Assistant Principal Officer grade) – Their primary role is a supervisory one overseeing caseloads.
 - 30 Investigative Officers in-post, and 5 vacancies (civil service Higher Executive Officer grade) – these are the lead investigators in most cases.
 - 10 Assistant Investigative Officers (civil service Executive Officer grade) – providing assistance to investigative officers.
 - The Protected Disclosure Unit has 10 staff in-post, and is carrying one vacancy. This is a specialist unit who do not work on standard GSOC complaints and referrals. They are ringfenced owing to the sensitive, confidential nature of the work.
 - Additional Operational Support:
 - 3 Analysts
 - Clerical Staff (5.6 FTE)

- **The Administration Directorate** has a total of 63.2 FTE staff capacity, and is currently carrying 10 vacancies. Administration directorate is in charge of all the necessary components for the running of an independent civil service agency, including:
 - HR
 - Finance
 - Corporate Services
 - ICT
 - Transition
 - Communications
 - Legal Services
 - Data Access/Freedom of Information
 - Secretariat
 - Quality Assurance
 - Library Services and Policy development

Q: Has GSOC had increased staffing and resources in recent years?

Additional funding in 2022 and 2023 provided for a total of 37 new positions, 30 of which were filled in 2022 to bring total staff in place to 156.7 by end December 2022.

New positions filled in 2022 were assigned as shown in the table below which briefly outlines the impact of filling these roles.

Position	No.	Grade	Impact
Chairperson of Commission	1	Retired High Court Judge	Transferred to GSOC staff numbers on retirement from Courts Service
Casework	4	1 PO, 1 HEO and 2 EOs	Reduced backlog of cases awaiting admissibility decision and provided capacity to lead the Unit in light of expected impact of process change due to PSCS Bill and development of Case Management System.
Investigations	14	1 AP (Senior Investigations Officer) 12 HEO (Investigations Officers), 2 EOs and 1 CO.	Increased capacity in investigations teams and the creation of an additional SIO-led team, resulted in the reduction of the number of cases on hand by 27% by end 2022 and contributed to the reduction of caseloads from 34 per investigator in Dec 2021 to 15 in May 2023.

Legal Unit	3	1 AP (Senior Legal Advisor), 1 EO Legal Executive and 1 CO	This additional capacity resulted in better management of legal working, including to reduction of queries on hand, in addition to creating capacity to deal with a significant increase in non-party disclosure requests.
Admin		1 AP (Finance and Corporate Services); 1 HEO Corporate Services; 1 AP and 1 HEO Transition Team; 1 HEO (Communications) and 1 SVO	These positions have added to the capacity in the Finance, Corporate Services and Communications Units to deal with increasing demand for corporate services and to enable GSOC to dedicate resources to the transition to the reformed organisation driven by the PSCS Bill and the significant workload that this is generating. It has also assisted in the delegation of day-to-day Communications tasks, providing the opportunity to engage in strategic communications planning and development.
Total	30		

As at end December 2022, GSOC had 156.7 FTE in place out of an authorised staffing complement of 172.7 full-time equivalent staff. Difficulties with recruitment have made it challenging to fill a number of specialist positions (e.g. persons with data analysis and quality management skillsets), resulting in some vacancies in these positions being carried forward into 2023. In addition, staff turnover continues to be high, with ongoing recruitment to fill vacancies as they arise. In 2022, in addition to filling 30 new positions, 20 staff were recruited to fill existing and new vacancies arising.

Q: What is GSOC's current caseload?

- We have a significant caseload, both in terms of investigations led by us, as well as those we send to AGS for supervised or unsupervised investigation.
- Annual report 2021 – refer to 'Year at a Glance' p 19. For key figures for 2021.
- Annual report 2022 – refer to 'Year at a Glance' p 21. For key figures for 2022.
- We are currently compiling data for our 2023 annual report.
- We began 2022 with:
 - 852 investigations on-hand led or supervised by us (s98, 95 and 94(5)).

- 327 unsupervised investigations underway by AGS following referral by us
- Approximately 300 cases in other 'phases' or our process, whether at assessment stage, or awaiting finalisation/signoff/ closure.
- We began 2023 with:
 - 952 investigations on-hand led or supervised by us (s98, 95 and 94(5)).
 - 290 unsupervised investigations underway by AGS following referral by us
 - Approximately 154 cases in other 'phases' or our process, whether at assessment stage, or awaiting finalisation/signoff/ closure.

Q: What proportion of your caseload is criminal investigations?

- We have already outlined the process according to which we refer certain cases to An Garda Síochána for either unsupervised or supervised investigation. While GSOC does send these cases back, the oversight and administration of this process remains a core part of GSOC's work, and is resource-intensive.
- Of the 904 investigations opened in 2022:
 - 349 were opened as a GSOC-led criminal investigation.
 - 44 were opened as a GSOC-led disciplinary investigation
 - 68 were opened as a Garda Síochána disciplinary investigation, with GSOC supervision
 - The remaining investigations – over 400 – were handed to An Garda Síochána for resolution in accordance with the provisions of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. These represent the lower-end service-level complaints we receive (service provision, discourtesy etc)
- With regard to investigations retained by GSOC, the vast majority of them are criminal investigations. For example:
 - In 2022, around 90% of new GSOC-led cases that year were criminal investigations. This represents around 350 new criminal investigations in 2022.
 - This is in addition to the 569 criminal investigations GSOC had on hand on 1 January 2022.
- The provisions of the new legislation, in particular the new provisions regarding 'incidents of concern', mean that the volume of criminal investigations undertaken by the new Ombudsman will increase significantly.

Q: How many criminal cases / GSOC-led disciplinary investigations per investigator does GSOC deal with?

- A 'per investigator' caseload is not necessarily a useful metric. Some investigators will have greater caseloads than others, depending on circumstances, experience, or the complexity or demands of the case in question. Senior investigators will lead on fewer, more complex cases, while having a supervisory role over more cases than more junior investigators.
- However, for the sake of this discussion, if you were to crudely and evenly divide the caseload across GSOC investigative staff, you are looking at a per-investigator caseload of between 20-30 cases. In practical terms, given some investigators are tasked with a handful of complex or critical cases, the effective caseload for the remainder of investigators can be more than this.
- Our organisational review, and subsequent business case to the Department (See below) place an optimal figure at 10 or below (see more below).

Q: Is this a high caseload for your staffing numbers? What additional numbers do you need? What additional areas of expertise are you seeking?

