

Summary

Introduction to this guide and about the seven areas of actionable advice.

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Policing is committed to combatting sexism and misogyny among officers and staff. Forces understand that multiple targeted initiatives are required to enable the necessary culture change. The College of Policing recommends a multi-component strategy made up of 12 interventions (College of Policing, 2023).

Communications campaigns will play an important role in implementing this strategy.

Behavioural science can help us to design communications and develop interventions using evidence, theory and stakeholder experiences. Compared with relying on common-sense assumptions or experience alone, using a behavioural science approach is more likely to be effective in changing behaviour.

While this guide focuses on sexist and misogynistic behaviours, many of the principles can be applied to culture change relating to other behaviours.

This guide is not a manual. It is intended to be an easy-to-use reference document that draws on behavioural science principles and evidence to provide actionable advice, with the aim of supporting people working in – and with – police communications teams. It presents advice under seven broad headings.

1. When selecting target audiences and behaviours, consider both the positive and negative impacts of communications

There may be a risk of unintended consequences, even with certain audiences and behaviours that appear to be promising targets for campaigns. For example, communications may inadvertently make an unwanted behaviour appear more common than it is, or may put an unfair burden on witnesses and on those experiencing sexism and misogyny.

2. Use evidence-based approaches to build trust and acceptance

These include using consistent messaging, sources that audiences will identify with and respect, and approaches that reduce the risk that target audiences will dismiss information they find challenging.

3. Determine which behavioural drivers the messaging needs to focus on

Audience research can help make a behavioural diagnosis to decide which of the following drivers to target in messaging:

- capability (the audience's awareness, knowledge, mental strength and skills relating to the behaviour)
- opportunity (how easy or hard the behaviour is to do within the audience's physical and social environments)
- motivation (how far the audience thinks it should behave in particular ways, how far it wants to do so, and how far it does so without thinking)

4. Understand how to target capabilities

Make the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as clear as possible. Recognise the importance of mental strength and social skills in adopting desired behaviours, as well as cognitive biases that lead us to inaccurate judgements or beliefs.

5. Understand how to target opportunities

Establish strong social norms about challenging or not engaging in sexist behaviours when they occur, and help to shape environmental triggers that prompt these behaviours.

6. Understand how to target motivations

Affirm the audience's self-identity and social identity. Use positive messaging to encourage the audience to do things because they want to, rather than because they feel forced to do so. Help the

audience to be reflective and to challenge automatic behaviours.

7. Evaluate communication campaigns using standardised approaches across police forces

This will allow progress to be assessed over time, making use of limited resources by prioritising measures that are as close as possible to the behaviours being targeted.

References

College of Policing. (2023). [Tackling sexism and misogyny in policing](https://www.college.police.uk/support-forces/diversity-and-inclusion/culture-change-through-communications/summary) [internet]. [Accessed 1 November 2023]

Tags

Violence against women and girls