

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

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NORFOLK
CONSTABULARY



SUFFOLK
CONSTABULARY

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Legal Basis

Legislation specific to the subject of this policy document:

- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Employment Rights Act 2025
- Equality Act 2010

Other relevant legislation which you must check this document against (required by law)

- Human Rights Act 1998 (in particular A.14 – Prohibition of discrimination)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated Regulations
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom Of Information Act 2000

Other documentation which you must check this document against:

- College of Policing – Code of Ethics
- Police Officer Standards of Professional Behaviour
- College of Policing – Authorised Professional Practice

Other Related Documents

- Sexual Harassment Incident Reporting Form
- Grievance and Resolution Policy
- ACAS – discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Police Staff Council Standards of Professional Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation Policy

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1. Statement of Policy

- 1.1 Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies (“the Constabularies”) are committed to creating an inclusive work environment that is free from sexual harassment and victimisation where everyone can feel supported, safe and able to achieve their potential at work. The Constabularies have a zero-tolerance policy in relation to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 The aim of this policy is to:
- explain what constitutes sexual harassment;
 - make clear the professional behaviour expected of all officers, staff and police support volunteers, contractors, workers and prospective job applicants.
 - empower those affected to raise a complaint by setting out a clear process;
 - make clear the responsibility of the Constabularies, and managers, to remove sexual harassment from the workplace;
 - make clear the expectation of all individuals to be an upstander, challenging sexual harassment if observed or otherwise believed to be happening in the workplace;
 - set out the steps the Constabularies take to investigate and deal with complaints of sexual harassment.
 - ensure individuals know where to find support in the Constabularies.
- 1.3 The Constabularies are committed to ensuring this policy complies with relevant legislation and general principles of fairness and that consultation has been undertaken with all relevant staff groups.
- 1.4 Unless we have expressly stated that a policy is contractual, all our policies and procedures are non-contractual (police staff). We may update our policies at any time following consultation with UNISON and/or Federation as applicable.
- 1.5 All our policies promote equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination and actively promote good relations regardless of a person’s age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, economic or family status. Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all officers and staff have a shared responsibility in ensuring its success.
- 1.6 This policy has been formally agreed via the approved policy development and review process. It will be maintained by the HR Department in conjunction with the Central Policy Unit.

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- 1.7 The Constabularies will review this policy periodically to ensure that it reflects appropriate standards, continues to meet our needs and reflects any changes in legislation.
- 1.8 The Director of People has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. Day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review has been delegated to the HR Managers, HR Delivery.

2. Applicability

- 2.1 This policy applies to all police officers, police staff, Special Constabulary personnel, police support volunteers, casual workers, and anyone else we engage to work for the Constabularies (e.g. contractors, agency workers). It also applies to job applicants and is relevant to all stages of the employment relationship.
- 2.2 The policy covers sexual harassment in the workplace, including working from home, as well as in any work-related setting outside the workplace or outside working hours such as training courses and work-related social events, or on social media.
- 2.3 There may also be circumstances where someone experiences unwanted conduct from a third party during the course of their work, for example partnership workers, suppliers or visitors. We will take appropriate action against any complaints of sexual harassment by a third party.

3. What is sexual harassment?

- 3.1 **Sexual Harassment** is specifically defined by the Equality Act 2010 as:
 - Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether physical, verbal or non-verbal, even if a single incident, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
 - less favourable treatment that occurs as a result of a rejection of, or submission to, unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or unwanted conduct related to sex or gender reassignment.
- 3.2 Sexual harassment can happen regardless of the individual's or alleged perpetrator's sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 3.3 The Constabularies recognise, however, that evidence suggests women are significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment than men and that there is a gender imbalance in relation to sexual harassment. If sexualised behaviour and sexual objectification of women is perceived to be tolerated in the workplace, it is more likely that sexual harassment will occur.