- Yes. It is a very significant caseload for our staffing volume. Far higher than it should be and well beyond international best practice. We have investigators with caseloads that are multiples of their counterparts in other jurisdictions. The more cases an investigator has, the more time each case takes.
- It also goes well beyond what was envisaged at the very inception of GSOC. When our founding legislation, the Garda Síochána Act 2005, was debated in the Dáil 18 years ago, the then Minister for Justice, now Senator Michael McDowell, indicated that if we were to carry out all the investigations that were required, he would envisage that the organisation would need between 150 and 200 investigators if it were to operate correctly. We have never been anywhere near such a figure – our current complement of investigators is near the highest we have had. The necessity of such levels of resourcing has been clear, however, from our inception, and we have raised concerns about it ever since.

Q: What would optimal resourcing look like? What is your 'ask' to the department?

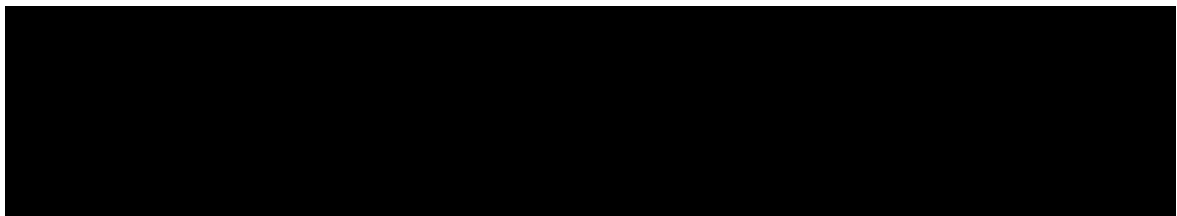
- Last year GSOC made a detailed Business Case to the Department of Justice for funding and resourcing the new Office of the Police Ombudsman.
- The business case drew from the organisational review we conducted with Grant Thornton last year, which conducted a comparison with other policing oversight bodies. This review was the first such analysis of the organisation since its establishment and it provided important insight into the likely future needs of the new Office of the Police Ombudsman.

We saw this exercise as an essential step in identifying precisely what our current structures and workload are, what gaps currently exist, and then the degree to which these structures will expand in the new organisation. The Review is now complete and can be found on our website.

- We hope and expect that as we stand up the new Office, these needs will be met in a phased way in the near to medium term.
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- In broad terms our organisational review found that in order to be able to fulfil its remit, Fiosrú will likely require:
 - At the lower end of the scale, at least a doubling of overall staff headcount in the near to medium term.
 - This needs to include a significant increase in the number of investigators employed by the new Agency. This needs to represent a multiple of our current numbers, in line with the figures indicated by Senator McDowell nearly two decades ago, and to represent caseload not exceeding of 10 cases at any point in time.
 - The creation of a significant range of new procedures, strands, resources and specialist functions in the organisation to meet with the new legislative requirements, and the likely scale and complexity that will come with that. This includes in the areas of
 - Investigation:
 - Case management
 - Digital investigations and forensics
 - Intelligence
 - Specialist support units
 - Major incidents units
 - Protected disclosures
 - Specialist interviewing
 - Digital forensics
 - Road traffic and forensic collision expertise
 - Crime scene investigation
 - Casework and case processing. This is the front line of interface with the public –the engine room of the work we do. The new legislation, and the expected increase in complaints and referrals coming our way, mean we will need more of them, including across specialties such as:
 - Customer Contact
 - Admissibility Assessment
 - Triage and Child protection.
 - Including the significant new workloads connected with the new functions of:
 - Processing incidents of concern
 - Conducting statutory reviews of admissibility decisions
 - Increased legal capacity

- Governance
 - Staffing and equipping the new organisation as an independent, vote-holding agency, directly reporting to the Oireachtas
 - Outreach
 - Public information and engagement
 - Public affairs
 - Awareness raising
 - Inter-agency liaison
 - Research and analysis, data analytics, publications - We also require the knowledge, skills and expertise to ensure that the work that our investigators do is marshalled for the improvement of policing in Ireland beyond the case itself. This involves **data analysis, research, trend analysis and public facing reporting of facts, findings and insights, as well as efficient governance and administration**. These are all areas of urgent need for GSOC now, and will be essential for the new Office of the Police Ombudsman which will have a specific statutory remit for research and analysis.
- We acknowledge that the broader needs of the new Office of the Police Ombudsman, and the precise demands on it, will become clearer as it begins to exercise its new remit. Therefore, we envisage the expansion of staffing and resources happening in a phased and iterative way. Our initial focus, in terms of our engagement with the Department and DPER, is to identify the bare essentials necessary for us to stand the new agency up on Day 1. However, we envisage that significant and sustained resourcing of the organisation in the medium-term period that follows will be essential for its success.
 - This is a time of uncertainty but significant opportunity. We have been preparing for transition for nearly two years, and the coming period will see this preparation come into clearer focus as the proposed legislation nears enactment and commencement.

Q: Are you satisfied with the allocation you have received for 2024



- The 2024 funding allocation is in excess of €19m, and it includes a pay allocation which will allow us to further increase our staffing. This sends us in the right direction, however, on commencement and as the new agency beds in, the wider resourcing needs that we have signalled will need to be met in a phased way in the near, medium and long term.

Q: How easy is it to get staff?

- Recruitment and retention of staff are both very challenging, as is the norm across the public service, particularly in the oversight sector.
- Recruiting staff has become more difficult as more organisations adopt regulatory mechanisms and with so many organisations fishing in what is the same pool, it is necessary to cast the net wider and wider.
- GSOC has investigators and caseworkers from all corners of the globe and it is very difficult to recruit suitably qualified and trained personnel locally.

7. Your investigators

When people are hired as investigators by GSOC, what training are they offered once they join? And is there ongoing training?

Many of our investigators come to us with various professional qualifications, skills and experience in investigations. Others begin at a junior grade and are trained via learning and development, continuous professional development, and on-the-job training. GSOC also offers ongoing learning and development opportunities to investigative staff.

Learning and development courses engaged in by investigative staff in the past year, for example, included:

- Investigative Interview Training
- Critical Incident Management
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Mobile Phone Forensics
- Magnet Certified Forensics Examiner
- Professional Certificate in Whistleblowing Law, Practice and Policy
- Injury Photography Training
- Policing & Human Rights Law in Ireland
- Coroner's Court training
- Children First
- Child Protection Awareness Programme
- Criminology and Criminal Justice

Further Continuous Professional Development training (CPD) is also undertaken by staff. This has recently included:

- Digital Investigations
- Firearms Awareness Training
- Training with Dublin Fire Brigade (motor accidents)
- Case preparation, Court room skills and the police complaints process
- Managing Covert Operations
- Domestic Violence and Coercive Control
- Advanced Computer Forensics
- Training with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- Training with The Sexual Assault treatment centre in the Rotunda
- Defence Forces military police photography training

- Defence Forces military police investigations training

Investigations staff also attended various professional conferences. Recent examples would include conferences on internet intelligence, sexual and gender-based violence, and police custody.

