

Performance and wellbeing sergeant

A performance and wellbeing sergeant assists with the management of complex performance and wellbeing cases.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Northamptonshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Northamptonshire Police
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Region	East Midlands
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	Pending review

Key details

Start date	March 2023
Completion date	September 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The aim of a performance and wellbeing sergeant is to provide oversight and coordination for a number of complex performance and wellbeing cases with the wider view to supporting improvement and, or appropriate management action if justified.

Although officers had existing line managers/sergeants overseeing their performance, the force identified an increase in demand for line managers in a newly set up team. There was a need to bridge the gap between human resources (HR) and professional standards department (PSD) and provide officers with support from someone outside the line management chain when dealing with complex cases. It was clear that line managers needed additional peer support to assist in managing such cases.

The team has a large proportion of restricted police personnel, and as a result may not be able to carry out frontline duties. Diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) and protected characteristics were considered throughout the development of this initiative and the HR team was closely consulted.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes were to:

- ensure a fair, consistent, informed, and supportive approach to the individuals requiring enhanced management
- offer peer support to line managers overseeing them
- ensure those with poor performance, attendance and conduct are identified and managed as appropriate through UPP, Disciplinary and medical retirement process
- build and manage relationships with key stakeholders (HR, PSD, Federation, Unison etc), to pool knowledge from such and be a tactical advisor to peers

Description

Several complex HR/performance cases were displaced to the team when it was first set up. The desk-based nature of the role accommodated reasonable adjustments for officers who could not be fully operational. Before the team was set up the officers were working in various departments. Some of these teams were de-structured to build a central team. Therefore, many officers requiring support and additional management ended up being placed on one team. This placed strain on the supervisors, having to juggle daily demand and have oversight of officers requiring support through performance or wellbeing.

The department's chief inspector secured a supernumerary sergeant position, with a mandate to look across a number of cases that had been identified in conjunction with line managers and HR and asked them to complete a holistic review of each case. This work fell under the banner of the 'performance and wellbeing sergeant'.

In order to ensure each individual and their case was being supported in accordance with their needs, and to also ensure consistent management, it was necessary to take a holistic approach. Taking this approach required working in line with unacceptable performance and attendance procedures, ill health retirement legislation, The Equality Act and with due consideration to data protection.

Several of the cases reviewed resulted in individuals having their tailored reasonable adjustments updated and occupational health referrals made to further support them. The review of some cases identified evidence of poor conduct resulting in further PSD referrals and action plans.

The sergeant built positive relationships with HR, occupational health, and the federation. During this time, they were able to help line managers negotiate complex processes which in turn yielded positive results for the force and the public.

Evaluation

There has been no formal evaluation to date, however the position was key to improving performance and supported those who were still able to provide a service, whilst appropriately exiting some individuals from the organisation.

Overall impact

As a result of the performance and wellbeing sergeant being posted in the department a number of officers received additional support through occupational health. Two officers were referred to professional standards, one of these officers soon resigned from their position. Two officers were put through ill-health retirement and one of the cases required further legal advice. Both officers were eventually retired from the force. Several officers received management intervention such as action plans to improve performance.

The performance and wellbeing sergeant has created consistency across case reviewal, improved support to line managers and officers, set better standards for ill-health retirement and promoted a culture of fair but firm management. Positive culture remains in the department to date. The force is currently exploring options to secure this into a permanent position.

Learning

The performance and wellbeing sergeant required support when managing some of the cases. Whilst they were in post, a complaint was made by an officer which led to the sergeant being served misconduct papers. No misconduct was found proven, but this had an emotional impact on the sergeant. Therefore, the chief inspector made a referral to a counselling service to ensure the sergeant was supported in potential secondary trauma from handling the cases.

A learning point from this intervention has been that roles of this nature will inevitably attract complaints from officers, especially where poor performance is involved. The force needs to consider the best approach to take towards officers who may have complaints about the role of the performance and wellbeing sergeant to offer them further support.

Care is also required in ensuring that the individuals agree for this post to be involved in communications from occupational health and HR where medical information may be disclosed.

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