

## **Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ's**

For information on how to report a crime [CLICK HERE](#)

For information on contact details for Garda Stations [CLICK HERE](#)

FAQ's (Sourced from Crime Victims Helpline)

### **1. What happens when I report a crime?**

You may be asked to make a statement which will be taken down in writing and you will be asked to sign it. The matter will then be investigated, usually by the Garda to whom you made the initial report. Depending on the crime, you may receive a letter from the Superintendent's Office giving you the name of the investigating Garda, the PULSE number of the crime (see next item), the telephone number of the investigating Garda Station, and the number of the Crime Victims Helpline.

### **2. What is a PULSE number?**

A PULSE number is a computer generated number allocated to a crime or incident in the Garda computer system. One unique number is allocated to each crime. This number enables Gardaí to access information on the crime at any stage.

### **3. How can I find out about services for crime victims?**

Depending on the crime or offence you should receive a letter from the Garda Superintendent's office with contact details for the investigating Garda and Victim Support Information. This will tell you about services available for crime victims and about specialist services for victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and for families affected by homicide. To find out more about these services [CLICK HERE](#).

### **4. Who investigates a crime?**

The Garda to whom you make the initial report normally investigates that crime. In a case where you report the crime to a Garda Station other than where the crime occurred, a report will be forwarded to the Garda Station in the area where the crime occurred and a Garda from that Garda Station will be appointed to investigate the crime.

In the case of homicide and some other serious crimes, a Family Liaison Officer will be appointed to liaise with family members and to keep them informed on all matters relating to the investigation of the crime.

## **5. What are the steps in investigating a crime? How long will it take?**

Every investigation process is different, and takes varying amounts of time depending on the seriousness and complexity of the crime. Witnesses have to be interviewed and written statements have to be taken from them. CCTV (if there is footage) has to be examined. Fingerprints may have to be taken and sent for examination. Other forensic tests may have to be carried out. There may be unavoidable delays in completing any of these processes.

## **6. What does it mean when you are told "a file is being prepared"?**

The investigating Garda takes statements from the victims, the witnesses, and the suspect. He/she also assembles all evidence such as fingerprint evidence, photographs of injuries, medical or ballistic reports, forensic testing results and reports, CCTV footage analysis and any other relevant information. This is known as the file. When completed the file is passed on to the Garda Superintendent, and/or to the DPP for a decision on the appropriate charges. A decision may be made not to go ahead with the case. This is usually because there is insufficient evidence to secure a conviction in the court, and does not mean that the victim's story is not believed.

## **7. How long does it take to prepare a file?**

It is impossible to be specific about how long it takes to prepare a file. Some cases are very complex, and may take a year or more. In other cases you can expect that the process will take up to 6 months, but it really depends on many factors which are often outside the control of the investigating Garda.

## **8. What are 'forensics'?**

'Forensics' refers to the various scientific tests carried out after a crime has been committed. Obviously these tests depend on the nature of the crime and the availability of material suitable for examination. The most usual tests are carried out on blood, semen, hair, teeth, fingerprints, and also on mobile phones, weapons and CCTV footage. A great number of these tests are done by the Forensic Science Laboratory in Garda Headquarters in the Phoenix Park.

## **9. What is CCTV footage?**

This is a camera placed in a strategic part of a premises or street that picks up images of activities on the premises or street. As technology has improved, many crimes are solved as a result of CCTV evidence. The CCTV footage is examined by the Gardaí.

## **10. What is an identity parade?**

It is a means of identifying someone who has committed a crime. If you are asked to attend an identity parade you will be asked to pick out the suspect from a group of people of similar appearance. You could also be asked to pick out a suspect from a selected group of photographs.

### **11. What is the best way to contact the investigating Garda?**

In the first instance you need to find out what time the Garda will be on duty, and then you can phone the Garda station during those hours. However Gardaí are not necessarily in the station at those times, as they may have other tasks to complete that take them out of the station, such as patrol, attending court, attending scenes of crime and interviewing victims and witnesses. Usually the best time to make contact with the Garda is at the beginning or end of the work period.

