

Demonstrating fairness and respect

How supervisor fairness can lead to positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, wellbeing and motivation.

First published 25 April 2022

Supervisors must treat all members of staff with fairness and respect.

This includes:

- being fair, consistent, transparent and inclusive in all interactions with staff
- valuing diversity, building inclusive teams, and taking into account the perspectives and lived experiences of people from a wide range of backgrounds
- recognising difference and the associated differing needs of staff
- actively seeking out the views of staff and adopting an open approach when responding to their views, concerns, needs and aspirations
- providing information, honest feedback and clear reasons for actions and decisions

Evidence summary

There is good evidence that links supervisor fairness to positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, wellbeing, commitment, discretionary effort, motivation and feeling empowered. Supervisor fairness is also associated with a reduction in problem behaviours, such as destructive gossip and intentionally working slowly or obstructively. There is a large body of evidence demonstrating the importance of organisational justice, such as staff perceptions of fair decision making and respectful treatment by supervisors and senior leaders.

Supportive leadership (see [Introduction](#)), of which honesty and fairness is one element, has also been associated with a range of positive outcomes.

Evidence suggests that decision making that is open to employee input may contribute to positive outcomes, such as improved wellbeing and motivation. Providing information, feedback and clear reasons for decisions has also been found to be associated with positive outcomes.

The evidence covers the importance of fairness, consistency and transparency of support in relation to diversity and inclusion. Evidence from policing has highlighted that supervisors are less likely to deal with low-level matters of conduct at the earliest opportunity and proportionally when they involve officers from ethnic minority groups.

The practitioner evidence identified that officers and staff with protected characteristics, as well as those who are not in traditional police officer roles (police staff, special constables and direct entry officers), felt that they were treated unfairly at work.

This perceived unfairness encompassed a wide range of issues, including:

- contributions being less recognised
- being treated with a lack of respect
- lack of support from supervisors
- less access to professional development, specialist equipment and welfare support
- lack of structured career pathways
- direct discrimination

They reported that this affected their feelings of confidence and motivation, their trust in their supervisors and leaders, and whether they felt valued and part of a team.

Empirical evidence

Moderate

Practitioner evidence

Available

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Public Sector Equality Duty places an additional responsibility on public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, and to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Supervisor fairness has a positive impact on staff attitudes and behaviour, as well as the extent to which staff identify with their force and its values. It is therefore essential that supervisors apply the principles in this guideline consistently when carrying out their work, making decisions or providing support to staff. This includes decisions and support in relation to:

- allocation of work
- agreement of leave and working hours
- access to learning, development and career opportunities
- access to information, equipment and other resources
- management of performance and conduct

Supervisors should reflect on how unconscious bias (see [Capability](#)) and stereotyping might influence their treatment of staff, as well as any related decision making. They should also consider taking actions to address any imbalance of opportunity or disadvantage that an individual with a protected characteristic might face.

Further guidance on communication, supporting staff to express their views, and giving feedback that will help foster fairness and respect and will help staff feel valued regardless of their background, identity, role or circumstances is contained in:

- [Acting as a role model](#)
- [Building effective relationships](#)
- [Communicating effectively](#)
- [Supporting the delivery of good service](#)

Supporting resources

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Fair cop 2 – organisational justice, behaviour and ethical policing \(pdf\) 483.3 KB](#)

Tags

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