

The Five Functions of Supervision

The Management Function ensures:

- The overall quality of the worker's performance;
- Agency policies and procedures are understood and followed;
- The worker understands her/his role and responsibilities;
- The worker is clear as to the limits and use of their personal, agency and statutory authority;
- Work is reviewed regularly in accordance with agency and legal requirements;
- The basis of decisions is clear to the worker and made explicit in agency records;
- Records are maintained according to agency policies;
- The worker knows when the supervisor expects to be consulted;
- The worker is given an appropriate workload;
- Appropriate time management by the worker;
- The worker acts as a positive member of the team;
- The worker understands the functions of other agencies and relates appropriately to them;
- The worker receives regular formal appraisal.

The Development function ensures:

- The professional competence of the worker;
- An appreciation and assessment of the worker's theoretical framework, skills, knowledge and individual contribution to the organisation;
- An understanding of the worker's value base in relation to race, gender, sexuality and disability and its impact on their work;
- An understanding of the worker's preferred learning style and blocks to learning;
- An assessment of the worker's training and development needs and how they can be met;
- Access to professional consultation in areas outside the supervisor's knowledge/experience;
- The worker's ability to reflect on their work and their interaction with service users, colleagues and other agencies;
- Regular and constructive feedback to the worker on all aspects of their performance;
- The worker's capacity for self-appraisal

- A relationship in which the worker provides constructive feedback to supervision.

The supportive/restorative function ensures:

- Validation of the worker both as a professional and as a person;
- Creation of a safe climate within which the worker can look at their practice and its impact on them as a person;
- Debriefing the worker and giving them permission to talk about feelings;
- Helping the worker to explore emotional blocks to their work;
- Exploring in a safe setting issues about discrimination;
- Support for workers who are subject to any form of abuse either from service users or colleagues, whether this be physical, psychological or discriminatory;
- Monitoring of the overall health and emotional functioning of the worker, especially with regard to the effects of stress;
- Helping the worker reflect on difficulties in colleague relationships in order to assist the worker in resolving conflict;
- Clarifying when the worker should be advised to seek external counselling.

The Mediation function ensures:

- Higher management is briefed about resource deficits and their implications;
- Resources are allocated in the most efficient way;
- Staff needs are represented to higher management;
- The team's remit is clear;
- Contributions are made to policy formulation or amendment;
- Staff are briefed and consulted about organisational information and developments;
- Advocacy between worker, or team, and other parts of the agency or with outside agencies;
- Staff are represented or accompanied in their work with other agencies, if necessary;
- Staff are involved in decision-making;
- Complaints about staff are dealt with sensitively and clearly;
- Staff are assisted and supported, where appropriate, through complaints procedures.

Reflection on and Learning from Practice

Supervision provides a key site for the development and support of reflective practice and offers a space in which to stand back and take a fresh look at a case. There are a number of strategies or models to help support practitioners/supervisors to use reflective, analytical and critical thinking skills. For example, Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, D. [1984] *Experiential Learning*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall) can support analytical and reflective thinking in supervision:

Experience: The supervisor elicits a clear 'story' about what the worker is experiencing and what they have observed, by asking questions and seeking clarity. The role of the supervisor is to encourage the supervisee to formulate hypotheses about how the relevant parts of the story fit together and to test out the relative strengths of the various hypotheses.

Reflection: The supervisee is encouraged to explore the feelings evoked by the story and think about what this might mean for the child, young person, family, carer or themselves.

Analysis: Supervisor and supervisee evaluate their perceived knowledge and beliefs about the case. They make judgements and decisions based on observations, evaluation of information, available evidence, wider experience, reflection and consideration of research. Working with the supervisee, and helping them to be clear about the impact on the child of not addressing their needs, will help ensure that any decisions and plans are as safe as possible for the child.

Plans and Action: Where critical thinking and critical reflection have occurred, realistic and safer plans can be developed. Actions can be explained and justified. Timescales and contingency plans can also be considered and agreed. The supervisor and Supervisee need to be satisfied that the outcomes set conform to the SMART standard (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely).