Building effective relationships

How supervisors can build good relationships with their team members.

First published 25 April 2022

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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, and being clear about when and how they can be reached
- building trust between team members and helping to build cohesive teams

Evidence summary

There is moderate evidence supporting the importance of supervisors building good relationships with team members based 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 practitioner evidence. Practitioner evidence also suggested that frequent redeployment of supervisors acted as a barrier to building trusting relationships with staff.

Empirical evidence

Moderate

Practitioner evidence

Available

Building effective and trusting working relationships with staff and between team members 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 field and the workplace, individually and as a team. 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 **Culture and capacity**).

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

- **Acting as a role model**
- **Communicating effectively**
- **Demonstrating fairness and respect**
- **Supporting wellbeing**
- **Supporting the delivery of good service**
- **Supporting professional discretion in decision making**

Tags

Supervision   Leadership development   Evidence-based policing