



# Supervision Policy and Procedure

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Policy Statement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Expectations around Supervision</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Supervision Training</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Defining Supervision - What is it and why does it matter?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Kolb's Learning Cycle</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Supervision – Thinking about Outcomes</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Types of Supervision</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Expectations of Supervisees</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Child</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Group Supervision</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Other Useful Tools for use in Supervision</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>15</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

This guide sets the standard for good supervision practice across Children's Services. It is a core part of a range of competences for leaders, managers and practitioners working with children and families.

Effective supervision can make a major contribution to the achievement of high quality services and best outcomes for those children and young people who use them. It is also vital in the support and motivation of staff who undertake demanding jobs both on behalf of this Council and for the benefit of our local communities.

All practitioners and their managers are expected to read this document, be familiar with its contents and use them to inform their day-to-day practice.

Effective case management and reflective supervision are essential tools in safeguarding children and young people and to ensure we provide high quality services.

Managers, supervisors and practitioners are responsible for ensuring that services meet the best possible standards and have the most positive impact on children, young people and their families.

This Supervision Policy is part of a continuum of policies and processes to ensure that staff in Children, Families and Community Health's professional journey within the Department is supported; All staff within Children, Families and Community Health is to be supported through:

- An Induction programme; inclusive of SBC's policies and procedures;
- Probation period;
- Support and Development within post (Supervision; Appraisals etc.)

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

Our vision is that all Swindon children have the best chances in life to achieve their full potential. We will work to ensure that they are able to live, learn and thrive free from fear and harm, with a network of safe people around them. We will enable families to use their own resources so children live, learn and thrive in safety. We will support staff to analyse and clarify the real issues within the family and to help effect change with them.

This vision is enabled by a set a values for how we behave together and how we provide our services to those who need them. These values help us develop a culture where staff can work in a collaborative way and deliver services with high standards of care. They include trust and respect for each other, pride in what we do, working well as a team and finding value in the contribution that every person makes.

This vision is supported by our Practice Framework which focuses on improving outcomes for children and relationship based practice.

One important way we can translate these values into the services we provide is through the provision and support of effective supervision. Swindon Borough Council Children's Services is committed to providing quality supervision for all staff as a key part of improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and of enabling staff to provide the best possible interventions.

In order to achieve this, Swindon Borough Council will ensure that the guidance, training, time and resources for supervision are available to all staff and that the policies and culture throughout the organisation positively supports supervision within the context of a learning organisation.

### **Core Principles**

- **Constructive working relationships** within and between professional networks and with families themselves are at the centre of effective practice
- **Fostering a stance of inquiry.** Critical thinking allows for the possibility of different positions about the truth of a given situation. The single most important factor in minimising professional error is to accept that you may be wrong.
- **Grounding our aspirations** in everyday practice. Finding and documenting practitioner and clients' descriptions of what on-the-ground good practice with complex and challenging cases looks like is a key to learning.

### **EXPECTATIONS AROUND SUPERVISION**

- Each worker is entitled to personal supervision on a monthly basis by the supervising Manager.
- ASYE supervision will vary however the expectation is that will receive weekly supervision for the first 6 weeks then fortnightly for 6 months and thereafter monthly. If ASYE workers have been students within the Department it may be that the move to monthly supervision will be earlier according to the worker's identified needs
- Supervision will consist of both case and personal supervision
- Supervision will focus on progressing good outcomes for children and how engaged the child's family is in facilitating change.
- Supervision will be recorded within **Appendix 1 Supervision notes** and **Appendix 2 Supervision case discussion.**
- Live supervision managers should undertake direct observations of at least 3 workers over a 3 month period-See **Appendix 4 Live Supervision**
- Group supervision will be held on a 3 weekly basis.

### **Cases to be supervised on a Monthly basis:-**

- Child Protection cases
- Children Looked After who are not matched or in settled placements

- Complex CIN cases/pre-birth cases
- Children subject to Placement Orders and accommodated under Section 20 by the IRO Service
- Fostering
- Youth Offending

#### **Other cases**

- All other cases should be 3/4 monthly
- Young people who have left care allocated in the Leaving Care Team should be discussed in supervision at a minimum of 3 monthly and if over 18 years at a minimum of 4 monthly.

