



# Supervision Principles

Multi – agency Guidance

January 2016

## 1. Introduction

Supervision is a fundamental task that managers undertake to support the development of their staff's skills and practices in work with children, young people and families and the safeguarding of those in their care.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, Munro's guidance and other reviews and OFSTED reports all support the need for good safeguarding practice to be subject to critical discussion and reflection.

Professor Munro considers in her Final Report May 2011 (Chapter 7.11) what an effective local system should have in place to support effective local practice. This includes:

*“Arrangements for practitioners to have frequent case consultations to explore and reflect on their direct work and plans for children and families which is separate from ongoing case supervision arrangements”*

as well as

*“Arrangements for frequent case supervision for practitioners to reflect on service effectiveness and case decision making”<sup>1</sup>*

The SSCB undertook a multi-agency audit looking at how supervision was used in partner agencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in 2015. The response to the audit was too poor to draw meaningful conclusions; however, one of the main recommendations was to consider some guidelines for safeguarding supervision which includes some agreed understanding of what is expected.

This document provides some common principles and guidance of supervision, which is relevant for all those who work with children, young people and families. It is hoped that these commonalities applied across all agencies will facilitate a consistent and joined up multi-agency approach to safeguarding children and young people.

## 2. Methodology

Information for this document has been drawn together based on findings from multi-agency audits<sup>2</sup> by SSCB, principles and guidance from other Local Safeguarding Children Boards<sup>3</sup> and various supervision theories and practices<sup>4</sup>.

This document brings together some common themes, practices and guidance that have been shared by other LSCBs as good practices for supervision in safeguarding.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Munro review of child protection: final report - a child-centred system](#)

<sup>2</sup> Supervision Audit, April – June 2015, SSCB

<sup>3</sup> Information has drawn from Devon and Torbay, Leeds, Manchester, Trafford and Lambeth Safeguarding Children Boards

<sup>4</sup> Kolb Learning Cycle and 4X4X4 Supervision model developed by Tony Morrison

### 3. 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"<sup>5</sup>.

On some occasions and special circumstances agencies should consider the provision of additional individual or joint supervision. Child protection supervision is an opportunity to develop practice and achieve high standards of care. It should also promote a high level of collaboration and cooperation within and between agencies so that the child's needs for protection are met.

### 4. Common Principles

Supervision in safeguarding children can take on a variety of forms. The principal recognised method is one-to-one supervision. However, it may be unrealistic to expect regular one-to-one supervision to meet all functions for all staff all of the time. It is therefore appropriate to use other methods of supervision including group supervision, team supervision, peer supervision, action learning and mentoring by a senior practitioner or the use of other expertise and skills.

Whatever the form of supervision, below are key principles which should apply and help ensure that the supervision is effective.

1. All staff members whose work brings them into frequent contact with vulnerable children or their parents should have formal and regular supervision which enables them to be clear about their roles and responsibilities and the objectives they need to meet. In addition to regular one to one supervision, ad hoc supervision should also be available to deal with any urgent safeguarding matters
2. Supervision should be a shared organisational responsibility, with a clear supervision agreement between the organisation, the supervisor and the supervisee
3. Supervision is arranged and conducted in such a way as to promote reflective practice and discussion; acknowledge good practice and achievement and promote evidence based practice
4. Supervision needs to be conducted in a quiet and confidential space with no interruptions and sufficient time allocated to enable critical reflection
5. All supervision sessions should be recorded accurately and stored securely. The outcome and decisions from supervision sessions should be noted on the relevant record or casework file
6. Supervisors should have the necessary safeguarding training (in line with SSCB training requirements for their role) and have had relevant training in conducting supervision
7. The supervisor ensures that the continuing professional development within safeguarding is identified and the supervisee is given the skills and capabilities to do their job. This includes taking action to address capability issues when necessary
8. Supervision should be supportive and offer the individual worker the opportunity to debrief when coping with difficult situations and volumes of work and through recognising issues which might affect his/her ability to cope with the work. All staff should have

---

<sup>5</sup> Morrison, T. (2005) 'Staff supervision in social care', Brighton: Pavilion

