

# 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

Láithreán Gréasain/Website:

[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

Bí linn/Join us  

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

## Re: Freedom of Information Request FOI-000273-2019 Request Part-Grant

*Dear*

I refer to your request, dated and received on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 and subsequently clarified on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 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:

1. *Can I request social media guidelines/rules/materials relating to Facebook/Twitter/Snapchat/Instagram/Whatsapp use provided and/or used in the teaching of Garda recruits in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.*
2. *Can I request details of all disciplinary measures taken against Gardai/Gardai recruits in relation to Snapchat and Instagram use from 2017 until present.*
3. *Can I request all email communications in relation to the use of Snapchat and Instagram by Gardai and the rules related to social media use from 2017 until present?*
4. *Can I request all communications and documentation in relation to the use of phone/mobile app location data from 2017 to present?*

Clarification received:

*Just to clarify the records I'm seeking are documents detailing guidelines and rules in relation to the personal social media use by Gardaí staff, as well as all email communications discussing guidelines and rules in relation to personal social media use among Gardaí staff.*

*In relation to part 4, can I access all email communications and Gardaí documents/memorandums in relation to phone/mobile app location data and policies on Garda staff using devices that use location services while on and off duty*

I wish to inform you that I have decided to part-grant your request on the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2019. The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision.

### **1. Findings, particulars and reasons for decision**

On receipt of your request, a search was conducted in the relevant sections of An Garda Síochána in respect the records that you were seeking. A schedule of records is herewith attached outlining the identified records.

Part 1 of your request sought “social media guidelines/rules/materials relating to Facebook/Twitter/Snapchat/Instagram/Whatsapp use provided and/or used in the teaching of Garda recruits in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Trainee Gardaí are addressed on social media policy from the time they attend their induction weeks and again on commencement of training. Instruction in respect of social media is delivered to the Trainee Gardaí prior to commencing their Phase 1 training. Each Trainee Gardaí undergoes an Induction Week prior to commencing their training.

During Induction Week the Trainee Gardaí candidates are spoken to on a number of issues, social media being one. An address on the usage of social media is delivered within the first hour of meeting the Trainee Gardaí candidates in order to ensure no breaches occur. This delivery addresses the social media realms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media forums and the policy in respect of social media. On the fourth day of Induction Week a power point presentation is given. An extract from the power point presentation is contained in the records provided. At the end of the Induction Week the candidates are reminded of the social media policy again prior to departing the college. Trainee Gardaí are also addressed by a member of IT section in the Garda College on the policy surrounding social media usage.

On commencement of training social media is addressed again with the Trainee Gardaí and they sign the Internet and Electronic Mail Policy document. Within the first 2/3 weeks of commencing training the Garda Press Office delivers a presentation on the functions of the Garda Press Office to the new Trainee Gardaí. This also incorporates the usage of social media and the official social media Garda accounts e.g. official Facebook pages and Twitter account.

In regards to part 2 of your request where you are seeking “details of all disciplinary measures taken against Gardaí/Gardaí recruits in relation to Snapchat and Instagram use from 2017 until present”. During the period 2017 to 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 Internal Affairs of An Garda Síochána



have directed this office that there have been 5 Discipline Files arising out of members use of various social media platforms. The two cases outlined below refer to the use of Instagram.

### **Case 1**

Two Garda members were dealt with in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations, 2007.

### **Case 2**

One Garda member was dealt with in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations, 2007 (Caution).

Part 3 of your request is seeking *'all email communications in relation to the use of Snapchat and Instagram by Gardaí and the rules related to social media use from 2017 until present?'*

I wish to advise you that no records of email communications are held by An Garda Síochána in the manner requested by you, therefore I am refusing this part of your request under Section 15(1) (a) of the FOI Act which states:

***Refusal on administrative grounds to grant FOI requests:***

15(1) *A head to whom an FOI request is made may refuse to grant the request where*  
*(a) the record concerned does not exist or cannot be found after all reasonable steps to ascertain its whereabouts have been taken,*

I wish to advise you that I am also refusing to release the records in relation to *'the rules related to social media use from 2017 until present'* in accordance with Section 15(1)(d) of the FOI Act as the Garda social media policy is available on the Garda website [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie). Section 15(1)(d) states:

***Refusal on administrative grounds to grant FOI requests:***

15(1) *A head to whom an FOI request is made may refuse to grant the request where*  
*(d) the information is already in the public domain.*

You may access this information by following the attached links:

<https://www.garda.ie/en/About-Us/Publications/Policy-Documents/An-Garda-Siochana-Social-Media-Policy-Put-on-the-14-1-16-.pdf>

<https://www.garda.ie/en/About-Us/Publications/Policy-Documents/Guidelines-to-Garda-Staff-on-the-Use-of-Social-Media.pdf>

