

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN ON SUPERVISION ORDERS**

### **1. What is a supervision order?**

At the conclusion of care proceedings, the local authority can be granted a supervision order when the court is satisfied that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and that the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to the care given to the child or the child being beyond parental control.

A supervision order has the same threshold criteria as a care order but has a different application. A supervision order does not give the local authority parental responsibility for a child, but instead places a responsibility on the local authority to “advise, assist and befriend” the child and by extension, the people with whom the child lives. It is therefore designed to allow the local authority to support and monitor a child’s welfare where there has been significant harm or a risk of harm but not enough continuing harm to warrant a care order.

Supervision orders tend to be used in the following situations:

- Children who have remained in the care of their parents but where a child protection plan alone was not successful in reducing risk.
- Children returning home to their parents after a period of being looked after.
- Children in substitute family care, often accompanied by a special guardianship order.

A supervision order can be made for a period of up to a year. This can be extended for any period not exceeding 3 years in total from the date of the first order.

### **2. Why our service to children on supervision orders is so important.**

Concerns about the safety of children on supervision orders has been the subject of research and serious case reviews. [University of East Anglia](#) research concluded that children subject to supervision orders were most likely to have further proceedings and [Lancaster University](#) highlighted professionals’ views that supervision orders ‘lacked teeth’. The Derbyshire serious case review of [Polly](#) raised concerns that professionals lacked understanding about the supervision order and felt it was “somehow a lesser process” than a child protection plan and “may have deflected professionals focus away from the original safeguarding concerns”.

This procedure therefore sets out practice standards we need to meet.

### **3. Supervision order meetings**

The first supervision order meeting must be convened within 15 working days of the supervision order being made. The purpose of the meeting is to gather relevant family members and key agencies together to:

- Ensure everyone understands what a supervision order is, why the supervision order has been made and any special requirements attached to it.
- Ensure everyone understands the child's circumstances, including protective factors, vulnerabilities, and risks.
- Collaborate in formulating a supervision order plan (see 5 below).
- Identify a core group of agencies and family members involved in the plan.
- Agree dates for review supervision order meetings.

When seeking a supervision order at Court, the date of the initial supervision order meeting should be included in the final care plan.

The first supervision order meeting must be independently chaired by a child protection coordinator from Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service (S&QA) who will then be responsible for writing the supervision order plan. Where children are transferring from the CLA service to the CIN service, this initial meeting can serve as a transfer point.

Subsequent supervision order meetings will be chaired by the social work team at a frequency of no less than 8 weeks to review progress against the goals and develop the plan.

A manager must chair a meeting at 9 months at which point a decision will be made about whether to apply for an extension of the supervision order.

#### **Agenda for supervision order meetings:**

- Recap on the initial risks, reason, and purpose of the supervision order, viewing the agreements laid out in the court order and final care plan.
- Update from family and agencies about child's welfare (what is working well/what are we worried about as with child protection conferences).
- Child's views and lived experience.
- Develop and review the supervision order plan.
- Identify core group and dates of next supervision order meetings.

The record of supervision order meetings should be circulated by the social worker to all participants within 5 working days.

If the child is also subject to a parallel child protection plan, supervision order meetings are replaced by child protection conferences and core group meetings (see 6 below).

#### **4. Child and Family assessments**

There should always be a child and family assessment on the child's file that is no older than six months that reflects the child's circumstances and the parenting capacity of those caring for them.

It is good practice for this assessment to be made available for the first meeting. The purpose of sharing this report is so that participants are fully aware of the strengths and risks of the child's situation to enable informed collaboration in planning to keep the child safe and

promote their welfare. If a child and family assessment is not available for the first meeting, agreement must be reached with the Chair as to how participants of the meeting will be briefed and when the assessment will be updated – no later than 8 weeks after the supervision order being made.

The child and family assessment should then be updated once again in time for the 9-month supervision order meeting so that an informed decision can be made as to whether to allow the supervision order to lapse or to seek legal advice.

## **5. Supervision order plans**

The supervision order plan must be developed in the first supervision order meeting in collaboration with family and partner agencies. The plan should:

- Have **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely** goals that are child centred.
- Be clear around what parents and carers need to do.
- Set out roles and responsibilities of all agencies.
- Specify the frequency and purpose of social work visits.
- Have a clear contingency plan, including the need to seek legal advice should the plan not achieve its goals.

Often there is a written agreement signed at court as part of the supervision order. This written agreement should also be incorporated into the child's plan.

The supervision order plan should be circulated to participants within five working days of the meeting.

## **6. Supervision orders and child protection plans.**

If the child is already supported by a child protection plan, the first multi-agency meeting after the making of a supervision order should take the form of a reconvened review child protection conference.

It is only in exceptional circumstances that a child subject to a supervision order will also require a child protection plan. Such circumstances may include situations of acute or active risk or where there is likelihood of a need to return to court. In such circumstances, child protection conferences and core group meetings replace supervision order meetings.

At any stage throughout the duration of the order, any concern about significant harm to a child should always follow [London Child Protection Procedures](#) as well as consultation with a child protection coordinator and Legal Services.

## **7. Minimum standards**

While situations vary, children supported on supervision orders will normally follow the same safeguarding standards as children on child protection plans (see s.5 London Procedures). This includes:

- Seeing the child at a frequency agreed in the plan (no less than every 10 days for children newly returning home or in high-risk relative placements).

