Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers

Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) appoint[1] warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) who have the necessary powers[2] to enable them to conduct inspections and investigations. This includes powers to inspect vessels, vehicles and premises, to seize items, fish and fishing gear, to request and copy documents, to detain a vessel to port and to use reasonable force[3], if necessary, in the exercise of such powers.

The IFCAs approach is to encourage compliance with regulation through engagement, education and proportionate enforcement, with sanctions available to deter, penalise and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the IFCA Enforcement Policy.

In achieving this it is important that individuals and organisations that are the subject to regulation and the wider public have trust and confidence in warranted IFCOs.

Purpose of the Code

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide standards of professional behaviour that are appropriate for IFCOs charged with undertaking duties and exercising powers that impact upon the activities and lives of others.

Whilst the Code of Conduct is not statutory for IFCAs it is drawn from the Standards of Professional Behaviour set out in legislation that applies to the Police Service in England and Wales.[4] The Code is approved by the IFCA Chief Officer Group and is adopted by all IFCAs.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

Honesty and Integrity

IFCOs must act with honesty and integrity and must not compromise or abuse their position.

Authority, Respect and Courtesy

IFCOs must act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.

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[1] Section 165 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[2] Chapter 2 (Common Enforcement Powers) and sections 264, 268, 269 and 284 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[3] Section 261 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[4] Schedule 2, The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

Approved and adopted by the IFCA Chief Officers Group on 12 August 2026
Adopted by Eastern IFCA on 9 September 2026

IFCOs must not abuse their powers or authority and must respect the rights of all individuals.

Equality and Diversity
IFCOs must act with fairness and impartiality. They must not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

Use of Reasonable Force
IFCOs do not ordinarily use force and will only do so to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate, reasonable and lawful in all the circumstances.

Orders and Instructions
IFCOs must only give and carry out lawful orders and instructions.

IFCOs must abide by their IFCA policies and lawful orders.

Duties and Responsibilities
IFCOs must be diligent in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities.

IFCOs have a responsibility to give appropriate cooperation during investigations, inquiries and formal proceedings, participating openly and professionally in line with the expectations of a warranted officer when identified as a witness.

Confidentiality
IFCOs must treat information with respect and access or disclose it only in the proper course of IFCA duties and in compliance with legislation.

Fitness for Duty
IFCOs when on duty or presenting themselves for duty must be fit to carry out their responsibilities.

Discreditable Conduct
IFCOs must not behave in a manner which discredits the IFCAs or undermines public confidence in them, whether on or off duty.

IFCOs must report any action taken against them for a criminal offence, any conditions imposed on them by a court or the receipt of any penalty notice.

Challenging and Reporting Improper Conduct
IFCOs must report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which has fallen below the Standards of Professional Behaviour.