

# Supporting wellbeing

How supervisors can support the wellbeing of their staff.

First published 24 April 2022

Written by College of Policing

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 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 and insensitive responses from supervisors are perceived to damage morale, dedication and goodwill, and fail to destigmatise mental health issues.

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 continually high job demands. Practitioner 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.

### **Empirical evidence**

Moderate

### **Practitioner evidence**

Available

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. All employees also have the legal right to request flexible working arrangements and for any requests to be reasonably considered.

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
- 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:

- [Building effective relationships](#)
- [Communicating effectively](#)
- [Demonstrating fairness and respect](#)
- [Supporting the delivery of good service](#)
- [Supporting professional discretion in decision making](#)

## Supporting resources

- [Oscar Kilo](#)
- [Mind Blue Light Programme](#)

## Tags

Supervision   Evidence-based policing   Leadership development