

# Effective supervision

**Guidelines**

Consultation



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# Summary of the guidelines

These guidelines provide clear evidence-based practice guidance on effective supervision, to support the wellbeing, learning and performance of everyone working in the police service. They specify the actions that supervisors need to take to support their staff, as well as the behaviours they need to display to be effective in their role. They also set out the actions that chief constables need to take to support supervisors.

Unless otherwise stated, references to supervisors, staff or employees in this document are all-inclusive and cover police officers, police staff, specials and volunteers.

The guidelines consist of:

- three guidelines for chief constables, which set out the organisational structures and processes required to support effective supervision
- seven practical guidelines for supervisors

The type and strength of the evidence underpinning each guideline is shown as follows.



Overall strength of the empirical evidence (good, moderate or limited)



Practitioner evidence available

The supporting information that follows includes a brief summary of the evidence and what the guideline might mean in practice.

# Guidelines for chief constables

The evidence is clear on the effect supervisors can have on individual performance, learning and wellbeing. The evidence on how organisations can support this effective supervision is less specific, but is consistent in terms of the conditions that Chief Officers need to foster.

## 1 Culture and capacity >

**Chief constables** should ensure that the role of supervisors in supporting staff is understood, valued and delivered consistently. This includes:

- actively seeking ways to enable supervisors to give regular dedicated time to their staff
- ensuring that strategic decisions take account of, and do not negatively impact, supervisors' capacity to support their staff
- promoting a culture that values the importance of supervision and recognises the role that supervisors play in demonstrating and delivering a visible commitment to diversity and to treating staff fairly

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 2 Capability >

**Chief constables** should ensure that supervisors are equipped with the skills needed to support staff. This includes:

- ensuring that all staff receive appropriate development before starting in supervisory roles
- adopting a fair and transparent organisation-wide approach to recruiting, selecting, posting and developing supervisors, ensuring that opportunities are available for all
- implementing recruitment and promotion processes that assess the skills and behaviours required

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 3 Organisational support and processes >

**Chief constables** should ensure that supervisors are provided with, and are able to easily access, effective and appropriate advice and support in relation to supporting staff. This includes:

- the provision of policies, guidance and advice
- access to professional internal and external support
- access to support and advice from peers

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



# Guidelines for supervisors

## 4 Acting as a role model

**Supervisors** must consistently demonstrate high standards of professional behaviour and should understand the importance of their position in being a role model for their staff. This includes:

- demonstrating reflective thinking, an openness to personal feedback and a willingness to learn and develop
- demonstrating an openness to new ideas and ways of working
- being visible to staff
- challenging colleagues whose behaviour falls below the public's and the service's expectations

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 5 Building effective relationships

**Supervisors** should build effective and trusting working relationships by:

- getting to know their staff
- understanding and responding to their staff's individual needs, motivations and aspirations
- dedicating time to be with their staff individually and on a regular basis (the time made available should be based on individual need)
- being accessible and approachable to their staff, being clear about when and how they can be reached

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 6 Communicating effectively

**Supervisors** should communicate effectively by:

- demonstrating open, honest two-way communication with their staff, using active listening skills and making use of technology where appropriate
- facilitating two-way communication between their staff and the rest of the organisation, helping them to understand organisational priorities and processes, and supporting them in expressing their views and ideas

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 7 Demonstrating fairness and respect >

**Supervisors** must treat all members of staff with fairness and respect. This includes:

- being fair, consistent, transparent and inclusive in all interactions with staff
- valuing diversity, encouraging inclusivity and considering the perspectives of people from a wide range of backgrounds
- adopting an open approach when responding to the views, concerns, needs and aspirations of others
- providing information, honest feedback and clear reasons for actions and decisions

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 8 Supporting wellbeing >

**Supervisors** should proactively support the wellbeing of their staff by:

- identifying, understanding and responding to their staff's health and emotional needs, as well as their own
- being aware of the internal and external support available
- signposting staff to the most appropriate support and helping them to access it
- ensuring that reasonable adjustments are put in place when required, to enable their staff to work safely

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 9 Supporting the delivery of good service >

**Supervisors** should support staff to deliver good service to the public by:

- being clear about what is expected of staff in their specific roles and their contributions to wider organisational objectives
- providing clear direction, support and assistance to help staff do their work
- identifying, enabling and encouraging staff to take up opportunities for professional learning and development that support their individual career plans
- having honest and open conversations, and using reflective practice to encourage staff to consider their own performance, learning and how to improve
- providing timely, meaningful and constructive feedback, acknowledging good work, discussing areas for development and addressing shortfalls in performance

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



## 10 Supporting professional discretion in decision making >

**Supervisors** should encourage their staff to use their professional judgement and explore new and different ways of working by:

- supporting staff to develop the skills to improve their decision making
- helping staff to reflect on, and learn from, experience
- encouraging staff to be innovative and use discretion where appropriate

### Evidence-base:

empirical evidence  
good|moderate|limited



practitioner evidence available



# Introduction

## What are these guidelines for?

These guidelines provide clear evidence-based practice guidance on effective supervision, to support the wellbeing, learning and performance of everyone working in the police service. They specify the actions that supervisors need to take to support their staff, as well as the behaviours they need to display to be effective in their role. They also set out the actions that chief constables need to take to support supervisors.

Unless otherwise stated, references to supervisors, staff or employees in this document are all-inclusive and cover police officers, police staff, specials and volunteers.

## Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are for anyone who manages staff on a temporary or permanent basis, or might do so in the future. This document also includes guidelines that are specifically intended for chief constables, in relation to the organisational support needed to enable effective supervisory practice.

Officers, staff, specials and volunteers can also use the guidelines to understand the support they should expect from their supervisors.

## Who developed these guidelines?

These guidelines were developed collaboratively by a College Guideline Committee consisting of frontline practitioners, subject matter experts and academics. The Committee was supported by College of Policing specialist staff.

## What do we mean by supervision?

For the purpose of these guidelines, a supervisor is defined as anyone who has management responsibility for one or more members of staff. Supervision responsibilities are made up of the following two components, which are equally important.

- **Operational** or **professional** supervision – the supervision of people doing the practical aspects of their work.
- **Personal** supervision – supporting, developing and leading individuals and teams.

## What types of supervision do the guidelines focus on?

These guidelines focus on personal supervision to enable and support staff wellbeing, learning and performance, where supervisory practice should be





broadly consistent regardless of job role or seniority. The accompanying guideline scope gives more detail about the selection of this area of focus.

### **How evidence-based are these guidelines?**

The guidelines and supporting information draw on an extensive review of the relevant social research, in the form of a rapid evidence assessment (REA). They also consider insights and practice examples from police officers, staff and specials, as well as from other sectors, both public and private.

The evidence review identified more evidence in relation to the supervisor's role in supporting wellbeing and performance and less evidence on the supervisor's role in supporting development of staff. As a result, guidelines in this area have been developed drawing on practitioner feedback and practice in other sectors. It should also be noted that much of the evidence relates to barriers to good supervision, rather than those factors that improve supervision. In developing the guidelines, there has been an assumption that the 'opposite' practice to an identified barrier supports effective supervision.

Criteria for assessing the standard of evidence as good, moderate or limited will be set out in the REA report.

### **Supervisor leadership styles**

The REA identified a wide range of leadership approaches and behaviours that were associated with a range of positive outcomes for staff and organisations. These styles are reflected in these guidelines and can be broadly categorised as follows.

- **Supportive leadership** – supportive leaders are characterised as open, honest, fair, and focused on the wellbeing, development and empowerment of their people.
- **Transformational leadership** – similar to supportive leadership, but also includes role-modelling high standards, going beyond self-interest, fostering collective values, and acting as a coach and mentor.

# Guidelines for chief constables

The evidence is clear on the effect supervisors can have on individual performance, learning and wellbeing. The evidence on how organisations can support this effective supervision is less specific, but is consistent in terms of the conditions that Chief Officers need to foster.

## Guideline 1: Culture and capacity

Chief constables should ensure that the role of supervisors in supporting staff is understood, valued and delivered consistently. This includes:

- actively seeking ways to enable supervisors to give regular dedicated time to their staff
- ensuring that strategic decisions take account of, and do not negatively impact, supervisors' capacity to support their staff
- promoting a culture that values the importance of supervision and recognises the role that supervisors play in demonstrating and delivering a visible commitment to diversity and to treating staff fairly

### Evidence-base:



Empirical evidence: good | **moderate** | limited



Practitioner evidence: **available**



Effective supervision guidelines: Consultation

### Evidence summary

Research and practitioner evidence suggests that the role of supervisors in supporting staff wellbeing, learning and performance is not necessarily understood universally or delivered consistently in policing. The evidence also suggests that material circumstances, such as limited resources and time for training, are a barrier to developing supervisors' skills and behaviours.

There is moderate evidence that aspects of existing police culture, particularly resistance to change and a belief in the value of hierarchical traditional leadership, present challenges for changing supervisor practices and approaches. Discrepancies between what senior, lower and middle managers see as important in good management is a further barrier.

Staff perceptions of fairness and support from the wider organisation and from senior management are associated with positive outcomes regarding staff wellbeing, learning and performance. One study found that employee engagement is more strongly associated with perceptions of support from their organisation than support from their direct supervisor.

The chief constable has overall responsibility for:

- leading their force
- creating a vision
- setting and role-modelling a culture that promotes wellbeing and facilitates impactful professional development and performance management<sup>1</sup>

The Guideline Committee acknowledged the challenge of managing high levels of operational demand. Developing and supporting staff to respond effectively to this demand will help them to provide high levels of service to the public. Finding ways to enable supervisors to spend time with their staff to achieve this should be considered as an essential investment. Chief constables could consider how the processes used to provide protected time for training might also be used to provide protected time for supervision.

Many forces have processes in place to formally record the impacts of strategic decisions on finance, human rights, and equality and diversity. Chief constables could consider the introduction of similar formal auditable processes to record impacts upon the capacity of supervisors to support their staff.

To promote diversity and inclusion within policing, research and practice evidence has identified a need for support from senior-level role models and a visible organisational commitment to diversity at all levels. Chief constables should promote a culture where all staff expect to be treated fairly, regardless of their role or demographic characteristics.

### **Supporting resources**

- **Police Professional Profile – Chief Constable**
- **Competency and Values Framework**
- **Guiding principles for organisational leadership**
- **NPCC Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Strategy**

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<sup>1</sup> **Police Professional Profile – Chief Constable**

## Guideline 2: Capability

Chief constables should ensure that supervisors are equipped with the skills needed to support staff.

This includes:

- ensuring that all staff receive appropriate development before starting in supervisory roles
- adopting a fair and transparent organisation-wide approach to recruiting, selecting, posting and developing supervisors ensuring that opportunities are available for all
- implementing recruitment and promotion processes that assess the skills and behaviours required

### Evidence summary

There is limited evidence in relation to effective recruitment, promotion and professional development of supervisors. This is due to the lack of robust and relevant studies identified that tested and evaluated particular approaches. Where research evidence is available, it is drawn from perception studies and from researcher recommendations, based on their own research findings on the current gaps in provision.

The practice evidence identified that people with protected characteristics felt that opportunities for promotion and development were less available to them. Police staff and specials also felt these opportunities were less available to them than for police officers. Practice evidence also found some strong perceptions that recruitment practices prioritised operational skills over the ability to manage and lead people.

### Evidence-base:



Empirical evidence: good|moderate|**limited**



Practitioner evidence: **available**



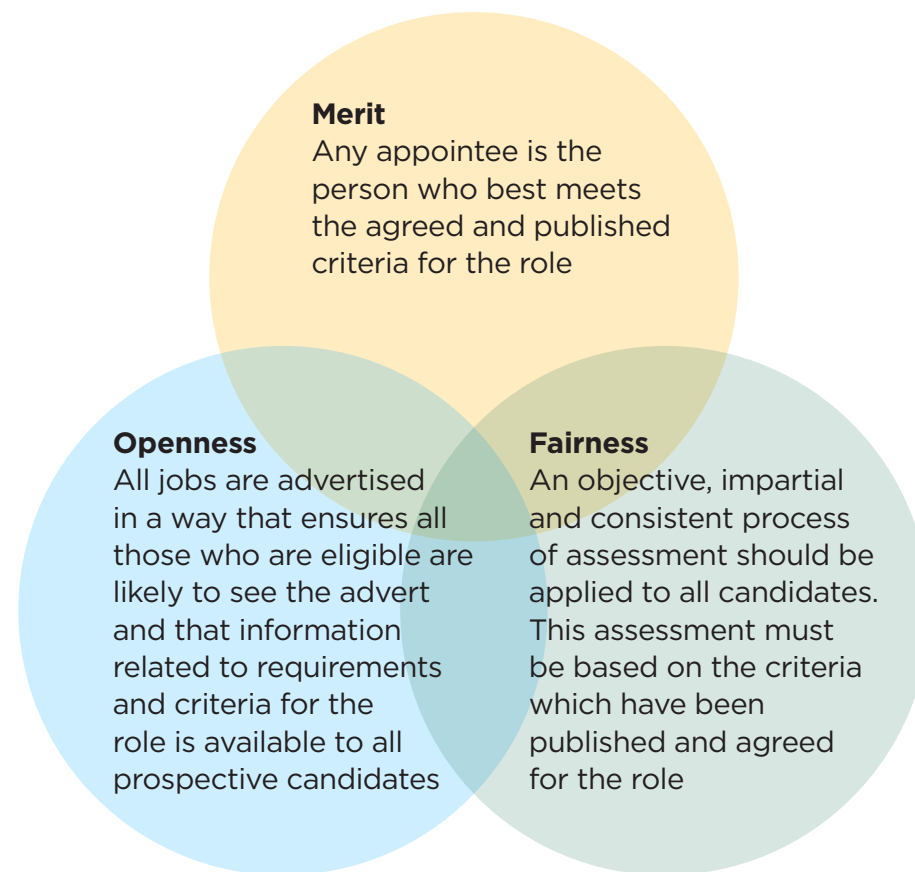
## Development

Supervisors need to be developed based on what forces collectively and individually need from them. This requires a structured and timely approach to supervisor development that ensures opportunities are fairly and consistently made available to supervisors and potential supervisors across all roles, resource types and protected characteristics. It is essential that future potential supervisors are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed before they are appointed into a supervisory role. This learning should be supplemented with a programme of ongoing development to further develop skills and competence. This continuous professional development approach requires a joint commitment. The individual develops their own skills through independent learning, while forces provide opportunities and time for such development. Development programmes should encompass a broad range of operational, leadership and supervisory skills, including support to develop practical knowledge and skills, such as workload management and managing absence. Chief constables should consider a range of ways to deliver development for supervisors, including formal training, mentoring, coaching and shadowing. Formal handovers from the previous post holder should also be considered.

## Recruitment and promotion

National recruitment and promotion processes for police officers and some special constabulary roles are developed by the College of Policing and supplemented

by local selection arrangements. Processes for recruitment and selection into other roles are developed by individual forces. These should follow the principles of merit, fairness and openness, summarised in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1. Principles of recruitment and selection, as described in the College of Policing Competencies and Values Framework for Policing**

The careful establishment of the appropriate criteria for a role is an essential part of any appointment process. For supervisory roles, it is important that the criteria place at least as much emphasis on the skills required to support staff wellbeing, learning and performance as they do on the operational aspects of the role. The College of Policing's **Competency and Values Framework** sets out nationally recognised behaviours and values, which should be used in devising recruitment, promotion and development processes.

Chief constables should consider the use of specific interventions that might reduce unconscious bias in relation to recruiting, selecting, posting and developing those with protected characteristics.

These might include:

- priming in pre-test communications
- interactive sessions on unconscious bias, including practical training on techniques to tackle it
- anonymising the application process
- monitoring selection and promotion processes for signs of bias in decision making

Chief constables should also consider the use of positive action to support those with protected characteristics and the development of clear career pathways for police staff roles.

## Supporting resources

- **Competency and Values Framework**
- **National Police Promotion Framework**
- **Tackling unconscious bias in recruitment, selection and promotion processes: A rapid evidence assessment: Executive summary**
- **Career pathways**
- **Positive action guidance**
- **Aspire programme**
- **Leadership Development Choices**


## Guideline 3: Organisational support and processes

Chief constables should ensure that supervisors are provided with, and are able to easily access, effective and appropriate advice and support in relation to supervising staff. This includes:

- the provision of policies, guidance and advice
- access to professional internal and external support
- access to support and advice from peers

### Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good|moderate|**limited**

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

### Evidence summary

There is limited research evidence on the importance of providing advice and support for supervisors to facilitate wellbeing, learning and performance within their teams.

Practice evidence identified a strong perception that supervisors needed much greater and more easily accessible support and advice to carry out their day-to-day supervisory role. Practitioners considered there to be inconsistent provision of welfare, occupational and support services in forces. There were frequent requests from practitioners for access to practical tools and information.

Practice evidence also identified a desire for more personal support and advice from peers and previous post holders. Evidence from police research studies suggested that there may be positive links between coaching, mentoring and shadowing opportunities for current and developing supervisors, and supervisors' subsequent behaviours and attitudes (see **Guideline 2**).

Chief constables are responsible for developing processes within their force to ensure effective decision making and appropriate action at all levels of the organisation.<sup>2</sup> This should include processes to provide effective support and advice to supervisors.

Chief constables should ensure that supervisors are able to easily access effective support from appropriate professional occupational health, wellbeing, human resources, and learning and development services when it is needed. This can be provided by internal staff or by external support services.

Support and advice should also be provided through a range of other readily accessible means. The following sources of support were suggested through the practice evidence:

- detailed self-service step-by-step and 'how to' guides
- templates and checklists
- online and interactive tools
- mentoring, coaching and other one-to-one support



## Guidelines for supervisors

### Guideline 4:

# Acting as a role model

Supervisors must consistently demonstrate high standards of professional behaviour and should understand the importance of their position in being a role model for their staff. This includes:

- demonstrating reflective thinking, an openness to personal feedback and a willingness to learn and develop
- demonstrating an openness to new ideas and ways of working
- being visible to staff
- challenging colleagues whose behaviour falls below the public's and the service's expectations

#### Evidence-base:



Empirical evidence: good|**moderate**|limited



Practitioner evidence: **available**



#### Evidence summary

Role-modelling involves a supervisor demonstrating the behaviour that they would like their team members to display.

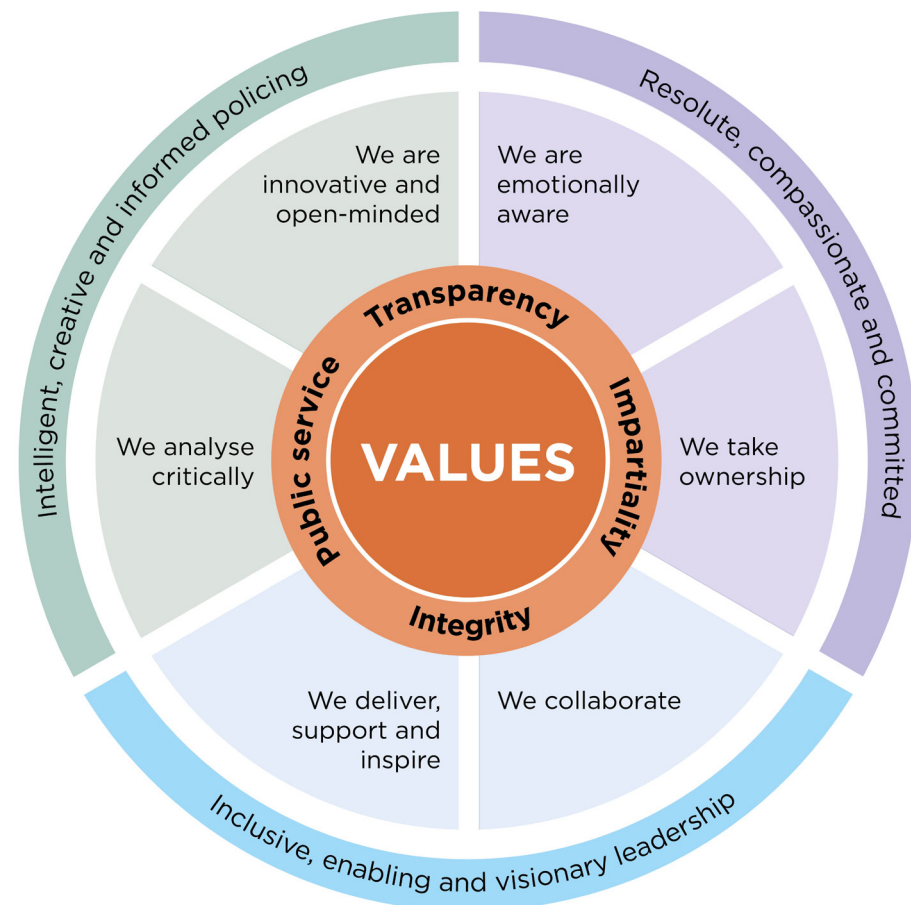
There is good evidence that suggests there is an association between role-modelling and positive team member behaviours, across a range of areas. These areas include:

- ethics and integrity
- conducting proactive crime investigations
- challenging mental health stereotypes
- helping officers understand the specific skills and attitudes required for effective policing in particular settings

There is also evidence that a supervisor's influence and role-modelled behaviour can make a difference to whether specific groups of staff feel included and valued in the police workplace. Role-modelling has also been identified as a component of transformational leadership (see the Introduction section of these guidelines), which evidence suggests is associated with positive outcomes relating to job satisfaction and motivation.

The evidence reviewed on role-modelling did not specifically focus on demonstrating reflective thinking, openness to new ideas or visibility, although limited evidence suggests that these are perceived to be qualities and behaviours demonstrated by good sergeants.

Supervisors should demonstrate the behaviours set out in the Competency and Values Framework, which is summarised in the diagram below. This framework is underpinned by the Code of Ethics and emphasises the importance of supervisors acting as role models to others.



**Figure 2. Behaviours set out in the College of Policing Competencies and Values Framework for policing**

## Supporting resources


- [Competency and Values Framework](#)
- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2020](#)
- [Police Staff Council Joint Circular No. 54](#)


## Guideline 5: **Building effective relationships**

Supervisors should build effective and trusting working relationships by:

- getting to know their staff
- understanding and responding to their staff's individual needs, motivations and aspirations
- dedicating time to be with their staff individually and on a regular basis (the time made available should be based on individual need)
- being accessible and approachable to their staff, being clear about when and how they can be reached

### Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good|**moderate**|limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

 Effective supervision guidelines: Consultation

### Evidence summary

There is good evidence supporting the importance of supervisors building good relationships with team members built on communication and shared expectations. This is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including greater job satisfaction, motivation, wellbeing and increased trust in – and commitment to – the organisation.

The evidence search did not find any specific research evidence related to dedicating time or being accessible and approachable to staff. However, the Guideline Committee considered lack of time to be the key factor in preventing effective supervision. This was supported by practice evidence. Practice evidence also suggested that frequent redeployment of supervisors acted as a barrier to building trusting relationships with staff.

Building effective and trusting working relationships with staff is intrinsic to the delivery of these guidelines. Supportive practices that help build these relationships include:

- demonstrating a genuine interest in staff
- being fair
- being flexible
- recognising and valuing staff's contribution and commitment

Certain formal meetings have their place in building these relationships, such as scheduled performance development reviews (PDRs). However, supervisors should also consider more informal ways of maintaining frequent, ongoing two-way engagement with their staff, such as spending time with them in the workplace. Appropriate use of mobile and video communications can help to overcome reductions in physical interaction that result from increased levels of agile and remote working. It is also important that supervisors allocate adequate time to prepare for the more formal meetings with their staff and to respond to issues (see **Guideline 1**).

This guideline should be read in conjunction with the following guidelines, which give further information about building effective relationships in different contexts:

- **Guideline 4: Acting as a role model**
- **Guideline 6: Communicating effectively**
- **Guideline 7: Demonstrating fairness and respect**
- **Guideline 8: Supporting wellbeing**
- **Guideline 9: Supporting the delivery of good service**
- **Guideline 10: Supporting professional discretion in decision making**

## Supporting resources

### Leadership Choices Map





# Guideline 6: Communicating effectively

Supervisors should communicate effectively by:

- demonstrating open, honest two-way communication with their staff, using active listening skills and making use of technology where appropriate
- facilitating two-way communication between their staff and the rest of the organisation, helping them to understand organisational priorities and processes, and supporting them in expressing their views and ideas

## Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good|**moderate**|limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

## Evidence summary

There is good evidence highlighting the importance of effective two-way communication between supervisors and team members.

Evidence suggests that relationships built on good two-way communication between supervisors and their team members are associated with a range of positive outcomes, including job satisfaction, perceived autonomy at work, and increased trust in - and commitment to - the organisation. Clear, open and honest communication are also elements of certain leadership styles, such as supportive leadership and authentic leadership (see the Introduction section of these guidelines), which research evidence suggests are associated with a range of positive outcomes, including supporting diversity and inclusion.

Practice evidence identified remote and agile working and use of technology as both being a challenge to, and offering opportunities for, interaction and connection with staff. The Guideline Committee considered that supervisors should make use of technology to communicate with their staff when face-to-face meetings are not possible or practical.

There is some limited evidence relating to a manager's role in facilitating communication between their members of staff and the wider organisation. This role was considered important by Guideline Committee members.



Effective communication includes:

- setting clear direction and expectations
- providing information, feedback and clear reasons for decisions
- adjusting communication style to the individual and the situation
- showing a genuine interest in staff by actively listening to their views and concerns
- putting yourself in the position of your staff by seeking to understand their views and how they might be feeling
- adopting a non-judgemental approach when responding to staff views and needs
- creating conditions where team members feel able to ask for feedback and support

There is a growing emphasis on the importance of ongoing conversation and reflective practice in the workplace (see **Guideline 9**). Practice evidence suggests that these conversations can be formal or informal, structured or unstructured, and of varying lengths. In all cases, there should be an emphasis on frequent, ongoing two-way engagement with staff.

Supervisors have an important role in acting as a bridge between their staff and the wider organisation, and should ensure that they effectively communicate

wider organisational expectations, priorities and changes. Supervisors should also provide support in identifying the appropriate people and processes that staff can use to get their own views and opinions heard by the wider organisation.

The following guidelines give more information on communicating in specific circumstances:

- **Guideline 5: Building effective relationships**
- **Guideline 8: Supporting wellbeing**
- **Guideline 9: Supporting the delivery of good service**
- **Guideline 10: Supporting professional discretion in decision making**





# Guideline 7: Demonstrating fairness and respect

Supervisors must treat all members of staff with fairness and respect. This includes:

- being fair, consistent, transparent and inclusive in all interactions with staff
- valuing diversity, encouraging inclusivity and considering the perspectives of people from a wide range of backgrounds
- adopting an open approach when responding to the views, concerns, needs and aspirations of others
- providing information, honest feedback and clear reasons for actions and decisions

## Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good|**moderate**|limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

## Evidence summary

There is good evidence that links supervisor fairness to positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, wellbeing, commitment, discretionary effort, motivation and feeling empowered. Supervisor fairness is also associated with a reduction in problem behaviours, such as destructive gossip and intentionally working slowly or obstructively. This policing evidence is supported by a large body of evidence from other sectors that has demonstrated the importance of organisational justice, such as staff perceptions of fair decision making and respectful treatment by supervisors and senior leaders. Supportive leadership (see the Introduction section of these guidelines), of which honesty and fairness is one element, has also been associated with a range of positive outcomes.

There is moderate evidence to suggest that decision making that is open to employee input may contribute to positive outcomes, such as improved wellbeing and motivation. Providing information, feedback and clear reasons for decisions have also been found to be associated with positive outcomes.

There is moderate research evidence focused on the importance of fairness, consistency and transparency of support in relation to diversity and inclusion. The practice evidence identified that officers and staff with protected characteristics, as well as those who are not in traditional police officer roles (police staff,

specials and direct entry officers), felt they were treated unfairly at work. They reported that this impacted their feelings of confidence and motivation, and whether they felt valued and part of a team.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Public Sector Equality Duty places an additional responsibility on public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work and to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Supervisors should reflect on how unconscious bias and stereotyping might influence their treatment of staff, as well as any related decision making. They should also consider taking actions to address any imbalance of opportunity or disadvantage that an individual with a protected characteristic might face.

Supervisor fairness has a positive impact on staff attitudes and behaviour, as well as the extent to which staff identify with their force and its values. It is therefore essential that supervisors apply the principles in this guideline consistently when carrying out their work, making

decisions or providing support to staff. This includes decisions and support in relation to:

- allocation of work
- agreement of leave and working hours
- access to learning, development and career opportunities
- access to information, equipment and other resources
- management of performance and conduct

Further guidance on communication and giving feedback that will help foster fairness and respect is contained in:

- **Guideline 4: Acting as a role model**
- **Guideline 5: Building effective relationships**
- **Guideline 6: Communicating effectively**
- **Guideline 9: Supporting the delivery of good service**

## Supporting resources

- **Code of Ethics**
- **Fair cop 2: Organisational justice, behaviour and ethical policing**







# Guideline 8: Supporting wellbeing

Supervisors should proactively support the wellbeing of their staff by:

- identifying, understanding and responding to their staff's health and emotional needs, as well as their own
- being aware of the internal and external support available
- signposting staff to the most appropriate support and helping them to access it
- ensuring that reasonable adjustments are put in place when required, to enable their staff to work safely

## Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good|**moderate**|limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

## Evidence summary

Overall, there is moderate evidence on the importance of supervisors supporting the wellbeing of their staff.

There is good evidence that supervisors supporting their team members' health and emotional needs is associated with the wellbeing of their staff, including improving self-esteem and reducing job stress and emotional exhaustion. The evidence suggests that a supportive attitude is particularly important in relation to mental health issues, due to cultural perceptions of the cynicism of some police leaders and the stigma of perceived weakness in policing culture. Inadequate support or insensitive responses from supervisors is perceived to damage morale, dedication and goodwill.

Social support from supervisors has been associated with decreased burnout in both officers and staff, and with moderating the negative effects of violence against officers by the public. However, there was also evidence that supervisor support cannot fully mitigate against the negative effects of continual high job demands. Practice evidence suggested that the ability of supervisors to identify and signpost staff to other sources of support was also important.

There is limited evidence regarding the benefits associated with supervisors understanding and acting on their own health and emotional needs.

The research review identified one study that found a link between the wellbeing of a supervisor and the wellbeing of their staff, although it was not clear how these influenced each other. The Guideline Committee felt strongly that a supervisor's ability to provide emotional and practical support to their staff was directly associated with their own health and wellbeing.

The **Health and Safety at Work Act** places a responsibility on employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. It also places a responsibility on employees to take care of their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions at work. These duties include taking care of both physical and mental wellbeing.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires employers to make **reasonable adjustments** to make sure that staff with disabilities, or with physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs.

Evidence suggests that staff who have supervisors who adopt a supportive style are likely to have better wellbeing in a range of ways, both at work and home. Support can be provided by:

- showing a genuine interest in staff and how they might be feeling
- showing unselfish concern for the welfare of others

- talking and actively listening to staff about their wellbeing
- being caring and supportive when dealing with personal or work issues
- recognising difference and the associated differing needs of staff
- being flexible
- taking practical steps to help manage workload
- providing advice
- supporting staff to access professional or third party advice and support

Staff wellbeing is also supported by the supervisory practices detailed in:

- **Guideline 5: Building effective relationships**
- **Guideline 6: Communicating effectively**
- **Guideline 7: Demonstrating fairness and respect**
- **Guideline 9: Supporting the delivery of good service**
- **Guideline 10: Supporting professional discretion in decision making**

## Supporting resources

➤ [Oscar Kilo](#)

➤ [Mind Blue Light Programme](#)





# Guideline 9: Supporting the delivery of good service

Supervisors should support staff to deliver good service to the public by:

- being clear about what is expected of staff in their specific roles and their contributions to wider organisational objectives
- providing clear direction, support and assistance to help staff do their work
- identifying, enabling and encouraging staff to take up opportunities for professional learning and development that support their individual career plans
- having honest and open conversations, and using reflective practice to encourage staff to consider their own performance, learning and how to improve
- providing timely, meaningful and constructive feedback, acknowledging good work, discussing areas for development and addressing shortfalls in performance

## Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good | **moderate** | limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

 Effective supervision guidelines: Consultation

## Evidence summary

There was good evidence on the importance of supervisors providing support and assistance to staff to help them do their work (see **Guideline 5**), which was associated with a range of positive outcomes, including increased employee job satisfaction, wellbeing and organisational commitment, as well as improved performance. Evidence also identified a link between supportive, empowering and transformational leadership approaches by supervisors (see the **Introduction section of these guidelines**) and positive employee performance outcomes, including generating extra effort, conscientiousness, motivation and engagement.

There is moderate evidence that has linked supervisory feedback with positive performance outcomes, with higher-quality feedback linked to higher organisational commitment. A combined perception of supervisor support and adequate feedback on performance has also been linked with better morale in police volunteers.

Although there was limited supporting evidence in relation to some of these guidelines' areas of focus, particularly learning and development (see **Guideline 2**), all aspects were considered essential components of effective supervision by the Guideline Committee. There were also substantial amounts of practice evidence around the perceived importance of supervisor-staff conversations to support wellbeing, learning and performance, as well as the ability to have difficult conversations with staff when necessary.

## Performance conversations

Supervisors must carry out a formal PDR with each member of their staff at least once a year, where objectives are set and performance is reviewed. Supervisors are also expected to have regular conversations with their staff about their performance, development and wellbeing. These conversations might be carried out through a range of different methods, on a one-to-one basis and/or in a team setting, and both formal and informal. The emphasis should be on frequent ongoing two-way engagement with staff.

## Reflective supervision

Formal reflective supervision is provided for some specialist staff in forces. Supervisors should consider adopting some of these approaches in their discussions with staff. Typically, a reflective supervision session will support staff to:

- engage in critical self-examination and reflect on their skills, performance and personal responses
- identify performance issues and consider a range of approaches
- develop skills and expand knowledge through discussion, review and positive challenge
- consider future training and development needs
- discuss home life, personal issues and wellbeing where these have an impact on performance or vice versa

## Supporting resources

- **Resources for reflective practice (in professional development programme)**





# Guideline 10: Supporting professional discretion in decision making

Supervisors should encourage their staff to use their professional judgement and explore new and different ways of working by:

- supporting staff to develop the skills to improve their decision making
- helping staff to reflect on, and learn from, experience
- encouraging staff to be innovative and use discretion where appropriate

## Evidence-base:

 Empirical evidence: good | **moderate** | limited

 Practitioner evidence: **available**

## Evidence summary

There was good research evidence suggesting a positive association between allowing discretion and staff wellbeing, job satisfaction and commitment. Research from other sectors also identified a link between influencing decisions at work and lower risk of burnout.

Enabling empowerment of team members is a feature of supportive leadership (see the Introduction section of these guidelines), which is associated with a range of positive staff outcomes, including higher levels of wellbeing, ethical behaviour, discretionary effort, engagement, emotional energy and job satisfaction. Empowering approaches, such as supporting, recognising, delegating and consulting, are also shown to be positively associated with wellbeing, job satisfaction, commitment, performance, conscientiousness and employees feeling able to give constructive ideas and opinions.

Practice evidence suggested that staff wanted to be creative and try new ways of working, but often felt restrained from doing so by the organisational culture.

Supervisors should support their staff to use the **National Decision Model** to enable them to make informed and ethical decisions. Supervisors should also use the model to review decisions and actions with their staff, and to promote learning. Supervisors should also consider the use of reflective practice to support staff to reflect on and learn from their own experiences (see **Guideline 9**). The **Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020** encourage a culture of continuous self-reflection and learning.

### Supporting resources

- **Code of Ethics**
- **The Seven Principles of Public Life**
- **Knowledge Hub**

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## About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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