Have all of the investigators entered GSOC as investigators?

GSOC investigators have varied backgrounds. Some enter the organisation directly having already had professional experience as investigators. Others join the organisation in another capacity and progress through the organisation into the role of an investigator. To move into such a role internally, staff would be subject to a competitive process in line with civil service norms. External recruitment of investigators is facilitated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS).

What's the difference between being a GSOC "investigator" and a "senior investigator"?

All GSOC investigators are 'designated officers' under the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 and are civil servants.

The titles are aligned to civil service grades, and therefore, refer to seniority and the level of responsibility that sit with that grade in keeping with the broader line management and seniority structures within the civil service.

The grading is as follows:

- An Assistant Investigations officer (AIO) is equivalent to the civil service Executive Officer (EO) grade.
- An Investigations Officer (IO) is equivalent to the civil service Higher Executive Officer (HEO) grade
- Senior Investigations Officer (SIO) is equivalent to the Assistant Principal (AP) grade.

Staff are recruited on permanent contracts.

Typically, what backgrounds are investigators from? For example, what percentage of them are former Garda members? And what percentage are former police officers from any police force (including the Garda)?

The investigators are from varied backgrounds. This includes:

- a small number of former Gardaí
- former police officers from other jurisdictions,
- former defence forces members
- former military personnel from other jurisdictions

- individuals with policing oversight experience in other jurisdictions
- individuals with other non-policing and non-military oversight, investigation and regulatory experience
- career civil servants

What kind of vetting is in place for investigators and who carries that out, and when? Is there any ongoing vetting once investigators join GSOC?

All GSOC staff – whether investigators or not – are subject to strict vetting. This includes standard vetting by the Garda National Vetting Bureau, which would be standard to all civil servants, in addition to security clearance, which is also carried out by An Garda Síochána.

Each year, GSOC requires every member of staff to declare formally if there are any potential conflicts of interest that may affect or influence them in the performance of their official duties. This is done by completing a Declaration of Interests Form.

8. Body cams

Q: What is your view on the proposals to legislate for body cams for Guards?

- We have noted the plans with interest, and are aware that they enjoy broad support including from Garda representative bodies.
- We are open to their introduction. While by no means a silver bullet, they would certainly have value as part of the broader ecosystem of oversight and accountability, and may assist in providing protection to the public and to members.
- Body cams are a useful tool but are not a substitute for institutional commitment to accountability.
- As a policing oversight agency, GSOC and the eventual Office of the Police Ombudsman will, of course, require appropriate resourcing to ensure that we are capable of analysing the materials captured by body cams. Procurement of the cameras should ensure that such considerations are factored in.

9. Recent issue re resignation of a staff member and AGS investigation into the matter

Q: What can you tell us about the controversy of last April which saw the resignation of a staff member?

- This is a matter currently the subject of a Garda investigation we are not in a position to discuss it, beyond what we have already said publicly:
 - When GSOC became aware in April of a potential conflict of interest involving a member of our staff, we immediately removed that member's access to our systems and commenced an initial internal investigation. The staff member in question resigned shortly thereafter.
 - GSOC engaged at a senior level with the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána and continues to do so. We took these steps promptly in response to the disclosure of a potential conflict of interest so as to preserve the integrity of our systems and facilitate proper investigation of all matters relating to this.
 - It is not GSOC's policy to investigate itself and we see independent investigation as integral to proper oversight, due process and fairness.
 - It is of paramount importance to establish whether any concerns of a criminal nature arise. This is a matter for An Garda Síochána in the first instance and GSOC is cooperating with them in their examination of the matter and will cooperate with any investigation that they deem necessary.
 - GSOC is committed to ensuring that any further investigation into this matter that may prove necessary is carried out independently, to ensure that public confidence in the oversight of policing in Ireland is both fostered and maintained.

Q: Are there concerns within GSOC about internal matters being leaked to the press by a member of GSOC staff?

All members of GSOC staff are bound by the Official Secrets Act, 1963. Any member of GSOC staff found disclosing any confidential information will face consequences in line with the Act and any civil service HR regulations that would apply.

10. Cases that may be raised.

General key message re *open* cases:

- We fully appreciate that by their very nature, investigations we carry out are matters of great public interest
- However, members will appreciate that we are not in a position to comment on ongoing investigations in a public forum – we are bound by statute and in the interests of the integrity of the investigative process not to do so.

General key message GSOC investigative reports:

- GSOC regularly is asked when it will issue its ‘findings’ or ‘reports’ on its investigations. It is important to note that GSOC’s investigative reports are not intended for publication. They are statutory reports with very specific functions.
- They are intended for review by the Ombudsman Commission, and in the event that the report is referred onwards, for decision by the DPP.
- This is just the same as where a case is investigated by An Garda Síochána. They, equally, do not publish their investigative files.
- GSOC does, however, have an obligation to keep all interested parties informed, and does so.
- GSOC also has the power to publish information on completed cases, and does so regularly via Annual Report case studies, and case overview documents published on its website.
- Since our tenure in GSOC, we identified this as a significant gap in GSOC’s work, requiring both action and resourcing, in order to better account publicly for our work, and to inform the public about our role and remit. This gap was also identified in our recently-completed organisational review and business case to DPER. We intend to make the proactive publication of information about our investigative work and its outcomes a central function of the new Office of the Police Ombudsman.

The death of George Nkencho

- This investigation arose out of a referral to GSOC under s102 of the 2005 Act.
- GSOC Completed its investigation into this incident in June 2023, forwarding a file to the DPP. A decision by the DPP is awaited.

- GSOC made a detailed statement on the matter in June 2023. While it could not get into any substantive detail, it gave some insight into the steps GSOC took in conducting the investigation.
- The investigation included the review of documentation, the taking of statements, and the securing of exhibits. The investigation also involved complex coordination with other experts and agencies in the fields of medicine, audio-visual technology, digital and physical forensics, ballistics, tactical firearms, operational policing and legal review. We do not propose to go into further detail in this forum but our statement is available on our website
- GSOC has also made a clear undertaking to make the substantive detail of the investigation publicly available as soon as statutory processes permit us to do so.
- We understand how difficult this is for the Nkencho family, and we are very grateful to them for their engagement with us at *what continues to be a very difficult time for them*.

When will the DPP make a decision on the Nkencho file?

- That is entirely a matter for the DPP. GSOC has no role whatsoever in the decision-making process, or the timing of it.

The N7 Investigation

What is the latest update in the N7 case?