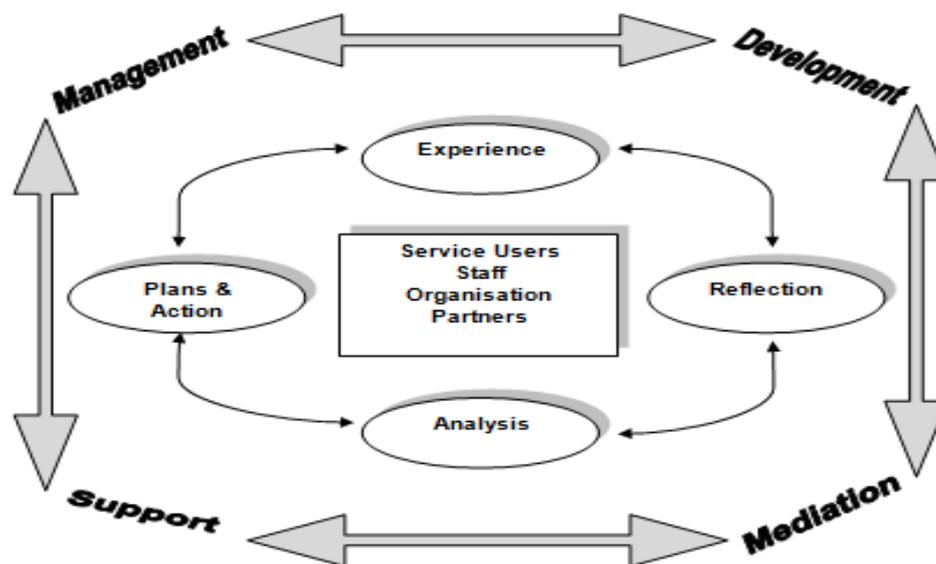
access to appropriate advice and support outside supervision sessions to deal with any immediate child protection issues

9. Supervision should have a child-centred approach and ensure that the child's daily experience is discussed and understood within the context of a whole child and family assessment
10. Supervision should promote and encourage equality and diversity

## 5. The supervision model

Supervision has to address a range of requirements on behalf of different stakeholders, involving a complex set of activities. The 4x4x4 model developed by Tony Morrison is an integrated framework that brings together the functions, stakeholders and main processes involved in supervision. The model emphasises a multi-agency approach with Kolb's Learning Cycle, widely used as a learning tool. However this may not provide a comprehensive solution to all issues and there are other models, tools and techniques available and should be looked at if required.

This model integrates the four functions of supervision (Management, Development, Mediation and Support), with the reflective supervision cycle (Experience, Reflection, Analysis and Plans & Actions) and focuses on the needs and priorities of the four stakeholders (Service Users, Staff, Organisation and Partners).



4X4X4 Model<sup>6</sup>

### Four functions of supervision:

1. Competent, accountable performance/practice (management function)
2. Continuing Professional Development (development function)
3. Personal Support (support function)

<sup>6</sup> 14. Morrison, T (2005) Staff Supervision in Social Care: Making a Real Difference to Staff and Service Users, (3rd edit.) Pavilion, Brighton

4. Engaging the individual with the organisation and developing the professional relationship. ( mediation function)

#### **Four stakeholders in supervision:**

If supervision is carried out effectively there should be benefits for stakeholders. Examples of benefits as follows:

1. Service users – a clear and focused approach from workers who are able to undertake a comprehensive assessment which takes account of needs, risks and involves service users in the process.
2. Supervisees – have clear role accountability and are able to demonstrate a confident, reflective approach to case management, engaging with a range of partners
3. Organisation – supervisors disseminate agency goals, values and policies. They guide and monitor work leading to the development of consistent practice. They value workers which in turn lead to lower rates of turnover, sickness or complaints.
4. Partners – workers understand the role of partners, are able to effectively negotiate with them and have accurate expectations when involved in multi-agency assessments and planning.

#### **Four elements of the supervisory cycle (based on Kolb's Learning Cycle):**

1. Experience – 'the story'
2. Reflection – think about the experience e.g. what worked well, what didn't work as well, what could have been done differently?
3. Analysis - what does the experience mean?
4. Plans/Action – what is the next 'chapter' in the story?