### **12. What do I do if I cannot contact the investigating Garda?**

You should ask to talk to the Sergeant on Duty who may be able to assist you. If you are still having difficulties in contacting the investigating Garda, you can contact the Garda Superintendent's Office and explain the difficulties you are having. You should ask for the name of any person who takes a message for you.

### **13. What hours are Garda Stations open?**

An Garda Síochána provides a 24 hour service all year round. If your local Garda Station is not open you will be redirected to a Garda Station that is open.

### **14. When should I make my statement?**

The investigating Garda will ask you to make a statement as soon as is practical after the incident. This is generally within a few days or a week of the incident.

### **15. What should I say in my statement?**

You should give a truthful account of what has happened, and you should give as much information as you can to the Garda who is taking your statement. It may be useful to write out an account of what happened as soon as possible after the incident while it is completely fresh in your memory. You should report any injuries suffered in the incident or as a result of the crime. You should also mention any intimidation against you or any member of your family. If photographs of your injuries have been taken you should inform the Garda of this.

## **16. Can I add to my statement if I forget something?**

Yes, you should contact the investigating Garda as soon as possible and ask to make a further statement.

## **17. Who can see my statement?**

Your statement is a confidential document and can be seen by you, by the prosecution team, if it goes to court by a judge, by the accused person, and by the solicitors for the accused person.

## **18. Can I see the other witness statements?**

No, you are entitled to see only your own statement.

## **19. Why was the person who I reported not arrested?**

The investigating Garda will decide on the most appropriate time for an arrest to be made. The investigating Gardaí must first build the case and gather evidence and witness statements which will be put to the person who is arrested, so even though you know who committed the crime, he/she may not be arrested until the investigation has been completed. It is very difficult for someone who is a victim of a serious crime to see the suspect appearing to carry on with normal life, but this person is presumed innocent until found guilty and convicted in court.

## **20. Who should I approach if I have any queries about the investigation?**

The first person to discuss any queries with is usually the investigating Garda. You can also speak to the Sergeant in charge of the Garda's unit. Alternatively, you can ask for an appointment to meet with your local Garda Superintendent. This request can be made by telephone or in writing.

## **21. What hours do Garda Superintendents work?**

They usually work 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

## **22. What does it mean if someone is cautioned?**

In the case of an adult offender, in certain cases the Garda Superintendent may decide that a caution is an appropriate way of dealing with the offender rather than bringing him/her to court. As a victim of crime your views will be considered by the Superintendent, but the decision to caution may be made even if you are opposed to it.

In the case of a youth offender (under 18) he/she must be considered for cautioning before a case is brought before the courts. For a caution to be administered the young person must accept responsibility for the offence, must agree to be cautioned, and where appropriate must agree to any supervision terms. Again the views of the victim will be taken into consideration, but the decision to caution will be made by a Superintendent at the Garda Office for Children and Youth affairs.

When an offender is a youth/child, the Juvenile Liaison Officer may also consider inviting the victim of the crime to attend at the caution, and this is called a Restorative Caution. A Juvenile Liaison Officer is a Garda who works full time with young people who come in contact with the law.

### **23. If I am not satisfied with the Garda investigation what can I do?**

There are a number of options. You can write to your local Superintendent or you can make an appointment to speak to him/her personally. Alternatively you could contact the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and make a complaint there. Further information is available at [www.gardaombudsman.ie](http://www.gardaombudsman.ie)

### **24. How can I thank a member of An Garda Síochána?**

The best way of thanking a member of An Garda Síochána is to write to the Superintendent in charge of the station to which the Garda is attached. If it is after the event and you do not have the Garda's details, you can ring your local station for help in identifying him or her

### **25. Where can I get information about domestic violence?**

To find out how to go about issuing proceedings (e.g. safety order) please contact your local District Court Office. If you live in Dublin, please contact the Dublin District Family Law Office, Dolphin House, East Essex Street, Dublin 2. Details of these offices are available at [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie) or you can ring the Courts Service on +00353 1 888 6000. You can also call your local Garda Station for assistance in this matter.