- This case was investigated by GSOC on foot of a referral made to us by AGS further to s102 of the Act. Per its statutory function, GSOC completed its investigation and sent a file to the DPP.
- The DPP made a direction for prosecution in this matter, and the charges are a matter of public record. (3 Counts Dangerous Driving; 1 Count Endangerment)
- GSOC is not in a position to comment further on this case as the matter is before the courts.

Do you think it is appropriate that a Garda can be prosecuted for doing his duty?

- GSOC has a clear role, set out in legislation, to independently investigate incidents referred to it by An Garda Síochána where death or serious injury occurred. This is precisely what GSOC did in this case.

- If the GSOC investigation finds that a Garda *may have* committed a crime, then GSOC is obliged to send the investigative file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is precisely what GSOC did in this case.
- The decision as whether or not to prefer charges and prosecute individual Gardaí on foot of a GSOC investigation is entirely a matter for the DPP.
- The preparation of summonses, and the formal elaboration of the details of charges being prepared are also entirely a matter for the DPP.
- GSOC is strictly bound by its statutory role and functions, and carries out these functions independently, and without fear or favour. GSOC is not in a position to comment further.

Templemore

- In September 2023, GSOC completed its investigation into the handling of EU funds in the Garda College in Templemore. A file was forwarded to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and a direction from that office is awaited.
- The matter was referred to GSOC by then Garda Commissioner Nóirín O’Sullivan in June 2017 following the identification of financial irregularities during an internal Garda Audit, and their subsequent discussion during hearings of the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee.
- Relying on its statutory power under Section 102(4) of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 to commence investigations in the public interest, GSOC accordingly opened a criminal investigation into the matter, pursuant to Section 98 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005.

Why did it take so long for you to complete this investigation?

- This was a unique and unusual case. It was highly specialist in nature, as well as being intertwined with investigations and other process in other jurisdictions.
- On the subject matter of the case, GSOC was obliged to create a multi-disciplinary team of specialists, including Garda officers with experience with the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the National Economic Crime Bureau; accountants with specialisms in fraud investigation, as well as specialist legal expertise.
- On the inter-jurisdictional nature of the case, its GSOC was obliged to have regard to, and await the completion of, the separate investigation into the matter by the European Union Anti-Fraud Office, known as OLAF
- The subsequent securing of essential evidence, required further engagement with both the EU and Belgian authorities. Such engagement is, by its nature, a protracted process. (including entering into cross-jurisdictional assistance and information sharing arrangements.)

- In addition, this case is one of hundreds on GSOC's caseload.

The Shane O'Farrell case:

Q: What can you tell us about the O'Farrell case and are you going to publish a report of your investigation?

- GSOC completed its criminal investigation into this case in 2018, and published a report in May of that year.
- GSOC regularly is asked when it will issue its 'findings' or 'reports' on its investigations. It is important to note that GSOC's *investigative* reports are not intended for publication. They are confidential statutory reports with very specific functions. They are analogous to investigative files produced by other agencies, including An Garda Síochána. They attract legal professional privilege and cannot be made available.
- However, GSOC has a statutory duty to provide updates on the progress of the investigation to certain interested parties listed in the legislation, including the Garda Commissioner, the Minister for Justice and Equality, and the Policing Authority.
- GSOC investigators met with the O'Farrell family and kept them informed throughout the progress of GSOC's investigation.
- In May 2018 GSOC prepared a report on the conduct of its investigation, sharing this with the O'Farrell family as well as publishing it on the GSOC website. The report, issued under section 103 of the Act, outlines in detail the criminal investigation carried out by GSOC, including the steps taken, and a breakdown of the allegations and findings we made. It is available on the GSOC website.
- There have been calls for the publication of further information on this case.. GSOC has reviewed the report it published in May 2018 in detail, and we are satisfied that every detail that is appropriate to publish, or to share with the O'Farrell family, has been shared.
- We note that the broader case was also the subject of a review by Judge Haughton, whose work has recently concluded. Haughton made 114 requests for information from GSOC in the course of his inquiries. GSOC responded in full to these requests. It is our understanding, per the Minister's statements in the Oireachtas in July of last year, that Judge Haughton concluded that there are no circumstances surrounding the death of Mr O'Farrell which warrant further investigation or inquiry beyond those already carried out.
- We appreciate that this is of little comfort to the O'Farrell family, who will continue to feel the loss of Shane regardless of the outcomes of statutory investigations or reviews.

Did GSOC identify, or does it have a view on, broader failures in the system arising from this case? Sentencing policy?

- GSOC's role to examine the conduct of members of the Garda Síochána. It has no role in other matters, such as prosecution, sentencing or internal Garda disciplinary actions.

The attempted break-in in September 2023

- Early on the morning of Thursday 7 September 2023, there was an attempted break-in at GSOC's Dublin Headquarters in Abbey Street.
- GSOC has 24-hour security on-site, who came on the scene immediately and alerted An Garda Síochána.
- The building was closed for a short time that morning in order to facilitate An Garda Síochána in their assessment of the scene.
- The incident resulted in some superficial damage to an entryway in the reception area, which has now been repaired. No working areas of building were accessed or affected, and there was no impact on GSOC operations.
- The matter is with AGS

11. Recent criticism from GRA/AGSI (Riots, CBD1 etc)

AGSI and other Garda bodies have been very critical of GSOC recently. How do you respond?

- Garda representative bodies have a role, and that is to vouch for their members. That is as it should be.
- GSOC's role, however, is to fulfil its statutory functions without fear or favour, and this is what GSOC does, with pride.
- GSOC has a very important role – independent oversight of policing in Ireland. It places it at a point of tension between competing interests and perspectives. Everyone has their role to play in this, and we have ours.
- Inevitably this leads to criticism of GSOC. This is unavoidable in the context of the work we do.
- The existence of these tensions and competing interests, as well as the commentary and speculation that comes with them, is natural in a democratic society. It is why GSOC exists. Our recent focus, in the context of the reform process, is to encourage the state to better acknowledge this natural tension, and to better equip Ireland's policing oversight infrastructure to navigate it better, to ensure better accountability in policing.

In the aftermath of the recent Dublin Riots, and in the context of recent cases involving the actions of Garda members in vehicles, there have been claims that the fear of GSOC investigation makes it impossible for AGS to do their jobs. What is your view.

