



Statement Garda Representative Association

Flexibility on uniforms a useful measure for recruiting from minority communities

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The decision by Commissioner Drew Harris to adopt a more flexible approach to Garda uniforms has been described as a useful measure for making the force more socially representative, by Garda Representative Association General Secretary, Pat Ennis.

Mr Ennis said: "The GRA is acutely aware of the value of diversity in the force. Addressing the substantial deficit in social representation needs to be a key focus for implementing the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

"Our research shows that barely half a percent of serving members are from minority communities, against a socially representative figure of around 18 percent. It also shows that efforts in the UK to address representation deficits have brought about improvements, but progress is very slow – which may be inevitable.

"So we welcome any reasonable measure such as the relaxation of rules on uniform to facilitate recruitment of people from non-Christian backgrounds; and are open to other approaches for bringing people born outside Ireland into the force irrespective of their religion or ethnicity."

"Our members are keen to meet the challenges of dealing effectively and sensitively with multiple cultures, languages, religions, values and belief systems.

"Recruiting women and men from minority communities brings a lived experience that can be educational for colleagues as well as having obvious benefits for frontline policing."

ENDS

Extract: GRA submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing (August 2018)

"While certain police forces in the UK still have a road to travel on recruitment from their ethnic communities, much has been done since the *Scarman Report* of some 30 years ago. A UK Home Office Report of March 2017 states that 14% of the population of England and Wales is "BME" (Black, Minority, Ethnic). Currently, some 6% of all officers are BME in English & Welsh police forces - the highest proportion since records began ... Over 2017, 11% of joiners were BME, compared with 5% of leavers. [...]

by way of comparison, Garda ethnic numbers from August 2017 suggest however that a mere 63 Gardaí (and 37 reserve) are from non-Irish backgrounds. Almost 1 in 5 Members of An Garda Síochána should be outside the 'White Irish' category if recruitment parity (relative to ethnicity) is to be achieved. However, currently it sits at one in every 240 - or a mere 0.4% of the population.