

GARDA SÍOCHÁNA OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION
PRESS RELEASE

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GSOC publishes Annual Report for 2013

GSOC has published its Annual Report for 2013 on its website today, 3 July 2014.

The following are the main subjects covered in the Annual Report:

Notable events in 2013

- The agreement of revised Protocols with the Garda Síochána covering, among other matters, the exchange of information – which is critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of GSOC investigations. (The revised Protocols are available on the GSOC website [here](#))
- Submission in May 2013 to the Minister for Justice and Equality, and the subsequent publication by the Minister, of a Special Report by the Garda Ombudsman. The report arose from issues identified during a long-running Public Interest Investigation. The recommendations made in the Special Report are set out on pages 26 – 29 of the Annual Report. (Full report is available on the GSOC website [here](#))
- The Ombudsman Commission’s appearance in July 2013, for the first time, before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions. This was to discuss our Annual Report 2012, the Special Report mentioned above and certain day-to-day operational issues. (A transcript of the appearance is available on the Oireachtas website [here](#))

Key statistics from 2013

- In 2013, GSOC received 2,027 complaints from members of the public (2,089 in 2012). The number of allegations of misconduct by gardaí made in these complaints was 5,299 (several different allegations may be included in a single complaint).
- The four most common types of allegation related to abuse of authority (34%); neglect of duty (27%); non-fatal offences (13%); and discourtesy (11%).
- The Garda Commissioner referred 41 incidents to GSOC for independent investigation, down from 72 in 2012.
- GSOC opened three investigations in the public interest.
- Statistics for 2013 in relation to context and location described in complaints, as well as division, rank and sex of garda members complained of, are available in the Annual Report.

Moves towards greater effectiveness in the future

- Dealing with less serious matters more efficiently: In May 2012, GSOC had submitted proposals to the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to changes to the Act that we believed were necessary to improve GSOC's ability to deliver effectively on its remit. In 2013, we engaged in discussions with the Garda Síochána to seek to introduce new ways of dealing with some less serious matters, largely of a quality-of-service nature. (Those discussions had not, at end 2013, resulted in any changes.)
- Informing police practice: GSOC believes that the ability to pass on to the Garda Síochána recommendations, as a result of potential systemic issues highlighted during investigations, is a valuable element of oversight, as it may contribute to long term improvement of service and reduction in complaints. In this context, the feedback is not specific to individual members but to the Garda Síochána as an organisation. Throughout 2013, GSOC sought to identify opportunities to provide the Garda Síochána with such feedback, to inform policing practice constructively. The recommendations are outlined in the Annual Report from page 23.

Public attitudes

An independent survey of public attitudes to GSOC was commissioned. The main findings for 2013 were:

- 69% of people perceive GSOC to be an independent body: an increase of 3%.
- 47% agree that GSOC goes about its work in an efficient manner. While this figure is down on the 2011 results by 3%, 40% of respondents stated they had no opinion; the net result is that 13% feel that GSOC is not efficient – this figure is unchanged since the last survey in 2011.
- 61% perceive GSOC as being effective in making Gardaí more accountable for their actions. This figure is down 11%. The Commission knew that bringing some of the problems we have had in doing our job effectively to public attention over the last year, in particular in last year's Annual Report, would have a detrimental effect on people's perceptions in this regard. But we hope that ultimately it will improve GSOC's effectiveness, and that public perception will again improve.
- 53% agree that GSOC deals with complaints in an impartial manner and 61% express confidence in the fairness of GSOC.

GSOC is committed to a continuous focus on our mission, vision, values and objectives. We believe that our independent role is a key element in police accountability. 2013 was a year of very frank exchanges with various interested parties. We hope that those exchanges have borne fruit in new awareness and that the public and gardaí will be the beneficiaries in the future.

ENDS

For further detail or explanation, contact:

Lorna Lee

Head of Communications

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission