

Supervision Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy sets out the standard for good supervision practice across Swindon Borough Council (SBC) Children's Services. It is a core part of a range of competencies for leaders, managers and practitioners, working with children and families.

Effective case management and reflective supervision are essential tools in achieving high-quality services and best outcomes for those children and young adults 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 it to inform their day-to-day practice.

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

This Supervision Policy is part of a range of policies and processes to ensure that staff in Children Services are fully supported to competently perform their roles and these include:

- An induction programme, inclusive of SBC's policies and procedures
- Probation period
- Support and Development within post (supervision, appraisals, training etc.)

Policy Statement

Our vision is that all Swindon children have the best chances in life to achieve their full potential. – '**Children and at the heart of everything we do.**'

This vision is enabled by a set of values for how we behave together and how we provide our services to those who need them. These values help us maintain 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.

The vision is underpinned by a set of 'non-negotiables of practice standards for our

- Children and young people are seen alone, and we know their lived experiences
- Children and young adults' views are obtained, and they will inform planning and decisions for their lives.

- All children and young adults have an up-to-date assessment that identifies their needs and a plan that addresses how their assessed needs will be met, by whom and by when.
- All children and young adults are subject to a supervision discussion/management oversight on a minimum of a monthly basis, to ensure their needs are being met and they are safe.
- All children know and are seen by their Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer (QARO Independent Reviewing Officer/ Child Protection Chair), who will oversee that their needs and safety is being met and take timely action where this is not the case.

This vision is supported by our Practice Framework, the Family Safeguarding Model underpinned by Restorative Practice, which focuses on relationships, high support, high challenge and achieving best outcomes for children.

SBC Children's Services is committed to providing quality supervision for all staff as a key part of improving outcomes for children, young adults and their families and of enabling staff to provide the best possible interventions.

In order to achieve this, SBC 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 and functions of supervision

- Supervision encourages practitioners to foster a stance of inquiry and allows for the possibility of different hypotheses to be formed about a given situation, which can be discounted or accepted during the course of the work and as more information is gathered
- Supervision can reinforce professional accountability with a high support, high challenge approach
- Supervision is key in ensuring appropriate thresholds and plans are in place and work is progressing at pace, and where drift or delay is challenged
- Supervision can support practitioners to reflect on the family circumstances and capacity for parents and carers to make change
- Supervision can provide a space in which practitioners can build their capacity to think and analyse complex situations, which may be dominated by anxiety about risk
- Supervision can be a forum for practitioners to make use of their own experience and develop awareness of how their experience informs their practice
- Supervision provides containment for practitioners' emotional responses to direct practice experience

- Supervision helps managers to identify specific areas of support and development for practitioners
- Supervision can act as a buffer between staff experience and organisational demands

Expectations for supervision

Practice Standards for supervision

1. We measure quality and outcomes for children

Standard:

In recording supervision, we allow time for reflective practice on the quality of work and evidence of the difference we are making to a child's life. If no difference is being made, we consider the reasons for this and what we can do differently. We consider and evaluate evidence and research, and focus on the longer-term outcomes for children, rather than being reactive and process driven.

What "good" looks like

Managers lead practice through having conversations with social workers about decisions, chairing key risk management and planning meetings, role modelling relationship-based practice expectations. Practice leaders are visible and accessible and respond quickly and flexibly.

2. We are clear about individual and shared professional accountability

Standard:

There is a clear "management footprint" on the file that demonstrates oversight, key decisions and case discussions (there is clarity on who is accountable for what and why; particularly in relation to keeping a child safe). We provide high support and high challenge to staff.