### **SUPERVISION TRAINING**

Swindon Borough Council has a Core Training offer for all staff which focuses on outcomes and what is good for children.

There is an expectation that all managers who undertake supervision attend the Supervising to Safeguard Core Training course and the Owning and Driving Performance Programme.

Group Supervision training will also be offered as part of our Core Training Offer

### **DEFINING SUPERVISION - WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

#### **Defining Supervision**

Supervision is a complex activity (1) While there have been many attempts to define supervision in terms of its function and purpose, there is no single definition that fully captures the range and subtleties of supervisory activities in practice. Traditionally supervision policies refer to a three or four functional model of supervision delivered via a supervisor-supervisee relationship. This might include for example dimensions of management, professional development, emotional support and mediation. This focus on function and task can tend to obscure the role of the supervisor in promoting critical analysis, the contextual dynamics of the supervisory process or that supervision itself forms part of the intervention with service users.

Developmental work by Skills for Care and the CWDC looked to widen the summarised supervision as

*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 [2].*

This extends the understanding of supervision as being more than just encompassing a one-to-one meeting with a supervisor – usually the worker’s line manager. At the same time, the focus on formal processes rather ignores the often significant contribution of informal activities, for example peer networks of support. These can represent an important and often underplayed part of the supervisory process and one that requires active support by managers and professional associations [3].

The approach we have taken here acknowledges this range of supervisory activity and looks to support best supervisory practice in whichever form it takes. It recognises that we need to understand which of these methods is most useful, for whom and in what circumstances. We also emphasise that good support is a core condition for effective supervision and guarantor for improving the outcomes of the children and families we work with.

Lord Laming reiterated the voice of many, before and since, when he concluded

*that supervision the cornerstone’ of good social work practice It is vitally important that social work is carried out in a supportive learning environment that actively encourages the continuous development of professional judgment and skills. Regular, high quality, organised supervision is critical [4].*

While the importance of supervision has also been emphasised in the literature and practice of social work for many years it is perhaps surprising that up until quite recently with the publication of ‘Providing Effective Supervision’ [5] there had been no national statement addressing the need for social care organisations to have in place a robust policy framework for supervision. At the same time, compared to other components of s

Social work practice, there has been a relative lack of well-founded systematic research into the value and impact of supervision in practice, although that picture is beginning to change. [6, 7] What are messages from that work we can be confident about?

The evidence indicates a positive influence of supervision in a number of areas, for example:

- Supervision does have positive effects on practitioner self-awareness, skills, self-efficacy, theoretical orientation and support.
- There is evidence that group supervisory processes can increase critical thinking and promote the dissemination of learning and skills.
- The supervisory relationship appears to have an important mediation function in which organisational and supervisee needs interact and are exchanged.
- The impact of supervision on promoting better outcomes within families does appear to be connected to a secure professional relationship where the supervisor takes time to understand and assess the supervisee’s strengths and weaknesses.
- The benefits of developing a positive supervision culture across wider social care and children’s services are now widely recognised. The task assistance, emotional

and support components of supervision have positive effects on a variety of organisational outcomes.

There are also some areas where supervision appears to be an important contributory activity but where the findings on impact are more tentative. This in large part has to do with the relative absence of larger scale robust studies as well as the especially complex interaction of factors involved. These areas include:

- The contribution of supervision to job satisfaction
- The importance of supervision on worker retention and commitment to the organisation

### **Content of Supervision**

Managers should be driving a reflective/progressive discussion not just tracking cases. Supervision should connect the workers to the lived experience of the child.

