

What works: tackling police wrongdoing

Exploring the impact of tackling police wrongdoing on public perceptions.

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There are several police activities that have been shown to have a direct impact on public perceptions. The police have a higher degree of influence over these activities, which could form the basis of a public service model of policing.

Tackling police wrongdoing

Research shows that police legitimacy is associated with the public thinking that the police behave in ways that are appropriate.

Perceptions of procedural justice have a stronger effect on legitimacy when people also trust officers and staff to work within the law and adhere to ethical and professional standards.

Uses of force that are seen by the public as excessive, unjustified and beyond the limits of police authority are likely to erode trust and legitimacy.

What works

There is relatively limited evidence on what works when preventing or responding to police wrongdoing. However, a College review of the evidence suggests that [early warning systems may be effective](#) in identifying serving officers and staff who are on the cusp of being involved in wrongdoing. The review also points to ethics programmes, different types of training, body-worn cameras and accountability reminders as potentially being effective.

A separate College review suggests that [psychological testing at the point of recruitment](#) may be useful for predicting and screening out officers and staff who may later go on to have performance and conduct issues. However, this is not a substitute for the ongoing supervision and monitoring of officers and staff in the workplace.

College research also shows that supervisors and more senior leaders play important roles in creating and maintaining ethical work environments, particularly through their modelling of behaviours and leadership styles. Other College research highlights [the value of procedural and](#)

distributive justice in the workplace. It shows that officers are more likely to support the principle of ethical policing when they feel that they would be treated fairly and with respect.

Resources

- [Vetting Code of Practice](#)
- [Code of Ethics: Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing](#)
- [College evidence review on promoting ethical behaviour and preventing wrongdoing](#)
- [College evidence review on predicting and screening-out police wrongdoing](#)

You can also search for examples of police practice on the College's [practice bank](#).

Tags

Evidence-based policing Community engagement