What "good" looks like

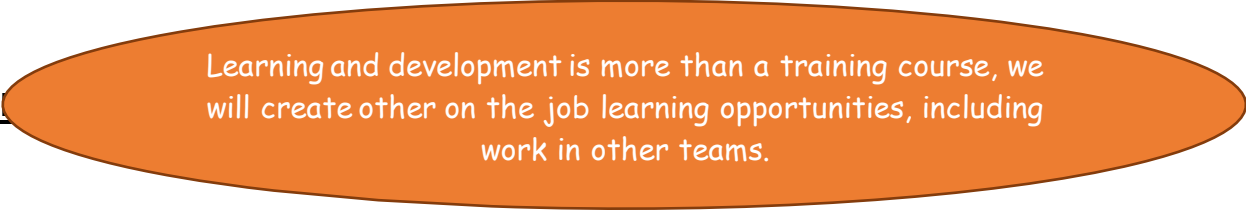
Supervisors focus on agreed outcomes and the actions needed to achieve them. Timescales are clear and expectations are realistic. The progress towards the outcomes are discussed and reviewed and recorded. Managers ask themselves and others "what impact is this having on the child"?

3 . We invest time in continual professional development

Standard;

Supervision will always allow time for reflection on training and learning and developmental needs, and through appraisal, a professional development plan will be included. We invest time in our staff so they can be the best they can be through creating different learning opportunities. This includes opportunities for direct work with children and their families.

What “good” looks like....



Learning and development is more than a training course, we will create other on the job learning opportunities, including work in other teams.

Frequency and recording supervision

Social Work England, the regulatory body for social work, states that in order to maintain social work registration the professional standard ‘Maintaining Continuing Professional Development’ detailed under 4.2, social workers will use supervision and feedback to critically reflect on, and identify their learning needs, including how they use research and evidence to inform their practice.

- Each worker is entitled to personal supervision on a **monthly basis** by the supervising Manager. Notes from these meetings should be recorded on a personal supervision form within **five working days**.
- ASYE supervision will vary, however the expectation is that ASYE’s 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 be recorded within **Appendix 1 Supervision notes** and **Appendix 3 Supervision case discussion**.
- Managers should undertake at least **one direct observation** of practice per annum of their workers, which is evidenced in their supervision file -See **Appendix 4 Live Supervision**
- Group supervision should be recorded using **Appendix 3 Supervision case discussion** and held on the child's file.
- Senior managers and team managers who supervise Assistant Team Managers will undertake a **direct observation of supervision every 3 months**

Formal Supervision about specific children and young people

Whilst staff supervision will take place on a monthly basis, supervision in relation to each child or young person will differ depending upon a judgement in relation to specific needs and risks.

Supervision of children are to be scheduled and monitored according to need and risk. The table below shows the **minimum** required interval periods between supervisions. Managers should make decisions about increasing this frequency as the level of risk for the child changes.

Supervisors and supervisee's both have a shared responsibility for ensuring that supervision discussions prioritise those children where management oversight is required. The table below details frequency of supervision expected

Cohort	Interval
Early Help	Management oversight recorded at point of allocation then minimum of 3 months. For those families allocated as higher risk they will be discussed monthly in every supervision session

Assessment and Child Protection	Management oversight and direction recorded on a case allocation record at the point of allocation within 24 hours full supervision by 4 weeks
CIN	1 month
CP/PLO/Court	1 month
CWCF – until a permanence plan is recorded	1 month
CWCF when a decision has been made by a Permanency Panel or approved by a senior manager.	2 months
Children receiving short breaks (for CIN)	1 month
Care Experienced	2 months

If family members are supported by more than one team, including adult services, it is important to hold either group supervisions or professional KIT meetings on a monthly basis.

Supervision training

Swindon Borough Council has a core training offer for all staff which focuses on best outcomes for children.

We are committed to embedding an outcome focused and relationship-based approach that considers the unique identity of families and their circumstances. We employ a position of curiosity, reflection and critical thinking. All staff, including managers, are required to attend Motivational Interviewing training

Group Supervision training is offered as part of our core training offer and regular supervision training for managers is provided through a range of in-house and external training and development opportunities, including workshops, leadership training and 1:1 support.

Defining Supervision

Whilst 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.

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

- Supervision has 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 areas for development.
- 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.

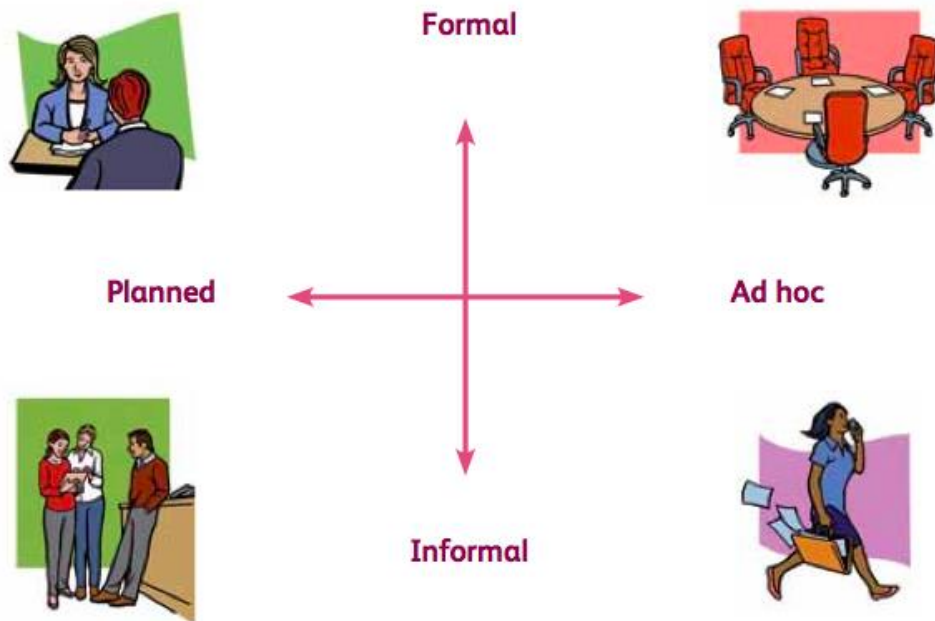
Content of supervision

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.)***

Some questions to consider include; What specifically does a safety plan require of the child's network so that it can respond in a protective and helpful way? What does "good" look like for this child living at home? Have we heard the child's voice and have we responded to this? Is the plan effective? What difference is social work intervention making for this child?

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** – a focus on joint accountability for day-to-day work of qualified practitioners and the quality of service. It includes decision-making regarding individual children, and discussion on resources and workloads, targets and overall performance.
- **Work and case discussion** - 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** - 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** - 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.

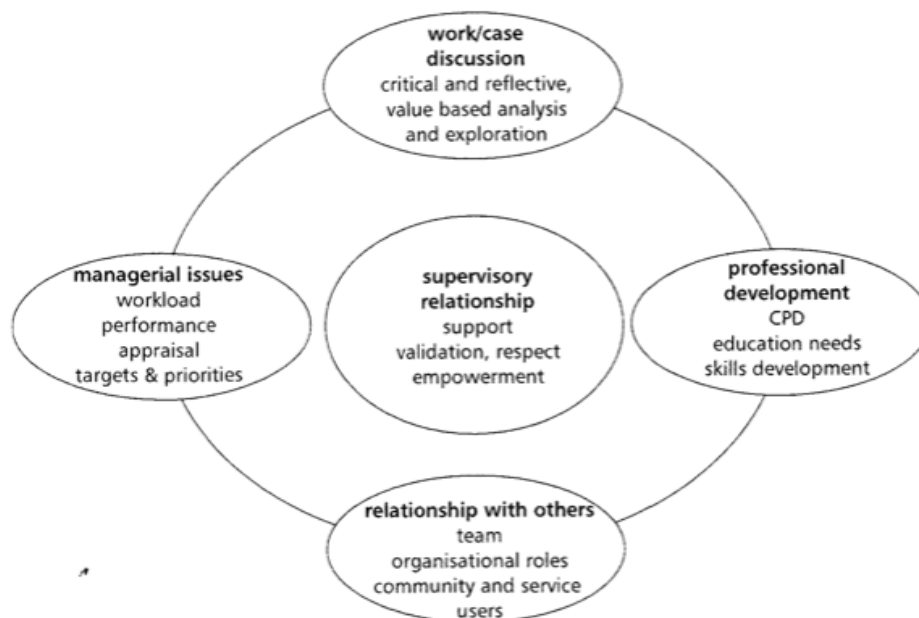


Figure 1 Dimensions of Supervision [7] Howe K and Gray I (2013) Effective Supervision in Social Work.

