

Rochdale MBC Children's Services Supervision Policy

CONTENTS	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. Policy Statement	2
3. Definition of Supervision	3
4. Scope of Policy	3
5. Functions of Supervision	3-5
6. Supervision Methods	5-6
7. Frequency of Supervision	6
8. Supervision Records	6-7
9. Confidentiality and Access	7
10. Individual Supervision Agreement	8
11. Quality Assurance	9
12. Complaints	9
13. Statutory Guidance – National And Local Context	9-10
14. Arrangements to Review Policy	10

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to provide a framework and consistency in the supervision of all staff working for Children's Services at Rochdale M.B.C.
- 1.2 The policy has been written, following consultation, to ensure it meets the needs of the service, the staff and their supervisors, regardless of the professional area in which they work.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Rochdale MBC is committed to delivering the very best services across children's and family services and in order to do this, we need the very best workforce who are well trained, highly skilled, motivated and passionate about their role.
- 2.2 High quality supervision is one of the most important drivers in ensuring positive outcomes for people who use our children and families services. It also has a crucial role to play in the development, retention and motivation of the workforce.
- 2.3 Rochdale's Children's Service aims to provide appropriate, responsive and flexible services for the most vulnerable citizens of Rochdale and can achieve this if the staff employed by the Service:
 - understand what is expected of them and managed effectively.
 - have the skills, knowledge, behaviours, values and attitudes necessary to carry out their role.
 - are fully supported in their work
 - and are engaged with the organisation
- 2.4 Supervision is one of the ways that this can be achieved. This policy sets out how staff can expect to be supervised and provides managers with the key elements needed to supervise staff effectively. **Practice guidance can be found in the [Supervision Practice Toolkit](#) and word document versions of all the proformas in the toolkit are also available.**

3. Definition of Supervision

3.1 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. In Children's Services this should optimise the capacity of people who use services to lead independent and fulfilling lives¹.

4. Scope of Policy

4.1 This policy applies to:

- All staff employed by **Children's Services** whether full or part time, permanent or temporary, including agency staff.
- Supervisors employed by other agencies with responsibility for the supervision of **Children's Service staff**.

5. Functions of supervision

5.1 The four main functions of supervision are:



¹ CWDC. Providing effective supervision

5.2 These four functions are interdependent, that is one function cannot be effectively performed without the others. An over-emphasis on, for example, management, will leave the supervisee feeling that they are being overly controlled and that the only purpose of supervision is to “check up on them”. An over-emphasis on support will result in important discussions about workload, decision-making, and accountability being neglected leading to a danger of supervision becoming counseling. Each function is described in detail below:

5.3 **Accountability or Management Function.**

This function is to ensure that the work for which the supervisee may be held accountable is carried out to a satisfactory standard.

Discussion during supervision should include:

- the overall quality of the supervisee’s performance and work output/outcomes
- the policies and procedures relating to their work and that these are understood and followed
- the role and responsibilities of the supervisee and that these are clearly understood, including the boundaries and limits of their role
- the development and monitoring of action plans/targets and objectives
- monitoring of the supervisees workload.

5.4 **Support.**

This function recognises that, from time to time, supervisees may require support to carry out their role; this may be because of particular situations, specific incidents or personal issues that may temporarily impact on their work performance. By offering support within the supervision context supervisees should be given the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the work upon them and prevent issues adversely affecting them and their work.

This will be achieved through:

- creating a safe environment within supervision where trust and confidentiality are maintained
- clarifying the boundaries between support and counseling
- enabling and empowering expression of feelings in relation to the work role
- monitoring the health of the supervisee and referring to occupational health or counseling when appropriate.

5.5 **Developmental function.**

This function is to encourage and assist staff in reflecting on their own performance, identify their own learning and development needs and develop plans or identify opportunities to address those needs.

The development function will be achieved through:

- helping supervisees identify their preferred learning style and barriers to learning,
- assessing development needs and identifying learning opportunities
- giving and receiving constructive feedback on performance

- encouraging the supervisee to reflect on learning opportunities undertaken and applying that learning to the workplace.

5.6 **Organisational Engagement.**

This function is to ensure that the relationship between the supervisee, their team, the organisation and other agencies with whom they work are effective.

This will be achieved through:

- briefing senior managers about key issues
- dealing sensitively but clearly with concerns and complaints about colleagues and others with whom they work
- consulting and briefing staff on changes and developments that affect their area of work
- advocating between worker or team and other parts of the agency or with outside agencies.

6. Supervision methods

- 6.1 This policy is primarily concerned with one to one supervision that takes place in private at a pre-arranged time with an agreed agenda and preparation on behalf of both parties. All staff within the Service will have access to this method of supervision. Further information and guidance is contained in Section 1 of the [Supervision Practice Toolkit](#).
- 6.2 It is recognised, however, that supervision is much more than these one to one sessions; it is an on-going process that takes place in many different settings and in many different ways. The two main methods, other than formal one to one sessions, are outlined below; they have a place but cannot and should not replace planned, formal, recorded, one to one sessions.
- 6.3 **Group supervision**
This should not replace individual supervision but can be used to complement it. It will involve a group of staff; all involved in the same task, meeting with a supervisor to discuss issues about their work or the way they work together as a team. This may be done in the context of a regular team meeting or as a separate session to look at specific issues.
- 6.4 **Unplanned or “ad-hoc” supervision**
The pace of work and change and the frequency of supervision means that staff often have to “check something out” with a supervisor, obtain a decision or gain permission to do something in between formal supervision sessions. In addition, staff who work closely with their supervisor will be communicating daily about work issues, problems arising and changes in policies or procedures.

- 6.5 This form of supervision is, of course, a normal and acceptable part of the staff/supervisor relationship. There are two points to be borne in mind when considering unplanned or ad-hoc supervision:
- any decisions made with regard to a service user should be clearly recorded on the service user's case file/electronic record on ICS as appropriate.
 - where supervisees and supervisors work closely together this does not negate the need for private one to one time together on a regular basis. The focus of these sessions is wholly on the individual, their development, performance and any issues arising from their work that do not arise on a day-to-day basis.
- 6.6 It should be noted that in some settings the day to day supervisor for a particular member of staff may change according to shift patterns and rotas. However, the one to one sessions for a particular member of staff should always be carried out by the same supervisor. If a supervisee is subject to frequent changes of supervisor it is difficult for a relationship based on trust, openness and honesty to be established and confidentiality may be, or may be perceived to be, compromised.
- 6.7 If a supervisor is absent from work for a long period (over one month) the senior manager should ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the supervision of the staff in that section.

7. Frequency of supervision

- 7.1 Planned supervision sessions will take place on a regular basis, usually monthly. **For further detail, see table in Section 2 of the Supervision Practice Toolkit.**

8. Supervision Records

- 8.1 The recording of supervision sessions is the responsibility of the supervisor. The supervisor must adhere to the following standards of recording; this will be checked during the quality assurance process.
- 8.2 The recording standards are set out below:
- the detail included in the supervision record is a matter of judgement for the supervisor. In general the record should be detailed enough so that the issue can be revisited, if necessary, at a later date and still be understood. A short summary of the discussion and the decisions or action points arising from it should be sufficient in most cases.
 - where possible supervision records should be typed. If the supervisor is unable to type them personally they should be passed to a member of the support services section to be typed. Note: this should be with the agreement of the supervisee and form part of the Individual Supervision Agreement; the actual content should be negotiated if issues of a very personal or confidential nature are discussed.

- if the supervisor prefers to handwrite them this is permissible providing it forms part of the Individual Supervision Agreement and the supervisor's writing is legible.
- supervisors should aim to give a copy of the record to the supervisee for signature within two weeks. If this is not possible they should be with the supervisee before the next supervision session. This should form part of the Individual Supervision Agreement.
- records should clearly detail any decisions that have been made, and the reasons for these, any agreed actions including who will take responsibility and the timescale for carrying out these actions.
- the records should be signed and dated by both parties. If there is disagreement as to the content of the record this should be recorded by the supervisor. A copy should be retained by both parties.
- whilst it is recognised that many staff prefer to keep records on computer systems, in the case of supervision records hard copies must be taken. This is to both safeguard the supervisor and supervisee in the case of investigations (e.g. disciplinary or complaints investigation) and to ensure that records are not altered in any way.

8.3 Proformas for the recording of supervision are included in the **Supervision Practice Toolkit** and are also available as word documents. **Separate templates are available for 'Staff other than Managers', for 'Managers/Senior Managers' and for 'Ad Hoc supervision'.**

9. Confidentiality and Access

- 9.1 Supervision is a private but not a confidential process. This means that the records are the property of the organisation, not the individual. From time to time supervisors will need to discuss the content of supervision sessions with others, e.g. their own line manager, this should always be with the knowledge of the supervisee.
- 9.2 Access to supervision records should be controlled and all records should be locked away so that others who do not have a legitimate right to see the records cannot access them. Supervisees should be aware, however, that other than themselves and their supervisor others will, from time to time, access records, and these might include:
- Senior Managers - for quality assurance purposes
 - Investigating officers - for disciplinary purposes
 - Inspectors - Ofsted/CSCI inspectors
 - Performance staff - for audit and quality assurance purposes

This list is not exhaustive.

9.3 Storage and Retention

The Individual Supervision Agreement and the supervision records will be kept on the supervisee's file held by the supervisor or in an agreed place, in a locked cabinet.

