

Supporting professional discretion in decision making

How supervisors can encourage their staff to use their professional judgement.

First published 25 April 2022

Supervisors should encourage their staff to recognise where they can use their professional judgement and explore new and different ways of working by:

- supporting staff to develop the skills to improve their decision making
- helping staff to reflect on, and learn from, experience
- encouraging staff to be innovative and use discretion where appropriate

Evidence summary

There was good research evidence suggesting a positive association between allowing discretion and staff wellbeing, job satisfaction and commitment. Research from other sectors also identified a link between influencing decisions at work and lower risk of burnout.

Enabling empowerment of team members is a feature of supportive leadership (see [Introduction](#)), which is associated with a range of positive staff outcomes, including higher levels of wellbeing, ethical behaviour, discretionary effort, engagement, emotional energy and job satisfaction. Empowering approaches, such as supporting, recognising, delegating and consulting, are also shown to be positively associated with wellbeing, job satisfaction, commitment, performance, conscientiousness and employees feeling able to give constructive ideas and opinions.

Practice evidence suggested that staff wanted to be creative and try new ways of working, but often felt restrained from doing so by the organisational culture.

Empirical evidence

Moderate

Practitioner evidence

Available

Supervisors should support their staff to use the [national decision model](#) to enable them to make informed and ethical decisions. Supervisors should also use the model to review decisions and actions with their staff, and to promote learning. Supervisors should also consider the use of reflective practice to support staff to reflect on and learn from their own experiences (see [Supporting the delivery of good service](#)). The [Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2020](#) encourage a culture of continuous self-reflection and learning.

Supporting resources

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [The Seven Principles of Public Life](#)
- [Knowledge Hub](#)

Tags

Supervision