



Mr. Bob Collins  
Chairman  
Policing Authority  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 90 North King Street  
Dublin 7  
D07 N7CV

April 2020

Dear Chairman

I want to express my thanks to the staff and members of the Policing Authority for your engagement in relation to the drafting of the Health Act 1947 (Section 31 – Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) Regulations 2020, made on 8 April in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and for the work to date in relation to oversight of these extraordinary powers.

In particular, I am aware of your continuing constructive engagement with the Garda Commissioner on this matter and I am grateful for the updates the Executive is providing.

I have been glad to note the consistent message from Garda management about the need for a balanced approach to policing this public health crisis with enforcement as the last resort and with a focus on engagement, education and encouragement in the context of the dangers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach aligns well with the public health message and has contributed to the positive response from the public. I acknowledge the important work of members of An Garda Síochána in playing their part in keeping the community safe as this exceptionally difficult time.

However, in view of the nature of these temporary powers, I also attach great importance to the role that effective independent oversight can play in reassuring the public and maintaining confidence in these challenging times. Through your work, and that of the Inspectorate and GSOC, as well as IHREC, the State is well-served with robust oversight of policing and human rights. I am aware that you intend to engage publicly with the Commissioner at the end of April and I believe that meeting will provide an opportunity to take stock of the situation in a transparent manner.

In the meantime, in view of the current timescale for the Regulations, I would appreciate if the Authority could provide me with an interim report by the evening of 20 April on its activities and its assessment of the application of the new Regulations by An Garda



Síochána since they came into force. You may consider it appropriate to seek views of the other relevant bodies, as well as the views of NGOs, including the Irish Council for Civil Liberties. Your report might, to the extent possible within the short timescale, reflect on the consistency of application of the new powers and any particular impact on vulnerable groups.

I want to reiterate my appreciation of the work of the Authority and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

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Charlie Flanagan, TD  
Minister for Justice and Equality