

# An Garda Síochána

Oifig Saoráil Faisnéise  
An Garda Síochána  
Teach áth Luimnigh  
Lárionad Gnó Udáras Forbartha Tionscail  
Baile Sheáin  
An Uaimh  
Contae na Mí

Teileafón/Tel: (046) 9036350

Bí linn/Join us  



Freedom of Information Office  
An Garda Síochána  
Athlumney House  
IDA Business Park  
Johnstown  
Navan  
Co Meath

Láithreán Gréasain/Website: [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

Ríomh-phoist/Email: [foi@garda.ie](mailto:foi@garda.ie)

## Re: Freedom of Information Request FOI-000127-2016 Request Partially Granted

Dear

I refer to the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and your submission to An Garda Síochána dated 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016 and received on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

Part 1(n) of Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 states that An Garda Síochána is listed as a partially included agency “insofar as it relates to administrative records relating to human resources, or finance or procurement matters”. Therefore, only administrative records that relate to human resources, finance or procurement shall be considered.

Your request is shown below:

- *The number of requests for payment for/assistance with payment for counselling services from members over the whole of 2015 and the first two months of 2016;*
- *The number of these requests granted;*
- *The amount of money spent in total for 2015 and the first two months of 2016 on counselling services for members;*
- *The value of the highest payment;*
- *Details of internal counselling offered by AGS or alternative arrangements if none available*

I wish to inform you that your request has been **partially granted**.

The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision.

### 1. Findings, particulars and reasons for decisions to deny access

A number of searches for administrative records were conducted within the Human Resources & People Development (HR & PD) section and the Finance Directorate of An Garda Síochána in respect of the following sections of your request:

- *the number of requests for payment for/assistance with payment for counselling services from members over the whole of 2015 and the first two months of 2016;*

- *The number of these requests granted;*
- *The value of the highest payment;*

I am to inform you that it has been determined that the records do not exist in the format as you have requested. An Garda Síochána Finance Directorate have advised that there is no unique expenditure code in place on the Financial Management System which identifies individual claims made by members of the Garda Organisation for counselling services. Claims for counselling services are recorded in a “catch-all” generic heading for all medical expenses and therefore are included with all other medical expenses. The use of counselling services is not uniquely identified under its own financial sub-head code and therefore cannot be extracted from the Financial Management System on a disaggregated basis.

In the absence of a specific financial sub-head code for counselling it is not possible to identify the number of individual requests received for counselling services as outlined in your request. In addition, the Financial Shared Services Centre (FSSC) in the Department of Justice and Equality process all payments in relation to medical expenses for An Garda Síochána. An Garda Síochána is one of nine clients of the FSSC.

I am therefore refusing these sections of your request under Section 15(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 which states:

*A head to whom an FOI request is made may refuse to grant the request where –*

- (a) The record does not exist or cannot be found after all reasonable steps to ascertain its whereabouts have been taken*

You have also sought *the amount of money spent in total for 2015 and the first two months of 2016 on counselling services for members.*

I can advise you, that a record has been identified outlining payment to Abate Counselling & EAP Limited who provide counselling services to the Garda organisation.

The requests for counselling services can be sought after a traumatic incident dealt with by an individual member or a number of members of An Garda Síochána. Counselling services are available for local management to utilise at their discretion to ensure the health and welfare of their staff. Members dealing with traumatic incidents, such as fatal road traffic collisions or sudden deaths and other such events will on occasion require the expertise of a professional counselling service to reduce the possible impact of dealing with an upsetting event.

The figures below refer to Abate Counselling & EAP Limited however other counselling providers can be selected by individual medical practitioners or the individual seeking the counselling services. As a result counselling costs cannot be identified in their entirety as they may form part of a medical expense without being individually identified. In many cases the level of detail held on an invoice may not identify the fact that counselling costs were included.

The table below provides the total cost to An Garda Síochána of providing the Abate Counselling and EAP Limited service to the Organisation for the full year of 2015 and the first 2 months of 2016

<b>Counselling Service</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016 (Jan-Feb)</b>
Abate Counselling & EAP Limited	€8,622	€2,863

The Organisation is very mindful to the significant occupational demands placed on members of An Garda Síochána and the exposure to very stressful and traumatic situations. In this context, the implementation of a 24/7 independent counselling service for Garda members, Reserves and Civilian Staff attached to An Garda Síochána is under final consideration.

This new independent counselling service will complement the existing critical supports already provided by the Chief Medical Officer, the Employee Assistance Service and the Peer Supporters network. The tender process in relation to this service is complete and the successful tender has been determined. It is envisaged that this service will be activated in the coming weeks.

The last part of your request is seeking

- *details of internal counselling offered by AGS or alternative arrangements if none available.*

An Garda Síochána provide an Employee Assistance Service to all members of staff. The purpose of the Employee Assistance Service is to provide appropriate support and assistance where either work or personal difficulties may impact negatively on the functioning capacity of a member of staff. The service is available to help remedy anything that is causing stress, worry or disruption to an individual's life.

An Garda Síochána also provide a Peer Support Service. Peer Supporters are colleagues who have received appropriate training in helping members cope with the effect of a traumatic incident in the workplace. This service operates in co-operation with the Employee Assistance Service and local Garda Management. The service is committed to helping colleagues cope with and recover from what is essentially a normal reaction to an abnormal incident which may have the potential to result in stress.

## **2. Right of Appeal**

In the event that you are not happy with this decision you may seek an Internal Review of the matter by writing to the address below and quoting reference number **F01-000127-2016**.

Freedom of Information Office,  
An Garda Síochána,  
Athlumney House,  
IDA Business Park,  
Johnstown,  
Navan,  
Co. Meath  
C15 DR90

Please note that a fee applies. This fee has been set at €30 (€10 for a Medical Card holder). Payment should be made by way of bank draft, money order, postal order or personal cheque, and made payable to Accountant, Garda Finance Directorate, Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8.

Payment can be made by electronic means, using the following details:

**Account Name:** Garda Síochána Finance Section Public Bank Account  
**Account Number:** 10026896  
**Sort Code:** 900017  
**IBAN:** IE86B0F190001710026896  
**BIC:** BOFIE2D

**You must ensure that your FOI reference number is included in the payment details.**

You should submit your request for an Internal Review within 4 weeks from the date of this notification. The review will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of An Garda Síochána and the decision will be communicated to you within 3 weeks. The making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances.

Please be advised that An Garda Síochána replies under Freedom of Information may be released in to the public domain via our website at [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie).

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please contact me by telephone at (046) 9036350.

Yours sincerely,

 **SUPERINTENDENT**  
**HELEN DEELY**  
**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICER**

**29<sup>th</sup> April 2016**