



College of
Policing

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Supervision

Scope of practice guidelines

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1 Title

Supervision: Supporting Wellbeing, Learning and Performance

2 Intended audience(s)

The guidelines are aimed at:

- All supervisors within the police service
- Those who can help embed effective policies and interventions that help to support, maintain and build effective supervisory practices within forces (e.g. senior leaders and staff in human resources, organisational development and learning and development). These guidelines will also be of interest to all officers and staff to set out the expectations of what support they can expect from their supervisor.
- HMICFRS who can use these guidelines in order to assess aspects of effective supervisory practices and the support given to these supervisors within and across forces in England and Wales.

3 Need

3.1 College 'perennial policing problems' analysis

The College's recent 'perennial problems' analysis identified ten recurring and systemic problems considered to be undermining capability to deliver good outcomes for the public. This thematic analysis was developed through interviews with 16 Chief Constables and focus groups with around 250 police officers and staff from 14 forces in England and Wales; a review of four years' worth of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' reports; together with Independent Office of Police Conduct reports, Police and Crime Commissioner Plans and other published material.

One of the 'perennial problems' identified was that, in general, individuals are not reaching their full potential owing to insufficient supervision and leadership. This work is summarised in **Appendix 1**. This demonstrates some of the underlying factors found to be contributing to this problem, many of which are related to organisational or individual support for effective supervisory practices. These findings suggest that there would be benefit derived from developing national guidance for effective supervisory practices. Accordingly, the scope of this project will seek to ensure that:

- Police officers, staff and volunteers receive excellent support from their supervisors with regards to wellbeing, learning and performance.

- Supervisors receive excellent support from their organisation

4 Context

4.1 Current evidence base

The College has identified several systematic and non-systematic literature reviews on relevant topics through initial scoping searches. For example, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) have published a research briefing on effective supervision¹ which summarises recent research.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published evidence-based guidelines on management practices², alongside three extensive evidence reviews. One of these reviews³ had a particular focus on how ‘work context’ factors affect employee wellbeing and identified the importance of supervisory support as a key theme.

The College is also undertaking a number of related programmes of work focusing specifically on first line supervision that will inform the development of the guidelines and potential mechanisms for their implementation.

In addition, findings from the Home Office’s Frontline Review should provide supporting evidence for the development of the guidelines.

4.2 Current practice

The 2008 HMICFRS thematic inspection on frontline leadership reported that there is a “widespread fundamental skills gaps at frontline sergeant level” (p. 7). Moreover, HMICFRS suggested that:

... the necessary capability and confidence [of sergeants] are not being acquired, nor adequate training provided, in order for frontline sergeants to be as effective in their role as they could, and indeed should, be. There is an urgent need to re-examine processes for preparing frontline sergeants for the role, and for the significant responsibility it carries (p. 7).

Since this report, the College’s (2015) Leadership Review concluded that:

There are areas of excellent practice in existing leadership and management training and development, but they are inconsistent and can be dependent on individual force initiatives that come and go (p. 30).

¹ SCIE (2017) “Effective supervision in a variety of settings”

² NICE (2015) “Workplace health: management practices”

³ Hillage et al. (2015)

Whilst these reports are important, there is not an up-to-date and exhaustive baseline for current practice with regards to effective first line supervision.

More broadly than wellbeing provision, the College 'Police Transformation Fund (PTF) Enablers Project has sought to identify the priority themes and areas of business that need to be addressed in order to help further develop confident and capable first line supervisors across the police service. This work included interviews with representatives of 12 forces⁴. The findings suggest that there are consistent areas of development which echo the findings of the 'perennial problems' analysis presented above (e.g., supporting officer/staff wellbeing, development and performance).

5 Focus

5.1 Overarching focus

The guidelines will seek to answer the following:

a) What constitutes great supervision to enable and support our people's wellbeing, learning and performance?

b) What support do supervisors need from their organisations to deliver this?

Accordingly, this work will focus on a broad definition of supervision which recognises that supervisors exist at all levels of the organization, rather than supervision of frontline staff only. The guidelines will have a particular focus on supervision and supervisory practices as opposed to (strategic) leadership⁵.

5.2 Rapid evidence assessments

'Rapid Evidence Assessments' will be undertaken in order to understand the research evidence that might support the development of the guidelines. These are reviews of the research literature that involve following clear procedures to search for, sift and bring together the findings of studies on a particular topic but within available timescales and resources. The use of transparent methods aims to ensure the reviews are relatively free from bias and can be easily repeated.

⁴ The police forces included in the analysis were: Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, South Yorkshire, Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire/Cambridgeshire, Durham, Cleveland, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Dyfed Powys, Staffordshire and Avon and Somerset. Interviews with representatives of the City of London Police and Humberside Police are planned but did not form part of the analysis presented.

⁵ Whilst there is conceptual overlap, this work distinguishes between 'supervision' broadly defined as "an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to more junior member or members of that same profession" (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004, p. 8) and 'leadership', that is, "the quality which connects an understanding of what must be done with the capability to achieve it" (College of Policing, 2015: "Leadership Review", p. 6).

5.3 Practice evidence and elicitation

A thorough assessment of existing activity within and beyond the College will be undertaken to assess our understanding of current practices in relation to supervision. Once this is identified and understood other research to understand current or good practice will be undertaken in order to plug knowledge gaps. This could involve visits to police forces and other public sector organisations and the use of elicitation techniques with key stakeholders. These would be used to provide insight into the impact and challenges present in delivering effective supervision in both policing and non-policing contexts and understanding practical levers to support implementation.