



## Statement Garda Representative Association

# GRA welcomes introduction of facemasks at checkpoints and on patrols

*The Association continues to press case for priority testing*

**20.05.2019**

GRA President Jim Mulligan has welcomed clarification that gardai on outdoor duties will be equipped with facemasks they can use if social distancing cannot be maintained – including on foot patrol and at checkpoints. However, the priority testing of gardaí remains an unresolved issue.

Last Friday, NPHEAT announced that facemasks should be worn by the public in a variety of circumstances. Garda management followed up at the weekend with an instruction to members to wear Garda-issue masks in cases where social distancing cannot be maintained.

It was confirmed by Garda management that while wearing masks is not normally required at checkpoints and on foot patrols, if members are unable to maintain social distancing they should put on a facemask.

GRA President Jim Mulligan said: “The GRA has been arguing for many weeks for greater use of facemasks by gardaí. We suggested that members should be equipped with masks on outdoor duties which they can put on based on their own Dynamic Risk Assessment\* of any situation.

“Management indicated at the weekend their adoption of this position and have since confirmed that it applies to checkpoints and foot patrols.

“The absence of facemasks at checkpoints has been a cause of concern to the public. Now there is a protocol that says if a garda cannot stay two metres away from a vehicle, for instance on a narrow road, they should put on a facemask.”

The GRA is to press for priority testing of gardai despite the HSE claim that it can provide test results in three days.

Despite Management’s decision to discontinue a Garda managed solution to priority testing of members following NPHEAT’s recent decision to abandon the priority testing, the GRA continues to pursue this requirement as an urgent necessity.

GRA President Jim Mulligan said: “We are seeking that the Garda Occupational Health Department engage immediately with the HSE to develop protocols and a Service Level Agreement to provide for the emergency testing of our members following assaults such as being spat at or other close interactions with persons suspected of having the Covid-19 virus.

“Such an SLA should provide for the taking of a sample at the earliest opportunity with immediate testing to follow; coupled with appropriate contact tracing as soon as possible if the test returns positive.”Gardai are wondering why they were never given priority testing considering so many

other frontline workers are getting it.

“When you have been spat at by someone claiming to be Covid-19 infected, the risk of infection is clearly a lot higher. Yet under the current arrangements, gardaí must join the queue.

“Turnaround times for the general population are not reliable, and therefore totally inappropriate. Currently, gardaí and their families face an anxious wait – and inconvenience – to find out if they have been infected with a deadly disease which may they have spread to family members – and colleagues.

"This shows a shocking disregard for our members and their families."