



Policy Document

Professional Boundaries and Abuse of Power for Sexual Purpose

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Approved by	<i>Garda Executive</i>
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Policy Owner	Assistant Commissioner, Governance & Accountability

1. Purpose

Garda Personnel must act ethically, professionally and appropriately and treat all individuals with whom they interact, in the course of their duty, with dignity and respect. Trust is a critical component of the relationship between Garda Personnel and the communities in which they serve. To ensure that this trust is maintained and communities protected, a professional boundary must exist between Garda Personnel and members of the public.

If a professional boundary is breached, or if an abuse of power for a sexual purpose occurs, it may undermine the trust and confidence communities have in An Garda Síochána.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained at all times between Garda Personnel and the public and that instances of abuse of power for sexual purpose do not occur.

Garda Personnel will be aware that through interactions they may have with members of the public, victims, suspected offenders or witnesses, there is on occasion, likely to be an imbalance of power (for example due to ongoing or situational vulnerability, conflict of interest or through the application of policing powers).

Professional Boundaries are ethical and professional standards of behaviour which limit physical and/or emotional relationships and/or interactions between Garda Personnel, or between Garda Personnel and members of the public.

Abuse of Power for Sexual Purpose means any behaviour by Garda Personnel, which takes advantage of his or her position as Garda Personnel, to misuse his or her position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with any other person.

Any abuse, or attempt to abuse power for a sexual purpose may constitute an abuse of authority that will not be tolerated.

Any attempt to establish a relationship beyond a professional capacity, or the establishment of any such relationships may constitute an abuse of authority that will not be tolerated.

This Policy (and accompanying Procedure) does not constrain Garda Personnel from forming professional relationships with members of the public. Garda Personnel are, indeed, encouraged to build professional relationships with members of the public; relationships which are compatible with the values and ethical standards of the Organisation.

As is the case in many work settings, it is not unusual for personal, emotional and/or sexual relationships to develop between Garda Personnel. *This Policy (and accompanying Procedure) does not attempt to prevent or restrict relationships from developing between colleagues.* It is, however, important to consider whether an imbalance of power, vulnerability or conflict of interest may exist within any such relationship. Where one, or more of these may exist, the accompanying Procedures provide a framework for self-referral by Garda Personnel.

2. Scope & Compliance

This document and all associated documentation applies to all An Garda Síochána personnel as defined by Section 44 of the [Policing, Security and Community Safety Act, 2024](#).



This includes Garda Trainees, Police Officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other persons seconded to An Garda Síochána in accordance with Sections [53](#), [94](#) and [93](#) of the [Policing, Security and Community Safety Act, 2024](#) respectively.

3. Policy Statement

Abuse of power can have extremely serious consequences for an individual and for society as a whole. Professional policing behaviour dictates that Garda Personnel must not abuse their policing powers or authority and must at all times treat the public they serve with dignity, respect and in a Human Rights compliant manner, in line with the [Code of Ethics for the Garda Síochána](#).

An Garda Síochána has an obligation to protect people from the risks and effects of corrupt behaviour within the Organisation and to pursue, prosecute and disrupt any form of corruption that impacts upon the delivery of a quality policing service to the community in which we serve.

Garda Personnel who attempt to abuse their power either for sexual purpose or to attempt to establish a relationship beyond a professional capacity, risk breaching the trust and confidence of the public and negatively impact on the reputation and integrity of An Garda Síochána.

All Garda Personnel are responsible for ensuring the principles contained within this document are followed and its associated Procedure document adhered to. There is a duty on all members of Garda Personnel to self-refer and/or report any breaches of this Policy or accompanying Procedure document, in line with the principles outlined in the [Code of Ethics for the Garda Síochána](#).

4. Related Documents

1. [Anti-Corruption Policy](#)
2. [Civil Service Circular 19/2016 - Civil Service Disciplinary Code](#)
3. [Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour](#)
4. [Code of Ethics for the Garda Síochána](#)
5. [Conduct Regulations Policy & Procedures](#)
6. [Data Protection Act, 2018](#)
7. [Data Protection Code of Practice for An Garda Síochána](#)
8. [\(EU\) General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) \(\(EU\) 2016/679\)](#)
9. [Garda College Academic Regulations and Procedures 2018](#)
10. [Garda Trainee and Probationer Handbook](#)
11. [HQ Directive No. 15/2025 – Conduct Regulations](#)
12. [HQ Directive No. 19/2019 – Human Rights Framework](#)
13. [HQ Directive No. 37/2019 – Garda Decision Making Model \(GDMM\)](#)
14. [HQ Directive No. 72/2014 – Protected Disclosures Act 2014](#)
15. [ICT Acceptable use Procedures](#)
16. [Policing, Security & Community Safety Act 2024](#)
17. [Policing, Security & Community Safety Act 2024 \(Section 257\) \(Conduct\) Regulations 2025](#)
18. [Professional Boundaries and Abuse of Power for Sexual Purpose Procedure](#)
19. [Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005](#)
20. [S.I. 470/2013 Garda Síochána \(Admissions and Appointments\) Regulations 2013](#)
21. [Ethics in Public Office Act 1995](#)
22. [Standards in Public Office Act 2001](#)



5. Legal & Human Rights Screening

This Policy has been Legal and Human Rights screened in terms of the respective obligations placed on An Garda Síochána for the subject area concerned.

6. Ethical Standards & Commitments

An Garda Síochána Personnel must observe and adhere to the standards and commitments set out in the [Code of Ethics for An Garda Síochána](#) and uphold and promote this Code throughout the organisation.

7. Post-Implementation Review

This Policy and associated documents will be reviewed twelve (12) months from its date of effect and every three (3) years thereafter.

8. Disclaimer

This document is not intended to, nor does it represent legal advice to be relied upon in respect of the subject matter contained herein. This document should not be used as a substitute for professional legal advice.

9. Data Protection

All Garda Personnel will process personal data for legitimate business purposes only and in line with a clearly defined lawful basis under the [General Data Protection Regulation \(\(EU\) 2016/679\)](#) and/or [Data Protection Acts 1988-2018](#), as applicable. All necessary measures will be put in place to ensure the personal data is kept safe and secure and only authorised personnel shall have access to personal data. Only relevant personal data will be processed, and will not be retained for longer than is necessary. All personnel are required to ensure that individual's data protection rights are adhered to and to identify and mitigate against any suspected data breaches.