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- 3.4 Sexual harassment is usually directed at an individual or minority group, but this is not always the case. It may be perpetrated by one individual, a pair, a small group, a large group.
- 3.5 Sexual harassment in the workplace may occur from, for example:
- someone you work with;
 - a manager, supervisor or someone else in a position of authority;
 - a third party such as a member of the public or visitor.
- 3.6 Sexual harassment need not be sexually motivated; it only needs to be sexual in nature, and includes a wide range of behaviours including but not limited to:
- sexual comments or jokes;
 - sexual gestures;
 - making sexual remarks to or about a person;
 - suggestive looks, staring or leering;
 - propositions and sexual advances;
 - uninvited discussion of one's sex life or inappropriate discussion of sex life;
 - sexual posts or contact on social media;
 - spreading sexual rumours about a person;
 - sending sexually explicit emails, texts or WhatsApp messages;
 - displaying sexually explicit images, pictures or photos;
 - making promises for sexual favours;
 - unwanted physical touching, hugging, massaging or kissing;
 - predatory behaviour;
 - criminal behaviour, including sexual assault, stalking, grooming, indecent exposure and sending offensive communications.
- 3.7 Sometimes there can be a culture of sexual harassment in a workplace that's not specifically aimed at one person – such as sharing sexual images and leering at individuals or groups. Someone could still make a complaint of sexual harassment in this situation even if they were not the intended target.
- 3.8 Sexual harassment can be a one-off event and does not need to be directed at a person. It can be witnessed or overheard.
- 3.9 Sexual conduct or interaction that has been welcomed or tolerated in the past may, over time, become unwanted and if it continues, becomes harassment. However, there is no need for an individual to have already

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made it clear that conduct is unwanted in order for it to constitute harassment.

- 3.10 It is also recognised that there is an issue of intersecting protected characteristics in relation to sexual harassment, and that there may be additional concerns in relation to, for example, racialised sexual harassment and sexual harassment aimed at LGBTQ+, disabled or younger workers.

4. Our commitment to you

- 4.1 The Constabularies will ensure all reasonable steps are taken to prevent sexual harassment of our staff in the course of their work. This will include:
- ensuring all new starters undertake sexual harassment training and are made aware of this policy as part of their induction programme;
 - requiring all staff to undertake sexual harassment training;
 - monitoring our workplace culture through anonymous people opinion surveys, exit interviews, one-to-one conversations, return-to-work meetings and management meetings to identify and address any issues;
 - ensuring that our zero-tolerance approach is communicated to all who work for us and third parties that we may have contact with.
- 4.2 The Constabularies will also take reasonable steps to prevent third-party sexual harassment. These may include warning notices to members of the public or recorded messages at the beginning of telephone calls.
- 4.3 If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, the Constabularies will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. These may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from the Constabularies' premises, reporting any criminal acts, and sharing information within the Constabularies.
- 4.4 We take all reports of sexual harassment seriously and will address them promptly and with the greatest degree of confidentiality possible.
- 4.5 We will investigate all reports and complaints fairly, and, if appropriate, will take disciplinary/misconduct action against the perpetrator(s); which in serious cases could result in dismissal for police officers and police staff.
- 4.6 The Constabularies will take into account any aggravating factors, such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague, when deciding the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary action to take.
- 4.7 If any sexual harassment of staff occurs, the Constabularies will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. These may include updating relevant policies, providing further staff training and taking disciplinary action against the perpetrator.

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- 4.8 Third-party sexual harassment occurs where a person is sexually harassed by someone who does not work for, and who is not an agent of, the same employer, but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their employment. Third-party harassment could include, for example, unwelcome sexual advances from a client, customer, partnership worker or supplier visiting the employer's premises, or where a member of staff is visiting a client, customer, partnership worker or supplier's premises or other location in the course of their employment.
- 4.9 All staff are encouraged to report any third-party harassment they are a victim of, or witness, in accordance with this policy.
- 4.10 Any sexual harassment by a member of staff against a third party may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 4.11 On 6 April 2026 further protections came into effect which extend whistleblowing safeguards to protect workers who report sexual harassment. The law now makes it explicit that workers who raise concerns about sexual harassment will be protected under the whistleblowing legislation.
- 4.12 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. Please see the force Whistleblowing Policy for further information and reporting processes.

5. What we expect from you

- 5.1 Everyone has a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment that is free from sexual harassment and to treat all colleagues with dignity and respect. It is imperative that all staff:
- understand and adhere to the Standards of Professional Behaviour and treat colleagues with dignity and respect;
 - report any concerns of sexual harassment witnessed to a manager or HR, co-operating with any investigations as required.
 - do not prejudge or victimise the complainant or alleged harasser if a complaint of sexual harassment has been made;
 - give support to anyone who may have been sexually harassed;
 - undertake mandatory training as directed.
- 5.2 Line managers have a particular responsibility to:
- implement the Constabularies' zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment;
 - ensure their staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and lead by example;
 - consider issuing appropriate communications to their teams ahead of key events/celebrations e.g. work Christmas parties;

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- ensure there is a pro-active and supportive working environment;
- intervene to stop sexual harassment;
- support their staff when any allegations of sexual harassment are made.

