



# Garda National Health and Wellbeing Office

**KEEPING OUR PEOPLE SUPPORTED**

## MOVEMENTS THAT MATTER toolkit

Easily accessible short examples of micro movements and evidence based movements promoting physical mobility during working hours, with benefits for health, cognitive readiness, and injury resilience.

The Movements that Matter toolkit (Version 1. 2026) was developed in partnership with Dr Kirsten McGarry OLY and the Garda National Health and Wellbeing Office.



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## A Note on Comfort and Personal Awareness

As you engage with the Movements That Matter toolkit, please remember that every body is different. These movements are designed to support mobility, reduce stiffness, and promote overall wellbeing during your working day—but they should always feel comfortable and manageable for you.

Listen to your body and move within your own limits. If something feels painful, strained, or uncomfortable, stop and either modify the movement or skip it altogether. There is no expectation to complete every exercise—choosing what works best for you is what matters most.

If you have any existing injuries, medical conditions, or concerns, consider consulting a qualified health professional before trying new movements.

Your health and wellbeing is the priority. Gentle, consistent movement that feels good for your body will always be more beneficial than pushing beyond your comfort level.

## Why This Matters for Garda Personnel?

- Long periods in patrol cars or at desks can increase stiffness in hips, back and neck.
- Sudden high-intensity physical demands such as a chase, restrain, sprint requires readiness.
- Movement “micro-breaks” improve cognitive alertness and decision-making.
- Brief mobility routines reduce musculoskeletal discomfort on shift and during the work day.
- A structured 10-minute protocol improves readiness, wellbeing, and resilience.
- Supports safer, more confident operational performance.



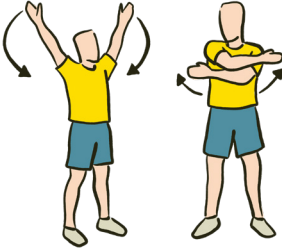
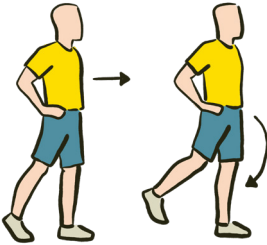

## Tips for Building Movement Into the Work Day / Shift






- Set a reminder every 40 minutes to stand, move, or stretch.
- Pair mobility movements with routine tasks (for example - radio checks, returning to patrol car, getting water, moving between offices).
- Walk work / station corridors between paperwork tasks.
- Do a 1-minute “activation snack” e.g. before putting on vest, before sitting for a long meeting.
  - Choose moderate to vigorous: stair climb, sit to stand in a chair for 30 seconds, fast bodyweight squat jumps or 30 second sprint/marching in place, followed by 30 second recovery walk.
- Use in-car micro movements during surveillance or long patrols (when stationary).
- Keep movements pain-free, controlled, and uniform-friendly.

## Health and wellbeing benefits (supported by evidence based literature)







Effect	Supporting evidence
Reduce stiffness & musculoskeletal discomfort	Regular micro-movement breaks and seated stretches (Columbia Univ. 2023; Warneke 2025)
Increases blood flow & vascular health	Chronic stretch training promotes endothelial function (Warneke 2025 consensus)
Increases alertness, focus, reaction speed	10-min movement breaks improve cognitive performance (2024 RCTs in healthcare workers)
Maintains readiness for sudden exertion	Dynamic activation preserves strength/power vs. static holds (Behm & Chaouachi 2020)

# 1. Dynamic warm-up & mobility

	
<p><b>Total Warm Up Duration</b> 5 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Raise heart rate, mobilise joints, activate large muscle groups.</p>
	<p><b>Arm circles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle straight arms up towards the ceiling, past the ears and wide back down towards the sides.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hugs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swing arms across chest, then open wide.</li> <li>• Alternate which arm crosses on top.</li> <li>• Stay tall, keep the shoulders away from the ears.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Leg swings (front)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand tall, hands on hips.</li> <li>• Swing one leg forward and backward like a pendulum.</li> <li>• Keep support leg straight and core engaged.</li> </ul> <p><b>Leg swings (cross)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand upright.</li> <li>• Swing leg gently across midline, then back out.</li> <li>• Control the movement — do not twist through the spine.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Hip openers with rotation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lift knee forwards and bend to 90 degrees.</li> <li>• Circle the knee backwards and down in a smooth arc.</li> <li>• Keep torso upright and hips level.</li> </ul>

	
<p><b>Total Warm Up Duration</b> 5 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Raise heart rate, mobilise joints, activate large muscle groups.</p>
	<p><b>Torso twists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.</li> <li>• Rotate through upper body right to left.</li> <li>• Move from the ribs — keep hips facing forward</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Worlds Greatest Stretch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step forward into a lunge.</li> <li>• Back knee lowers toward floor, front knee over ankle at 90 degrees.</li> <li>• Hand opposite to the front leg on floor beside the foot, opposite arm reaches upward.</li> <li>• Rotate through chest, not lower back.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Butt kicks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jog lightly on the spot.</li> <li>• Bring heels toward glutes.</li> <li>• Keep posture tall and movement quick but controlled.</li> </ul>

## 2. In-car and at desk seated micro movement set

	
<p><b>Total Duration</b> 4 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Release tension from seated posture, support recovery.</p>
	<p><b>Calf Pumps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At desk sit up straight knees to 90 degrees, lift heels, then toes and repeat.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Neck half circles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chin to chest.</li> <li>• Slowly roll ear toward shoulder.</li> <li>• Return through centre.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Shoulder rolls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lift shoulders up, back, and down.</li> <li>• Slow, controlled circles.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Butterfly extension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit tall.</li> <li>• Place hands behind your head, pull elbows backwards and stick out the chest.</li> <li>• Release and repeat</li> </ul>



**Total Duration**

4 min  
Roughly 30 seconds per movement

**Goal**

Release tension from seated posture, support recovery.



**Levator scapulae 'sniff the armpit' stretch**

- Turn head slightly to 45 degrees of centre.
- Tilt chin toward armpit.
- Place the hand on that side on the back of your head to increase stretch.



**Pelvic tilts (slow)**



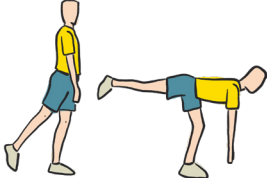
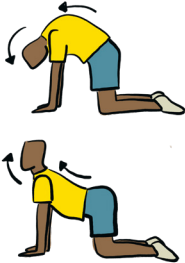
- Rock pelvis forward and back slowly on the sit bones.
- Keep movement small and controlled.



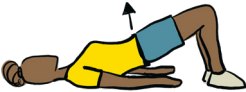



**Seated hamstring at desk (Important to stretch quads and hip flexors after.)**






- Sit forwards in a chair and keep your back straight, place one leg out in front, bend forward at the hips until you feel a stretch at the back of the thigh.

### 3. Out of Office Core activation & Strength

	
<p><b>Total Duration</b> 6 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Re-engage trunk and hips after sitting; prepare for sudden effort.</p>
	<p><b>Walking single-leg deadlifts (balance + posterior chain).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step forward and hinge at hips, lifting one straight leg backwards.</li> <li>• Reach the hand of the lifted leg towards the front foot.</li> <li>• Keep back flat and balance controlled.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Cat-cow or standing pelvic tilts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On hands and knees.</li> <li>• Round spine up, then gently arch down.</li> <li>• Move slowly through full range.</li> <li>• Stand tall.</li> <li>• Gently tuck pelvis under, then release.</li> <li>• Small, controlled movement.</li> </ul>

	
<p><b>Total Duration</b> 6 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Re-engage trunk and hips after sitting; prepare for sudden effort.</p>
	<p><b>Glute squeeze or mini squats (if in a standing position)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand tall and squeeze glutes firmly.</li> <li>• Or perform small controlled squats.</li> <li>• Knees track over toes.</li> </ul> <p>Or</p> <p><b>Glute bridges (10–12 reps)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie on back, feet flat.</li> <li>• Drive hips up by squeezing glutes.</li> <li>• Lower slowly.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Mini core activation (dead bug or plank hold ~30 s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie on back, arms up, knees bent.</li> <li>• Extend opposite arm and leg.</li> <li>• Keep lower back gently pressed down.</li> </ul> <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elbows under shoulders.</li> <li>• Body straight line from head to heels.</li> <li>• Brace core and breathe steadily.</li> </ul>

## 4. Cooldown/static mobility (2 min)

	
<p><b>Total Duration</b> 2 min Roughly 30 seconds per movement</p>	<p><b>Goal</b> Release tension from seated posture, support recovery.</p>
	<p><b>Seated hip figure-of-4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit tall.</li> <li>• Cross ankle over opposite knee.</li> <li>• Lean forward gently, keeping back straight, until stretch felt in hip.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Standing quad stretch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grab right ankle with right hand and lift to buttock.</li> <li>• Knees close together.</li> <li>• Tuck pelvis slightly to increase stretch.</li> <li>• Repeat other side.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Calf stretch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand facing a wall</li> <li>• Extend arms to meet wall</li> <li>• Step one foot back.</li> <li>• Heel flat, knee straight.</li> <li>• Lean forward gently.</li> </ul>





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