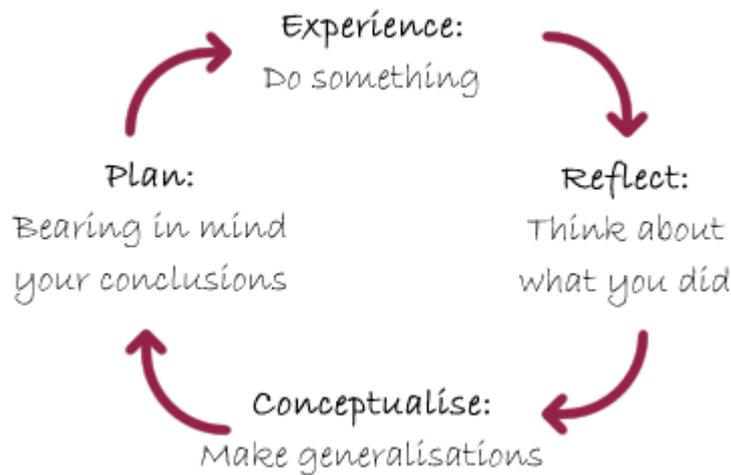
During case discussion, practitioners must always be given the opportunity to emotionally explore and reflect on the child's experience. The question "**What is it like to be this child?**" should be used to enable good decision making to take place in the best interest of children. It is important to think about this for each child in families where there are two or more children.

What specifically does a safety plan require of the child's network so that it behaves in a protective and helpful way? What does "good" look like for this child living at home?

Recording of reflective supervision-should include quality of the child's plan and the impact on the child.

### **KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE**

Kolb's Learning Cycle is a well-known theory which argues we learn from our experiences of life, even on an everyday basis. It also treats reflection as an integral part of such learning. According to Kolb (1984), the process of learning follows a pattern or cycle consisting of four stages, one of which involves what Kolb refers to as 'reflective observation'. The stages are illustrated and summarised below:



- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Stage 1: Experience</b>    | The Experience - what happened, detailed descriptions, paying attention to the detail as well as the bigger picture   |
| <b>Stage 2: Reflect</b>       | Reflection involves thinking about what we have done and experienced including the exploration of emotions associated with the experience   |
| <b>Stage 3: Conceptualise</b> | When we pass from thinking about our experiences to interpreting them we enter into the realm of what Kolb termed 'conceptualization'. To conceptualize is to generate a hypothesis about the meaning of our experiences. This involves Analysis - articulating the thinking and understanding that is occurring in relation to this experience |
| <b>Stage 4: Plan</b>          | Action Plan - Deciding what to do in response to what has/may happen and the thoughts and feelings you are aware of, having applied knowledge, theory and practice wisdom to the experience   |

To learn from our experiences it is not sufficient just to have them. This will only take us into stage 1 of the cycle. Rather, any experience has the potential to yield learning, but only if we pass through all Kolb's stages by reflecting on our experiences, interpreting them and testing our interpretations

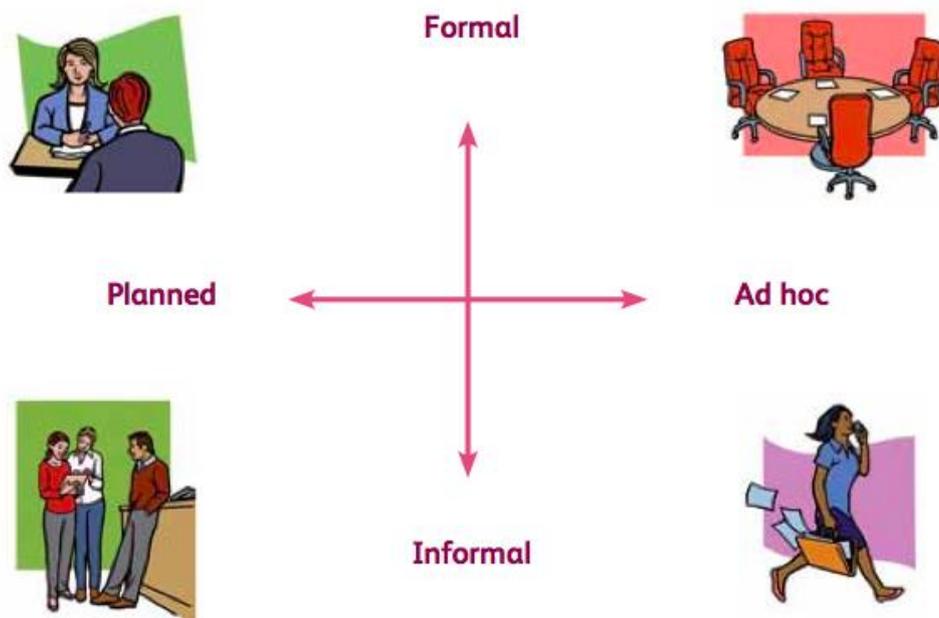
Learning from our experiences involves the key element of reflection.

