



Principles and Standards for Safeguarding Supervision

1. Introduction

Working to ensure that children are safeguarded is demanding and requires sound professional judgements to be made. It may also be distressing and stressful for the professionals involved. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 states '*Effective professional supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family*'. This paper outlines the core principles of effective supervision to which the 4 Local Safeguarding Children Boards in Hampshire require all member agencies to implement.

2. Background

It is important to acknowledge that each LSCB partner agency will have its own governance arrangements, supervision culture and organisational structure that will affect the way in which supervision is delivered. This document does not intend to replace organisational policies that set out the specific supervision processes within agencies, but, provide a statement of expectation on the principles of safeguarding supervision that can be applied across organisations. It is recognised that there is no single model for the delivery of effective supervision. However, fundamental principles are applicable to all organisations and to all services.

3. Definition and functions of safeguarding supervision

Supervision is an accountable process which supports, assures and develops the knowledge, skills and values of an individual, group or team. The purpose is to improve the quality of their work to achieve agreed objectives and outcomes. For those working in safeguarding, this should optimise the capacity of people who use services to be safe and lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Safeguarding Supervision uses the supervisory relationship to promote positive outcomes for service users through creating a safe contained environment where the practitioner has the capacity to think and reflect. It facilitates the practitioner to be able to take responsibility for their own practice and response to the safeguarding needs of children. This relates specifically to their cases but also generally in their professional development. As a result safeguarding supervision will:

- Enable the individual to reduce the negative impact of human factors on their performance through the recognition of personal triggers and the personal and organisational resources they have to support them in developing and sustaining resilience in the face of challenging and complex work.

- Facilitate recognition of gaps in knowledge and skills needed for effective safeguarding practice; challenge discrepancies in thinking processes e.g. biases and assumptions
- Enhance the ability of practitioners to work effectively with colleagues and within their own organisation and support changes in behaviour that have led to ineffective relationships
- Contribute to organisational responsibility for competent accountable performance

Safeguarding supervision should be provided within a structured process. It requires a supervisor with a background or additional training in safeguarding, and whom receives regular updates in safeguarding and supervision.

All staff have a responsibility to access safeguarding supervision if they are concerned about the welfare of a child, and require support and advice about whether action is needed to safeguard the child(ren).

It is recognised that not all managers will have specific expertise in safeguarding. Where a (non-safeguarding) manager is supervising a safeguarding professional, or a professional whose main job focus is not safeguarding, but whom may come across safeguarding issues, for example, a housing officer or maintenance officer in a District Council, it would be appropriate for that member of staff to seek advice and guidance on safeguarding issues from the named safeguarding lead in their department / organisation. This advice should be sought with the prior knowledge of their line manager, and is in addition to formal line management supervision. Where additional safeguarding supervision is sought from a named safeguarding lead, feedback should be given to the member of staff's manager to inform their own management supervision.

Good quality supervision can help to:

- Keep a focus on the child
- Avoid 'drift' in case management
- Provide a forum for challenging fixed views
- Review the evidence base for agreed actions and decisions
- Address the emotional impact of the work
- Assist in the 'debriefing' process following complex or distressing cases

4. Reflective Supervision

Reflective supervision is an important part of Safeguarding Supervision. It is the activity within the supervision session whereby the supervisor asks the supervisee to reflect on certain situations / cases to consider whether a different perspective can be provided and an alternative approach taken that may impact positively on progress or effect a different end result.

It is important that staff who are working with children and their families are provided with Reflective Supervision as part of their supervision programme. It is acknowledged that not all workload / casework discussions require a reflective approach as some discussions just need a management decision or just confirmation that the work is on track with some suggestions made. However, in certain circumstances, the discussions need to be more reflective and will always inform why certain decisions are taken thereby providing a context on why those decisions were made.

An example of this would be a discussion about a child who has been on a child protection plan for over 12 months. The supervisor may explore with the supervisee the work undertaken to date and what has been achieved. An explanation as to why certain objectives have not been met may lead the supervisor to explore the plan and re-assess the risks in order to establish if the plan should end or be taken down an alternative route. This reflection enables the worker to step 'outside' of their work and re-examine the work plan. As an outcome of that reflection an alternative plan or a different focus may be agreed.

Recording of reflective discussion should be included within both supervisee files, as would be the case for any management supervision, but also any relevant case files so that there it is clear why certain decisions / courses of action have been taken.

5. Models of Safeguarding Supervision

Planned 1:1 Safeguarding Supervision

This is planned supervision with a trained safeguarding supervisor from the safeguarding children team or elsewhere in the organisation. The supervisee presenting any cases for discussion will be responsible for implementing any agreed actions. The safeguarding supervisor (if not the formal line manager) should provide feedback on the outcomes of the discussion to the supervisee's line manager.