- As we have said before, GSOC operates under legislation passed by the Oireachtas, and will soon operate under new modernised legislation. Everything GSOC does in line with law and policy debated and enacted by the Oireachtas. GSOC as an agency, and as a staff of dedicated civil servants, carries out the statutory functions provided for in legislation. It does so with pride, with commitment, and without fear or favour.
- [REDACTED]
- The nature of our role – independently investigating Gardaí, who hold significant power over the lives and freedoms of the public – contains a natural tension. It attracts criticism and pushback. This is natural, and is healthy in a democratic society. Were there no such tension, we would not be doing our jobs well.
- However, we must strongly object to the commentary we have seen in recent weeks and months that the independent oversight of policing by GSOC may have a role in hindering An Garda Síochána's ability to do its work – be that in the context of public order incidents, road

traffic or any other matter. This is categorically not the case. Such commentary is without foundation.

- To suggest that one must choose between robust oversight or effective policing is a false choice. It is a disingenuous choice.
- Independent oversight and accountability are not a hinderance to modern policing. On the contrary, modern policing cannot function without it. Accountability lies at the heart of public confidence in policing.
- The reality is that we must have – we must insist – on both. And it is clear from our discussions today, and the huge project of policing reform currently in progress, that we are working hard to improve both policing, and policing accountability.
- As for the matters that have hit the news recently, whether in the realms of public order policing, driving qualifications and standard operating procedures for deployment of Garda vehicles, we would simply say that these are operational matters that are entirely the responsibility of An Garda Síochána and its management. So too are disciplinary matters. GSOC does not discipline Garda members. GSOC does not suspend Garda members. GSOC does not prosecute Garda members. GSOC does not have, nor does it seek, any role in such matters.
- If there are problems of training, equipment, policy or procedure, it is for An Garda Síochána to address.
- We, in the meantime, will stick to our role, which is to independently investigate complaints and referrals made to us, and to do so without fear or favour. As always, we will conduct our investigations in light of the law of the land, the applicable disciplinary regulations, as well as the fundamental principles that underpin human-right-compliant policing, most importantly, the principles of proportionality and necessity in the exercise of policing powers.
- We trust that, notwithstanding recent commentary, An Garda Síochána is committed to the principle of independent police accountability and oversight.

Did you have a row with AGSI recently?

- On foot of a request from AGSI, GSOC meet with AGSI representatives in May
- We discussed matters of mutual interest.
- As outlined above, our respective roles mean that such discussions can be robust. This is natural.
- We won't be commenting on the content of our discussions.

12. GSOC and Data

Q: How good are GSOC's systems for the capture and disaggregation of data?

- Poor collection, disaggregation, analysis and retention of data by state institutions has been a recurring theme in recommendations made to Ireland by United Nations Treaty Monitoring Bodies.
- GSOC, in keeping with much of the public service, has issues with good data capture.
- We acknowledge the need for better data and better publication of same.
- The coming period of transition will include efforts to ensure that good data analysis is placed at the heart of our work, allowing us to better understand systemic issues, identify trends and patterns and approach our work in a more targeted, thematic and strategic way. It will also permit us to provide better systemic recommendations to Garda Management for the improvement of policies and practices.
- A flagship project of GSOC's transition to the Office of the Police Ombudsman, and already underway, is the design and building of a new all-purpose Case management System that will facilitate this work.

s97 Reports (2023)	
Total sent	48
Breach recommended by GSOC	30
No breach recommended by GSOC	18
AGS decisions received	27
AGS decisions outstanding	21
Sanctions/Breach by AGS	7
No breach by AGS	18
Discontinued	2
Total s97 Reports awaiting Decision	
AGS decisions outstanding	27
Breach recommended by GSOC	24
No breach recommended by GSOC	3
BOI	
On hand	14

102 Referrals Death & Serious Harm	
Total	36
Death	18
Serious Harm	18

102 (4) Public Interest	
2021	13
2022	17
2023	25

Files sent to DPP		
	2022	2023
No. of files sent	27	40
Directions Received	26	36 - 4 files from 2022, 32 in 2023
Directions Outstanding	1	8
Prosecution Directed	10	11
No Prosecution Directed	16	25 (21 for 2023)
Directions outstanding TOTAL	8	10 (1 file from 2024)

Court Appearances 2023	
Total Court Appearances	114
Total Cases	34
Total AGS Members	39
For mention (incl. setting hearing date)	66
Hearing	26
Summons Application	11
DAR	6
Sentencing	2
Pre-trial application	2
Plea	1
Concluded Court cases (2022)	7
Outcomes of concluded cases (2022)	5 dismissals, 1 struck out, 1 proven without proceeding to conviction, s1 (1) (ii) of Probation Act
Concluded Court cases (2023)	7
Outcomes of concluded cases (2023)	4 dismissals, 1 struck out, 1 found that force was reasonable, 1 charitable donation
Cases on hand for 2024	23

40 Files sent to the DPP in 2023 which identified the following alleged offences -

Section 3 Assaults, section 2 assaults, Road traffic offences, theft and fraud offences,
 Section 10 harassment, Attempting to pervert the course of justice,
 Section 110 providing false or misleading information, Misconduct in public office,
 Rape, Sexual Assault, Criminal Damage, Conspiracy, Breach of the peace, Misuse of Drugs
 Cruelty to children, Withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable people
 Corruption, Gross Negligence Manslaughter

SUMMARY

Assault
 Road Traffic Offences
 Sexual Offences including Rape
 Conspiracy, Corruption
 Misuse of Drugs
 Misconduct in Public Office
 Harassment

Cases over 2 years							
TOTALS:	2y-3y	3y-4y	4y-5y	5y-6y	6y-8y	Total	%
GSOC	39	19	6	4	5	73	58%
Coroner	1	0	2	0	0	3	2%
Court	7	2	5	1	1	16	13%
DPP	1	1	2	0	1	5	4%
AGS	9	9	6	4	1	29	23%
	6.61%	3.22%	1.02%	0.68%	0.85%	126	
	87%	94%				5 unable to close	

Total cases on hand	590
over two years	126
% of total cases	21%
% over 2 years with GSOC	12%

