



## **Multi-Agency Standards for the Supervision of Staff**

"Working to ensure children are protected from harm requires sound professional judgements to be made. It is demanding work that can be distressing and stressful. All of those involved should have access to advice and support from, for example, peers, managers, named and designated professionals. Those providing supervision should be trained in supervision skills and have an up to date knowledge of the legislation, policy and research relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children." (Working Together 2010, 4.48)

All agencies which have operational responsibility for safeguarding / child protection services must have an agreed policy, which defines minimum levels of formal supervision of those staff that are accountable for safeguarding and child protection cases.

### **Supervision can be defined 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 outcomes." (Providing Effective Supervision, Skills for Care and CWDC 2007, page 5)

### **The key functions of supervision are:**

1. "Management (ensuring competent and accountable performance/practice);
2. Development (continuing professional development);
3. Support (supportive/restorative function); and
4. Engagement/mediation (engaging the individual with the organisation)" (Working Together 2010, 4.49)

"For many practitioners involved in day-to-day work with children and families, effective supervision is important to promote good standards of practice and to supporting individual staff members. The arrangements for organising how supervision is delivered will vary from agency to agency but there are some key essential elements. It should:

- Help to ensure that practice is soundly based and consistent with LSCB and organisational procedures;
- Ensure that practitioners fully understand their roles, responsibilities and the scope of their professional discretion and authority; and
- Help identify the training and development needs of practitioners, so that each has the skills to provide an effective service. " (Working Together 2010, 4.50)

All child protection cases must be regularly discussed in supervision and case files/records audited systematically by the responsible manager.

"Good quality supervision can help to:

- Keep a focus on the child;
- Avoid drift;
- Maintain a degree of objectivity and challenge fixed views;
- Test and assess the evidence base for assessment and decisions; and

- Address the emotional impact of work." (Working Together 2010, 4.51)

Supervisors should be available to practitioners as an important source of advice and expertise, and may be required to endorse judgments at certain key points in time, which should then be recorded within the case records.

On some occasions - e.g. enquiries about complex abuse or allegations against colleagues, agencies must consider the provision of additional individual or group staff support. Managers must develop local policies and systems to maximise staff safety including the need to carry out risk assessments as appropriate.

## **Key messages for organisations**

Every organisation should ensure the following are in place:

1. A clear supervision policy, with practice that supports the policy - This should include a clear statement of the purpose of supervision and why it is important to the organisation, including how it contributes to positive outcomes for users of services. It should also include clear statements about:
  - frequency
  - recording
  - expectations of supervisors and supervisees
  - and agendas for supervision sessions
2. Effective training of supervisors
3. Strong leadership and 'walking the floor' by senior managers
4. Performance objectives for supervision for all supervisors
5. Monitoring of actual practice – frequency and quality

## **Supervision agreements**

Managers/Supervisors may wish to consider having a written agreement with each person they supervise. In some organisations this may be called a supervision contract. The detail may be standard across an organisation or there may be scope for individual elements to be agreed. An example of a written agreement is included in the Appendix. The agreement should be reviewed periodically to ensure that all elements are being covered and that the agreement is still fit for purpose.

It is important that all supervision discussions are properly and promptly recorded so as to maximise impact, support completion of agreed actions within agreed timescales and to avoid any confusion or disputes.

## **Key messages for supervisors**

Being a supervisor is a significant responsibility and one which needs to be taken seriously. Your organisation and the individuals you supervise expect you to provide supervision that is:

- based on a written agreement or contract
- planned well in advance and only changed in exceptional circumstances
- well-structured, allowing both you and the individual to contribute to the agenda
- provided in an appropriate setting and free of interruptions

- inclusive of all the functions outlined in the unit of competence
- properly and promptly recorded, with notes copied to the individual

Guidance from Working Together 2010:

4.52 Supervision should enable both supervisor and supervisee to reflect on, scrutinise and evaluate the work carried out, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the practitioner and providing coaching development and pastoral support. Supervisors should be available to practitioners as an important source of advice and expertise and may be required to endorse judgements at certain key points in time. Supervisors should also record key decisions within the child's case records.

4.53 Supervision will be both educative and supportive and facilitate the supervisee to explore their feelings about the work and the family. Effective safeguarding supervision needs to be regular and provide continuity, so that the relationship between supervisor and supervisee develops. Each session should include agreeing the agenda, reviewing actions from previous supervision, listening, exploring and reflecting, agreeing actions and reviewing the supervision process itself.

4.54 It is particularly important that social workers have appropriate supervision. The recent report Building a safe, confident future: the final report of the Social Work Task Force emphasised that supervision is a critical aspect of the support that employers should provide to social workers. It identified three specific functions of the supervision which must be in place to support effective practice: line management; professional (or case) supervision; and continuing professional development.

4.55 In line with the Task Force's recommendations, a national standard for supervision will be developed for social workers, as part of the comprehensive reform programme which the Government has committed to taking forward with the profession and employers. Whilst this is developed, it is strongly recommended that employers comply with existing guidance on the features of good supervision for social workers, for example Providing Effective Supervision (Skills for Care/CWDC 2007).

### **Key messages for individuals receiving supervision**

Supervision is an important right and benefit for all those working in social care and children's services. It is the main way in which your organisation monitors and reviews your work but also ensures you are properly supported and continue to develop your skills. It is therefore important that you are fully involved and make the most of the opportunities that supervision offers. In particular you should:

- Prepare for each supervision meeting by reviewing notes from the previous meeting and thinking about the things you want to raise and discuss
- Be ready to share your thoughts and ideas in the meeting
- Be open about what has gone well and what you have found difficult
- Be ready to plan and undertake training and other development activities as agreed with your supervisor
- Check and read the notes of your meetings and make sure you follow through and complete any actions as agreed.

## Appendices

### Definition of Supervision:

“Supervision is a process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organisation to work with another worker(s) in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users” Morrison 2005,

- Ensure practice is soundly based and consistent with LSCB and organisational procedures
- Ensure practitioners fully understand their roles, responsibilities and scope of professional discretion and authority
- Help identify learning and development needs to support the skills to provide an effective service
- Keep focus on the child
- Avoid drift
- Maintain degree objectivity, challenge fixed views
- Test and assess evidence base for decisions
- Address the emotional impact of the work
- Reflective process
- Scrutinise and evaluate the work
- Coaching and pastoral support
- Source of advice and expertise
- Endorse decisions
- Educative and supportive
- Explore feelings
- Structural process

*Children's Workforce Development Council (2007)*

## **SUPERVISION AGREEMENT (Example)**

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:**

**POST HELD:**

**NAME OF SUPERVISEE:**

**POST HELD:**

**The objectives or functions of supervision are:**

- 1. Competent, accountable performance/practice (Managerial Function)**
- 2. Continuing professional development (Educational/Development Function)**
- 3. Personal support (Supportive Function)**
- 4. Engaging the individual with the organisation (Mediation Function)**

- *The timescale for each supervision session will be defined by your service area, but more frequent when the supervisee is new in post or requires more frequent sessions.*
- *Dates for supervision will be booked in advance and will be given priority. Reasons for cancellations will be recorded.*
- *Sufficient time will be set aside for each supervision session.*
- *Supervision will take place in a suitable location which is private, comfortable and free from distractions and interruptions.*
- *The agenda will be agreed at the beginning of the session with agenda items suggested by supervisor and supervisee.*
- *At the beginning of each supervision session there will be a brief review and update of decisions, actions agreed at the previous supervision, and as recorded on the supervision record.*
- *Each supervision session will be recorded by the supervisor. The record will provide an accurate reflection of the issues discussed and agreed actions, with timescales. Supervisor and supervisee will both sign the record as a true statement. Any disagreement of the content will be discussed as soon as possible. If it is not possible to resolve the dissension then a note of the differing views will be added to the supervision record. (Agree and record whether supervision notes will be hand written or typed)*
- *Supervision records are confidential but may be disclosed in certain circumstances.*
- *Performance issues addressed within supervision may be referred to if the supervisor is preparing an employment reference.*
- *If there are specific performance concerns, the supervisor will be clear about these. Objectives and targets will be set and agreed to enable the supervisee to meet the required standard within acceptable timescales.*
- *The supervisor will provide evidence-based feedback to the supervisee on his/her performance. Such evidence will include:*

- *Direct observation*
- *Feedback from colleagues/other managers etc*
- *Other evidence as appropriate to the role*
- *Training and development needs will be identified and reviewed.*
- *The content of supervision sessions will feed into the supervisee's annual appraisal.*

*SIGNED AND AGREED: (Supervisor)*

*SIGNED AND AGREED: (Supervisee)*

*DATE:*