

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board



Professional Supervision:
A model for organisations where staff
work directly with children, young people
and their families

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This guidance was produced by the WSCB with input from representatives from Children's Social Care, Adult Services and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.

1. Introduction

Working Together¹ (2018) states that:

'Effective practitioner supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support practitioners to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family ... Practitioners working with children should always have access to colleagues to talk through their concerns and judgments affecting the welfare of the child.'

National and local Serious Case Reviews repeatedly contain the theme that robust and reflective supervision should be available and incorporated into everyone's working life. Protecting children from harm requires sound professional judgements to be made. It is demanding work that can be distressing and stressful. All of those involved should have access to advice and support from, for example, peers, managers, named and designated professionals. Those providing supervision should be trained in supervision skills and have an up to date knowledge of the legislation, policy and research.

This guidance has been produced to support agencies which directly employ professional staff, students, trainees and/or volunteers to work directly with children, young people and their families. Additionally, the guidance will benefit staff and managers who deliver services to adults who are parents or carers where the impact of the needs of adults may impact on the welfare of the children. This document highlights the purpose and principles of effective supervision and is intended to support all agencies in ensuring that practitioners have access to a robust framework for supervision and sets out some basic key principles and provides tools to assist managers/supervisors.

Good quality and structured supervision promotes a learning culture whereby practice is challenged, reflected upon, open and transparent. The absence of a culture of supervision leaves organisations vulnerable. Commissioners of provider services therefore need to ensure that providers have in place appropriate arrangements for supervising staff in accordance with their S11 duties to promote welfare and safeguard children and young people. **There is an expectation that all partner agencies will have in place a Supervision Policy and that staff will adhere to their own agency's policy. This guidance does not replace the supervision policies of individual organisations, but can be used to support the development or review of supervision policies where applicable.**

¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) page 29

2. Definition of supervision

Supervision is an accountable process which should provide a safe environment for critical reflection, challenge and professional support that operates alongside an organisation's appraisal process.

Supervision is a general term which describes the process of directing people in the workplace. It can, however, include a number of different elements as outlined in section 5.

This guidance encompasses all elements, but places particular emphasis on the need for effective safeguarding supervision which supports ways of working with families which keep the child in focus, address risks and enable practitioners to learn through reflection.

3. Purpose of supervision

Supervision enables workers to develop their capacity to use their experiences to review practice, receive feedback on their performance, build emotional resilience and think reflectively about the effectiveness of the professional relationships they have formed with children, adults and families. Regular, high quality safeguarding supervision is an essential element of effective arrangements to safeguard children.

Benefits of Effective Supervision	Impact of Poor Supervision
More accurate assessment and enhanced development of worker	Worker less clear, more rigid
Worker clear and confident in role and task	Child, young person (CYP) or family less confident
User Confident in the worker, good relationships built	CYP or family less open, less information given, poorer relationships built
Increased capacity, trust and openness, reduced anxiety, stronger partnership	Assessment weaker, less likely to be shared/agreed
Clearer assessment, more evidenced based , worker and CYP/family clearer about the work being carried out.	Plans less likely to be shared/agreed
Worker communicates better with other agencies	Poorer links with other agencies/ danger of drift and delay.
Plans more informed, owned implemented and reviewed	CYP and families may be less open, more dependent

4. Principles of supervision

Supervision must:

- Keep a focus on the child
- Ensure that practice is consistent with the Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk> and the organisation's own procedures
- Provide a safe environment for reflection and professional challenge
- Acknowledge the emotional impact of the work
- Recognise and manage feelings and beliefs which may affect the safeguarding of children
- Identify when a case needs to be escalated due to concerns about case progress or other aspects of case management, including ineffective multi agency working. <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4gjN/escalation-policy-resolution-of-professional-disagreements/?b=Worcestershire>

Where the requirement to provide supervision is part of a practitioner's job role, sufficient time must be allocated in order for supervision to be carried out effectively.

5. Elements of supervision

The four elements of supervision are:

- Management support (competent accountable performance and practice)
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Personal Support
- Team and organisational issues

Good supervision involves a balance between all elements, not always within one session, but certainly over the entire supervision process. A fuller description of these elements can be found in Appendix 1. This appendix also includes a practice cycle adapted from Morrison (2005) to support implementation of supervision and ensure that reflection and analysis take place.

6. Agreement

An example of a Supervision Agreement which should be signed and adhered to by both parties is provided in Appendix 2.

7. Recording

Supervision must be recorded on the agreed template for your organisation. Notes should be agreed and signed by both parties. Any discussions and decisions relating to a child must be recorded on the child's record. An example of a supervision record is in Appendix 3

8. Frequency and duration

Formal supervision should be a prioritised, planned event in line with the organisation's Supervision Policy. The frequency of supervision will be dependent upon the organisation and the specific role of the practitioner. Additional ad-hoc supervision should be available as and when required. Any decisions made during such supervision should be recorded on the child's record. Alternative robust arrangements should be known and understood by all employees in the case of any long term absence of their regular supervisor e.g. sickness/staff vacancy.

9. Types/methods of supervision

Planned/formal supervision takes place in private at a pre-arranged time with an agreed agenda and preparation on behalf of all parties. This time should be prioritised and protected. All staff within an organisation with responsibility for safeguarding children should have access to this method of supervision. There may be times when 'group' supervision or unplanned, ad-hoc supervision is appropriate. Records of these discussions should be maintained.

10. Training

All managers who provide supervision should be appropriately trained in order that they can recognise and assess any safeguarding issues. Practitioners should be provided with support and/or training in order to ensure that supervision is effective. In addition supervisors should receive regular supervisor supervision, either one-to-one or as a group.

