

Introduction to effective supervision

Who and what these evidence-based guidelines are for and how they were put together.

First published 25 April 2022

What are these guidelines for?

These guidelines provide clear evidence-based 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. The guidelines have a particular focus on supervision and supervisory practice, as opposed to strategic leadership.

Unless otherwise stated, references to supervisors, staff or employees in this document are all-inclusive and cover police officers, police staff, special constables and police support 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, special constables and police support 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 development team and a College Guideline Committee, which consisted of frontline practitioners, subject matter experts and academics.

The role of the Guideline Committee was to consider the evidence and draft the guidelines, taking into account the views of stakeholders.

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 consist the following two components, which are equally important and, in most cases, carried out at the same time.

- 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). A [report on this REA](#) accompanies these guidelines. The guidelines also reflect insights on current practice from police officers, staff and special constables, as well as from other sectors, both public and private. This was gathered through a range of engagement activities with officers, police staff, specials and subject matter experts, including one-to-one interviews, online events and discussion forums. We also reviewed material published by the College and other organisations, including the findings from workshops carried out as part of the Front Line Review of policing. This is referred to throughout the guidelines as 'practitioner evidence'. A [full report on methodology and findings](#) accompanies these guidelines.

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 evidence and practice in other sectors. 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 are set out in the REA report.

Supervisor leadership styles

The REA identified a wide range of leadership approaches and behaviours that, when demonstrated by supervisors, 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.

Supporting resources

The guidelines include links to resources that will support chief constables and supervisors to implement these guidelines. The College will continue to develop these resources and other forms of support.

Tags

Supervision Evidence-based policing