

#MoreWomen
WOMEN
FOR ELECTION



Safety Guidance for
**Candidates
in Elections**

Second Edition

Why this Guide?

Political debate and discussion underpin our democratic processes and are a key component of public life.

The majority of your interactions as a candidate with members of the public will be pleasant and rewarding. However, on occasion, you may interact with someone who is intimidating or threatening, online or in-person. This can cause some candidates to question whether they have made the right decision to participate in public life. Woman candidates in particular may experience a disproportionate level of unacceptable behaviour, including online abuse and harassment.

[An Garda Síochána, Women for Election](#) and [See Her Elected](#) have produced this guide to give candidates tools to recognise and respond to intimidatory or criminal behaviour. We understand that this knowledge won't stop an incident from occurring, but you may feel more prepared and supported.



What might happen?

The election period places pressures on candidates. This will include greater scrutiny on you and your political standpoint. You will be subject to heightened public exposure.

For the majority of candidates, and for most of the time, these pressures won't impact on your personal safety. There can be robust political debate, however there have been occasions when candidates have been exposed to harassment and intimidation. This can have a significant psychological impact on candidates and those close to them and can affect their wellbeing. In some cases, these behaviours and actions have reached the criminal threshold.

It is important to recognise what might happen and the action you can take. The advice contained in this guide applies to both your political and private life - harassment and intimidation may also be directed at your family, friends, and co-workers. In addition to occurring in public life, these behaviours and actions can primarily occur in online spaces.

Protecting Yourself, Family, Friends, and Colleagues

These are some safety measures you can take when you are out canvassing or meeting the public:

- Avoid, where possible, going alone or in the dark. Aim to be canvassing in pairs.
- If you are required to canvas alone, ensure someone is aware of where you are canvassing and what time to expect you home at. Update them on your movements. Stick to the plan.
- When canvassing as a team, keep track of each other and know the whereabouts of other teammates. Do not leave people behind on doors.
- When you knock on the door, step back to allow space between you and the householder.
- Have a code word with your canvassing partner or team and use if needed.
- Set up a plan with your team for what to do at a negative door. If you or any of your team feel unsafe, disengage from the situation, and walk away.
- You may know the local area well but if you are unsure of a specific area or are uncomfortable, move on.
- Don't enter a person's residence. If necessary, take details of an issue and deal with the matter later by phone or email.
- If an incident does arise, ensure a check in with the team, discuss what happened, make a note, and assess if you need to go to the authorities.
- Prioritise after care with canvass debriefs.
- When meeting someone you don't know, meet in public and bring a member of your team. Let someone know where you are.



Protecting Yourself Online

Social media is a key tool for engaging with your constituents. However, it can also be a space for abuse and harassment. It's important to protect yourself online.

These are some measures you can take to protect yourself and your information online:

- Don't use your personal email addresses or accounts for your campaign. Create a campaign email address and use this to create your campaign social media accounts. Put your personal accounts on private.
- Use two factor authentication (2FA) on your social media and email accounts.

How to set up 2FA: [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [X](#) (Formerly known as Twitter) / [Tik Tok](#) / [Snapchat](#) / [Gmail](#)

- Use strong and unique passwords. Consider using a password manager.
- Use a new phone number specifically for your campaign.
- Should you experience any harassment, abuse or threats online - do not engage and keep a record.
- Screenshot any incidents and keep them in a folder in your phone. Report the user online and block them.

- Consider turning off comments online on all platforms.
- Always report incidents - social media companies can track recurring behaviours.

How to report: [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [X](#) / [Tik Tok](#) / [Snapchat](#)

- Block any user who is behaving in a threatening manner.

How to block: [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [X](#) / [Tik Tok](#) / [Snapchat](#)

- See Women for Election short video on safety tips online [here](#).



What to do in the Event of an Incident

- Call for help - if you notice any unusual activity or suspicious strangers, contact the Gardaí, abandon your plan, and get the attention of other members of the public.
- Trust your instincts and walk away from the situation if you are uncomfortable.
- Always keep a record of any abuse, harassment or intimidating behaviour- whether online or in-person.
- Write down what happens, the time, date and details.
- Let your team, Party, and An Garda Síochána know.
- Call 999 or 112 in an emergency.

Posters

- Posters may be removed by the local authority for not adhering to the rules of elections posterage.
- However, missing or stolen posters can be reported to An Garda Síochána as property theft.