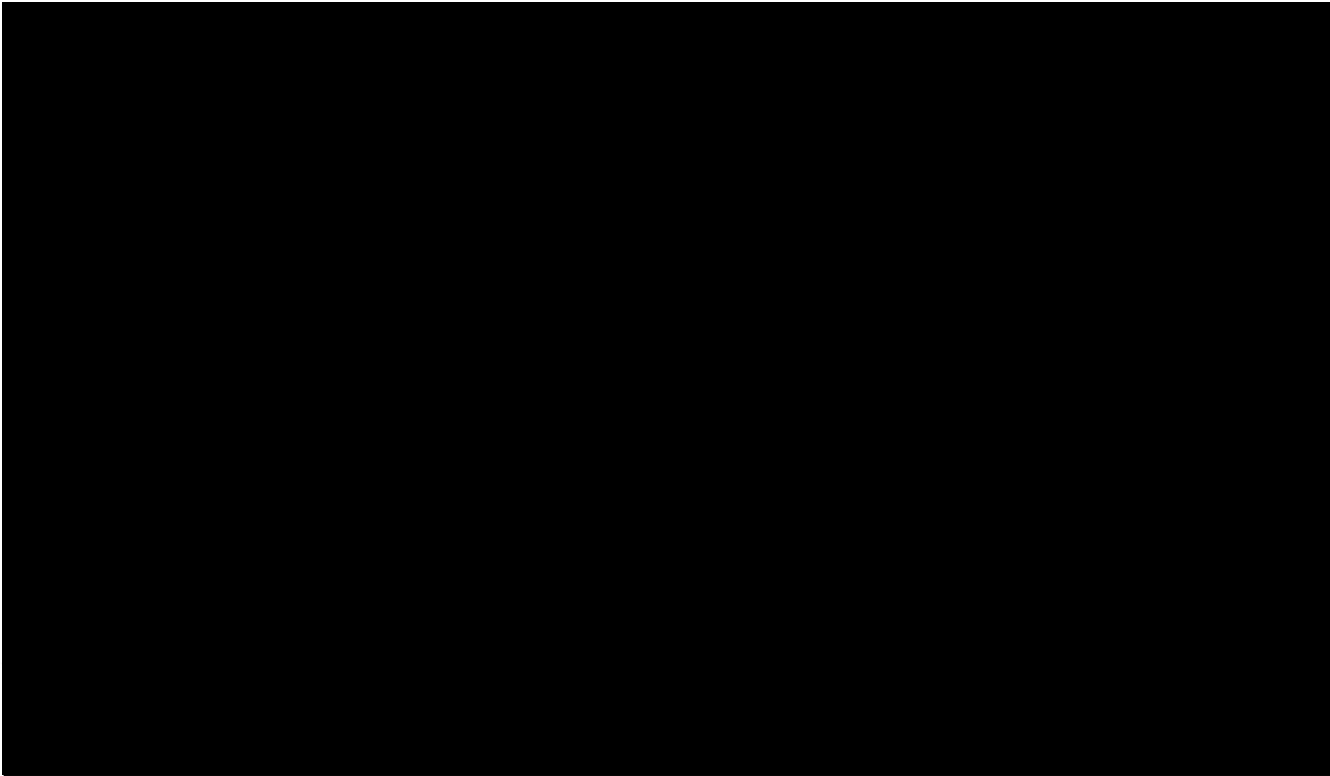
Coroners Inquests	
2023 Appearances	11
GSOC Lead 2023	33
AGS Lead 2023	22

Median closure time			
	2021	2022	2023
s98	311	366	
s 94 (1)	199	250	
s 94 (5)	288	336	
s 95	254	320	

Casework Stats	
	Jan-24
94 (1)	281
L.I.	162
Queries / Screeners	462

Investigation Numbers				
	Jan-24	Jan-23	Jan-22	Jan-21
98	287	403	547	565
95	106	124	191	175
94(5)	53	67	83	98
106	4	2	4	3
94(10)	10		1	9
97	50	49	61	51
101	51	53	111	128
93	18	18	123	36
91	11	11	17	7
Total	590	740	1138	1072

Prioritisation, Process Improvement, Delegated authority, Devolved decision making,
 Development of in-house specialist services - Digital forensics, specialist interviewers
 Small increase in Investigators (now 29 excluding PDU), 9 X AIOs



Significant Changes to Operations from introduction of new bill
Review of inadmissibility decisions
Review of discontinuance on Investigation
Incidents of Concern - notifiable misconduct and criminal offences
All complaints to OPO - return subset of complaints suitable for AGS resolution
Research, Trends and Analysis
Removal of Section 91 examination phase by AGS

	2021[1]	2022[2]	2023 (indicative)[3]
Complaints received	2189 (3760 allegations)	1826 (3207 allegations)	1577 (3244 allegations)
Increase/Decrease on previous year	↑234 (12%)	↓363 (17%)	↓249 (14%) BUT: allegations ↑+1%
Admissible	1332 (61%)	904 (49.5%)	962 (61%)
Inadmissible	855 (39%)	918 (50.2%)	608 (38.5%)
not assessed for admissibility/withdrawn	2	4	7

	2021[1]	2022[2]	2023 (indicative)[3]
Complaints Closed	2078 (3878 allegations)	2301 (4484 allegations)	1755 (4156 allegations)
Increase/Decrease on previous year	↑21%	↑11%	↓ 24% BUT: allegations only ↓ 7%
Of which deemed admissible and investigated	1279 (2909 allegations)	1376 (3465 allegations)	1135 (3394 allegations)

PAC Profiles of members February 2024

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Committee of Public Accounts Members

Updated list of the Current standing committee:

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/33/committee-of-public-accounts/membership/>

- Brian Stanley, SF
- Catherine Murphy, SD
- John Brady, SF
- Colm Burke, FG
- Cormac Devlin, FF
- Alan Dillon, FG
- Alan Kelly, Labour
- Paul McAuliff, FF
- Imelda Munster, SF
- Verona Murphy, Ind
- James O'Connor, FF
- Marc Ó Cathasaigh, Greens

Colm Burke



Party: Fine Gael / **Constituency:** Cork North-Central

Abstract of profile from Fine Gael website:

Colm Burke is the Fine Gael spokesperson for Health. He was elected as a TD for Cork North Central in 2020. He was previously a Senator (2011-2020) and was elected on the Industrial and Commercial Panel.

Colm was a member of the European Parliament for the Ireland South constituency between 2007 and 2009.

He was a member of Cork City Council from 1995-2007 and was Lord Mayor of Cork in 2003-2004.

Colm is a native of Dripsey in Mid Cork, educated in De La Salle College Macroom and University College Cork, qualifying as a solicitor in 1982.

He has been involved in many community organisations, including Foroige and Macra na Feirme, served as Chairman of Blackpool Community Centre and Blackpool/Glen/Farranree Training Centre. He has also served as a Director of the Port of Cork, Cork Urban Enterprises Ltd, the National Sculpture Factory and Cork City Urban Ltd. He was a member of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael (1978-1982), serving as National Chairperson (1980-1981). He also served on the Fine Gael National Executive (1981-1982).

Colm was involved in the publishing of two private members bills; the Civil Law (Missing Persons) Bill 2013 and the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2012. The Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2014 has since been published by the Minister for Health.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Corporation Tax Losses
Post-European Council Meeting: Statements
Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Bill 2022: Committee Stage

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Recruitment issues and cost savings in the Health Service
 Geographical distribution of the National Roads Programme
 Amount of income tax

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Taxation, Energy Conservation, Transport Infrastructure.

