

Conclusion

Conclusion of the behaviour change process which challenged and addressed sexism and misogyny within policing.

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Sexist and misogynistic behaviours have no place in policing. To create an environment free of sexism and misogyny, where everyone can feel safe and flourish at work, a great deal of effort and commitment is needed. Rushed or poorly conceived initiatives are, at best, unlikely to work and at worst can make the situation worse.

This work has taken a systematic approach to identifying exactly what needs to change and what is going to help make that change.

The work has found that sexism and misogyny in policing takes many forms, from sexualised comments, women being overlooked for promotion or moves to specialist units, to sexual harassment and physical assaults.

One thing that came through clearly is the need to focus on the more subtle 'every day' behaviours that create an unhealthy and hostile work environment. The hope is that by stopping such behaviours early, it can prevent things from escalating and causing even greater harm and will reset expected standards of acceptable behaviour.

For those who experience unacceptable behaviour, the evidence suggests that the risks of reporting it outweigh the benefits. Often, they will end up further victimised either informally, for example by being ostracized by others in their team or formally through forced moves and the misconduct process itself.

As a result, it is important that colleagues who witness poor behaviour make a stand on behalf of the person experiencing the behaviour. Unfortunately, however, there are also many barriers that are preventing witnesses from challenging inappropriate behaviour when they see it. This includes:

- not knowing what to say and do
- being seen as disloyal
- not having senior role models who offer support

These issues can only be addressed by giving everyone in policing the capability, opportunity and motivation to tackle sexist and misogynistic behaviours.

In terms of capability, this includes but goes beyond the knowledge to identify sexism and misogyny and the skills to challenge it in the most appropriate way. Those experiencing and those witnessing sexism and misogyny, need to feel motivated to challenge by knowing their concerns will be dealt with confidentially and that there will be negative repercussions for the instigator of the behaviour and not for them. Everyone needs the opportunity to see role models demonstrating the expected behaviours and so feel supported.

None of this negates the need to ensure those who clearly have no place in policing are prevented from joining or removed from the service.

Next steps

Work is ongoing in collaboration with stakeholders to develop the content of the interventions ensuring they draw on the best available evidence, most suitable behaviour change techniques but are also relevant and feasible for policing.

Testing of the interventions will be undertaken to help identify what works to change behaviour in this area.

Tags

Violence against women and girls