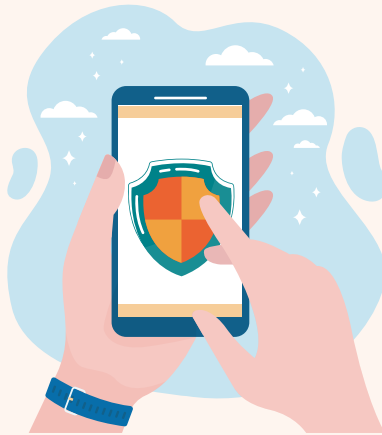
Responding to a Criminal Attack

Being aware of your security risk and taking the right safety measures will help to reduce or prevent your risk of a criminal attack. If, however, someone attacks you or tries to attack you:

- Obey any instructions.
- Contact the Gardaí as soon as possible, once it is safe to do so.
- Don't interfere with the crime scene.
- Do not give out any information about any incident without prior approval of the Gardaí.

Dealing with an Anonymous and Threatening Phone Call

- Keep the caller talking and note exact date and time and details such as their age, gender, accent, manner or if they have knowledge of your personal details and any threat posed.
- Listen for any background noises.
- Contact the Gardaí immediately afterwards



When should I contact An Garda Síochána?

The actions and behaviours listed below may constitute a criminal offence and should be brought to the attention of your local Gardai:

- Communications online or offline that contain abusive or threatening language.
- Repeated unwanted contact may constitute harassment or stalking. (more below).
- Racial, homophobic, transphobic or other discriminatory abuse or threats. You can report a hate crime directly to An Garda Síochána [here](#).
- Fixation on you or anything to do with your campaign.

The following indicators may signal an escalation and should be brought to the attention of An Garda Síochána immediately by calling 999 or 112.

- Threat or imminent violence.
- Fixated ideas – someone being set on a course of action or making a very specific type of threat or reference to a plan.
- If you become aware that the individual has access to weapons.
- If the person releases personal information about you not in the public domain.



How do I contact An Garda Síochána?



See [Appendix 1](#) for Divisional Liaison Inspectors

– Supporting Safe Participation in Political Life

See [Appendix 2](#) for Divisional Crime Prevention Officers

– Providing Crime Prevention and Personal Safety Advice

How do I report an emergency?

Always call **999** or **112** in an emergency.

An emergency is any incident which requires an immediate Garda response, for example:

- A danger to life
- Risk of serious injury
- Crime in progress or about to happen
- Offender still at scene or has just left.

How do I report other crimes?

To report a non-emergency crime, you can contact your local or any Garda Station. A Garda can take a report of a crime from you in person in any station. Contact details of your local Garda Station should be readily to hand in both your home and place of work, and on speed dial on your home and mobile phones.

Telephone numbers for all Garda stations and key offices are available on the Garda website [here](#)

If you have queries, would like to inform Gardaí of an incident or would like further assistance, contact your Divisional Liaison Inspector - details in [Appendix 1](#) below.

Can I report crime online?

You can report the theft of property that is valued at €1,000 or less online [here](#).

NOTE: Do not use this online declaration if:

- the incident is happening now
- an offender is still at the scene or nearby
- evidence has been left at the scene.

Hate Crime

Click [here](#) to report a hate crime online

Always report any incident you perceive as motivated by hate to An Garda Síochána. In an emergency call **999/112**.

You will be attended to by a Garda who will take your report.

- They will make an assessment to commence an investigation. An investigation will involve gathering evidence such as taking statements from victim(s) and witnesses, etc.
- You will be offered a choice to be referred to victim support.
- You will be kept informed of developments throughout the investigation.

There are hundreds of Garda Diversity Officers appointed throughout the country who can assist you in the course of the investigation, if you so wish.

Should you not wish to attend your local Garda station, you can seek the services of the Garda National Diversity Unit, who will act as liaison with your local Garda station or Garda Diversity Officer.

Should you require further information about hate crime, please contact the staff at the Garda National Diversity Unit, who will deal with any query on this.

Incident Logging

Women for Election and other organisations supporting candidate and campaign team safety are collecting information about any threatening incidents, online or offline, experienced by all candidates - men and women - in General Election campaigns, including damage to property (e.g. posters).

