



**Irish Translators. and Interpreters. Association
Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Teangairí na hÉireann**

Submission on the Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2008

The Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association (ITIA) is made up of approximately 500 members, including professional, ordinary, student and corporate members. See our website on <http://www.translatorsassociation.ie> for more information. It is the only such association in Ireland and is committed to the professionalisation of translation and interpreting.

Our main interest in this submission is the provision of interpreters. To this end we have considered Strategic Goal 5 – Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in the Garda Policing Plan 2006 where a number of relevant issues are mentioned:

- Build trust and confidence with ethnic and culturally diverse communities.

We believe that this is very difficult or indeed impossible in the current situation where the majority of interpreters are not trained. Also, we understand that in rural areas where interpreters are not readily accessible, local members of the Garda will look to the local community for interpreters. We are very concerned about this because of issues of confidentiality and professionalism. The ability to speak English and another language does not guarantee competent interpreting. We have come across cases where children as young as 7 have been asked to interpret. There have also been cases where interpreters with very little or no knowledge of a language have been allowed to continue in a case. In some cases, interpreters have been friends of perpetrators or indeed friends of victims of crime.

- Survey conducted with ethnic and culturally diverse groups on satisfaction with the Garda service

We wonder if this survey included people with limited or no English. We believe that this particular group is often omitted from surveys by public bodies. It would be interesting to find out the satisfaction levels of people with limited English proficiency.

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- Audit of processes and procedures relating to the quality and effectiveness and human rights compliance of the Garda Síochána's immigration service.

We understand that the Garda at Dublin Airport regularly have difficulty obtaining interpreters over the phone and occasionally ask staff employed in other areas of the airport to act as interpreters. Again, there is an underlying expectation that people with no interpreter training will be able to interpret accurately.

- The volume of Garda multilingual information material

From what can be seen on the Garda website, there does not seem to be a lot of information available in other languages. There is a need to find out what exactly people need to know and to prioritise the languages of translation. It is also essential that the services of professional translators be used to ensure quality.

- Directory of available interpreters for use by the Garda Síochána developed and distributed to each Division

As far as our Association is aware, no such Directory has been developed as yet. However, we would welcome such a Directory provided that it focused on interpreters' qualifications and training rather than merely their availability. To the best of our knowledge every Garda station operates its own system. Some just work with one translation agency; others work with a number of different agencies; still others hire local interpreters directly.

We would like to see the Garda take some positive steps towards improving the service provided to people with limited English proficiency. To this end we have included a list of measures that we believe the Garda could consider.

How can the Garda improve this situation?

In the short term:

- It should be Garda policy to work with professional interpreters. Friends, relations, children and members of a local community should not be drafted in.
- A telephone interpreting service is needed nationwide to help the Garda deal with queries, complaints and cases where it will take some time for an interpreter to arrive at a garda station.
- The C72 form should be updated to include the right to an interpreter.
- A comprehensive set of written guidelines for garda officers should be drawn up.
- Similarly, a set of guidelines for interpreters working in garda stations is needed.

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- Translation agencies that supply interpreters should be asked to provide details of all interpreters' qualifications and experience.
- A record should be kept of all spending on interpreting and translation. Information should also be compiled on the languages used.
- All interpreted sessions should be recorded on video.
- Consideration should be given to taking statements in the foreign language and then having them translated into English.

In the medium term:

- Work should commence on compiling a register of the best qualified interpreters on the Irish market at present.
- The Garda should insist on professional qualifications such as the Chartered Institute of Linguists Diploma in Public Service Interpreting or the Dublin City University Graduate Certificate in Community Interpreting.
- Training in how to work with interpreters is needed. This should commence in Templemore College and also be provided to all members of the force.

In the long term:

- There is a need for a testing system for all interpreters who wish to work with the Garda. This will be difficult to organise and the languages most in demand will have to be prioritised. Interpreters who speak other languages not covered by the test will have to be tested in English only. All successful candidates would then be included on the Garda Register.
- Ongoing training should be provided to interpreters.

Please note that we would be happy to meet with the Garda to discuss this in further detail.

For and on behalf of
The Irish Translators. and Interpreters. Association
Cumann Aistitheoirí agus Teangairí na hÉireann

Annette Schiller
Chairperson

Mary Phelan
Honorary Secretary
31st July 2007