Cormac Devlin



Party: Fianna Fáil / **Constituency:** Dún Laoghaire

Abstract of profile from Fianna Fáil website:

Cormac was elected to Dáil Éireann in 2020 to represent Dún Laoghaire. In December 2020, he was appointed by An Taoiseach as Fianna Fáil Spokesperson on Dublin and in January 2023 he was appointed Fianna Fáil Chief Whip and Deputy Government Whip.

He previously served on Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, where he was elected to represent the Dún Laoghaire until 2019. He served as Cathaoirleach of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2016-2017.

Cormac is the Chairperson of the Oireachtas All-Party Committee on Diabetes and he is a member of the Public Accounts Committee, the Climate Action Committee, and the Public Petitions Committee.

Representing a county with a long maritime tradition, Cormac is passionate about protecting the environment, particularly the Dublin Bay biosphere, supporting the development of public transport, increasing the supply of housing and promoting an enterprise culture.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Funding and Financial Reporting
 Corporate Tax Losses
 United Kingdom Import Controls: Statements

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Income Taxation
War in Ukraine
Transport Infrastructure

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Children's welfare, transport infrastructure, taxation.

Alan Dillon



Party: Fine Gael / Constituency: Mayo

Abstract of profile from Fine Gael website:

Alan Dillon is the Chairperson of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party and Fine Gael Spokesperson on Tourism and Sport. Proud to call Castlebar home, Alan is married to Ashling, a successful business owner in the town. Alan wants to represent the people of Mayo with hard work and with absolute integrity. His vision for Mayo is of a modern, dynamic and vibrant place to live and work. One that has a tremendous sense of pride of place and a capacity to work together to overcome obstacles and maximise their assets. He is determined to ensure that Mayo's future is better than its past.

Alan holds a Bachelor's degree (B.Sc.) in Applied Mathematics and Biology from Maynooth University, a Master's degree (M.Sc.) in Pharmaceutical Science from the RCSI and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from NUIG. A life-long learner, Alan has a post-graduate certificate in professional leadership. A self-employed company Director, Alan has worked with many leading multi-nationals in the life sciences sector specializing in Pharma, Bio-Pharma and Medtech. He provides validation consulting and engineering managed services for large capital projects and supports clients on quality and regulatory compliance issues. Alan is a keen sportsman, a two times GAA All-Star, he dedicated himself to Mayo GAA as a player and former captain for over 18 years

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Services funding and financial reporting
Community development

Rural Schemes

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Transport infrastructure
Rural development funding
Taxation

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Community Development Projects, Forestry Sector, IDA Regional Building Programme, Tax Evasion and White Collar Crime, Broadband connectivity in rural areas.

Paul McAuliffe



Party: Fianna Fáil / **Constituency:** Dublin North-West

Abstract of profile from Fianna Fáil website:

Before becoming involved in politics, Paul was involved in youth and community work in his home area of Finglas. He was mainly involved in the Finglas No-Name Club, dealing with young people in the area and giving them skills to develop as young adults. He is committed to youth development work and recognises it as an important tool to empower young people. It was his desire to improve his community which encouraged him to run for the local Council. He served on Dublin City Council for ten years, including as the 350th Lord Mayor in 2019. In February 2020 he was elected to the 33rd sitting of Dáil Éireann where he represents Dublin North West. He was elected as Vice Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage and serves on the Public Accounts Committee, a standing committee of Dáil Éireann which focuses on ensuring public services are run efficiently and achieve value for money.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Funding and Financial Reporting
Corporation Tax Losses
Housing Provision

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Transport Infrastructure
Energy Policy
Housing Provision

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Electricity cost emergency benefit scheme, Social Welfare Eligibility, An Garda Síochána, Transport, Disability Services.

Imelda Munster



Party: Sinn Féin / Constituency: Louth

Abstract of profile from Sinn Féin website:

Imelda Munster is the Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Tourism, Sport and Media.

Imelda Munster is married to Niall and is the mother of two daughters and lives in Melifont Park, Drogheda. Imelda was elected to Louth County Council representing the Drogheda East area in 2004 and was re-elected in 2009 to both Drogheda Borough Council and Louth County Council.

At this stage Imelda left her job to become a full-time public representative and in May 2014 Imelda topped the poll in Co Louth with 2,317 and was the longest serving female councillor on the Council.

Imelda is the first ever woman elected to the Dáil to represent the Louth Constituency.

She successfully contested the Louth constituency at 2016 general election, receiving 8,829 first preference votes and was re-elected at the 2020 general election receiving 17,203 first preference votes topping the poll, the highest ever vote recorded by any candidate ever in the Louth Constituency.

A member of Sinn Féin for over 30 years, Imelda is a committed and tireless worker for the people of Louth/East Meath and has a reputation for sticking with an issue until it is completed to her satisfaction. Diligent in her decision-making, working hard to ensure all matters are taken into consideration and offering sensible and viable alternatives to the governments lame duck policies.

A passionate advocate for social justice and equality, campaigning against government cuts to local services and unfair home taxes, believing that Sinn Féin's economic and social policies of 'putting people first' is the solution for many families in Louth who are struggling because of the government policies of austerity and cutbacks.

Imelda is a member of The Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Committee and the Public Accounts Committee.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Online Safety and Online Disinformation
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Television licence fee
Broadcasting sector
Child and Family Agency

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Hospital facilities, media sector, social welfare eligibility, tourism funding.

Catherine Murphy, Vice-Chair



Party: Social Democrats / **Constituency:** Kildare North

Abstract of profile from website of the Social Democrats:

Catherine Murphy is a co-founder of the Social Democrats and a TD for Kildare North.

Catherine entered politics over 30 years ago as a town councillor for her local area, following years of community activism on a range of issues. She was first elected to Dáil Éireann in 2005 following a by-election in Kildare North.

Catherine is vocal on a wide range of issues, including institutional reform, climate change, planning sustainable communities, affordable housing and fighting for those most vulnerable in our society.

Tenacious, passionate, and always ready to stand up for what she believes in, Catherine has, and continues to be, a strong advocate for more accountability in politics and public life.

I believe in an Ireland where high quality public services, strong communities and a thriving economy combine to create a fairer society.

Catherine's Priorities:

- Ensure solid governance and the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Agency.
- Champion honest politics.
- Invest in public services that serve the public.
- Achieve a fair distribution of resources and services.
- Ensure sustainable and proper planning.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Corporation tax losses
Social insurance fund review

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

School building projects and enrolments
Special education needs
Primary care centres

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Education, Social welfare, defence forces, transport infrastructure.