- This will help establish an evidence base of incidents and build understanding of patterns and trends that will help organisations such as WfE and Political Parties to better support candidates.
- While reporting abuse or threatening behaviours to the Gardaí or a social media platform should be the first option, we would appreciate logging of incidents as below.
- If you can, could you send details including screenshots/pictures of any online or offline incidents via SMS/Whatsapp to **(087) 116 1060** or via email to incidents@womenforelection.ie. More details on how we will collect and use the information are [here](#).

Key Contacts

Support

Women for Election

Email:

hello@womenforelection.ie

Phone: (01) 672 8050



See Her Elected

Email:

info@seeherelected.ie

Phone: 0860320455



Crime Victim Helpline

Immigrant Council of Ireland

Other

Electoral Commission

Coimisiún na Meán

(Online Safety Commissioner)

National Cyber Security Centre

(Guidance for Election Candidates)

For more information on harassment see [here](#).

For more information on hate crime see [here](#).

For more information on stalking see [here](#).

Protecting yourself in your car

Protecting your home



Legislative Guidance

There is a range of public policy, including legislation, to safeguard and support those in political life. There is no requirement or expectation for a person reporting an allegation of crime to have knowledge of criminal law. This guidance is intended to assist candidates to recognise conduct which may fall under criminal law. In any circumstance where a candidate in an election believes that a criminal offence may have been committed, they are encouraged to report it to the Gardaí.

Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights 'Right to Life'

A Threat to Life invokes a response under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights 'Right to Life', placing an obligation on An Garda Síochána to take reasonable steps to protect a person whose life is in danger.

Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997

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|------------|--|
| Section 2 | Assault. |
| Section 3 | Assault causing harm. |
| Section 4 | Causing serious harm. |
| Section 5 | Threats to kill or cause serious harm. |
| Section 10 | Harassment. |
| Section 15 | False imprisonment. |

Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994

| | |
|------------|--|
| Section 4 | Intoxication in public place. |
| Section 5 | Disorderly conduct in public place. |
| Section 6 | Threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour in public place. |
| Section 7 | Distribution or display in public place of material which is threatening, abusive, insulting or obscene. |
| Section 8 | Failure to comply with direction of member of Garda Síochána. |
| Section 9 | Wilful obstruction. |
| Section 13 | Trespass on building, etc. |
| Section 14 | Riot. |
| Section 15 | Violent disorder. |
| Section 16 | Affray. |
| Section 19 | Assault or obstruction of peace officer. |

EU Digital Services Act: Illegal Content Online

Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's Digital Services Coordinator under the EU Digital Services Act (DSA). The DSA is EU-wide legislation that regulates online services like marketplaces, social networks, app stores, and online travel and accommodation platforms. It requires these online services to take some steps to help make the internet safer for users by addressing illegal content, or content that goes against a platform's own rules on their services.

Under the law, platforms must provide a way for users to report illegal content. If the content is illegal, the online platform must act quickly to disable it or remove it. When a user reports content, the platform must respond to the report and tell the user what they have done (e.g. removing the content) and tell the user about their right to appeal the platform's initial decision. Equally, when a platform removes, downranks or demonetises content, they must tell the user who uploaded the content what action the platform has taken and why. If you come across illegal content on an online platform, you should report it to the platform. If you are not satisfied with the response, or if you cannot find the platform's process for reporting illegal content, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán [here](#).

Coimisiún na Meán can receive complaints from users who believe that a provider of an online service has not complied with its obligations under the (DSA). Any user of the service based in the Republic of Ireland and any organisation authorised to act on behalf of a user. Coimisiún na Meán's role is to oversee how platforms comply with the law at a systemic level.

Content is illegal if it is in breach of the law of Ireland or another EU Member State, or of EU law. There are a number of criminal offences under Irish law that may be applicable to the types of online content that often cause concern. (See Page 15 for what illegal content includes.)

You may see content online that you do not approve of, or think should not be online. This does not necessarily mean that the content is illegal. You should always report content to the platform where they saw it if you have concerns, but outside of what is illegal, platforms are free to set their own rules for what content is permissible.

Coimisiún na Meán Online Safety Code

A legally binding set of rules have been published by Coimisiún na Meán to regulate video sharing on media platforms whose EU headquarters are based in Ireland. Companies such as Facebook, TikTok, X, Instagram are bound by the code and face fines if they are in breach of the code. Content constituting cyberbullying, promoting self-harm or suicide and promoting eating or feeding disorders, incitement to hatred or violence, terrorism, child sex abuse material, racism and xenophobia is prohibited.