- 9.4 When a supervisee leaves the council the records must be retained and the supervision file should be stored with the personal file held within personnel sections.
- 9.5 Where a member of staff transfers to another section or supervisor within the directorate their records should be passed onto the new supervisor.

10. Individual Supervision Agreement

- 10.1 The process of developing an Individual Supervision Agreement is as important as the written document itself. This process should be begun at the first supervision session though it may not be completed in one session.
- 10.2 The purpose of the Individual Supervision Agreement is to establish a basis for which the supervisor and supervisee will work together during one to one supervisions. This establishment of “ground rules” should be through negotiation and should clarify the rights and expectations on both sides to create a safe, secure and effective supervisory setting. It is worth noting that when the supervision relationship breaks down, or is less than satisfactory for either party, it is usually because of a lack of clarity or a mismatch of expectations from the outset.
- 10.3 When establishing the supervision agreement the following should be discussed:
- the purpose of supervision
 - the frequency of supervision
 - the venue for the supervision sessions (note: this should always be in a private room where others cannot easily overhear)
 - any specific responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee
 - the recording of supervision, including where records will be kept to safeguard confidentiality, whether records will be typed or handwritten, how quickly records will be given to the supervisee for signature
 - the arrangements for any ad-hoc or unplanned supervision
 - the complaints and review process
 - the practical arrangements (e.g. the process if supervision has to be cancelled/rearranged, an agreement that supervision will be uninterrupted, the anticipated length of time for each session)
 - the arrangements for agenda setting (e.g. both parties to submit agendas before the session, at the start of the session etc).
 - arrangements to be put in place to meet any needs arising from disability (for example in relation to venue and alternative recording formats)
 - arrangements to be put in place to meet the cultural needs of staff (e.g. the need to have a break at the appropriate time to open the fast during the month of Ramadan for Muslims).
- 10.4 Each Individual Supervision Agreement will be different and should be regarded as a “living” document that is changed according to the changing needs of the supervisee, an example of this may be where the frequency of supervision has been agreed and this subsequently changes as the member of staff gains confidence in their role. As a minimum it should be reviewed annually.

- 10.5 A proforma Individual Supervision Agreement is found in **Section 3 of the Supervision Practice Toolkit**. Also included is a proforma Supervision Arrangement Record and proforma Extended Supervision Agreement to detail more individual needs once the supervisory relationship has been established.

11. Quality Assurance

- 11.1 In order to be effective the supervision process requires monitoring and quality assurance arrangements. The quality assurance process ensures that:
- the standards of supervision as outlined in this policy are being followed
 - staff are being supervised professionally and effectively
 - supervision sessions are being appropriately recorded,
 - individual Supervision Agreements are being developed, used and reviewed

the supervision process promotes equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

- 11.2 The quality assurance arrangements involve:
- the auditing of a random selection of supervision files on a three monthly basis by senior managers
 - discussion during supervision, for example, between service manager and team manager, about the team manager's practice in supervising their staff. The senior manager may request copies of supervision records as evidence of practice and to use as a tool where there are developmental needs on behalf of the team manager.

12. Complaints

- 12.1 Supervisees should be clear about whom they should contact if they feel the terms of their supervision agreement are not being met. How supervisees make a complaint and who to (named manager) should be included in the Individual Supervision Agreement.
- 12.2 Supervisees should always discuss any complaints or dissatisfaction in the first instance with their supervisor and endeavor to reach an agreement within the normal supervision process. If the complaint cannot be resolved by discussion with the supervisor the supervisee should raise the issue with their supervisor's manager.

13. Statutory Guidance – National and Local Context

- 13.1 The key national drivers underpinning this policy include:
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children (March 2010)
 - 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy (December 2008)
 - CWDC, Supervision: Right From the Start: the supervisor's guide to supervising the newly qualified social worker (February 2009)

- National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, Good practice principles in supervision for working with parents (2009)
- Building a Safe, Confident Future - The Final Report of the Social Work Task Force (December 2009)
- Lord Laming, The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report (March 2010)
- Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and Code of Practice for Employer's of Social Care Workers (Issued 2004, updated April 2010)
- Inspiring practice: A guide to developing an integrated approach to supervision in Children's Trust (2010)
- The Final Report of the Munro Review of Child Protection: A child-centred system (May 2011)

13.2 This policy needs to be applied in conjunction with:

- Morrison, T (2006). Staff Supervision in Social Care – Making a Real Difference for Staff and Service Users. 3rd Edition. Brighton: Pavilion.
- CWDC/Skills for Care, Providing Effective Supervision (2007)
- Rochdale MBC [Supervision Practice Toolkit](#)

14. Review of policy

14.1 This policy will be reviewed annually on the anniversary of implementation, unless service delivery requires a more immediate amendment due to incidents affecting or included in this policy or changes in guidance from any appropriate body.

