



# Supervision: Guidance for Managers and Practitioners

Document Title	Supervision: Guidance for Managers and Practitioners
Version	2.0
Authors	Nik Flavell, Senior Manager for Adopt North East
Owner	Nik Flavell, Senior Manager for Adopt North East
Date Approved	13 January 2025
Date to be Reviewed By	31 January 2026

## 1. Introduction

Supervision has been well described as *the scaffolding staff need to get out there, work with the most vulnerable members of our society with emotional intelligence and compassion that will make a difference*<sup>1</sup>.

This guidance sets out our ambition for both Professional and Case Supervision. At its best, we aspire to Supervision which enables a practitioner to walk away feeling less anxious than when they walked in, with a clearer view of what the child, family and organisation require, what actions are most likely to produce the best results and what to do next<sup>2</sup>.

The Guidance is for all staff and managers within Adopt North East Social Care for whom accountability for casework is a core function of Supervision. It is not therefore applicable to administrative staff.

## 2. The Context of Supervision

The Guidance is informed by the standards issued by Social Work England in relation to the use by practitioners of Supervision, including:

*[As a Social Worker I will] Recognise and respond to behaviour that may indicate resistance to change, ambivalent or selective cooperation with services, and recognise when there is a need for immediate action (3.15), make sure that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about*

---

<sup>1</sup> Wonnacott 2013

<sup>2</sup> Research in Practice: Reflective Supervision (2017)

*identified risks and the outcomes and implications of assessments and decisions I make (3.9) and reflect on my own values and challenge the impact they have on my practice (4.8).*

And in particular:

*[As a Social Worker I will] Use supervision and feedback to critically reflect on, and identify my learning needs, including how I use research and evidence to inform my practice (4.2)*

It is also informed by the Local Government Association standards applicable to Adopt North East as an employer – through its host, North Tyneside Council – of Social Workers, including:

Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision (Standard 5) by:

- ensuring that social work supervision is not treated as an isolated activity by incorporating it into the organisation's social work accountability framework
- promoting continuous learning and knowledge sharing through which social workers are encouraged to draw out learning points by reflecting on their own cases in light of the experiences of peers
- providing regular supervision training for social work supervisors
- assigning explicit responsibility for the oversight of appropriate supervision and for issues that arise during supervision
- providing additional professional supervision by a registered social worker for practitioners whose line manager is not a social worker
- ensuring that supervision takes place regularly and consistently
- making sure that supervision takes place at least weekly for the first six weeks of employment of a newly qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the duration of the first six months, and a minimum of monthly supervision thereafter
- ensuring that supervision sessions last at least an hour-and-a-half of uninterrupted time
- monitoring actual frequency and quality of supervision against clear statements about what is expected.

### **3. Definition of Supervision**

Supervision is defined in this guidance as:

*The regular one-to-one planned meetings which take place between a member of staff and a manager who has responsibility for the quality of their casework, professional development and individual welfare. Its purpose is to ensure that the best possible outcomes are obtained for service users, and that staff receive effective personal and professional support to achieve this*

Supervision is the primary means by which Adopt North East practitioners are supported to fulfil the professional and organisational requirements placed upon them by their work roles. Informal case discussions, Team Meetings, Group Supervision and group discussions and professional development opportunities also support staff and complement formal Supervision. They are not however to be regarded as an alternative to formal Supervision. Recorded one-to-one meetings – Supervision – with a manager remains the central feature of personal and professional support and development within Adopt North East.

#### **4. Link with Individual Performance Review**

Every Supervision session should include a discussion regarding professional development. These discussions should contribute to the annual Individual Performance Review (IPR) process. Following the annual Review, the objectives set in the IPR will be reviewed and monitored within Supervision. In this way, there should be a clear link between the two processes.

#### **5. Supervision Standards**

##### **5.1 Supervision Agreement**

##### **STANDARD 1: *Supervisory relationships must be based on a written agreement between the Supervisor and Supervisee***

All supervisory relationships should be built on explicit understandings, as opposed to assumptions, between the two parties about the process. To facilitate this, a Supervision Agreement should be completed between the Supervisor and Supervisee whenever a new supervisory relationship begins or is renewed after an interval such as an extended period of sickness absence or other extended leave.

The Supervision Agreement forms part of the Supervision Record for the individual staff member. A completed Supervision Agreement should be read and checked for accuracy by both parties and then signed by both parties as a formal indication that the record accurately reflects the discussion held.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to save a version of the signed document onto the staff member's Supervision Record on S:Drive and provide a copy to the Supervisee for their own records.

## **5.2 Frequency and Duration of Professional Supervision**

**STANDARD 2: Professional Supervision must take place at least once a month for a minimum of an hour and a half**

The standard minimum requirement for Professional Supervision for all Adopt North East's Social Work staff is once a month. The requirement applies to all staff regardless of their status, including students, agency, temporary or part time staff.

Whilst, the duration of Supervision will depend on how familiar the supervisor is with the supervised person's work, the complexity and number of cases to discuss and any personal and professional issues the supervised person wishes to raise, it is recommended by the Guidance that Supervision take no less than an hour and a half.

It is noted that the frequency and duration will need to be adapted in particular circumstances. For example, Social Workers subject to ASYE requirements or newly appointed staff will require more frequent supervision, as will any who have a temporary need for additional support, for example if returning to work after an extended absence or subject to Capability procedures. Any change to frequency should be recorded within the Supervision Record with reasons given.

## **6.3 Frequency of Case Supervision and Prioritisation within Supervision**

**STANDARD 3: Case Supervision must be systematically undertaken, proportionate to risk and complexity, and not less than every three months**

The standard minimum requirement for Case Supervision for all open cases is once every three months. This timescale is a 'backstop' to ensure there is regularity to Supervision of every case whilst acknowledging that certain cases will achieve a degree of stability of risk and complexity.

It is an essential part of Case Supervision that the frequency of the Supervision is proportionate to the risk and complexity of the case. Determining whether a case should be discussed is a partnership between Supervisor and Supervisee with both enabled to 'table cases' for discussion. Ultimately, the Supervisor has responsibility for deciding which cases are discussed more frequently than every three months.

## **6.4 Content of Supervision**

**STANDARD 4a: Professional Supervision must be based on a standard format to ensure that all the functions of Supervision are covered**

In order to ensure a consistent approach to Professional Supervision, a standardised format must be used to structure the discussions and subsequent recording. The format also acts as a prompt to ensure that all elements of Professional Supervision are covered. These are:

1. Staff welfare and well-being

2. Employment Issues
3. Practice and Performance Issues
4. Professional Development
5. Leave / Absence
6. Any Other Business

It is encouraged that all Supervisors start with staff welfare and well-being but as long as the six elements are covered, there is no requirement that the six elements are undertaken in a particular sequence.

**STANDARD 4b: *Case Supervision must be based on a standard format to ensure that it is reflective***

Research in Practice notes “*At its best, reflective supervision offers a safe space for a practitioner to slow down and think, explore possibilities, look for meaning and a way to do their work well*” (2017). To facilitate and foster reflection, a dedicated LCS RAA Case Supervision Form has been developed. It frames questions that encourage reflective discussion:

1. What is happening on the case right now?
2. Update on Actions
3. What are you most pleased with?
4. What is your biggest worry right now?
5. Progress Scaling Question
6. Why have you scaled progress as you have?
7. Given the scaling you have given, would it help you to reflect on this case further?
  - a. If no, before we finish, are there any actions that would move progress forward for the child or young person?
  - b. If yes;
    - i. What is working well?
    - ii. What are you worried about?
    - iii. Barriers to Progress scaling question
    - iv. Why have you scaled the progress as you have?

## 6.5 The Production and Distribution of Supervision Records

**STANDARD 5: *A written record of Professional Supervision and Case Supervision must be produced by the Supervisor and jointly agreed with the Supervisee***

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to record the discussions that take place within both Professional and Case Supervision (using the template provided for Professional Supervision and the LCS RAA Case Supervision Record Form) within the system. Whilst recording methods may vary - some Supervisors will hand write notes within Supervision, some will type - it is the responsibility of the Supervisor to ensure that the

completed Records of Professional and Case Supervision accurately reflects the discussions held. Whilst it is acknowledged that the written record will not be a verbatim record, the final Records of Professional and Case Supervision must nevertheless be as accurate a record as possible of the discussions held and care needs to be taken by both Supervisor and Supervisee that the records do not omit significant information.

## **6.6 Storage and Archiving of Supervision Records**

### **STANDARD 6: *Supervision records must be stored securely***

Both Professional and Case Supervision must be recorded on the appropriate Forms. Professional Supervision must be saved by the Supervisor in the staff member's Supervision Record on S:Drive. This record is the property of Adopt North East and its host Authority, North Tyneside Council.

Case Supervision must always be recorded on the child or adopters LCS record on the Case Management System. This record is part of the child or adopters case record:

- Where an adopter is being assessed (and has no child placed in their care), Case Supervision is recorded on the adopter's LCS record
- Where an adopter has a child in their care (placed or adopted), Case Supervision is recorded on the child's LCS record.

## **6.7 Access to Supervision Records**

### **STANDARD 7: *Supervision records must be confidential but accessible***

Professional Supervision Records must only be accessed by third parties - other than the Supervisor and Supervisee - for prescribed purposes, namely where Management and Supervision responsibility is transferred, where there is a formal concern about the work of an individual, or for audit/quality assurance purposes. If either a supervisor or a supervisee considers that a Professional Supervision record should not be read by a third party because it contains sensitive or personal information, representations should be made to a more senior manager for the relevant section to be removed. The final decision will be taken by the Assistant Director, North Tyneside Council, in the light of any relevant legal or HR advice available.

With regard to Case Supervision, the record will be part of the case record for the child or the adopter and will be subject to case file permissions and subject access governance.

## **6.8 Retention and Destruction of Supervision Records**

### **STANDARD 8: *Supervision records must not be retained any longer than necessary***

Professional Supervision Records are the property of the Supervisee and Adopt North East and its host Authority, North Tyneside Council.

The Supervisee should be encouraged to retain a record for their own reference. With regard to the copy retained by Adopt North East and its host Authority, North Tyneside Council, copies will be retained for a period of three years from the date of departure of a staff member from the employment of Adopt North East and then deleted.

With regard to Case Supervision, the record will be part of the case record for the child or adopters and will be subject to relevant case file retention and deletion criteria.

## **7. Learning**

Periodic audits of the frequency and quality of supervision against the standards in this Guidance will be undertaken on no less than an annual basis. Additionally, an annual anonymised survey to staff about their perception of the quality of their supervision will be undertaken.