## SUPERVISION – THINKING ABOUT OUTCOMES

Develop actions or goals with 'the end in mind'. An outcome thinking that pictures what is it you want to do rather than don't want to do. A stepped approach can be helpful here, for example:

- **What?** Describe what you want to achieve in positive and detailed terms.
- **Context?** When, where, with whom will your goal be realised?
- **Evidence?** How will you know you have realised your goal? What will you see, hear or feel?
- **Resources?** What do you need to achieve your outcome? Are they in your control?

## TYPES OF SUPERVISION



### **1. Formal Supervision**

It is important that a supervision discussion provides the opportunity for both supervisee and supervisor to raise matters of importance to them across the four areas outlined below. The supervisee should be able to identify what they particularly want to cover during the meeting as well as including the supervisor's priorities. It is good practice to agree and prioritise the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

There are interrelated aspects to individual supervision (Figure 1). At the centre is the relationship between the supervisee and supervisor. This core dimension is concerned with support and must be grounded in an environment of respect and validation of the individual. In this approach, support is not a function of supervision but a core condition

for it. This central dimension influences the four other aspects of supervision that surround it.

- **Managerial** this is about joint accountability for day-to-day work of qualified practitioners and quality of service. It includes decision-making regarding individual children, and discussion on resources and workloads, targets and overall performance.
- **Work and case discussion:** this aspect is concerned with reviewing and reflecting on practice with a focus on the purpose, pace, proportionality and impact of our work for children. This should focus on achieving improved outcomes for children. Reflective analysis can be supported by the use of appreciative inquiry. Constructive feedback and observation of practice forms part of the learning process for workers and supervisors.
- **Professional development:** this aspect recognises individual achievements and learning needs. This may include looking at roles and relationships and evaluating the outcome of training. It ensures staff have the relevant skills, knowledge, and attributes to manage their work. It anticipates future changes in the service, identifies and provides developmental opportunities to respond to these.
- **Relationships:** this aspect recognises that the supervisee may have a number of roles, relationships and partnerships, within and outside the organisation including family members, team colleagues and professional networks. The dynamics involved with these need to be explored together through the exchange and mediation of information and feedback to provide a holistic consideration of practice, professional and personal development.

Supervisors are responsible for completing a record of each individual and formal supervision, which will cover each one of these four aspects although the balance of content between them will vary from time to time.