The integrated 4x4x4 model provides a coherent, practical, and well-tested framework to integrate these different but connected elements of supervision.

Recognising the different functions of supervision and the needs of different stakeholders is essential. Sometimes the needs of the supervisee, service user, supervisor and agency may be aligned; at other times they will conflict and the different functions will pull in opposite directions.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

To ensure robust supervision there are responsibilities for supervisee, supervisor, the employing organisation and the SSCB.

Supervision is a process not an event. It entails preparation, open discussion and the implementation of decisions. All parties have a responsibility to contribute positively to all levels of this process, including monitoring.

The supervisor is responsible for:

- Agreeing suitable time and location with supervisee
- Eliminating interruptions
- Ensuring confidentiality, subject to service user and staff safety

- Creating an effective sensitive and supportive supervision
- Maintaining accurate and clear records in relation to comments about or actions for the supervisee as well as changes or actions in relation to particular cases
- Notifying the supervisee of any factors which will impact on the implementation of decisions or plans
- Identifying particular cases to discuss in addition to those identified by the supervisee
- Identifying and facilitating access (where appropriate) to development and support opportunities
- Ensuring the supervisee is aware of, and understands, relevant policies and procedures
- Responding to any concerns raised about the quality of supervision
- Undertaking training for this role

The supervisee is responsible for:

- Attending regularly and on time, participating actively and bringing their agenda
- Preparing appropriately for supervision sessions. This includes identifying prior to supervision cases where they have concerns and which they would like to discuss
- Ensuring that actions agreed within supervision are recorded and carried out in a timely manner
- Notifying the supervisor of any difficulties in implementing decisions or plans
- Identifying development and support needs
- Understanding and implementing policy
- Raising concerns about the quality of supervision

Where the supervisee is a practitioner s/he will also contribute to the supervision process (and promote high quality service delivery) by, for example, ensuring that:

- There is a written plan for each child
- The desirable outcomes for each child are defined, including the purpose of contact and agreed interventions, and progress measured against these
- Case files contain clear analysis, plans and summaries
- Diversity is integrated into all work records

The Organisation has a role to play in ensuring that supervision is provided on a regular basis should ensure the quality of the process by, for example:

- Ensuring that the adoption of these standards which will be contained within a supervision policy which has a clear review date
- Providing clarity about documentation and storage/access to records
- Ensuring all staff requiring supervision receive it on a regular basis (that regularity to be set in line with the principles)
- Ensure all staff providing supervision provide it on a regular basis and to the required standard as set out in the principles

The SSCB is responsible for the overall provision of a robust child protection supervision process across all partner agencies and will monitor this through a variety of mechanisms, including the annual Section 11 Audits and multi-agency case audits. Member organisations

will be informed of the monitoring arrangements as this is likely to need reflecting in organisational policies for staff and capacity planning.

## **7. Assessment and monitoring**

There is an expectation that everyone working with children has access to regular, high quality supervision of their practice which is reflective and seen by the worker as effective and challenging.

Each Agency will have their own supervision policy and clear expectations of supervision standards and quality. Each agency should monitor frequency, content and quality of supervision, based on standards through quantitative, qualitative, and outcome measures. Monitoring should also be done by the SSCB through a variety of mechanisms, including the annual Section 11 Audits and multi-agency case audits.

## **8. Summary**

Safeguarding Supervision is a planned, accountable and two way process which should support, motivate, assist and ensure all workers develop good safeguarding practice. It should be underpinned by an agency supervision policy based on agreed values, principles, language and expectations. Supervision outcomes should ensure workers are confident and competent in their own role, are able to develop multi-agency working, improve their performance and learn from practice. Line managers should be confident in their ability to provide high quality reflective supervision and are accountable for supervision practice.

Senior managers are responsible for ensuring that supervision is given priority. Time and resources should be embedded in Agency policies to ensure effective multi –agency working. All partner agencies should undertake regular evaluation and audit their own supervision strategy and practice in order to achieve to effectively safeguard children and young people.