



Garda
Ombudsman
INQUIRY INDEPENDENCE IMPARTIALITY

Victims of Crime Charter

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The Role of GSOC

GSOC – the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission - was set up in 2007 to deal with complaints against Gardaí.

Any member of the public can make a complaint to us about a Garda. These complaints are handled in different ways depending on what the complaint is about. Our office also investigates incidents where a complaint has not been made, but GSOC thinks it is in the best interest of the public to do so. GSOC must also investigate any incident where a person may have been seriously injured or died while they were in contact with Gardaí. If we are investigating a criminal allegation, you will be treated as a victim of crime and afforded the same rights as you would get during a Garda investigation.

What you can expect from GSOC

GSOC aims to treat people who make complaints to us in a sensitive and understanding manner, while trying to resolve the issue as fairly as possible.

Our key values are:

- Putting the public interest first;
- respecting the human rights of everyone with whom we deal;
- making decisions based on a thorough and fair analysis of evidence;
- being open and transparent by communicating and explaining our actions;
- being committed to providing a high standard of public service.

For further information please visit our website www.gardaombudsman.ie.

What happens when you make a complaint to us

If you are a victim of a crime that you think has been committed by a Garda, we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint in writing within one week of receiving it, and give you a case reference number;
- Carefully consider your complaint and make an independent decision about whether we can investigate it or not;
- Give you information about relevant supports available to you from other agencies – emotional, legal or other supports. Our website has a list of agencies, as well as the type of information you can request from us. You can also ask the GSOC officer who is investigating your complaint for this information;
- Tell you what type of investigation will be undertaken;
- Write to tell you if we decide not to investigate your complaint – and tell you the reasons why.

How we will investigate your complaint

We will investigate your complaint as follows. We will:

- Interview you in a way that is sensitive to your needs in a place that we think is suitable for you as soon as we can. If you wish, you can bring another person to support you during the interview unless we think the person you choose would not serve your best interests. If that happens, you can choose someone else.
- Gather the available evidence in a fair and impartial manner.
- Assess whether you need special protection and, if that is the case, we will let you know the possible options open to you.
- Let you know what will be required of you during the investigation and inform you of the types of information you can request.
- Keep in regular contact with you to let you know how the investigation is going.
- Always give you contact details so you can contact us if you need to.

What happens after GSOC investigates your complaint

Following a GSOC investigation, we will do some or all of the following, depending on the case:

Send a file to the DPP

We will send a file on the investigation to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) and ask for a direction on whether a criminal prosecution should take place.

Tell you the DPP's decision

We will let you know the DPP's decision. If the DPP decides not to prosecute, you can request the reasons why – either through us or directly from the DPP. If they decide to prosecute, they will let you know what you can expect to happen during the process. They will either make direct contact with you to tell you this, or they will ask us to tell you. We will keep you informed of any court dates or other information we think you need to know before attending court.

Send a file to the Garda Commissioner

We will send a file on the investigation to the Garda Commissioner to see if the Garda authorities agree that Garda personnel should be disciplined or not. We will let you know what you can expect to happen during that process.

Close an investigation

If there is not enough evidence available to send a file to the DPP or to the Garda Commissioner, we will close the investigation. If we decide not to continue with the investigation, we will tell you why in writing.

How GSOC will respond to your needs.

At all times, we aim to be courteous, helpful, respectful and professional. If you are upset about a crime or other traumatic incident, we will respond to your needs in a caring and sensitive manner.

GSOC hopes to meet your needs by:

Listening to you

We will give you the opportunity to make a complaint. We will respond to your concerns and treat you fairly and with respect.

Processing complaints efficiently

We will do all we can to ensure that you have confidence in our decisions.

Being professional and courteous

We will abide by the principles of Quality Customer Service, do what we promise to do and do our best to give you the right information in a timely manner.

Being open and honest at all times

We will answer your questions as fully as we can

Protecting your privacy

We will keep accurate records of your dealings with us and keep those records safe.

Being admissible

We will be available to answer your questions in person, by telephone, by letter or electronically.

How GSOC responds to different categories of complainants

GSOC recognises that different categories of complainants might need additional supports such as follows:

Victims of sexual offences, gender based violence or violence in a close relationship

We will treat you with special sensitivity and we will:

- Ensure that you are interviewed by a GSOC officer of the same gender, if you wish;
- Provide you, if you request it and if it is possible, with a doctor of the same gender;
- Provide you with details of support organisations for victims of sexual offences.

Families of people who have died following contact with Gardaí

In the cases of this type which come under GSOC's remit we will provide you with a Family Liaison Officer who will keep in contact with you or any other person that you have asked to help you. Your specific needs will be assessed, with your input, and the Family Liaison Officer will be able to give you information about support services.

GSOC will make sure that you receive the same information and treatment as any other complainant.

Children

GSOC recognises that children - people under 18 years - who are victims of crime will always have needs that require consideration. When assessing these needs, GSOC will respect your views. When making decisions which concern you, GSOC will take your best interests into account.

We will:

- Explain our processes;
- Provide you with a special interviewer if you need one;
- Comply with the guidelines under Children First and national guidelines to protect the welfare of children and safety of children
- Ensure your safety and protection.

As well as keeping your parent, guardian or representative informed, if you wish, we will also keep you up to date.

Special needs

If you have any form of disability, we will take special needs or requirements you may have into account.

If you have any difficulty with reading or writing, we will be sensitive to your needs.

If you are not fluent in English

We will provide a free translation service so that you will receive the same quality of service as far as possible.

If we do not meet you expectations

If we do not meet your expectations and you would like to ask questions, make suggestions or make a complaint about our service, you can contact us at the details below.

How to contact us	
Address:	Corporate Services Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission 150 Abbey Street Upper Dublin 1 D01 FT73
Phone numbers	0818 600 800 or 01-871 6600
Fax	Fax: 01814 7023
Email	info@gsoc.ie
Website	www.gardaombudsman.ie