

#MoreWomen
WOMEN
FOR ELECTION



Safety Guidance for
Candidates
in Elections

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 need to go 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](#) (Formally 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.**

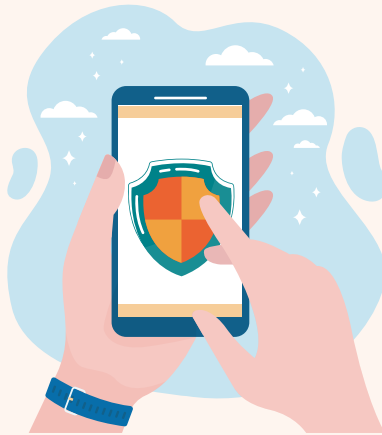
Responding to a Criminal Attack

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, 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 Gardaí:

- 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 **112** or **999** 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 Gardai 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.

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

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

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.

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.)*

Information on how to make a complaint under the Digital Services Act may be found here: <https://www.cnam.ie/onlinecomplaints/>

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.

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 / Kilkenny	D/Inspector Siobhan Keating	Siobhan.m.keating@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
Laos/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



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