

An Garda Síochána

Oifig Saorála Fáisnéise,
An Garda Síochána, Teach áth Luimnigh,
Lárionad Gnó Udáras Forbartha Tionscail,
Baile Sheáin, An Uaimh,
Contae na Mí.
C15 DR90



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

Teileafón/Tel: (046) 9036350

Bí linn/Join us  

Láithreán Gréasain/Website:

www.garda.ie

Ríomh-phoist:/Email: foi@garda.ie

Re: Freedom of Information Request FOI-000307-2018 Request Refused

Dear

I refer to your request, dated and received on 26th July 2018 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI Act) for records held by An Garda Síochána.

Part 1(n) of Schedule 1 of the FOI Act 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 sought:

Materials providing details on how many Gardai have been sent for trauma counselling resulting from traumatic incidents they have worked on, in 2015, 2016, 2017, and to date in 2018, in Cork city, Cork west and Cork north; the cost of such treatment, and the number of Gardai currently on leave while being treated.

I wish to inform you that I have decided to refuse your request on the 20th August 2018.

The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision.

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1. Findings, particulars and reasons for decision

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 your request.

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 your request under Section 15(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 which states:

Refusal on Administrative Grounds to grant FOI requests

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*

I am also refusing ‘*the number of Gardaí currently on leave while being treated*’. The Sick Leave Absence Management System (SAMS) records the sickness absence of members of An Garda Síochána and categories sick leave absence into two categories for Garda members: Ordinary Illness and Injury on Duty.

In this regard, it has been determined that the records do not exist in the format as you have requested and I am therefore applying Section 15(1)(a) as outlined above.

Requests for counselling services by members 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 Garda Employee Assistance Service (GEAS) provides a confidential, professional, support and assistance service to:-

- Serving members of An Garda Síochána and their families.
- Garda Trainees and Probationers

- Retired members of An Garda Síochána and their families.
- Reserve Gardaí
- Retired Members of External Police Service resident in the State.

The Garda Employee Assistance Service supports members who are experiencing work and/or personal difficulties, this also includes trauma incidents etc.

The service is supported by over 850 colleagues throughout the Organisation who have been appropriately trained as Peer Supporters and assist in helping members cope with a traumatic incident in the workplace. Peer Supporters are activated following a traumatic incident in the workplace and very often the immediate activation and response from a peer supporter has a huge impact in assisting colleagues in the aftermath of such occurrences.

Since June 24th 2016, a 24/7, 365 Independent Helpline and Counselling Service is available to both Garda and Civilian staff within An Garda Síochána. This service is available for both work and personal difficulties. The service is not mandatory and is self-referral. It is provided by Inspire Wellbeing (previously known as EAO Consultants / Carecall). Each member of the Organisation may avail of up to 8 free sessions of counselling per year.

All appointments and consultations are arranged directly between the Service Provider and the staff member.

The figures below show the uptake of the Independent Helpline and Counselling Service since its launch on the 24th June 2016 to June 2018

Total number of one to one counselling sessions: 3008

There are no figures available for 2015 as the Counselling Service was launched in 2016.

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 **FOI-000307-2018**.

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: BOFIIIE2D

You must ensure that your FOI reference number (FOI-000307-2018) 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.

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
SHARON KENNEDY
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICER

20 AUGUST 2018