



Welfare Support Guidance

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1.0 GUIDANCE STATEMENT

At West Midlands Police, we recognise that during the course of an individual's career there may be a situation where they are involved in either a grievance, disciplinary or investigation (PSD or IOPC). These situations and the process that the individual will be involved with, can impact their health and well-being.

We recognise that as an organisation we need to provide a clear welfare support offering that ensures a point of contact during the process that can provide guidance, signposting to both internal and external organisations and ongoing support.

It is important that we ensure that we offer an unbiased and without prejudice clear support structure to those colleagues going through a grievance or disciplinary process.

2.0 PURPOSE

We have set out this guidance to:

- Provide an overview of the Welfare Support Offering
- Provide guidelines for the role of the Welfare Liaison Officer
- Provide clarity of the management of the role within the Force
- Set out the support mechanisms available within the Force.

3.0 SCOPE

This guidance applies to:

- All West Midlands Police Officers and Police Staff, regardless of rank or seniority.

4.0 WHAT IS WELFARE SUPPORT

The welfare support offering is an integrative approach to meet the needs for those going through a grievance, disciplinary or investigation process. Depending on the background to the particular process that someone is involved in will depend on the welfare support required and offered- in most cases. A Welfare Liaison Officer will only be allocated in misconduct cases or if the individuals line manager is not appropriately placed to provide welfare support. Support for welfare can be for anything for an individuals that have a emotional, psychological need and a WLO can signpost appropriately or escalate to the Well-being manager or Occupational Health. WLO's also work in collaboration with the Police Federation and unions to provide such support. Staff Associations can also support, but as with the WLO, will not directly be involved in the case itself.

However, in more complex cases such as misconduct and gross misconduct cases or where it is not appropriate for a Line Manager to be the welfare support then a Welfare Liaison Officer will be posted to support. We also need to ensure that



the correct level of support is given by the Occupational Health Department, understanding there is no medical reason for OH intervention other than when psychological assessments, support and guidance is required.

5.0 THE WELFARE LIAISON OFFICER ROLE

The role of the Welfare Liaison Officer will be undertaken by a recruited group of volunteers who will have completed a programme and had continuous CPD to ensure that they have the capabilities and commitment to support colleagues difficult time in their career.

The Welfare Liaison Officer will be providing this support in addition to their normal workload. The WLO is not on call out of their normal working hours and does not provide crisis support.

The role of Welfare Liaison Officer (this includes the deputy role when assigned to an individual) will be selected through a recruitment process for a number of volunteer roles designed to support WMP colleagues in a time of need.

The WLO team will be coordinated by the Wellbeing Manager for the purpose of this activity. The WLO may be asked to provide an update report on the welfare of the individual to the individual's senior management team, PSD or other related parties.

WLO's are not involved in the investigation process and their sole function is to provide support

Purpose of the role

WLO's will be the conduit between West Midlands Police and an individual that is involved in a misconduct investigation when the support cannot be provided by the Line Manager.

This is to ensure that the individual can be signposted towards the appropriate wellbeing support with any identified risk being managed in a timely and appropriate manner.

To achieve this, there will be regular face to face (where possible) contact between the WLO and the individual. This will enable the WLO to listen, risk assess and act upon any concerns that may be raised. These concerns may include (but aren't limited to):

- The impact of the investigation upon the individual's financial, emotional, family and professional life and their health and wellbeing.
- Feedback to the line manager/SLT the meaningfulness/impact/significance of the work they are performing during any period of restrictive duties and/or the impact of any suspension decisions.
- Concerns or elevation in risk following any investigation milestones.

It is essential that the WLO does not become involved in the investigation and it will be made clear as part of the contract between the individual and the WLO that their role is not to provide advice regarding the process but to support the individual through the process. Any queries regarding the grievance / misconduct process must be referred to their Fed/union for advice.

Where possible, the WLO should be independent of any grievance misconduct, gross misconduct or performance process during the period of investigation.

If during the life of the investigation it becomes apparent that a change of WLO would be beneficial, consideration should be given to the appointment of an alternative WLO. Issues such as this should be raised with the Well-being Manager and escalated to the PSD for a decision to be made.

