

Capability

How chief constables can equip supervisors with the skills needed to support staff.

First published 25 April 2022

Written by College of Policing

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

This includes:

- ensuring that all staff receive appropriate and timely development to support them when 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 good evidence in relation to recruitment, promotion and professional development of supervisors, although most of the policing evidence focused on barriers to effective practice. There is evidence that supervision quality can be improved by organisations offering a programme of 'education, experience, and mentorship' to new and existing supervisors.

There is also evidence that management and leadership development programmes can improve organisational and individual performance. However, policing studies highlighted a perceived absence of formal support, training and preparation for supervisory roles, as well as an association between poor management skills and behaviours and lower commitment levels from staff.

Evidence from policing suggests that unconscious bias in promotion processes is a barrier to improving leadership in policing. The practitioner evidence identified that people with protected characteristics felt that opportunities for promotion and development were less available to them. Police staff and special constables also felt that these opportunities were less available to them than for police officers.

Practitioner evidence also found some strong perceptions that recruitment practices prioritised operational skills over the ability to manage and lead people.

Empirical evidence

Good

Practitioner evidence

Available

Development

Supervisors need development based on what forces collectively and individually need from them. This requires a structured and timely approach to supervisor development that ensures opportunities are made available fairly and consistently to supervisors and potential supervisors across all roles, resource types and demographic characteristics.

Forces should understand the development required by new supervisors, including those in temporary roles, and ensure that this is undertaken in a timely way, either at or before the point of appointment. This learning should be supplemented with a programme of ongoing development for supervisors 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 resilience training, mental health awareness, 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, as summarised in Figure 1.

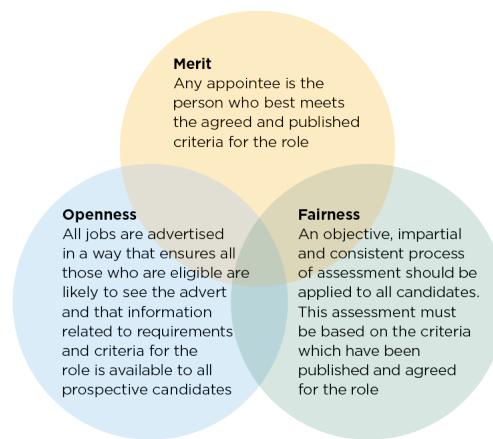


Figure 1. Principles of recruitment and selection, as described in the College of Policing competencies and values framework for policing

Merit, fairness and openness

There are three overlapping principles of recruitment and selection in the College of Policing **competencies and values framework** for policing.

They are:

- merit – any appointee is the person who best meets the agreed and published criteria for the role
- fairness – an objective, impartial and consistent process of assessment should be applied to all candidates – this assessment must be based on the criteria which have been published and agreed for the role
- openness – all jobs are advertised in a way that ensures all those who are eligible are likely to see the advert and that information related to requirements and criteria for the role is available to all prospective candidates

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.

Unconscious bias affects everybody's decision making. It happens when we make quick decisions in ambiguous situations that, without us realising, disadvantage particular groups of people. Our biases are influenced by our background, culture and personal experiences.

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 \(NPPF\)](#)
- [Tackling unconscious bias in recruitment, selection and promotion processes: A ...](#)
- [Career pathways](#)
- [Positive action guidance](#)
- [Aspire programme](#)
- [Continuous professional development – definition and principles](#)

Tags

Supervision Evidence-based policing Senior leaders