



**St Helena
Government**

STAFF SUPERVISION POLICY

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1. Policy Statement

- All supervision will meet good practice guidance and be to a consistent standard;
- The Service is committed to the supervisory process and sees the quality of supervision as having a direct bearing on the quality of services and outcomes for service users;
- Supervision has an essential role in the effective management of staff performance and practice and is a primary means by which staff are supported and held accountable;
- Regular, planned and **competent** supervision is both a **right** and a **requirement** for all members of staff working for the Service **regardless of role or grade**. This would include temporary, part or full time staff, volunteers and, where agreed, staff employed by another agency but seconded to, or undertaking work on behalf of, the Directorate;
- **Supervision is an authority relationship in which the dynamics of power and the recognition of difference are crucial. The good practice guidelines set out in this document value people and acknowledge and work with difference. In this way, issues relating to anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities should become integral to good practice;**
- All staff will have a named supervisor with whom they will have an explicit arrangement regarding their supervision and a supervision agreement;
- Supervision will usually be provided by the line manager. If not the task should be delegated to another person with suitable status and relevant experience;
- The preferred model of supervision, which will apply to the majority of staff in the Service, is that of 'one to one'. If this model of supervision is not practicable, group supervision may be acceptable providing that there is recorded evidence that supervisees are periodically offered opportunities for individual supervision;
- Supervisors should ideally not supervise more than 10 staff on a regular basis;
- The Service will ensure that all supervisors have the necessary skills to supervise and will provide training as appropriate;
- All staff will have an annual appraisal and whilst supervision and appraisal are distinct activities in their own right, they are also integral to each other and neither can be fully effective in the absence of the other.

2. Definition of Supervision

A broad definition of supervision states that:

Supervision is both a process and an activity by which one worker is given responsibility by the organisation to work with another worker(s) in order to achieve certain organisational, professional and personal objectives. These objectives or functions are:

1. Competent, accountable performance/practice (may also be referred to as Formative Function);
(Managerial and Accountability)
2. Continuing professional development (may also be referred to as Normative Function);
(Development/Educational)
3. Personal support (may also be referred to as Restorative Function);
(Supportive)
4. Building the relationship between the individual and the organisation.
(Mediation or Advocacy function) [1]

'Service user' refers to all those using services of the Social Work and Safeguarding Service.

'Practice' describes direct work with service users.

'Performance' describes quality of work of any staff member.

'Supervisor' refers to all those at **any level** responsible for supervising others.

'Supervisee' refers to all those at **any level** receiving supervision.

'Supervision Agreement' **refers to the agreement between a supervisor and a supervisee.**

[1] Adapted from Harries (1987), Richards and Payne (1990) and Morrison (2001)

3. The Four Elements of Supervision

Although it is not necessary to have a complete balance of the four functions in each supervision session, it is important not to let any one of them consistently dominate the supervision process. Supervisors and supervisees should monitor any tendency to concentrate on one particular function and think about why this may be happening.

1. The Managerial and Accountability Function

This function is concerned with ensuring that the work of the supervisee is carried out to the Directorates expectations and standards by:

- Ensuring that managers take responsibility for supervising their staff;
- Ensuring that the overall quality of the supervisee's work is monitored;
- Ensuring that supervisees are clear about their roles and responsibilities;
- Ensuring that supervisors know, understand and meet statutory obligations;
- Ensuring that supervisees know, understand and follow all Directorate policies, procedures and integrate changes or new developments into their practice;
- Ensuring that supervisees act in the best interests of service users whenever possible;
- Ensuring that supervisees are clear about the purpose and practice of supervision;
- Encouraging supervisees to review their work, establishing clear and appropriate priorities and action plans which are then evaluated;
- Ensuring that the basis of decisions and professional judgements about practice is clear and made explicit in Directorate records;
- Giving supervisees feedback on their performance, acknowledging and appreciating good performance and identifying and planning how to address areas of under achievement;
- Ensuring that anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities are promoted and integral to the work of all supervisees;
- Encouraging supervisees to act as positive members of the team and relate appropriately to other agencies;
- Encouraging supervisees to deal with differences between themselves and colleagues professionally and constructively;
- Offering professional consultation and advice, or guiding individuals to where such advice can be accessed as appropriate;
- Identifying resource shortfalls or other constraints that may affect the ability of supervisees to do their work to the standard expected;
- Ensuring that records are maintained according to Directorate policies.