Coimisiún na Meán Candidate Safety Information Pack

Coimisiún na Meán have published an information pack for candidates on keeping safe online during elections.

Illegal content includes:

| | |
|--|---|
| A credible threat of violence | Section 5 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 |
| Part of a campaign of harassment (such as cyberbullying) | Section 10 of Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 |
| A threatening or grossly offensive communication | Section 4 of the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 |
| Threatening, abusive or insulting and likely to stir up hatred against a group of people on account of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, membership of the travelling community or sexual orientation | Section 2 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989 |
| An unsolicited image of someone's genitals that causes distress, fear or alarm | Section 45 (1) of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 |
| Offensive conduct of a sexual nature | Section 45 (3) of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 |
| An intimate image shared without consent | Section 3 of the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 |
| Encouragement of a person to attempt suicide or information that would help them do so | Section 2(2) of the Criminal Law (Suicide) Act 1993 |
| Child sex abuse material or an advertisement for child sex abuse material | Section 5(1) of the Child Trafficking & Pornography Act 1998 |
| Encouragement of terrorist activity or a threat to commit an act of terrorism | Section 6 of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 |

Appendix 1

Divisional Liaison Inspectors

- Supporting Safe Participation in Political Life

| Division | Inspector | Email |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| DMR South Central | Inspector Aidan Murphy | Aidan.P.Murphy@garda.ie |
| DMR North Central | Inspector Ken Hoare | Kenneth.a.hoare@garda.ie |
| DMR SOUTH | Inspector Nigel McInaw | Nigel.m.mcinaw@garda.ie |
| DMR NORTH | Inspector Sean Earley | Sean.p.earley@garda.ie |
| DMR EAST | Inspector Francis Gormley | Gareth.f.gormley@garda.ie |
| DMR WEST | Inspector Martin Geraghty | Martin.g.geraghty@garda.ie |
| Carlow | Inspector Conor Nolan | conor.p.nolan@garda.ie |
| Kilkenny | Inspector Alma Molloy | alma.j.molloy@garda.ie |
| Cavan/Monaghan/ Louth | Inspector Ciarán Clancy | brian.c.clancy@garda.ie |
| Clare | Inspector Andrew Lyons | andrew.p.lyons@garda.ie |
| Cork City | Inspector James Hallahan | james.a.hallahan@garda.ie |
| Cork County | D/ Inspector Eamonn Brady | eamonn.j.brady@garda.ie |
| Cork County | Inspector John O' Connell | john.ma.oconnell@garda.ie |
| Donegal | D/Inspector David Durkin | david.f.durkin@garda.ie |
| Galway | D/Inspector Brendan Carroll | Brendan.carroll@garda.ie |
| Galway County | D/Inspector Gary McEntee | Gerard.P.McEntee@garda.ie |
| Kerry | D/Inspector Liam McGraynor | liam.p.mcgraynor@garda.ie |
| Kildare | Inspector Gavin Dunphy | Gavin.m.dunphy@garda.ie |
| Laois/Offaly | Inspector Joe Culliton | Joseph.p.culliton@garda.ie |
| Limerick | Inspector Martyn Wallace | martyn.g.wallace@garda.ie |
| Mayo/Roscommon/Longford | Inspector David Jordan | david.f.jordan@garda.ie |
| Meath | Inspector Alan Roughneen | alan.t.roughneen@garda.ie |
| Sligo/Leitrim | D/Inspector Ray Mulderrig | Raymond.Mulderrig@Garda.ie |
| Tipperary | Inspector Andrew Lyons | andrew.p.lyons@garda.ie |
| Waterford | D/Inspector Donal Donohue | Donal.j.donohue@garda.ie |
| Westmeath | D/Inspector Tom Quinn | thomas.f.quinn@garda.ie |
| Wicklow | D/Inspector Seamus Ryan | Seamus.m.ryan@garda.ie |
| Wexford | D/Inspector Padhraic Roberts | Paraic.w.roberts@garda.ie |

Appendix 2

Divisional Crime Prevention Officers

- Providing Crime Prevention and Personal Safety Advice

For more information regarding the crime prevention officer in your area, please click [here](#)

Garda National Crime Prevention Unit
Garda Headquarters
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8
D08 HN3X