Part 4 of your request seeks *"all communications and documentation in relation to the use of phone/mobile app location data from 2017 to present?"* I am refusing to provide this information in accordance with Section 15(1)(a) as set out above as there have been no communications in the timeframe of your request. However, please find attached copy of HQ Directive 5/2012 which relates to the allocation of Official Mobile Phones; Directory Maintenance and Directory Enquiries. This directive is dated 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

## 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-000273-2019**.

***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 fee 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:** IE86BOFI90001710026896

**BIC:** BOFIE2D

**You must ensure that your FOI reference number (FOI-000273-2019) 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,

Maria Brodigan **ACTING ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL**  
**MARIA BRODIGAN**  
**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICER**

6<sup>th</sup> **AUGUST, 2019.**

Requester Name: File Re: FOI-000273-2019					
Page No	Description of document	Deletions	Relevant Section of FOI Acts	Reason for Decision	Decision Maker's decision
1-2	Extract from that presentation given on the fourth day of Induction week in relation to social media	0			Grant
3-6	HQ-Directive 5/2012	0			Grant
				Total number of pages	6
				Total number of pages for full release	6
				Total number of pages for partial release	0
				Total number of pages being withheld	0



## Social Media







## Social Media cont.....

- Garda material will not be put on social media
- No reference to training or operational information will be put on social media.
- No photographs or personal details
- No photographs in uniform
- **All Garda information will be released through official channels and the Garda Press Office only. H.Q. Directive 47/14**

# An Garda Síochána

Stiúrthóir Feidhmiúcháin Airgeadais  
agus Seirbhísi,  
Ceanncheathrú an Gharda Síochána,  
Páirc an Fhionnuisce,  
Baile Átha Cliath 8.

Teileafón/Tel: (01) 666 2175  
Facs/Fax: (01) 666 1966



Executive Director of Finance  
and Services,  
Garda Headquarters,  
Phoenix Park,  
Dublin 8.

Láithreán Gréasáin/Web Site:  
[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)  
Ríomh-phoist:/Email:

*Luaigh an uimhir thagartha seo a leanas:  
Please quote the following ref. number:*

*Treoir Ceanncheathrú/HQ Directive: 5/2012  
Dáta/ Date: 10 January, 2012*

GACH OIFIGEACH, CIGIRE AGUS STÁISIÚN – EACH OFFICER, INSPECTOR AND STATION  
IS DOICIMÉID FAOI IONTAOIBH É SEO LE H'ÚSÁID AG PEARSANRA DEN GHARDA SÍOCHÁNA AMHÁIN.  
THIS IS A CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT FOR USE ONLY BY GARDA PERSONNEL

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## Re: Allocation of Official Mobile Phones; Directory Maintenance and Directory Enquiries

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This directive sets out the policy to be adhered to by all personnel in receipt of an official Garda mobile phone.

### Protocol

- Garda mobile phones are issued for official purposes only and will not be used for unlawful activities, commercial purposes or personal gain.

### Permanent Allocation of Mobile Phones

- All mobile phones on issue to Inspectors and higher ranks will be a permanent issue and retained on promotion or transfer within An Garda Síochána.
- All mobile phones on issue to Garda Civilian Personnel at Assistant Principal grade and higher will be a permanent issue and retained on promotion or transfer within An Garda Síochána.
- Upon appointment, newly promoted Inspectors or Civilian Personnel at the appropriate grade will apply to Superintendent Telecommunications Operations for the issue of a mobile phone.
- Upon retirement, resignation or transfer outside of An Garda Síochána the holder of a permanently allocated mobile phone will return their mobile phone to Superintendent Telecommunications Operations. The mobile phone is not to be retained locally.

### Divisional Allocation of Mobile Phones

- Each Divisional Officer is provided with an allocation of mobile phones for operational issue. This pooled resource will no longer include the phones allocated to Inspectors, Officers or Garda Civilian Personnel at Assistant Principal grade and higher within their Division/Section.
- Divisional Officers will not make any permanent issue from their allocated pool and they will be responsible for ensuring that phones are returned as personnel are promoted/transferred out of their Divisions/Sections.

*Ag obair le Pobail chun iad a chosaint agus chun freastal orthu / Working with Communities to Protect and Serve*



- If a mobile phone from a pooled resource is removed from a Division/Section, the Divisional Officer may, upon written application to Superintendent Telecommunications Operations, request the suspension of the phone and the re-issue of the mobile number on a new SIM card.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will the number of pooled phones on issue to any Divisional Officer be increased. Where such circumstances exist, an application must be made to the Executive Director of ICT including a business case for the requested increase.

#### **Directory Maintenance**

- Superintendent Telecommunications Operations will maintain a register of permanently issued mobile phones.
- Divisional Officers will maintain a register of mobile phones under their control. This register must contain the following information at a minimum - (*Division, District, Station, Section, Name, Rank, Mobile No., Date Issued, Date Returned*).
- The above information will be recorded electronically and will be furnished upon request to either Superintendent Telecommunications Operations or the Executive Director of Finance and Services.