2. The Development/Educational Function

The supervisory process is a key element in the continuing professional development and education of staff. The role of the supervisor is to help staff reflect on their current performance, identify development and education needs and plan how these can best be met by:

- Developing the competence of supervisee's within their role;
- Helping supervisees identify their theoretical base skills, knowledge and individual contribution to the Directorate;
- Encouraging supervisees to be explicit about their value base in relation to race, gender etc and its impact on their work;
- Encouraging supervisees to 'stop action', reflect and identify learning from both positive experiences and mistakes, thus developing the skills of self appraisal and a commitment to continuous improvement;
- Understanding each supervisee's preferred learning style, blocks to learning and responding to these as appropriate;
- Giving regular and specific feedback which may be positive or constructively critical, on all aspects of a supervisee's work;
- Helping supervisees to try new approaches and methods of work as well as integrate changes in policy or practice into their work;
- Encouraging supervisees to reflect on their interaction with service users, colleagues and other agencies;
- Jointly, with supervisees, identifying educational and development needs and planning a range of ways in which these might be met;
- Encouraging the giving and getting of feedback about the supervision process itself so that both the supervisor and supervisees can develop their supervisory skills.

3. The Supportive Function

The nature of the work carried out in Children and Young People's Services can mean that staff are faced with difficult situations, uncertainty and stress. An important function of supervision is to help staff cope with these difficulties by:

- Valuing supervisees both as people and as professionals;

- Creating a safe environment within supervision for supervisees to reflect on their practice 'warts and all';
- Encouraging supervisees to talk about their feelings as well as thoughts and actions;
- Helping supervisees to explore emotional blocks to their work and how the work impacts upon them;
- Helping supervisees to explore issues about discrimination in a safe setting;
- Supporting staff who may be experiencing abuse or harassment;
- Monitoring the overall health and well being of supervisees especially with regard to stress;
- Encouraging supervisees to make use of the Directorate's health and staff care provision or external support as appropriate;
- Fostering and promoting productive working relationships amongst team members;
- Encouraging supervisees to be proactive in resolving conflict.

4. The Mediation/Advocacy Function

This function is concerned with building the relationship between the individual and the Directorate as an organisation.

- Representing supervisee's needs and views to higher management;
- Briefing higher management about resource shortfalls or exercises and their impact on supervisees;
- Ensuring that resources are allocated in ways that are efficient and equitable including access to training and development opportunities;
- Ensuring supervisees have up to date information about developments and changes in the Directorate;
- Involving supervisees in decision making including encouraging them to play an active part in consultation and policy formation when appropriate;
- Mediating or advocating between staff within the team, with staff in other parts of the Directorate or with outside agencies;

- Supporting supervisees who may be experiencing abuse, harassment or discrimination within the team, some staff in other parts of the Directorate, from service users or other agencies;
- Dealing sensitively, but clearly and equitably, with complaints against supervisees;
- Supporting supervisees through the Complaints Procedure.

4. Guidelines on Putting the Supervision Policy in to Practice

4.1 The Supervision Contract

- There should be a written agreement between each supervisee and each supervisor taking part in one-to-one supervision. The agreement should be developed jointly by the supervisee and the supervisor, using the contract in Appendix C;
- The Supervision Contract covers record keeping, confidentiality, expectations from each side, frequency and duration of sessions, circumstances under which supervision can be cancelled, and timescales for rearranging cancelled supervision;
- Where supervision is done on a group basis, there should be a similar written agreement on the focus and purpose of group supervision, expectations of group members and supervisors, and confidentiality and its limits.

4.2 Planning supervision sessions

- Supervision sessions should take place regularly, following the guidance on frequency in [Appendix A: Suggested Frequency of Supervision](#);
- Each session should be arranged in advance;
- The length of the sessions should be agreed in advance, making sure there is sufficient time for supervision to be adequate;
- The supervisor and supervisee should each prepare for the session, following the guidance in [Appendix B: Suggested Outline Structure for Supervision](#);
- An agenda for the session should be prepared in advance.

