



# Invisible Labour

**Invisible labour is the unseen work that keeps teams steady but rarely gets named or acknowledged.**

Women often carry this load — remembering tasks others forget, noticing what needs to be done, filling relational gaps, and holding the emotional and operational glue of a team. Over time, this creates fatigue, resentment, and burnout.

## Why This Matters

Invisible labour drains energy, emotional bandwidth, and confidence. It increases fatigue, resentment, and burnout risk. In policing—where vigilance and load are already high—this pattern compounds pressure and erodes wellbeing over time. Naming it allows women to redistribute work without guilt and create healthier team norms.

## Who This Is For

- Women in policing
- Supervisors and team leaders
- Wellbeing and HR teams
- Anyone wanting to understand unseen workload patterns

## What You'll Learn

- What invisible labour is and how it shows up
- Why women often carry more of it
- How it impacts wellbeing and performance
- Tools to reduce, redistribute, and name invisible labour

## What Invisible Labour Is

Invisible labour is the **unassigned, unacknowledged work** that keeps teams functioning. It includes tasks that:

- no one assigns
- everyone benefits from
- women often absorb
- rarely appear in job descriptions
- are essential for team functioning

# Why Women Often Carry It

Women tend to hold invisible labour because they:

- notice what others miss
- anticipate relational or operational gaps
- feel responsible for team harmony
- pick up dropped tasks to avoid consequences
- are socially conditioned to “hold it all together”

This is cultural, not individual.

# Invisible labour Impacts

- fatigue
- emotional bandwidth
- resentment
- burnout risk
- confidence
- team culture

Naming it is the first step in redistributing it.

# How Invisible Labour Shows Up

## A. Operational Glue Work

Remembering deadlines, following up tasks, filling gaps, keeping things moving.

## B. Relational Maintenance

Checking in on people, smoothing tension, managing personalities.

## C. Anticipatory Work

Thinking ahead, preventing issues, preparing for others.

## D. Emotional Containment

Absorbing frustration, supporting distressed colleagues, being the “steady one.”

## E. Unseen Logistics

Organising, coordinating, preparing, tidying, reminding, tracking.

# Practical Tools

## Tool 1: The Visibility Script

A calm, leaderly way to name invisible labour without blame:

*"I've noticed I'm holding a lot of the background tasks that keep things running. We need to make this work visible so we can share it more evenly."*

## Tool 2: The Redistribution Conversation

A simple structure for shifting invisible labour:

1. Name the task.
2. Explain the impact.
3. Invite shared responsibility.
4. Agree on who holds what.

## Tool 3: The Drop-One Rule

Choose one invisible task you will no longer carry alone. Let it drop — and allow the system to adjust.

## The Visibility Script

This tool helps women name invisible labour without blame, emotion, or apology. It brings the unseen workload into the open so it can be shared. Visibility shifts the pattern from "this is just what I do" to "this is work the team benefits from, and it needs to be recognised." It interrupts the assumption that women will quietly absorb background tasks and creates the conditions for redistribution.

## The Redistribution Conversation

This tool provides a simple, steady structure for shifting invisible labour. It helps women move from carrying the load alone to shared responsibility. By naming the task, explaining the impact, and agreeing on who holds what, teams build clarity, fairness, and sustainable rhythms.

## The Drop-One Rule

Invisible labour often accumulates because women feel responsible for preventing things from falling through the cracks. This tool breaks that pattern. Choosing one task to stop carrying — and allowing the system to adjust — teaches the team to notice gaps, step in, and share load. It also helps women practise releasing responsibility without guilt. The Drop-One Rule is a small, controlled way to reset expectations and create more sustainable rhythms.

