



Statement Garda Representative Association NPHET must recognise Garda role in containing Coronavirus

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The GRA has called on NPHET to recognise the role An Garda Síochána are playing in containing the spread of the Coronavirus, following the abandonment of a fast-track system for testing gardaí who may have been infected with Covid-19.

Garda management had arrangements in place at several locations around the country for the priority sampling of gardaí.

But Garda staff associations were informed yesterday that a clinical governance issue with the HSE meant the arrangements for priority sampling were being abandoned.

GRA President Jim Mulligan said: “We have been pressing this matter from an early stage of the crisis and were assured week after week that measures were being implemented.

“Sampling facilities had been organised in different parts of the country and we were told arrangements had been made with the HSE for speedy testing.

“Then we discover that after management had trained Garda members with medical experience to take samples, NPHET has scuppered this plan.

“It is difficult to make sense of how there could be a governance issue around priority testing for gardaí when there was none around other frontline workers such as medical staff and ambulance workers.

“We requested fast-tracking of testing gardaí as a Health & Safety measure for members because of their exposure to infection at work due to the huge volume of public interaction involved in policing at the moment.

“During this crisis, we have seen 45 gardaí go into self-isolation in one division, and a whole unit was stood down in Dublin recently – albeit temporarily. We have also seen 52 cases in which gardaí were the target of people weaponizing Covid-19.

“A fast-track testing procedure is needed to ensure the resilience of An Garda Síochána and prevent the potential danger infected gardaí could pose to the wider population.

“Members of the public have rightly expressed concern about the possibility of being infected at Garda checkpoints, and now because of the new testing criteria announced two days ago, the priority testing of gardaí has been abandoned.

“NPHEA need to broaden their understanding of managing this health crisis. Policing is central to containing the spread of the virus yet they appear not to recognise this.”