5.3 Line managers are encouraged to seek advice or support from their HR Advisor regarding any concerns of sexual harassment or unwanted behaviour in their teams.

6. Standards of Professional Behaviour

6.1 The Standards of Professional Behaviour define how officers and staff should behave, what conduct is acceptable and what is unacceptable. The police staff standards are listed at Appendix A. The police officer standards are listed at Appendix B.

6.2 We must all take the time to consider the types of behaviour that are unacceptable or may be unwanted or cause offence – we should treat everyone with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment can cause stress and affects health and wellbeing. It may affect work performance and can even cause people to leave their job.

6.3 For the purpose of this policy the following standards are highlighted.

- Individuals are expected to act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.
- Individuals should not abuse their powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals.
- All individuals are to challenge, where appropriate and/or possible, but always report, improper conduct.

7. What to do if you have experienced sexual harassment or witnessed sexual harassment against others?

General principles

7.1 As a general principle, the decision whether to progress a complaint is up to you. However, we have a duty to protect all our staff and may pursue the matter independently, if, in all the circumstances, it is appropriate to do so.

7.2 We encourage anyone who feels that they have experienced sexual harassment or has witnessed sexual harassment against another individual, to come forward with their concerns. This will enable us to take appropriate action and provide support. We will help people to have open conversations, engage in resolution of complaints and incidents reported and, where appropriate, implement a disciplinary or misconduct process against the perpetrator.

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- 7.3 Sexual harassment can be clear cut, but sometimes unwanted behaviour can start at a low level and gradually escalate. If you are concerned, you should keep a record of any incidents or behaviour. It's important that notes are contemporaneous and kept in a safe place, whether handwritten or made electronically. This will be useful evidence if the behaviour continues and you wish to make a report.
- 7.4 When making a record of relevant incidents or behaviour you should include:
- the date it occurred,
 - what was said or done and by whom,
 - how it made you feel,
 - anyone else who was present or witnessed the incident.

Informal reporting route

Bully/harasser is a member of staff

- 7.5 If you have experienced or witnessed unwanted conduct or behaviour it may be possible to sort out the situation informally. If you feel able to, you may decide to approach the person yourself, to make it clear that you find their behaviour offensive or unwelcome and ask them to stop immediately. They may not be aware that their behaviour is offending you.
- 7.6 Alternatively, if you do not feel able to speak directly to the individual, you may consider asking your manager, HR, or a representative of Federation or UNISON (if you are a member), for support. You may or may not want a manager or HR to talk to the individual on your behalf and we will respect your wishes. However, if the welfare or safety of you or others is at risk or where your allegations are particularly serious, it may be necessary to approach the individual and instigate a formal investigation. In such a case we will, wherever possible, discuss this with you first.
- 7.7 If you are a witness to sexual harassment, but not affected personally, you are encouraged to take appropriate steps to address it. Depending on the circumstances, this could include:
- intervening where you feel able to do so;
 - supporting the victim to report it;
 - reporting the incident where you feel there may be a continuing risk if you do not report it;
 - co-operating in any investigation into the incident.

Bully/harasser is a third party

- 7.8 If you are experiencing bullying or harassment by a third party, we encourage you to report this to your manager or HR without delay so that they can advise and support you on the best course of action.

