



Supervision Guidance



Introduction

Supervision is a fundamental role that managers will 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. Following the inquiry of Victoria Climbié Lord Laming stated.

“All staff working directly with children must be regularly supervised” Lord Laming Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report 2003

More recently, reviews of serious cases, research and the findings of other inquiries, have highlighted that good supervision and support are necessary to ensure the effective protection of children and young people. Organisations and multi-agency teams that work with children, young people and their families and carers should have an over-arching supervision policy statement for all staff. This document highlights the rights of all workers engaged in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people to have access to formal safeguarding supervision.

The purpose of this guidance is to support partner agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of supervision for professional staff working in complex multi-agency environments.

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 2023 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 guidance is aimed at all agencies and organisations working with children and young people and families. Agencies should ensure that their staff and / or volunteers receive good quality, supervision which offers high support, exploration, reflection and high challenge. All managers undertaking supervision should ensure they follow their own agency supervision policy and procedures and use the associated paperwork.

Background

The expectation is that the principles outlined within this document are incorporated within organisational policies that set out the specific safeguarding supervision processes. It is recognised that there is no single model for the delivery of effective safeguarding supervision. However, fundamental principles are applicable to all organisations and to all services.

Statutory Guidance

Statutory guidance highlights the importance of the role of a DSL (Designated Safeguarding lead), the training and support this individual ought to receive, and the critical role of supervision to ensure the best outcomes for the child and family at risk.

The 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance stipulates that DSLs 'should be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters....'.

Chapter 2 of Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out the arrangements that organisations should have in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These include the requirement of employers to provide 'appropriate supervision and support for staff' to ensure that staff are:

- Competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- Working in an environment where they feel able to raise concerns;
- Feel supported in their safeguarding role;
- Familiar with the processes and procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child's safety or welfare; and
- Have opportunities for their practice to be regularly reviewed to ensure they improve over time.

The Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage – EYFS (2017) states that 'providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.'

All agencies which have operational responsibility for safeguarding / child protection services must have an agreed policy, which defines minimum levels of formal supervision of those staff that are accountable for safeguarding and child protection.

What is supervision?

Effective supervision should provide support, encourage critical reflection and curiosity and leave the supervisee feeling more confident about their safeguarding work. Supervision can mean different things to different people but essentially it is an activity that brings skilled supervisors and practitioners together in order to reflect upon their practice.

"A process in which one worker is given professional responsibility to work with another in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives. These objectives are competent, accountable performance, continuing professional development and personal support." Morrison 1993, (adapted from, Harries 1987)

The use of effective supervision is a means of improving decision-making, accountability, and supporting professional development among practitioners. Supervision is also an opportunity to question and explore an understanding of their work with children and families .

Types of supervision

Planned 1:1 supervision

This is planned supervision with a safeguarding supervisor within the organisation. The supervisee presenting children or families for discussion will be responsible for implementing any agreed actions. If not the formal line-manager, the safeguarding supervisor should provide assurance that the supervision is taking place and provide feedback as per organisational policy.

Group Supervision

Group supervision and Reflective Practice Groups can be even more effective in promoting curiosity and safe uncertainty, as practitioners can use these spaces to think about their own judgments and observations. It also allows teams to learn from one another's experiences, and the issues considered in one family may have echoes in other workloads. Group supervision allows us to bring our best thinking and that of our colleagues into our work to support us developing the right questions and plans in safeguarding. The purpose of group supervision is to support the team in working effectively to ensure the most appropriate support is in place and we are working together effectively to support the needs of the child and family. Families that we are working with are discussed constructively to improve practice. This could include learning points from internal reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice reviews (CSPRS) and changes in policies and protocols.

Supervision Principles

This guidance is informed and complemented by the 'Research in Practice' (RiP) Reflective Supervision: Resource Pack (2017), which outlines the 6 principles of reflective supervision:

1. To deepen and broaden workers' knowledge and critical analysis skills
2. To enable confident, competent, creative and independent decision-making
3. To help workers build clear plans that seek to enable positive change for children and families
4. To develop a relationship that helps staff feel valued, supported and motivated
5. To support the development of workers' emotional resilience and self-awareness
6. To promote the development of a learning culture within the organisation

Supervision Model

The 4x4x4 model of supervision based upon Morrison, 2009, in Dugmore et al., 2018 adaptation of the 4x4x4 model which is designed to be a practical tool to promote reflective supervision.

The model identifies four stakeholders in supervision, four functions of supervision and four elements of the supervision cycle.

The four elements of the supervision cycle promote reflective practice, critical thinking and secure decision making. Using it as a basis for discussions can therefore make for effective supervision on our work and other opportunities for learning.

Four stakeholders in supervision	Four functions of supervision	Four elements of the supervisory cycle
People who use services	Management	Experience
Staff	Support	Reflection
The organisation	Development	Analysis
Partner organisations	Mediation	Action planning

Key elements of supervision

1. Personal Support / Encourage Reflection

- To provide reflective space for the supervisee to discuss and work through the personal impact of their role and responsibilities. This should include support to address the emotional impact of the work where required.

2. Quality Assurance

- Ensure that practitioner performance and practice, including safeguarding, is competent, accountable and soundly based in research and practice knowledge.
- Ensures that safeguarding children practice is consistent with the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership policy and procedures.
- Ensures that practitioners fully understand their roles, and responsibilities and the scope of their professional discretion and authority.
- To provide reflective space to analyse ongoing work and specific incidents, to identify good practice and how this can be used within other situations, to assess risk and need and to provide an important check and balance on decision making and planning.

3. Professional Development

- Ensure that professional development needs, including safeguarding practice are considered and supported.

Good supervision involves a balance between all three elements, not always within one session, but certainly over the entire supervision process.

Effective Supervision

Effective supervision needs to combine critical reflective practice and critical thinking with a restorative experience in order for the professional to feel supported and maintain their capacity to think.

In order to understand whether supervision has an impact on outcomes for children and young people and their families, it is important that it is delivered effectively and to a high standard. Effective supervision should:

- Focus on the child
- Consistently be in line with safeguarding procedures
- Be a safe environment for restorative reflection
- Provide high support and high challenge
- Recognise the potential consequences, both personally and professionally, of the work and provide time to reflect on these
- Acknowledge and offer support and the opportunity to explore feelings, beliefs and views which may impact on the safeguarding of children
- Ensure children are at the heart of all engagement and within the work consider their family lives, their identity, the impact of trauma and their own personal experiences
- Demonstrate an inclusive approach when working with children and young people and an understanding and commitment to equality and diversity
- Ensure that if concerns about a child or young person need to be escalated, this is done in a timely manner

Cumbria Safeguarding Children Supervision Standards

1. Each agency should have a written policy for the supervision of staff working with children, young people and families which reflects these standards. The policy should outline the different types of safeguarding supervision applicable to various staff groups.
2. Safeguarding supervision should be provided by an appropriately experienced supervisor. Each agency has a responsibility to assure itself that supervisors are identified within the organisation as being sufficiently competent and confident in working with others to assure the safety of children. Any member of staff providing safeguarding supervision is required to have undertaken appropriate training in accordance with the organisation's policy.
3. Some groups of staff should have regular, planned, protected time and space for safeguarding supervision whether this is on a one-to-one or group basis. This should be uninterrupted time that is a priority for both the supervisor and supervisees. Dates and times should be planned and prioritised.

4. For one-to-one safeguarding supervision, there should be a written agreement that explains the purpose of the safeguarding supervision, its value and importance in developing practice and the roles of the supervisor and supervisee.
5. A written record should be kept of each session in line with the specific organisation's own supervision policy and/or agreed processes.
6. Decisions relating to children, young people and families should be recorded (or cross referenced) on the child/young person's or family's file or record. Good practice would require recording as soon as possible and within two working days of the decision being made (unless an immediate response is required). Safeguarding supervision records will be kept securely by the agency in line with agency policies and procedures.
7. Professionals should receive regular safeguarding supervision in accordance with their role and the organisation's policy (more frequently for some staff groups).
8. An open culture of learning and development and commitment to continuous improvement in practice should be promoted.

