



Appropriate Personal Relationships, Conflicts of Personal Interests and Behaviours in the Workplace (Surrey and Sussex) (1207/2026)

Abstract

This policy covers workplace relationships.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is intended to raise awareness of the issue of appropriate personal relationships, how they can affect perceptions of fairness in the workplace, and to outline each individual's personal responsibilities to declare conflicts of interest.

1.2 This policy seeks to support police officers and police staff to understand whether a relationship could result in negative impact upon public confidence or undermine the ability of Surrey Police or Sussex Police to deliver an effective and efficient policing service.

1.3 It is imperative that all staff feel that they work in a safe, dignified, fair, inclusive, and transparent environment, where recruitment, promotion and development opportunities are not influenced by personal relationships.

1.4 This policy makes no judgement on any personal relationship nor is it intended to prevent relationships developing. It is concerned principally with intimate or sexual relationships, but may in certain circumstances, extend to close personal relationships.

1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Code of Ethics](#) and the [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\) Appropriate Personal Relationships and Behaviours in the Workplace Guidance](#).

1.6 This policy does not affect the requirement to notify the Joint Force Vetting Unit (JFVU) of a new relationship in accordance with the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice. This is a separate and ongoing responsibility. (See change of personal circumstances form)

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all police officers, police staff, Special Constables, staff held in reserve, staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, volunteers, temporary staff, and agency staff. References to 'workforce' in this policy refer to all the aforementioned.

2.2 This policy focuses upon relationships between police officers and police staff. Guidance on maintaining professional boundaries with members of the public is available

within the Notifiable Associations Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1176) and the NPCC Strategy-Abuse of Position of Trust for Sexual Purposes.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to assist police officers and police staff in recognising that conflicts may be created when a relationship between colleagues is formed in the workplace. It provides a framework to address any adverse impacts of such a relationship on the individuals involved, their colleagues and the public.

3.2 The policy is not intended to create a register of personal relationships but to ensure that relationships do not impact on service delivery or public confidence.

3.3 This policy is not intended to cover every situation but will assist the reader with principles and guidance to support professional decision-making.

Procedure

1. Workplace Relationships and Effective Policing

1.1 Relationships often exist and develop between colleagues. There are many happy relationships that form in the policing community. This policy does not prevent such relationships from forming.

1.2 Relationships must be conducted with complete professionalism, to avoid them negatively impacting on service delivery or public confidence.

1.3 The potential for relationships to create an actual or perceived conflict of interest at work must be considered by the individuals involved, their supervisors and line management.

2. Appropriate Workplace Relationships

2.1 In determining whether a relationship creates any negative impact on the legitimate aims of policing, several factors must be considered, including but not limited to the following:

- a power imbalance is not used to initiate, control, or maintain the personal relationship.
- physical and intimate relations do not take place on duty, or off duty on police premises including police vehicles.
- engaging in sexualised conversations, in person or via electronic communications systems or the sharing of sexually explicit images or material should not take place on duty.
- the relationship does not have an adverse impact on the workplace e.g., by creating division and/or friction between those in the relationship or amongst work colleagues.
- there is no fear of fraud or workplace benefit driving the relationship.

- the relationship has no influence on workplace decision or activities and is not being used to gain or provide some workplace advantage.

Lines of reporting are not abused or compromised.

2.2 The perception of others is a parameter for consideration in any of the factors outlined above.

3. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Seeking Guidance

3.1 Relationships, or former relationships, must not be allowed to impact adversely on behaviour at work and thus on the ability of Surrey Police or Sussex Police to achieve their policing purpose.

3.2 Where there is a reasonable likelihood that the relationship may lead to, or be perceived by others as, a conflict of interest then the relationship must be reported to a line manager. This must occur at any stage of a relationship where a perceived or actual conflict may arise.

3.3 It is recognised that an individual may be reluctant to report the relationship for personal reasons. However, in the interests of maintaining public confidence and service delivery, it is the responsibility of both individuals involved to report the relationship at the earliest opportunity.

3.4 If there is a conflict of interest with a line manager, the matter may be reported to another line manager.

3.5 This also applies to former relationships.

3.6 Conflict can occur in the following cases:

- Line-management activity;
- Recruitment, promotion, or selection processes, including tutoring, mentoring and coaching;
- Decision relating to disciplinary, Unsatisfactory Performance Procedure (UPP) or workplace resolution procedure;
- Decisions relating to pay or remuneration, including overtime;
- Decisions regarding access to training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD);
- Decisions (e.g., deployment) that may lead to perceptions of unfairness by those involved in the relationships or by others.

3.7 These are not exhaustive examples, and a level of objective reasonableness should be applied in each case.

4. Relationships involving a police officer with a more senior officer or member of staff with a more senior staff member

4.1 Where a relationship involves a clear power imbalance, such as:

- Between a Probationary Constable and a Coach
- A Student Officer and Police Trainer, or,
- A Senior Officer and a Constable,

then there will always be the potential for a conflict of interest, whether that be perceived or actual.

4.2 Such a relationship must be reported to ensure suitable safeguards are implemented to protect the individuals concerned and ensure that public confidence and service delivery are not affected.

4.3 Suitable safeguards may include role adjustment, repositioning, change in line manager, or reallocation of a Police Trainer.

4.4 Where individuals fail to report such a relationship or refuse to adhere to instructions, then misconduct / disciplinary proceedings will be considered.

5. Responsibilities of Line Managers

5.1 When a disclosure is made to a line manager it will be their duty to ensure that it is dealt with sensitively and in confidence. They should consider:

- The nature of the relationship.
- Any evidence or perception that it may cause a conflict of interest.
- Any reasonably foreseeable negative impacts on service delivery.
- Any reasonably foreseeable damage to public confidence / Force reputation.
- Any reasonably foreseeable adverse impact in the workplace.

5.2 The [National Decision Model](#) (NDM) and [Code of Ethics](#) will be used in these considerations.

5.3 The manager should record the facts, their assessment and any mitigating action taken. This must be stored confidentially.

5.4 Where the relationship does not give concern then both individuals are to be informed accordingly, and no further action taken.

5.5 Where a line manager believes that a relationship is ongoing that has the potential to cause a conflict of interest, but it has not yet been reported, the line manager must approach the individuals involved and encourage the facts to be reported. Only then can a full assessment be made.

5.6 Any failure by the individuals involved to adhere this policy, or be dishonest in anyway, during the process may result in misconduct / disciplinary proceedings.

5.7 Any action that engages an individual's rights under European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) must be carefully considered and balanced against public confidence in Surrey Police and Sussex Police and the service they deliver.

5.8 In all cases, line managers should carefully consider what, if any information, is shared with others; accepting that managing a conflict of interest may require further reporting.

5.9 Where it is considered necessary, a line manager may have to employ proportionate and relevant measures which may include, but are not limited to:

- Removing officers or staff members from the decision-making process in relation to promotion / selection / discipline.
- Requiring officers or staff members not to work on the same shift together or requiring officers or staff members to no longer work on the same team.
- Redeploying one or both of the individuals. This will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and based on a reasonable and documented consideration of all the facts in the case.

5.10 Assistance and guidance from Human Resources and the Professional Standards Department will be made available in all circumstances where necessary measures are required.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Individuals involved in relationships are required to take steps to report any potential conflicts as outlined.

6.2 An officer or member of police staff who suspect that such a relationship has not been reported has a positive obligation to report the matter either to a line manager or via the confidential reporting procedure. (Anonymous – Surrey Police) (Break the Silence – Sussex Police).

Team: Professional Standards Department