#### **Directory Enquiries**

- Access to Directory Enquiries will be restricted to one telephone in a Divisional HQ station (Divisional Control Room) and one telephone in a District HQ station (Day Room/District Control Room). All other offices will be barred from this facility.
- Personnel authorised to call Directory Enquiries shall not avail of the "call connect" facility when offered – as there is an additional cost for this service.
- Directory Enquiries will be barred by default on mobile phones.
- Offices with access to the Internet may obtain directory information at [www.goldenpages.ie](http://www.goldenpages.ie)
- Call Charge Computers are installed in all Divisional and District HQ stations and District Officers will provide reports on Directory Enquiry usage upon request by the Executive Director of ICT.
- Control Rooms are not to be used as a Directory Enquiry service. Accordingly, staff are prohibited from extending a trunk line or transferring the Directory Services Operator to another extension.
- Applications for access to Directory Enquiries for operational reasons shall be submitted via normal channels to the Executive Director of ICT.

#### **Temporary Mobile Phones**

- Applications for the allocation of mobile phones on short term temporary basis for special events/operations etc., within a Division/Section may be submitted to Superintendent Telecommunications Operations by the relevant Divisional Officer stating the reason for the additional phones and the date by which they will be returned.
- If an extension of the loan period is required this must also be communicated in writing to Superintendent Telecommunications Operations. Where a mobile issued

temporarily is over-held, Superintendent Telecommunications Operations will have the authority to deactivate the phone.

#### **Use of Mobile Phones while Driving**

- The hand-held use of an official mobile phone whilst in control of any vehicle is prohibited - this also includes periods when the vehicle is stationary in traffic. The use of wired or wireless headsets while driving is also prohibited.

#### **Official Car-Kits**

- The Executive Director of ICT will on application and in exceptional circumstances approve the issue of an official car kit.

#### **Usage and Costs**

- Use of mobile phones should be kept within the agreed mobile phone package. This package covers:
  - All calls to Irish mobile number 083/ 085/ 086/ 087 /089
  - All calls to national landlines (Excluding calls to Northern Ireland)
  - Normal text messages

Any call outside of the above package will incur additional charges e.g. calls to premium numbers, international calls or calls to non Irish mobile numbers.

Premium texts will also incur additional charges. Divisional Officers may request call detail records for any phone under their control upon written request to the Executive Director of Finance and Services.

Subscription based services or any chargeable downloads are prohibited and members will be liable for all costs incurred as a result of the improper use of official mobile phones.

International, Premium Rate, Roaming Calls/SMS are excluded from the current mobile package agreed with the mobile phone providers. Web texting using an official mobile number account should not be used. Such calls and texts will be highlighted in the monthly bills, and members may be liable for these calls if they are not work related.

It should be noted that as and from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 all members using and subscribing to premium texts will be charged for these texts.

#### **Mobile Data/Multimedia**

- Multimedia and data enabled phone facilities are not considered essential to normal Garda operational business and will be restricted to a limited number of users approved by Executive Director of ICT, based on a written submission.

#### **Text / Multimedia Messaging**

- Text and Multimedia messages will be kept to a minimum.
- It is strictly forbidden to send any messages containing harassing, abusive, obscene, defamatory, illegal or otherwise offensive content. The sending of jokes and other non-essential messages is also prohibited.
- The sending of premium rate text messages is prohibited. Members will be liable for all costs incurred.

*Ag obair le Pobail chun iad a chosaint agus chun freastal orthu / Working with Communities to Protect and Serve*

**Voicemail**

- The code for accessing voicemail is set to 0000 by default and should be changed immediately on receipt of a phone. (HQ 137/06)
- A personalised greeting will be set up and all messages returned within a reasonable time frame. In the event that an immediate response to a message cannot be given, the mobile phone user should contact the caller, and indicate when they can expect a definitive reply.
- When on leave, the voicemail message should indicate the date of return and supply a contact name and number for a colleague who will be in a position to deal with any queries.

**Hazardous Use of Mobile Phones**

- Switch off mobile phone when in an aircraft as it may interfere with the operation of the aircraft. Switch off phone near sensitive electronic equipment, e.g., hospitals, laboratories, and medical electronic devices such as hearing aids and pacemakers. Switch off phone when at a service station, chemical plant, or where blasting operations are in progress.

**Maintenance of Mobile Phones**

- Faulty mobile phones should be reported to the local Divisional Garda Telecommunications Technician and similarly requests for PIN/PUK codes should be raised with the ICT Service Desk.

**Lost or Stolen Mobile Phones**

- Where phones are lost or stolen, the Divisional Garda Telecommunications Technician, or outside normal office hours the Inspector in Charge, Command & Control will be notified immediately so that the phone can be switched off. Reports of mobile phones lost or stolen will be forwarded without delay through normal channels to the Executive Director of ICT.

HQ Directive 70/10 is hereby cancelled.



**Michael Culhane**  
**Executive Director of Finance & Services**