

Aims of the guide and how to use it

Aim of this guide, who it's for and how to use it.

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Aims

This guide aims to provide communications teams in police forces with simple, evidence-based advice to help optimise campaigns that address sexist behaviour among officers and staff.

Communications teams in police forces have considerable expertise in developing campaigns on a range of issues. The behavioural and social sciences have studied persuasive messaging for many decades and have generated useful insights that can help with these campaigns.

Definition

Sexism and misogyny are defined in many different ways. In common usage:

- sexism involves conscious or unconscious bias based on gender
- misogyny involves a specific antipathy towards women (Merriam Webster, 2023)

This guide considers behaviour to be sexist or misogynistic when it adversely affects the wellbeing of someone because of their female sex or gender – whether intentionally or unintentionally. This includes:

- use of demeaning language
- offensive remarks or jokes
- intrusive questions
- bias in the way people are treated
- unwanted physical contact
- tolerating sexist behaviour
- downplaying the importance of sexist behaviour
- spreading the idea that women are given preferential treatment because of their sex or gender
- treating a woman in a given role, or with a given level of seniority, with less respect than would be given to a man holding the same position

- ‘everyday sexism’ (Swim and others, 2001) that is often regarded as normal behaviour in certain groups

In this guide, the word ‘sexism’ is used throughout to encompass all these behaviours.

How to use the guide

Communications teams can use this guide when developing force-level campaigns or when assisting chief officers to decide on the strategic direction of communications plans.

Human resources teams, professional standards departments, and learning and development teams can also use it to support their work.

This guide is not a manual. It is intended to be an easy-to-use reference document that provides evidence-based, actionable principles that can be applied as required. Different parts of the guide may be applied at different times, depending on the needs of the task.

This guide focuses on supporting the development of campaign content. It complements existing frameworks such as the [Government Communications Service's OASIS framework](#). (Government Communication Service, 2023; Government Communication Service, 2023.)

About behavioural science

Behavioural science studies how people act by collecting and analysing data to draw broad conclusions, develop theories and make predictions. It combines insights from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics and neuroscience.

It is not an exact science. Sometimes evidence confirms what seems like common sense and sometimes it challenges our everyday assumptions.

Crucially, experience over many decades shows that by applying behavioural science, we can make better predictions, and we can develop policies and interventions that are more likely to be more effective than if we rely on experience or common sense alone.

References

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Tags

Violence against women and girls