Responsive Supervision

This refers to requests made from any professional to the named safeguarding team or professional for advice and support on safeguarding issues when they have concerns about a child(ren) or family. This advice should be sought as and when issues arise and should not be delayed by waiting for regular planned supervision. The supervisee presenting any cases for discussion will be responsible for implementing any agreed actions. The safeguarding supervisor (if not the formal line manager) should provide feedback on the outcomes of the discussion to the supervisee's line manager.

Peer Group Safeguarding Supervision

Peer Group supervision can be considered by any team that has common caseloads, or across teams where staff report similar safeguarding challenges or issues. The purpose of safeguarding supervision groups is to support the team in working effectively to ensure the most appropriate care provision. This ensures that there is consistent and a cohesive approach to safeguarding. The purpose of group supervision is to discuss safeguarding cases constructively, to challenge practice, review case studies and to discuss learning points from internal reviews, Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and changes in policies and protocols.

Unplanned face to face contact in the working environment

Whilst adhoc conversations can be both timely and helpful, staff should be discouraged from sharing information or seeking advice on safeguarding issues in 'corridor conversations'. This setting is not conducive to good communication and is not sufficiently private to discuss confidential or personal details of cases. A suitable private area should be found to continue the discussion.

6. The 4LSCB Safeguarding Standards

For the purposes of these standards, the following definition of supervision has been agreed:

“a two way, planned and accountable process that supports, assures and develops the knowledge of an individual, group or team...and ensures good practice”.

Providing effective supervision CWDC/skills for care 2007

- 1. Each agency should have a written policy for the supervision of staff working with children, young people and families which reflects these standards.**
- 2. Supervision should be provided by an appropriately experienced supervisor.** Each agency has a responsibility to assure itself that supervisors are sufficiently competent, experienced, qualified and confident in working with others to assure the safety of children. Any member of staff acting in a Supervisor role is also required to have undertaken the Supervisor training and should be able to demonstrate that they maintain the up-to-date knowledge required to offer support to others involved in safeguarding children.
- 3. All staff should have regular, planned, protected time and space for case supervision whether this is on a one to one or group basis.** This should be uninterrupted time that is a priority for both the supervisor and supervisee – or supervision group. Dates and times should be planned in advance and should not be changed or cancelled without an alternative time being made immediately.
- 4. For one to one supervision there should be a written supervision agreement signed and dated by supervisee and supervisor,** for group supervision this should be a group agreement. The agreement confers importance and status to supervision.
- 5. The supervision agreement will detail frequency and duration of supervision, practical arrangements, agendas, content and dates for review.**
- 6. Case supervision should be child focussed and should result in clear agreement about who will now do what in relation to the child to safeguard and promote their welfare.**
- 7. A written record should be kept of each session in line with the specific agency’s own supervision policy.**
- 8. Decisions relating to children, young people and families should be recorded (or cross referenced) on the supervisee’s supervision records and on the child/ young person’s or family’s case file or record within 24 hours of the decision being made. The way in which a ‘think family’ approach should be incorporated into supervision.**
- 9. Supervision records will be kept securely by the agency in line with agency policies and procedures.**
- 10. Professional practice supervision should be provided at a minimum of six weekly (usually monthly) intervals for practitioners working directly with children, young people and families.**
- 11. Supervision will usually take place face-to-face and not over the phone.**
- 12. An open culture of learning and development should be promoted, where good practice is celebrated and mistakes are used to learn and develop.**

13. The supervisor and supervisee share a joint responsibility for the supervisory relationship and for preparing for the session. For groups, this will involve shared responsibility of all participants, which should be based on mutual respect and trust and where all feel able to question and challenge assumptions and decisions

14. Discussions in practice supervision should be confidential unless:

- a. **Child / family member may be at risk of significant harm**
- b. **there is unsafe practice placing people at risk**
- c. **there is illegal activity**

Other issues, such as concerns about practice, should not be taken outside of supervision without advising the supervisor/supervisee first. Supervision records are the property of the agency, and the agency has access to Supervision records for audit or inspection purposes.

15. Each agency should have a process for handling complaints and disagreements with regards to supervision. The complaint or disagreement should be discussed, agreed and recorded with the supervisee. This will usually involve an agreement to involve the supervisor's line manager in a 3 way discussion to resolve any issue that the worker and supervisor cannot resolve themselves. Such discussions should take place with reference as needed to the professional resolution process, bullying & harassment policy, grievance process or other policies as necessary.