Practice Guidance

Contract (or agreement) between a supervise and supervisor

This should clearly outline the responsibilities and expectations of both parties. The contract should be discussed, agreed and signed off at the beginning of the supervisory arrangement and reflect the minimum standards within this document. The contract should form part of the supervision records and should be reviewed annually.

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of supervisor and supervisee, for example,

The Supervisor is responsible for

- Sharing the responsibility for making the supervisory relationship work however seeking alternative arrangements if needed.
- Ensuring confidentiality, subject to service user and staff safety
- Creating an effective, sensitive, supportive environment and maintains trust.
- Adopt attentive listening skills, using appropriate service tools if available.
- Providing suitable time and location
- Agree the timescales within which supervision takes place.
- Eliminating interruptions
- 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 child/families.
- Ensuring that the supervision contract has been agreed and reviewed annually.
- Ensuring the organisation's professional standards are met.
- Ensuring that where a change in line management occurs, a handover process is arranged between all parties concerned.

- Ensuring that issues relating to diversity are addressed constructively and positively and provide opportunity for staff to raise issues about their experience and diversity.
- Ensuring the shared responsibility for oversight and maintenance, including safeguarding, accountability and workload.

The supervisee is responsible for

- Sharing the responsibility for making the supervisory relationship work
- Attending regularly and on time, participating actively and bringing their agenda.
- Understanding and engaging with the rationale for supervision and being accountable for any actions.
- Preparing appropriately for supervision sessions.
- Ensuring the recording of supervision is reflective of the particular meeting.
- Ensure any identified changes or actions regarding individual workloads are recorded on the files
- Ensure that the contract has been agreed and reviewed annually.
- Actively participating in an effective sensitive and supportive supervision.
- Aiming to meet the organisation's professional standards
- Agreed frequency of supervision

The agreed frequency of supervision will be dependent on the practitioner's role within the organisation, their skills, experiences, team requirements and Government guidance. Good practice indicates that the sessions should be regular (occurring at set intervals) and frequent enough to provide the support and oversight needed. It is recommended that this is monthly, but certainly no more than every three months.

The supervisor and supervisee should agree on the duration and frequency of supervision taking into account the experience of the supervisee and the complexity of work. It will be appropriate to arrange for more frequent supervision for staff who are newly qualified or new to post but also if there are particular pieces of work which need more time in supervision.

Time and Place

Creating the right environment for supervision is an important element but we must accept that this is not always possible. However, for many people, working arrangements have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and many supervision arrangements will continue to happen virtually.

- Have a quiet private space to allow for open and honest discussions
- Ensure a relaxed atmosphere
- Prioritise the time and avoid interruptions
- Make sure you keep to agreed start and end times
- Consider when the supervision is scheduled so as not to clash with other commitments

Recording of supervision sessions

Recording should follow the principle that,

- The contract (or agreement) is the initial record of agreement between both parties.
- All supervision sessions must be recorded. Recording may be completed by the supervisor depending on the agency.
- Records of supervision should be completed and where needed signed off and dated by supervisor and supervisee. All records of supervision are confidential and should be stored securely by the supervisor. They will be subject to inspection and audit.
- Records should ensure management decisions on individual children through supervision are also recorded on the individual children, young people and family records held by the organisation.
- Handwritten records must be legible.
- Supervisee to receive a signed copy.

Competence

Professionals who provide supervision and support need to be suitably trained in supervision and safeguarding in order to be able to provide this effectively. In addition, they should also be provided with supervision relevant to their role.

Quality Assurance

It is essential that good quality supervision is provided. A practitioner who is not receiving supervision at the required frequency or standard should,

- In the first instance arrange a one to one with their supervisor to discuss and resolve, where possible.
- If they are unable to find a solution, the supervisee should request a three-way meeting between themselves, their supervisor and appropriate line managers (potentially including theirs and the supervisors). The difficulties should be discussed, and outcomes agreed.

There is a critical link between good quality regular supervision and good outcomes for children, young people and families. Recording should be available during inspection and audits if required.

Key messages

- **Supervision will be supportive and educative**
- **Effective supervision needs to be regular and provide continuity**
- **Supervisors and supervisees are powerfully influenced by their experiences of supervision**
- **All supervision sessions must be recorded**
- **Good supervision is relational**