- Seeing the child on their own on at least alternate occasions.
- Seeing the child's bedroom on at least alternate occasions.
- Multi agency meetings to review the plan held every 8 weeks.

After the 9-month supervision order meeting, the team manager must discuss the child with the service manager to review whether the supervision order can be allowed to lapse or whether the matter should be presented at ACRP for consideration of return to Court to either extend the order or reissue care proceedings.

## **8. Quality assurance**

Work with children on supervision orders should be quality assured by line managers. In addition, S&QA are available to provide advice and support around this area of practice. S&QA will complete an annual report for children on supervision orders and present this to the Practice and Outcomes Board and to the Quality Assurance subgroup of the Islington Safeguarding Children Board.

## **9. Supervision Orders and LCS**

Once a supervision order is made, the social worker must immediately change the child's **legal status** on LCS (located in the **Additional** tab). This will then raise an **SO flag** which alerts S&QA.

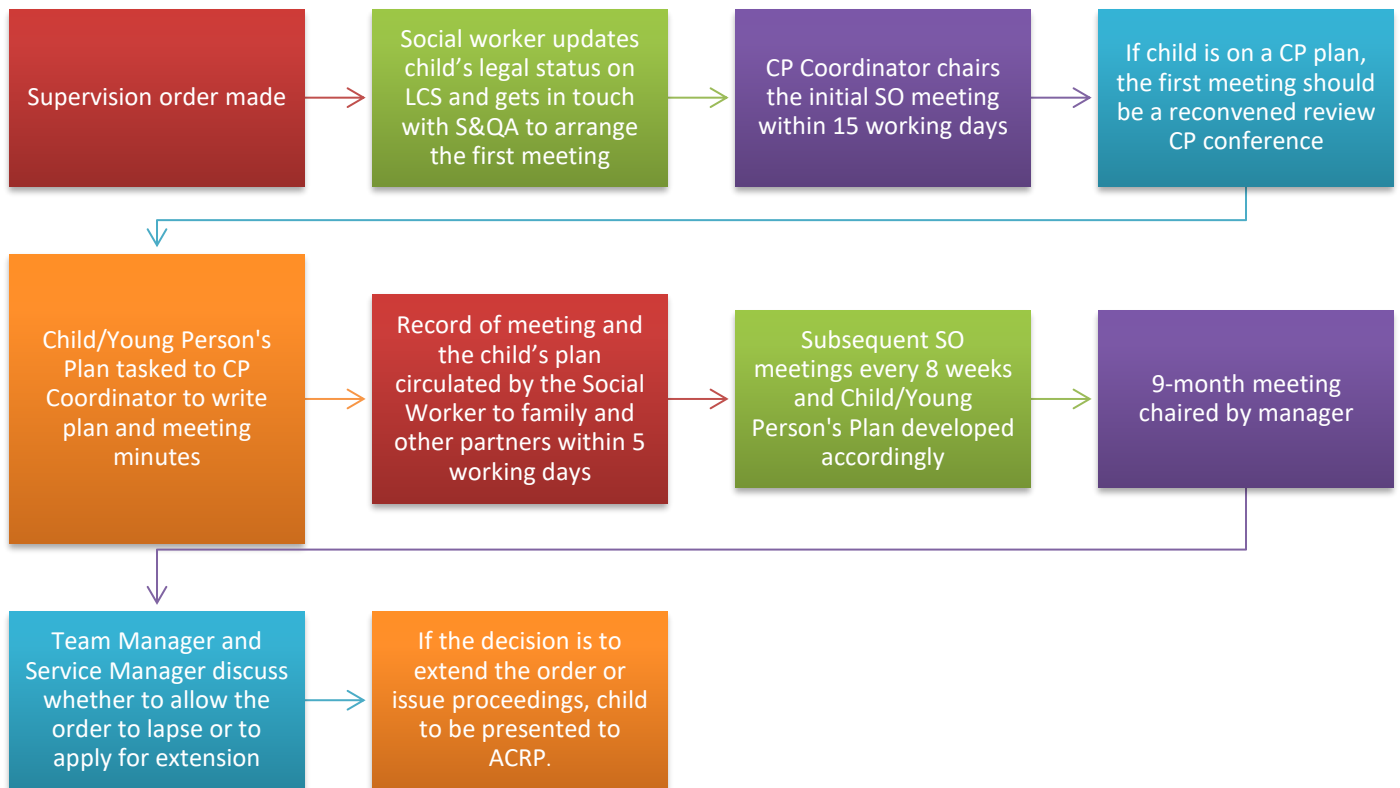
The **Child/Young Person's Plan** form is used to record the supervision order plan and meeting minutes. This must be updated after each supervision order meeting. Ensure the drop-down menu labelled **Type of Plan** is clicked on **Supervision Order Plan**.

While the CIN workflow is used for children on supervision orders, meetings and plans must be referred to as supervision order plans and meetings, **not** 'child in need' to reinforce their status.

The case note type for social work visits is **Statutory Visit (Supervision Order)**.

The **C&F Assessment** should be updated prior to the first supervision order meeting. If this is not possible, it must be completed no later than 8 weeks after the initial meeting and updated a minimum of every 6 months.

## 10. QUICK GUIDE



*Date this procedure to be reviewed: March 2026*

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