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Formal reporting route

- 7.9 If an informal approach doesn't resolve the situation to your satisfaction, or you don't feel comfortable addressing the person directly, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can raise it formally.
- 7.10 You will need to put the details in writing – you can use the 'Incident Reporting Form' which has to guidance to help you with this, and send it to your line manager, head of department, or direct to HR. Any line manager or head of department that receives a written complaint should contact their HR Advisor without delay.
- 7.11 Upon receipt of your formal complaint, an HR Advisor will be assigned and will make contact with you and discuss next steps and the most appropriate way forward.
- 7.12 Where the concerns are too serious to address informally, we will follow our formal grievance procedure as set out in our Grievance Policy. This will usually involve an investigation carried out by an appointed Resolution Manager. You can be accompanied by a colleague or a member of Federation or UNISON (if you are a member) at any meetings we may ask you to attend to help resolve the situation.
- 7.13 We will ensure that you and the person you are complaining about are not required to work together whilst we investigate.
- 7.14 If there is any indication that matters raised by you may amount to potential misconduct by an officer, an immediate referral must be made to PSD. In such circumstances the Resolution Manager should seek detailed advice from HR on how to proceed. Please note that any such referral may impact the timescale for conclusion of grievance process, but is unavoidable due to the requirement to comply with the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020. Subject to data protection requirements, we will notify you whether any misconduct or disciplinary proceedings are being instigated. In all cases, it is not your decision as to the action that should result.
- 7.15 If your complaint is otherwise upheld, appropriate action will be instigated to seek to resolve the issues raised.
- 7.16 Where the alleged harasser is a third party, we will conduct an appropriate investigation.
- 7.17 Any individual who deliberately provides false information in bad faith, or who otherwise acts in bad faith as part of an investigation, may be subject to disciplinary action. However, you will not be disciplined or treated detrimentally because your complaint has not been upheld.
- 7.18 Regardless of the outcome, we will support you and those involved in making arrangements to continue or resume working together, and to help repair working relationships, which may include encouraging you to engage in mediation. We will consider making arrangements to avoid those

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involved having to continue to work alongside each other, if either party wishes to do this.

7.19 If you report sexual harassment that you have witnessed (and have not been personally affected by), you will receive confirmation from HR that the matter is being dealt with appropriately. If there is any indication that an allegation needs to be addressed via the misconduct or disciplinary process, this may result in proceedings against the person who has been reported. Subject to data protection requirements, we will notify you whether any proceedings are being instigated. In all cases, it is not the decision of the reporting party as to the action that should result.

7.20 All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support.

8. What happens if I am accused of sexual harassment?

8.1 If someone speaks to you about your behaviour, remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to be respected. If you have offended someone without intending to, the person concerned may be satisfied with an explanation and an apology, and assurance from you that you will not behave that way again.

8.2 If a formal report is made against you, we will investigate and may instigate proceedings under our Disciplinary Policy or Misconduct Policy, as applicable, to deal with the issue as a possible case of misconduct or gross misconduct.

8.3 We will make arrangements so that you and the individual who made the report, or is impacted by the allegations, are not required to work together while we investigate.

8.4 If it is found that you have committed, authorised or condoned an act of sexual harassment a sanction may be imposed, up to and including dismissal with or without notice.

8.5 You should be aware that you could be also held personally liable to pay compensation in the event of a claim for discrimination.

8.6 Investigations into allegations of sexual harassment, may also lead to a criminal investigation being instigated. Where there are concerns that a criminal act has taken place, advice will be taken from PSD. If a criminal act is suspected, any action taken must avoid prejudicing the criminal investigation. Appropriate action will be taken depending on the circumstances.

8.7 You must not victimise anyone who has made a report or complaint of sexual harassment against you, nor anyone who has supported them in making the complaint or given evidence about the matter. Disciplinary action will be taken against you if we have good reason to believe that you may have victimised someone.

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9. Ex-officers and ex-staff

- 9.1 Anyone who no longer works for the Constabularies who has experienced sexual harassment during the course of their service/employment can still report incidents. They should write to the Director of People as soon as possible, including as much information as possible. This will be reviewed by the Director of People and acted upon in accordance with our Disciplinary or Misconduct procedures, as appropriate.

10. Advice and Support

- 10.1 We understand that people may be apprehensive about raising harassment concerns of a sexual nature. We therefore encourage individuals to seek advice and support, either from their line manager or a more senior manager, another manager they feel comfortable speaking to, an HR Advisor or Manager, a Federation or UNISON representative (if a member), or a representative from another staff association or support group. Whomever you confide in will sensitively discuss with you the options for reporting and/or addressing your concerns.
- 10.2 We also understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint of sexual harassment may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you.
- 10.3 The line manager remains responsible for the welfare of any member of their team who raises a concern or report of sexual harassment, as well as any one of their team whom an incident of sexual harassment is reported against or complaint raised against.
- 10.4 You can also access confidential support and counselling from our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). To access the EAP site please [click here](#) or go to Constabularies' intranet pages.
- 10.5 Any manager who is concerned about a person's welfare or mental health should submit a management referral to Workplace Health. If the concern relates to the immediate safety of anyone who may be at risk of self-harm or suicide, a SASH notification form must be completed as soon as this is identified. In such circumstances the decision may be taken to contact the family members/next of kin as held on that person's HR personal file, as this risk would outweigh confidentiality obligations.
- 10.6 For information and contact details on the Constabularies' wider support networks, please go to the Staff Support Networks pages on the intranet. These networks are available to offer advice and support to their members.
- 10.7 Information and support can also be obtained from the following external services:
- The Equality Advisory and Support Service (www.equalityadvisoryservice.com).
 - Protect (www.protect-advice.org.uk).