Key accountabilities/responsibilities

1. To be responsible for identifying and acting appropriately on any wellbeing issues during the period of investigation, linking in with Police Federation, Unison and Unite representatives as appropriate to ensure joined up support.
2. To identify any individuals who do not have Unison, Unite or Police Federation support as they may need additional wellbeing requirements (Unison and Police Federation representatives also have wellbeing as part of their agenda and provide an additional network of individually focussed help).
3. To develop a positive relationship with the individual and maintain an agreed level of contact throughout the investigation based on the individual's stated preferences.
4. To refer into the Employee Support Officer team (within Occupational Health) for assessment and escalated psychological support as per the referral process.
5. To sign post essential services such as mental health support services etc. and be aware what action needs to take place should there be an immediate concern for safety. This will be kept under regular review. WLO's will communicate with the Occupational Health department, SMT, Chaplaincy and other relevant persons in order to ensure that the individual is being supported appropriately.
6. To be clear with the individual from the outset regarding the differences between the role of the WLO and that of people acting as 'police friends', legal representatives, PSD, Federation, Unison or Unite, particularly around issues of confidentiality, involvement in the investigation and disclosure.
7. To be aware of and proactively offer support during particularly difficult points of the investigation for example serving of papers, interviews, hearings etc.
8. To read and adhere to the briefing pack provided and ensure skills are continually developed via cohort training events, the sharing of best practice and learning from cohort experiences.
9. To de-select themselves from the support of an individual if there is a conflict of interest or any other reason that would impair the service to that individual. (For example if there is a relationship break down).
10. To work with the individual, staff association, Occupational Health, PSD and SMTs to develop a return to work plan at the end of an investigation as appropriate.
11. To support the link between the individual(s) and any Gold Group meetings.
12. To arrange meetings with other parts of the organisation as deemed appropriate by the WLO to support the individual(s).
13. Where the WLO is acting for more than one individual, to keep under review any potential conflict of interest and take any steps necessary to minimise this.
14. To keep their own line manager updated particularly with reference to capacity issues that might affect their substantive role.
15. There is no requirement to take detailed notes during each meeting as this may create a barrier to building rapport. However, the WLO contact log must be updated as soon as practicable after each meeting. Contact logs will not be viewable by anyone outside of the WLO cohort unless there is an urgent operational requirement.



WLO's are volunteers and have the right to decline deployments for personal reasons or due to workload commitments. WLO's must not be pressurised into taking or accepting a deployment.

6.0 WELFARE LIAISON OFFICER ACTIVATION

The WLO process can be initiated by:

- An investigating officer in PSD
- A Line Manager (following a meeting with the individual when it is agreed that it is not appropriate for the LM to support them)
- A HR Advisor

The request for a Welfare Liaison Officer will be directly through the Well-being Manager using the appropriate email inbox. Once received, the request is triaged and arrangements will be made to provide a suitable WLO to be assigned to support.

The details of the WLO assigned will be sent to the person requesting this support and initial contact to the individual requiring the support will be made by the WLO and recorded with the Well-being Manager. PSD will also be informed of the involvement of the WLO.

It is the WLO's responsibility to keep a record of contact and welfare support that has been offered and to raise any concerns with Occupational Health if they feel necessary. The WLO will be expected to disclose any record of conversation upon request. If in the event the WLO is leaving the Force or away for a long period of time, a suitable replacement will be allocated and a full handover will take place.

7.0 ACTION TIMESCALES

The email inbox will be monitored Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays). The Welfare Liaison Officer team only provide support during their normal working hours. After a referral has been made to the well-being manager, a WLO will be allocated within 3 days, with the WLO to make contact at the first available opportunity after being notified of allocation. The WLO will remain with the member of staff for the duration of the investigation.

8.0 DOCUMENTATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The WLO will complete a contact log to record support offered and any agreed actions. This document is not shared unless authorisation is given to do so.



As part of the initial contact there will be a contract to sign from both parties to confirm the support provision agreed. This also confirms the confidentiality agreement. It is the WLO responsibility to ensure the documents are in a secure location. Contracts are only used in cases where a WLO is allocated, not where line managers oversee the welfare role.

Upon being notified of a PSD investigation, a risk assessment will be carried out by the WLO with the individual to address any immediate welfare issues. A copy of the risk assessment will be sent to the well-being manager and any referrals to occupational health will be made accordingly.

9.0 SUPPORT FOR THE WELFARE LIAISON OFFICER

Support for the WLO will be provided directly from the Well-being Manager in the form of quarterly meetings to address any issues, where the Well-being Manager will chair and action anything raised appropriately. WLO are encouraged to disclose any welfare issues they have that may affect them carrying out their duty as a WLO. In the event of this happening, the Well-being Manager shall provide suitable well-being support and temporarily restricting the WLO from their duties.

10.0 OTHER WELFARE SUPPORT AVAILABLE

West Midlands Police recognises that any management process will impact on your Wellbeing. It is important that we have a number of options available to you to enable you to access the best support to meet your needs.

- 24/7 EAP – Self referral to the force EAP service [REDACTED]. Telephone [REDACTED] for counselling and other support
- West Midlands Police Federation- Tel: [REDACTED]
- Staff Associations
- Staff Unions
- Line Manager support – Your Line Manager can offer you some practical and emotional support and guidance.
- Line Manager Occupational Health referral – Referrals in Occ Health via the wellbeing portal. The referral needs to come from your Line Manager (or another Line Manager if needed).
- Force Chaplaincy Service – We have over 90 chaplaincy team members across the force. Our chaplains are based at local stations and are available for all colleagues whatever your faith.