Verona Murphy



Party: Independent / **Constituency:** Wexford

Abstract of profile from South East Radio:

Verona Murphy is an Independent TD in Dáil Éireann and past President of the Irish Road Haulage Association. Verona left school at 16 and moved to the UK to work before returning to Ireland at the age of 18. Verona started out her professional career obtaining a CPC in International and National Transport Management and on graduating at 21 years of age, she became a sole trader in the haulage sector.

She was awarded a BA in Law from I.T. Carlow in 2010 and in the same year, Verona joined the transport member representative body, the Irish Road Haulage Association, where she served three terms as President of the National Association. Verona has been recognised as the leading woman in the transport sector. Her advocacy in this area made the IRHA a household name. In 2018, she was appointed a diversity ambassador by the EU Transport Commissioner.

A passionate advocate for the future prosperity of Wexford, Verona entered the world of politics in 2020 when she was elected an Independent TD for Wexford. Verona believes it is essential to have a straight talker to effect policy.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Reproductive health related leave
School facilities

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Forestry Sector
School Transport
Agriculture Schemes

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Planning issues, Housing, Forestry Sector, Transport, Special Education needs.

[James O'Connor](#)



Party: Fianna Fáil / **Constituency:** Cork East

Abstract of profile from Fianna Fáil website:

James was first elected to Cork County Council for the Midleton (East Cork) Municipal District in the 2019 Local Elections. He went on to get elected to become one of the youngest TDs ever elected to Dáil Éireann in 2020. James comes from a farming background in East Cork. He is passionate about investment in education, transport, and health. In his role as Transport Spokesperson James wants to ensure that rural communities are not left behind. He wanted to make sure that they have the necessary infrastructure in place to live productive and happy lives. James enjoys hearing from community groups and understanding how we can work together to make Cork East one of the best places in the country to live, work and grow up in.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Social insurance fund review
Enterprise, trade and employment

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Transport policy
Insurance industry
Tax credits

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Transport policy, Asylum applications, School accommodation.

Brian Stanley, Chair



Party: Sinn Féin / **Constituency:** Laois-Offaly

Abstract of Profile from Sinn Féin website:

Brian Stanley - Chairperson of the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee

Brian Stanley is the Sinn Féin TD for Laois/Offaly and Chairperson of the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee.

As a public representative, he is active on many issues including job creation, planning, roads/infrastructure, housing, education, sport and recreational facilities and the environment.

Brian has been involved in various campaigns on a wide range of social, economic, environmental and national issues. He maintains direct involvement in the ongoing campaign for Irish independence and all-Ireland integration.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
Corporation tax losses
Housing and homeless prevention

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Transport
Waste management
Healthcare

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

Subjects (based on headings added by the Dáil record): Taxation, Water services, education, social welfare eligibility.

[Alan Kelly](#)



Party: Labour Party / **Constituency:** Tipperary

Abstract of Profile from his website:

Alan is from the small village of Portroe, by Lough Derg in County Tipperary.

He gained an MBS in eCommerce in UCD and went on to become eBusiness manager in Failte Ireland.

In July 2007 he was elected on the first count on the Agriculture Panel to Seanad Eireann In September that year he was appointed Party Spokesperson on Tourism and Seanad Spokesperson on Finance and Local Government In July 2008 he was selected to contest the European Elections for Munster/Ireland South

In 2009 He was elected to the European Parliament for Ireland

February 2011 he was elected to the 31st Dail. The same year he was appointed Minister of State for Public & Commuter Transport - Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport

4 July 2014 he was elected Deputy Leader of the Labour Party

11 July 2014 he was elected Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government

26 February 2016 he was elected to the 32nd Dail.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Policing – garda recruitment
Horse and greyhound racing fund regulations
Renewable energy generation

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Energy Conservation
Public Transport
Tourism

Asks most questions about (Source - KildareStreet.com)

An Garda Síochána (number of vetting applications processed, number of vehicles reported stolen in Tipperary, number of CBD Level 3 training courses, proper seizure holding capacity.)
Healthcare
Mental Health Services

John Brady



Party: Sinn Féin / Constituency: Wicklow

Abstract of Profile from party website:

John Brady is the Sinn Féin spokesperson for Youth and Integration

A native of Bray, John is married to Gayle, and they have five children.

John was a member of Wicklow County Council from 2011 to 2016 before he was elected TD for Wicklow in 2016.

John is regarded as one of the key performers on the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, where he was responsible for several important initiatives, including the publication of a Joint Committee report into Demolitions and Displacements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

John secured international recognition in 2021 when he successfully introduced a motion to the Dáil recognising that de facto annexation had and was continuing to take place in the occupied Palestinian territories.

A strong opposition voice for Wicklow, he is working hard to end the neglect of the county and pushing for key infrastructural projects, including an upgrade of the rail line between Bray and Arklow and essential N81 improvement works.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
International Court of Justice and Genocide in Gaza
Services for those seeking protection in Ireland: statements

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Passport Services
Financial Services
International Protection

Asks most questions about (Source -KildareStreet.com)~

International Protection
Health Services
Schools Building Project

Marc Ó Cathasaigh



Party: Greens / Constituency: Waterford

Abstract of Profile from party website:

I am originally from Butlerstown but now live in Tramore, Co Waterford with my wife and three young boys. I was honoured to be elected to Waterford Council in the Local Elections 2019 representing Tramore and Waterford City East. I was then elected to the 33rd Dáil in the 2020 General Election where I am honoured to represent the people of Waterford City and County in Dáil Éireann. I am currently the Green Party Spokesperson on Social Protection. Having graduated from UCC with an MA in English, I studied Primary Teaching in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino, and taught in Glór na Mara National School up to the General Election of 2020. I am a two-time Ironman, a member of Waterford Triathlon Club and Chairperson of Waterford Cycling Campaign.

My priorities

To demand that key services are made available in Waterford, from 24/7 Cardiac Care to Mental Health Services in University Hospital, Waterford, to securing University status for WIT.

To deliver transformative change in how we address the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, with increased investment in active and public transport coupled with changes in how we use our land, produce our energy and heat our homes.

To bring life back to the heart of our urban communities, making our town centres and villages places to do business, but also to live, socialise and raise a family. To maintain the fabric of our rural communities by delivering sustainable jobs in the new Green Economy.

To plan properly for Waterford's future and that of all our people, allowing our city and county to grow sustainably, and to make that growth benefit all our citizens, and not just the wealthy few.

Recent Contributions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting

Research and Innovation Bill

General Scheme of the Social Welfare (Pay-Related Social Insurance and Jobseeker's Pay-Related Benefit Provisions) Bill 2024: Department of Social Protection

Recent Questions (Source - Oireachtas website)

Transport policy

Road safety

Further and higher education

Asks most questions about (Source -KildareStreet.com)

Transport policy, education, tourism, water services.