

# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS** **2021**



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# In-House PR Team of the Year

## 6 or More Employees



An Garda Síochána

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Gardaí from Crumlin & Kevin Street Community Policing assisted The Iveagh Trust in delivering donations for the #CrisisCall initiative which supports women & children exiting domestic abuse. They also assisted Safe Ireland with donations for refugees. [#HereToHelp](#)



### Organisation

An Garda Síochána

### Citation

The judges were impressed by a team that: –

*“... faced up to a major crisis and came out with distinction in terms of engagement with all stakeholders, internal and external. They presented a resilient human face to support the public health message in a very engaging manner and emerged from the pandemic with an enhanced reputation. They did their duty and beyond.”*



## **Brief description of the organisation and its objectives in the relevant period**

The mission of An Garda Síochána (AGS) is to keep people safe.

As the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the national policing service, AGS would have a front-line role in efforts to tackle the spread of the virus.

In a rapidly evolving crisis with major health and societal implications, it was critical for AGS to provide the public with reassurance, particularly to those most vulnerable to the direct and indirect impact of the pandemic, that we were here to keep them safe.

It was important in implementing far reaching legal powers that we were seen to be consistent and fair. Trust in policing had already diminished in some jurisdictions because of over-reach in using such emergency powers.

Before the onset of the pandemic, AGS was highly trusted and had a reputation for being a community-based police service. It was critical that these values were seen to be maintained.

Our personnel were also having to adapt to rapid changes in their professional and personal lives. They needed regular and clear information to protect their health and safety, support their mental health, and explain in plain English the complex new regulations they had to enforce at short notice.

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## **Brief overview of the team's objectives and strategy**

Strategy – Communicate clearly, consistently, openly, regularly and in engaging ways across multiple channels to the public and our own personnel on our efforts to keep them safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives:

- Provide public reassurance that AGS was there to keep people safe.
- Maintain high levels of public trust.
- Demonstrate our support for the most vulnerable in society.
- Explain the 4Es approach to the public and our own personnel.
- Provide clear and accessible information to our personnel.
- Being open, transparent and honest, particularly when mistakes were made.
- Consistency across internal and external communication.
- Support public health messaging in an engaging way.
- Maintain high level of service from GOCC to public, media and internal audience while adhering to public health measures.

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## **Analysis of team performance/delivery against those objectives**

### **Trust and public reassurance**

- Trust in policing among Irish public during COVID-19 was 6th most positive in Europe – Eurofound (May 2020).
- AGS ranked 2nd, only behind the HSE, in organisations leading and making a positive contribution in response to the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, An Garda Síochána's Reputation Pulse score improved 14.6 points, moving from an Average score to a Strong score of 78.2 – Reputation Agency RepTrak survey (May 2020).
- "I think you are very good at getting out and reassuring and communicating with the general public"  
– Policing Authority (PA) member Pat Costello at November 2020 public meeting. PA is one of our main oversight bodies.

### **Communicating to and engaging with the public**

- 45% growth in social media audience from 1.1m (1 March 2020) to 1.6m (24 February 2020). Engagement levels consistently above 5% and at times was around 15-20%. All growth and engagement was organic.

- Among the public service, ASG is ranked 2nd for largest number of followers on both Facebook and Twitter, and 3rd for Instagram. It also had one of the highest Facebook engagement rates – State of Social Media in the Public Sector Report (December 2020).
- Crimecall average viewership per episode was 377,000 with a 33% share of TV audience – RTE (February 2021).
- Commissioner Harris interview on The Late, Late Show – 600,000 viewership – RTE (February 2021).

### **Community Engagement & Supporting the Most Vulnerable**

- Jersualema video designed to lift spirits and encourage safe communal activity was viewed 7 million times. It had a media reach of 67.58m - 85% of coverage was positive – 45% of this prime positive. It had a prime media prominence of 58% and 21% significant – RuePoint (February 2021).
- Our video of Gardaí visiting a medically vulnerable child to celebrate his birthday was viewed 589,000 times on social media and covered by RTE TV News and Virgin Media.

### **Communicating clearly and effectively to Garda personnel**

- Average readership of COVID-19 e-zine is 12,500 – approximately 70% of the organisation – Poppulo (February 2021).
- Outside of January 2021, the percentage of personnel, particularly front-line members, out with COVID-19 or as a close contact remained generally at 5%. This meant there was no impact on service delivery.
- Communities have told us they believe that AGS's use of the 4Es is being "fairly and consistently applied" – Policing Authority Report, November 2019.

### **Supporting Public Health Messaging**

- Video using Gardaí and Garda equipment to highlight social distancing had a reach of 7.5m on social media.
- Videos for minority communities were viewed over 400,000 times and had a reach on social media of 1.5m.

### **Maintenance of GOCC service**

- During February 2021, on average, the Garda Press Office dealt with approximately 1,000 email queries and issued 36 press releases per week efficiently and effectively.
- GOCC also managed communications on on-going major investigations and incidents.

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## **Summary of outstanding achievements in the relevant period**

The work by the Garda Office of Corporate Communications during COVID-19 supported An Garda Síochána in its mission of keeping safe by maintaining and enhancing public confidence in policing during a time of great uncertainty and fear. It also supported our own people through regular communications that explained in clear and simple terms how to best protect themselves and, most importantly the public, in a very difficult and constantly changing operating environment.

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