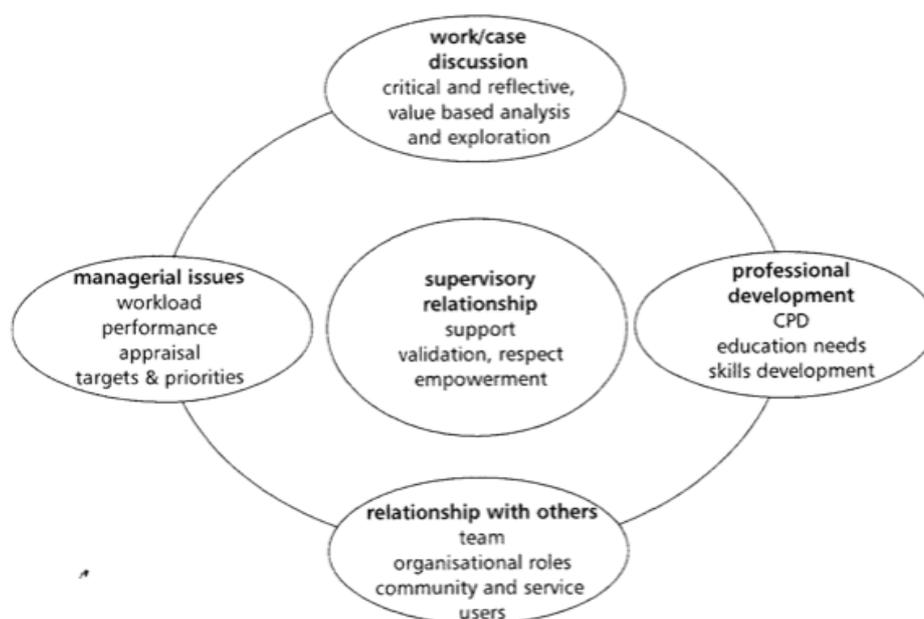


Figure 1 Dimensions of Supervision [9] Howe K and Gray I (2013) Effective Supervision in Social Work.

## **2. Management Overview or “Informal Supervision”**

An over-reliance on ‘corridor conversations’ is not an adequate substitute for formal supervision. Nonetheless, given the pace of work, change of circumstances and the frequency of formal arrangements means there will be occasions when staff will need to have discussions with their manager, for example, to obtain an urgent decision or gain permission to do something in between formal supervision sessions. In addition, staffs who work closely with their supervisor will be communicating daily about work issues.

This form of “supervision” is, of course, a normal and acceptable part of the staff/supervisor relationships. There points below should be kept in mind when considering unplanned or ad-hoc supervision:

- Any significant decisions made with regard to a service user must be clearly recorded on ICS. The rationale for management endorsement of a decision must be set out in sufficient detail to enable transparency and accountability for actions with the child, family and relevant professionals. Management oversight entries on ICS must be clear and specific. In addition to “formal” supervision they are a key method of evidencing the process of decision making in relation to children and young people and ensuring standards of intervention are met.
- Where employees 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.

## **3. Effective Supervision: a shared responsibility**

A Supervision Agreement should be in place between the supervisee and the supervisor using **Appendix 1** Supervision Agreement.

While there are some specific and separate responsibilities and accountabilities for supervisors and supervisees, many are in fact shared and are instrumental in delivering high quality supervision. So, both supervisors and supervisees have a responsibility to contribute positively to this process.

These shared responsibilities and accountabilities include:

- Turning up on time
- Making sure supervision is planned well in advance and only changed in exceptional circumstances
- Allowing both supervisee and supervisor to contribute to the agenda
- Maintaining a focus on the child and children
- Providing an appropriate setting and free of interruptions
- Preparing well for supervision by reviewing notes from the previous meeting and thinking about the issues that need to be raised and discussed

- Ensuring that supervision consists of open and honest discussion. This includes a preparing to share what has gone well and what has been difficult
- Recognising and naming unhelpful, difficult or dangerous dynamics within casework and agency relationships
- Reaching agreement about the implementation of decisions
- Reviewing the timeliness of case progression and milestones
- Monitoring the active caseload, including agreements about when cases should be stepped down and closed
- Enabling (for those in direct practice), a critical and in depth reflection on one case every month, using the Signs of Safety mapping tool
- Reflecting on evidence of service user feedback and using this to inform and promote good practice and professional development
- Making sure that progress against appraisal goals are checked regularly between formal annual appraisal points

Effective supervision is a **collaborative activity** and one that recognises the nuances of inter-professional roles. Understanding the relationship between leadership and fellowship behaviours, for example, can be helpful in gaining insights about how the supervisory relationship can be made to work well.

Recent thinking about these issues suggests that leadership can only occur if there is followership—without followers and ‘following behaviours’ there is no leadership [12]. Leaders and managers influence follower attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes.

