

Principles and Standards for Safeguarding Supervision

1. Introduction

Working to ensure that children are safeguarded is demanding and requires sound professional judgements to be made. It may also be distressing and stressful for the professionals involved. '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*'¹ states 'Effective professional supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family'. This paper outlines the core principles of effective supervision to which the local safeguarding children board requires all member agencies to implement.

2. Background

In 2014 two Southampton Serious Case Reviews identified the need for robust supervision of professionals and a recommendation was made that required the LSCB to establish a core standard for safeguarding supervision. Importantly, the recommendation acknowledged that differing governance arrangements, supervision cultures and organisational structures would affect the way in which supervision is delivered. Nevertheless a core standard was required that would:

- Promote reflection, critical analysis and evidence informed practice
- Ensure that all staff have the psychological and emotional support required for effective decision making in safeguarding children
- Require regular evaluation of the quality of supervision being provided

It is recognised that there is no single model for the delivery of effective supervision. However, fundamental principles are applicable to all organisations and to all services.

3. Definition and functions of supervision

Although numerous definitions exist, this definition has been adopted by Southampton LSCB:

'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'²

There are three essential functions of supervision:

- Management and organisational function: ensuring that practitioners are competent and accountable

¹ HM Government 2013

² Providing Effective Supervision, Skills for Care Council 2007:5

- Developmental function: assisting supervisees to identify learning and developmental needs
- Supportive or restorative function: to acknowledge the emotional demands of the role and to support the well-being of the supervisee

Good quality supervision can help to:

- Keep a focus on the child
- Avoid 'drift' in case management
- Provide a forum for challenging fixed views
- Review the evidence base for agreed actions and decisions
- Address the emotional impact of the work
- Assist in the 'debriefing' process following complex or distressing cases

4. Key principles of effective supervision

Reflective practice is the essence of supervision and requires both supervisor and supervisee to have a shared understanding of the value and purpose of reflection and critical analysis. This will require the workforce, from frontline staff to senior managers to develop skills, knowledge and understanding about the purpose and processes of supervision. It enables organisations to be assured of the quality of work and also ensures the workforce is properly supported to do their job well.

Despite differing cultures and governance structures, it is possible for all to have a clear supervision policy that sets out how the requirements for effective supervision will be met. The policy should include the following:

- Training and competence requirements of supervisors and supervisees
- Frequency of planned supervision ('on demand' supervision should always be available)
- Expectations about recording and documentation for supervision
- Monitoring of the quality of supervision
- Expectations of supervisors and supervisees
- Expectations about the confidentiality of supervision sessions (which may remain confidential unless unresolved risks to children or performance issues are identified)
- Acknowledge that racial and diversity factors must be acknowledged but must not outweigh the child's welfare and safety
- The way in which a 'think family' approach is incorporated into supervision
- A requirement for 'debriefing' staff following complex or distressing incidents or cases

5. The role of supervisors

This is an important responsibility which must be taken seriously. There is an organisational responsibility 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 supervisor and supervisee to contribute
- Provided in an appropriate setting, free from interruptions
- Inclusive of the three functions of supervision
- Promptly recorded

6. The role of supervisees

Supervision is an important right for the children's workforce and is the way in which practitioners are supported to do their job effectively and continue to develop expertise. Supervisees should:

- Be well prepared for supervision
- Be ready to share thoughts and ideas
- Be open about what has gone well and what has been difficult
- Be open to the idea of further learning, training or developmental needs

An example of a supervision agreement or contract is provided in Appendix 1.

7. Responsibilities of LSCB

The LSCB has responsibility for seeking assurance from all member organisations that they are actively implementing these supervision principles. There is a strong tradition of reflective supervision being a component of safe practice in some professional disciplines whereas for others, it is a less familiar concept. The Board will require all members to provide regular progress reports on implementation plans and review the quality of supervision in those services where it is already taking place. This may include audits and feedback from frontline staff, and learning from serious incidents.

This document forms part of the LSCB's learning and development framework.

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APPENDIX ONE

EXAMPLE OF A SUPERVISION AGREEMENT

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)

- 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: