

Maintaining Professional Boundaries and Standards of Behaviour

The aim of this statement is to clarify the distinction that must exist between the professional and personal relationships of members of Nottinghamshire Police with victims, offenders and/or witnesses to achieve a shared understanding of acceptable practice. This will ensure the understanding and application of the Standards of Professional Behaviour in a clear and consistent manner across Nottinghamshire Police.

AIMS

Trust is a critical component of the relationship between Nottinghamshire Police and the communities of Nottinghamshire. To ensure that this trust is maintained and communities protected, a professional boundary should exist between the relationships of members of Nottinghamshire Police and victims, offenders and/or witnesses. If this boundary is breached, it will undermine the trust of the communities of Nottinghamshire in its officers and staff or more widely, the police service. In some circumstances the breach may even constitute a criminal offence of 'Misconduct in a Public office'.

STATEMENT

The Standards of Professional Behaviour for both police officers and police staff clearly identify that they should not abuse their powers, or authority, and respect the rights of all individuals. Officers and staff should be aware that in their dealings with victims, witnesses and offenders there is likely to be an imbalance of power (for example due to ongoing or situational vulnerability or through powers of office) and that an attempt to establish a relationship beyond the purely professional may constitute an abuse of that power.

The PROUD values identify that to demonstrate the professional ethic expected by Nottinghamshire Police, officers and staff require clear standards of performance and behaviour in line with the relevant Codes of Conduct for officers and staff.

To ensure that there can be no misunderstanding as to the professional standards expected from all members of Nottinghamshire Police in relation to maintaining boundaries, the following additional guidance must be adhered to.



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
POLICE
PROUD TO SERVE

**Professional
Respect for all
One Team
Utmost Integrity, trust and honesty
Doing it differently**

- You must not use your professional position to establish or pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship with any current or former victim, offender or witness, or use your contact with them to pursue a relationship with someone close to them.
- You must treat all people with dignity.
- You must protect all people from the risk of harm posed by another colleague's conduct. The safety of the public must come first at all times. If you have concerns that a colleague may be involved in an inappropriate relationship you must report this matter to a supervisor or line manager without delay in order that the concerns can be investigated and the necessary protective arrangements are put in place. If you have grounds to believe that a colleague has, or may have demonstrated inappropriate sexualised behaviour to any person, including other colleagues, you must report this matter to a supervisor or line manager.
- If a victim, witness or offender (or member of their family) displays sexualised behaviour towards you, you should report this matter to a line manager in order that consideration can be given to putting in control measures, such as being accompanied in any further meetings with this person or removing you from that incident or case.
- You must not give out any personal telephone numbers or other personal contact details (e.g. social networking details) to any victim, offender or witness.
- You should not enter into inappropriate communication including the use of text messages or any social network site.
- If future social contact unconnected with work leads to the possibility of a sexual relationship beginning with a former victim, offender or witness, careful consideration must be given to the nature and circumstances of the relationship, taking into account the following:
 - When the professional relationship ended and how long it lasted.
 - The nature of the previous professional relationship.
 - Whether the person was particularly vulnerable at the time of the professional relationship, and whether they are still vulnerable.
 - The nature of the relationship being formed – for example the likelihood of it being an abuse of power is enhanced if it is considered necessary to conduct the relationship privately and 'secretively'.

To remove any doubt about the relationship being considered an abuse of the professional position and to protect both parties the relationship should be reported to your Divisional Professional Standards SPOC (Superintendent) for further advice and guidance.