

Chair, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

An Garda Síochána takes the investigation of each and every suspicious death very seriously.

All members of An Garda Síochána understand completely that any death regardless of whether it is ultimately deemed to be from natural causes, accidental or premediated brings significant pain for the deceased's loved ones and, as such, it is vital they are investigated fully and professionally so families can be provided with answers.

It is also important that each death is recorded accurately on PULSE to ensure An Garda Síochána, our stakeholders and society at large has the most up-to-date information available on natural, accidental and suspicious deaths recorded in Ireland at any particular time.

It was in this light that in July 2016, the Garda National Protective Services Bureau asked the Garda Analysis Service to conduct a comprehensive analysis of homicides with a domestic motive in the Republic of Ireland over a 10-year period (2007-2016). The purpose of this analysis was to identify any trends and patterns in homicides recorded in Ireland where domestic abuse may have been a motive. This data could then be used to inform the development of An Garda Síochána's domestic abuse policy and interventions.

In furtherance of this review, cases dealt with by the Office of the State Pathologist (OSP) during 2013, 2014, and 2015 were initially examined by the Garda Analysis Service.

This examination was carried out to ensure that every case that had a suspicious circumstance or cause of death, which would be pathologically considered to be

a homicide, was compared with the PULSE incident classification. This review identified 41 deaths where on initial examination the related PULSE incidents required further analysis from either a PULSE incident classification or data quality perspective.

In January 2017, a Working Group was established under a Chief Superintendent that included senior staff from the Garda Analysis Service to review the PULSE incidents concerned and identify the rationale for the PULSE classification and the data quality relating to the 41 deaths.

The review identified a necessity for clarity and consistency regarding the application of the crime counting rules with regard to the PULSE classification of homicide incidents. This review found that each of the 41 deaths were investigated.

Subsequently, the Policing Authority requested an independent peer review of the quality of the investigations carried out in respect of the 41 cases. This is now being carried out.

In parallel with this review, in September 2017, guidance for classification rules for homicides were agreed upon to assist with the correct classification of homicide incidents. Of the 41 deaths, it was identified that 12 deaths required re-classification.

In each of those 12 deaths family members of the deceased were contacted to inform them of the change in the incident classification and offer them advice and information on victim support organisations that may be of help to them.

I am conscious of the need to protect the identify of victims and victims' families. Chair, I am sure you share the same concern. I am also conscious that a number of the 12 cases are before the Courts or currently under investigation and may be subject to further classification changes on PULSE.

In order to provide assurance on the validity of PULSE classification, it was decided in consultation with the CSO to extend the review to all homicides back to 2003. The data for the period 2003 to the present day is utilised by the CSO to prepare the publication of crime statistics.

As a result of interactions with the CSO and the Policing Authority, the terms of reference for a Working Group under Assistant Commissioner, Executive Support and Corporate Services were agreed. The Working Group, which has been established, has been tasked with undertaking the following:

- An independent peer review of the quality of the investigations carried out in respect of the 41 cases
- dip sampling to establish the degree to which PULSE is updated in a timely manner with outcomes from the Higher Courts
- All homicide cases from 2003 to 2017 to be reviewed including Fatal Road Traffic Collisions.

The Working Group will also monitor PULSE to identify any new homicide incidents from 1st January 2018 to ensure they are appropriately classified.

An Garda Síochána is very conscious of the need to ensure we have a high quality data across all crime areas to assist us in preventing and detecting crime to protect and support communities and victims of crime. We have introduced a number of measures in this regard and more are planned. It is also vital that there is a culture throughout the organisation of correctly recording data.

Chair, An Garda Síochána fully recognises the need to provide the public and our other stakeholders with correct data so that issues affecting policing are based on accurate information.

That is why we are continually examining our processes and have expended so much time and effort to ensure our data in relation to crimes including homicides is accurate.

I fully accept Chair that the review process could have been quicker. However, this is a highly complex area - often of a very complicated, fluid and sensitive nature, relating to case files, and each and every case being analysed and reviewed.

Given the seriousness of the crimes involved it is important that this process is thorough, detailed and robust.

Any issues identified from this further review will be comprehensively addressed.

In conclusion Chair, this matter was discovered by An Garda Síochána. The process to date has identified issues that we are addressing so they can't happen again.

I can assure you Chair that An Garda Síochána has taken this matter very seriously and will continue to do so.

Thank you.