4.3 Carrying out supervision

- Supervision should be held in a private place, free of interruptions;

- The supervision session should take account of the four functions of supervision described in [Section 3, The Four Elements of Supervision](#), and should follow the guidance in [Appendix B: Suggested Outline Structure for Supervision](#);
- A clear distinction must be made between supervision and capability or grievance procedures, especially when under performance issues are being addressed;
- Staff may need to consult their supervisor over problems that cannot wait until the next supervision session. If important decisions are reached during 'informal supervision', they must be recorded. Informal supervision should not be allowed to substitute for formal supervision, as the latter covers a broader agenda, e.g. staff development;
- Both supervisor and supervisee should explore anti-discriminatory practice in relation to the supervisee's work and in relation to the supervision process itself. The supervisor needs to be aware of how issues to do with race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and class can affect interaction in supervision, and should encourage supervisees to examine their own values, assumptions and beliefs.

4.4 Record keeping

- A written record of the supervision session must be made by the supervisor, and signed and dated by both the supervisor and the supervisee at the end of the session. If there are any disagreements between the supervisor and supervisee about what goes in the record, these should be noted. The supervisor should make a photocopy of the record and give it the supervisee within seven working days;
- The supervision record remains the property of the Service. Both the supervisor and the supervisee are responsible for the safe storage of these records;
- Supervision agreements, records and evaluation forms may all be read by the supervisor's line manager and other appropriate stakeholders as part of demonstrating that staff are supervised and to what standard. They may also be used as evidence to evaluate supervisees' progress at appraisal or in the event of capability or grievance procedures;

- Where supervision is done on a group basis, notes of the session must be taken and agreed as an accurate record of decisions made and action to be taken;
- Supervision record in relation to individual children/young people will be recorded in the child's Azeuscare records as appropriate.

4.5 Breakdown of the supervision relationship

- Both partners should work to establish a purposeful and effective relationship within supervision. If the supervision relationship breaks down and the problem cannot be resolved by the supervisor and supervisee, the supervisor's line manager should investigate the reasons for the breakdown, consider solutions or alternative options, and take appropriate action.

5. Responsibilities in Supervision

Supervision sessions should be based on a shared responsibility for:

- Accepting the requirement to be supervised and accountable;
- Giving supervision a high priority in the workload;
- Attending at the agreed time and place;
- Clarifying expectations of each other through a written agreement for supervision;
- Having an agreed joint agenda and participating fully;
- Clarifying and agreeing objectives and standards of practice based on objective outcomes and Directorate guidelines;
- Identifying evidence that will demonstrate competent practice;
- Listening attentively;
- Being open and sharing information;
- Giving and seeking feedback regarding what is going well and what is problematic, including the process of the supervision session itself;
- Recognising experience and acknowledging contributions;
- Looking beyond caseload management;
- Promoting anti discriminatory practice and behaviour;

- Reflecting, thinking through and exploring options;
- Developing action plans:
 - i. In respect of current work;
 - ii. To address areas of work that are not up to the required standard.
- Timescales for action plans;
- Implementing action agreed in supervision;
- Discussing, agreeing and reviewing the supervision agreement at least annually.

The supervisor has a further responsibility to:

- Encourage a positive attitude to supervision by the supervisee and the team as a whole;
- Work towards creating an open and 'learning' environment in supervision;
- Help the supervisee analyse any presenting problem;
- Clarify and summarise both the content and the perceptions of the issues under discussion;
- Deal with the situation early if there are concerns about the professional competence or behaviour of the supervisee giving specific and concrete example of these concerns;
- Confront and challenge constructively including any areas of unawareness or bias the supervisee may have;
- Be aware of how issues of anti discriminatory practice may affect the supervisory relationship;
- Ensure that supervision does not become mechanistic or a checklist by encouraging creative approaches to the discussion of work issues;
- Identify training and development needs and the need to consolidate practice;
- Assist with generating solutions and realistic action plans;
- Ensure that a written record is made of supervision, dated and signed at the end of each session and that any disagreements are noted.

The supervisee has a further responsibility to:

- Maintain a competent standard of practice and to seek help and guidance if unable to do so for any reason;
- Express opinions, disagree where appropriate to learn from mistakes and be honest if unsure of what to do;
- Make the supervisor aware of his or her own work and development needs;
- Be open to feedback both about good practice and areas of concern;
- Be open to challenge about areas of unawareness or bias in relationships with service users or colleagues;
- Explore alternatives, find solutions and make realistic action plans;
- Make any disagreements with the record of supervision known.