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- Victim support (www.victimsupport.org.uk).
- Rape crisis (www.rapecrisis.org.uk).
- Rights of women (England and Wales) (www.rightsofwomen.org.uk).

11. Sensitivity and Confidentiality

- 11.1 Anyone involved with an informal or formal complaint about sexual harassment, including witnesses, must keep the matter strictly confidential and act with appropriate sensitivity to all parties.
- 11.2 If you are found to have breached confidentiality or acted without due care or sensitivity in a sexual harassment case, we may take disciplinary or misconduct action against you up to and including dismissal.
- 11.3 All personal data collected is processed and retained in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. In particular, data collected in relation to the investigation of sexual harassment complaints is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints and conducting an investigation.
- 11.4 We will treat all reports of sexual harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations and future management of risk, if allegations are upheld, will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, the individual whom the sexual harassment has been reported about will need to know the identity of the person that reported it; also some details may have to be given to potential witnesses but this will be limited as far as possible, while ensuring a fair and sufficiently thorough investigation. The importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to witnesses.
- 11.5 HR will keep records of relevant correspondence and documents relating to the reported incident(s) of sexual harassment on the individual's HR personal file on a confidential basis.
- 11.6 If any meetings have been digitally recorded, this record will also be retained on the personal file of the individual who reported the sexual harassment and made available to that individual upon their request.
- 11.7 Any individual whom allegations of sexual harassment have been made against, will have a record held on their personal file of any action to be taken or outcome concluded that concerns them.

12. Monitoring

- 12.1 A central record of sexual harassment incidents will be held for monitoring by HR. Sufficient detail will be recorded to allow for trend analysis of such incidents, to ensure that cases are dealt with consistently and that complaints are properly investigated and resolved, to confirm that those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, and to identify any further

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and future preventative action to be taken, including dealing with repeat offenders appropriately, identifying and resolving cultural clashes and targeting training where necessary.

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Appendix A: Standards of Professional Behaviour – Police Staff

The following is an overview of the standards of professional behaviour for police staff. Full guidance on the standards can be found [here](#).

Honesty and Integrity

Police staff are honest, act with integrity at all times and do not compromise or abuse their position.

Authority, Respect and Courtesy

Police staff act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy. Police staff do not abuse their powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals.

Equality and Diversity

Police staff act with fairness and impartiality. They do not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

Use of Restraint

Police staff only use restraint as part of their roles and responsibilities to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all the circumstances.

Instructions

Police staff only give and carry out reasonable instructions. Police staff follow all reasonable instructions and abide by force policies.

Work and Responsibilities

Police staff are diligent in the exercise of their work and responsibilities

Confidentiality

Police staff treat information with respect and access or disclose it only in the proper course of their work.

Fitness for Work

Police staff when at work are fit to carry out their duties.

Discreditable Conduct

Police staff behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence in the police service. Police staff report any conviction or caution against them for a criminal offence.

Challenging and Reporting Improper Conduct

Police staff whilst at work report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which have fallen below the standards of professional behaviour expected.

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Appendix B: Standards of Professional Behaviour – Police Officers

1. Honesty and integrity

I will be honest and act with integrity at all times and will not compromise or abuse my position.

2. Authority, respect and courtesy

I will act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.

I will use my powers and authority lawfully and proportionately and will respect the rights of all individuals.

3. Equality and diversity

I will act with fairness and impartiality.

I will not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

4. Use of force

I will only use force as part of my role and responsibilities, and only to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all the circumstances.

5. Orders and instructions

I will, as a police officer, give and carry out lawful orders only, and will abide by Police Regulations.

I will give reasonable instructions only, and will follow all reasonable instructions.

6. Duties and responsibilities

I will be diligent in the exercise of my duties and responsibilities.

7. Confidentiality

I will treat information with respect, and access or disclose it only in the proper course of my duties.

8. Fitness for work

I will ensure, when on duty or at work, that I am fit to carry out my responsibilities.

9. Conduct

I will behave in a manner, whether on or off duty, which does not bring discredit on the police service or undermine public confidence in policing.

10. Challenging and reporting improper behaviour

I will report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which has fallen below the standards of professional behaviour.

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