This means that following behaviours are a crucial component of the leadership process. Viewing leadership or management as a process means that leaders and managers affect and are affected by their followers either positively or negatively. It stresses that leadership is a two-way, interactive event between leaders and followers rather than a linear, one-way event in which the leader affects the followers but not vice versa.

This approach also allows us to recognize that managers are not always leading—they also defer to those who they lead or manage which means they also engage in following behaviours.

Supervisees can and will make a substantial contribution to the quality of their own individual supervision.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF SUPERVISEES**

Expectations include:

- Finding out what I am expected to do
- Ensuring that actions agreed within supervision are carried out in a timely manner
- Taking the initiative to deal with problems

- Updating my manager about decisions being made e.g. any difficulties in implementing decisions or plans
- Alerting my manager of risks to myself and others
- Encouraging my manager to provide honest feedback
- Supporting leader efforts to make necessary changes
- Challenging flawed plans
- Identifying development and support needs and being ready to plan and undertake training
- Understanding and implementing policy
- Providing upward coaching

### **THE CHILD**

During case discussion, practitioners must always be given the opportunity to emotionally explore and reflect on the child's experience. The question "**What is it like to be this child?**" should be used to enable good decision making to take place in the best interest of children. It is important to think about this for each child in families where there are two or more children.

What specifically does a safety plan require of the child's network so that it behaves in a protective and helpful way? What does "good" look like for this child living at home?

### **GROUP SUPERVISION**

There is good evidence for the role of groups in maximising access to and the sharing of support, knowledge and skills. Groups have been described as remarkably intelligent and often smarter than the smartest people in them. The best decisions are often a product of disagreement and contest in their making. Key conditions for intelligence in groups and to help avoid processes of 'group think' include diversity, independence and decentralisation. Group supervision can also provide an effective counter to what has been referred to as the 'privatising' of practice experience. If the majority of supervision is individual this risks creating a privatized practice culture within the agency, places excessive pressure on the team leaders or supervisors to be the font of all wisdom for all practitioners and limits the capacity to draw on the knowledge and experience of peers.

Group Supervision can be used to provide opportunities for supervisees to experience mutual support, share common experiences, improve understanding of complex situations for children and increase insight into the work that is done or needs to be done.

Group supervision may be particularly helpful for:

- Cases that are 'stuck'
- Cases that are very complex
- Cases where there is a lot of uncertainty about risk
- Cases where there is disagreement about risk

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to monitor supervision using **Appendix 5** Supervision Monitoring Form.

Supervision compliance will be reviewed at the Quality Performance Board. Qualitative Supervision audits will be undertaken on at least an annual basis.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 Supervision Agreement**



Supervision\_Agreement.doc

### **Appendix 2 Supervision Notes**



Super\_note\_temp.doc

### **Appendix 3 Supervision Case Discussion**



super\_case\_discuss.doc

### **Appendix 4 Live Supervision**



live\_supervision.doc

### **Appendix 5 Supervision Monitoring Form**



form\_supervis\_monitoring.doc

## **OTHER USEFUL TOOLS FOR USE IN SWINDON**



Supervision cycle.docx



CASE SPECIFIC SUPERVISION TEMPL



Reflective Supervision Gibbs.d



Six Reflective Questions for Super



Supervision 1.docx



Supervision 2.docx

## **REFERENCES**

1. Morrison T & Wonnacott J (2010) Supervision: Now or Never
2. Skills for Care & CWDC (2007) Providing Effective Supervision
3. Social Work Reform Board (2010) Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England and Supervision Framework
4. Laming, H (2009) The Protection of Children in England. TSO
5. Skills for Care & CWDC op cit
6. Carpenter J et al (2012) Effective supervision in social work and social care. SCIE Research Briefing 43
7. SCIE (2013) Effective supervision in a variety of settings. SCIE Guide 50
8. Gibbs G (1988) Learning by Doing
9. Howe K and Gray I (2013) Effective Supervision in Social Work. Sage
10. Uhl-Bien M et al (2014) Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly* 25 pp83-104