6. Confidentiality

It is important for the supervisor and supervisee to be clear about confidentiality in supervision and this should be made explicit in the Supervision Contract. Information from supervision may inform discussions between the supervisor and her/his manager in relation to issues that impact on the work of the Directorate, particularly where there is risk to individuals or the Directorate. The supervisor has the right to share information that arises in supervision if:

- The supervisee's works breaches agreed standards of practice - in this case, supervision records could be used in a discussion about training and development needs or when dealing with capability or grievance procedures;
- The supervisee's behaviour gives rise for concern - the supervisor might need to refer to the line manager or Human Resources unit;
- The supervisee's physical or emotional health requires referral to a medical or staff care professional.

Equally supervisees have a right to discuss any concerns with their supervisor's manager. These will include concerns about complaints with the process, such as:

- The supervisor does not keep to the agreed agreement;
- There are concerns about the quality of supervision offered;
- There are concerns about the supervisors' standards of practice.

7. Case Critique

Critical reflection and analysis of our actions and interventions as Social Workers is integral to both personal and professional development. We have looked at management supervision and the guidance available for this. We have identified that a crucial part of supervision is the ability to critically analyse all aspects of service user intervention.

8. Direct Observations

Within a supervision session, supervisors and supervisees may identify that the use of a direct observation would be an appropriate method for checking out professional skills in practice. Reflecting on the feedback from this type of observation creates opportunities for Social Workers to evidence their capabilities to practice confidently and professionally. The discussion also provides an opportunity to check out their skills with their supervisor in a practice setting (see [Appendix F: Direct Observation Guidance and Template](#)).

References

Brown A & Bourne I 'The Social Work Supervisor'
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CWDC Supervision Guide for Social Workers
2009

Hawkins P & Shohet R 'Supervision in the Helping Professions'
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Harries M 'Discussion paper on Social Work Supervision'
Pub. Australian Association for Social Workers 1987

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Pub. Pavilion 2001

Richards M & Payne C 'Staff Supervision in Child Protection Work'
Pub. London NISW 1990

Appendix A: Suggested Frequency of Supervision

Undertaking the Assessed and Supported year in Employment	In the first 6 weeks of employment - weekly for a minimum of 1 and a half hours. 7 weeks to 6 months - fortnightly for a minimum of one and half hours. 6-12 months - a minimum of monthly for a minimum of one and a half hours.
Social Workers with 1 year experience	Monthly
Team Managers	Monthly
Residential Home Managers	Monthly
Support Service staff	4 weekly
Residential Child Care staff	2 weekly
All other staff groups	Monthly

Part time staff should receive adequate and appropriate supervision. The frequency of supervision agreed with the staff member, taking into account the individual's working arrangements and the standard set out above.

Appendix B: Suggested Outline Structure for Supervision

Pre session preparation:

- Set the dates for supervision well in advance so they are a priority in the diary;
- Read through and review the record of the previous session, checking that it has been signed and dated. Note items and action plans that need following up;
- Note any items that were suggested at the end of the session as agenda items for the next session;

- Prepare an agenda incorporating these and any new agenda items suggested by the supervisor or supervisee;
- Both supervisor and supervisee should identify:
 - What the supervisee has done well since the last session;
 - How this can be maintained or built upon;
 - What the supervisee has done since the last session that needs improvement;
 - How an improvement in practice could be achieved;
 - Anything the supervisee or supervisor has failed to do;
 - What has cause this.

During the session:

- Start the session on time;
- Clarify and prioritise the agenda so that substantive items do not become crowded out by less important items;
- Within the first 10 minutes, 'take the temperature' by checking how the supervisee is in a general way. It is important to find out where the supervisee is starting from and anything that might have an influence on the process of the session;
- Share any information/briefing;
- Discuss the main agenda items. This will also provide opportunities for the supervisor to give feedback about good practice and any areas of concern that need to be addressed. Agree key decisions and action plans that will be recorded for the supervisee and supervisor;
- Review any other work including possible future work;
- Discuss any training or development needs the supervisee may have and action plan to meet these;
- Discuss any personal issues relating to the supervisees ability to do the work and keep to agreed deadlines;
- Agree the provisional agenda for the next session;

- Record the session. Date and sign the record noting any areas of disagreement ensuring that both points of view are represented. Both supervisor and supervisee should have a copy of the record.
-