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, staff 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. The points below should be kept in mind when considering unplanned or ad-hoc supervision:

- Any significant decisions made with regard to a child or family must be clearly recorded on the child’s file. 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 the child’s file 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 practitioners 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.

Whilst 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. As supervision is a collaborative process, 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/ren
- 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, sharing 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
- Reflecting on evidence of family 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.

Group supervision

There are varying definitions of what constitutes as 'group supervision' but essentially it involves the use of a group, more than 2, to facilitate and support discussion and reflection and enables improved decision making by the sharing of knowledge and skills between professionals.

Any approach implemented must consider and adapt to meet the needs of the supervisor and supervisees, their skills and requirements and support the policy framework within the organisation in terms of requirements.

Group supervision usually involves practitioners from a variety of different professions who have professional concerns or tasks in common. Potential benefits of group supervision include the opportunity to:

- Reflect in depth on complex problems
- Pool and apply knowledge and skills
- Challenge individual perspectives (a group's diversity in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and experience will provide different perspectives)
- Explore the skills, processes and dynamics needed in work with children and families and to influence organisational culture from the 'bottom up'
- Provide a safe space to share feelings
- Build relationships and reduce isolation
- Develop a shared language, values and culture

There are potential pitfalls, however. Without confident facilitation, groups can lose focus and lack challenge (e.g. lapsing into 'group think') or be dominated by a few loud voices. Groups can amplify dysfunctional team processes – such as anxiety about speaking out and confuse boundaries of responsibility and structures, and time for individual needs or cases to be explored will be limited. (Earle et al 2017).

It is worth also considering that different professions will have different agendas in terms of how they approach a particular need or presenting issue. This will require

careful management and a skilled supervisor to fully unpick and explore this approach to support outcomes effectively.

Group discussion benefits from:

- Diversity
- Equality
- Hypothesising
- Use of analysis and intuition
- Emotional intelligence
- Accountability
- Recognition of disguised compliance

Decision making can be undermined by power and identity issues and it is important that the chair of these discussions remains mindful within these settings.

Group supervision is a core element of the Family Safeguarding Model and is supported as a principle across the department and within Family Safeguarding teams. It is framework for strong and consistent management oversight, which enables a shared understanding of the families each team works with. Within the Family Safeguarding teams, it allows the team, manager, allocated social worker and the multi-disciplinary workers to meet together for reflective case supervision and provides an opportunity for practitioners to capitalise on each other's strengths and experiences. The benefits of the Family Safeguarding group supervision model are that it:-

- Brings together multidisciplinary professionals working with a family as one team to address the 'trio of vulnerabilities': domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental health
- Enables multidisciplinary discussion on a monthly basis to discuss the holistic support needs of the family
- Uses the monthly case summaries within the electronic Workbook by all involved professionals to feed into the group supervision.
- Reduces bureaucracy and supports analytical multi-disciplinary recording, information sharing and decision making.

This promotes a whole family approach and better information sharing and collaborative working; shared discussion and decision making and a holistic approach to the assessment of need by drawing on different professional expertise and coordinated support to improve outcomes for families.

Quality Assurance

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

Supervision compliance is tracked through performance indicators and the quality of supervision reviewed through the monthly auditing cycle. These are reviewed at the Quality Performance Board. Focused 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



Supervision case discussion record.doc

Appendix 4 Live Supervision



live_supervision.doc

Appendix 5 Supervision Monitoring Form



form_supervis_monitoring.doc

Appendix 6 Family Safeguarding Group Supervision Process Business Support Process



Appendix 6.docx

Appendix 7 Family Safeguarding Supervision Pathway



Appendix 7.docx

Appendix 8 Family Safeguarding Supervision Expectations



Appendix 8.docx

Appendix 9 Cycle of change



Appendix 9.docx

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

RIP Change Project Earle et al (2017)

Gibbs G (1988) Learning by Doing

Howe K and Gray I (2013) Effective Supervision in Social Work. Sage