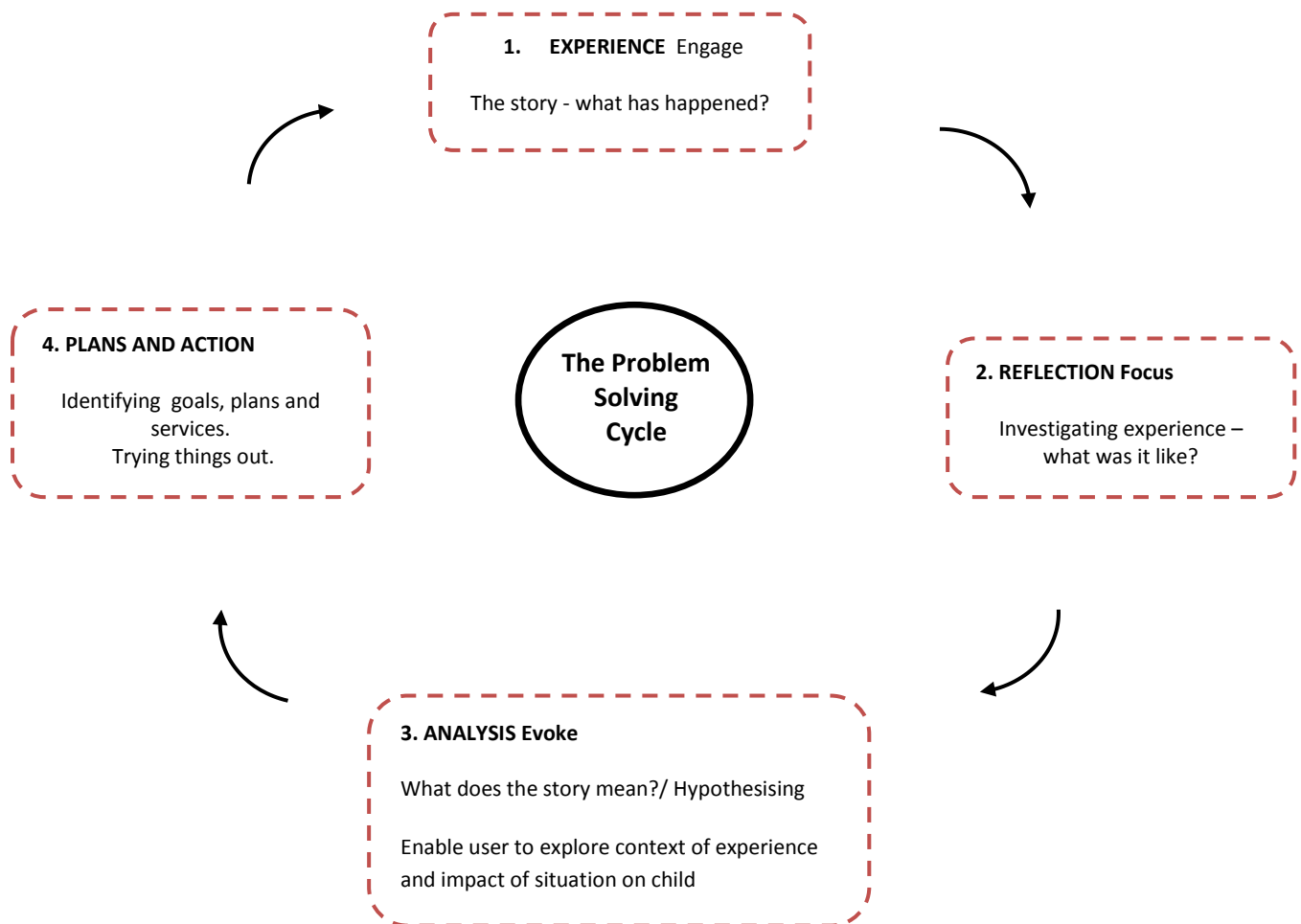
11. Conclusion

Partner organisations and commissioned services are required to have a Safeguarding Supervision Policy. Supervision is a method which supports accountability between the employer and employee to safeguard children. As part of its quality assurance and evaluation of effectiveness role the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board will seek assurance that organisations have in place supervision policies and may seek practitioner feedback about their experiences of supervision.

Appendix 1: Elements of supervision.**Continuing Professional Development**

Management	Continuing Professional Development
Role and responsibilities are defined	Development of the worker's professional competence, skills, knowledge and understanding
Purpose of supervision is clear	An understanding of the worker's value base in relation to race, gender etc. and its impact on their work.
Policies, procedures and statutory responsibilities are understood and implemented	The worker's ability to reflect on their work and interaction with users, colleagues and partner agencies.
The basis of decisions and professional judgements are clear to the supervisor	Regular and constructive feedback to the worker on all aspects of their performance.
Time management expectations of the worker are clear.	The worker's commitment to on-going professional development.
The worker understands the functions of partner agencies and his/her role and responsibilities in working with them.	The worker's capacity to learn from their experiences or difficulties.
Assess the overall quality of the worker's performance	Open Culture of Learning
Personal Support	Team and Organizational
Create a safe climate for the worker to look at their practice and its impact on them as a person	Brief more senior management about gaps in or issues with resource.
Clarify the boundaries between support, counselling, consultation and confidentiality in supervision.	Allocate resources in the most efficient way
Debrief the worker and give them permission to talk about feelings.	Involve staff in decision-making.
Help the worker to explore emotional blocks/barriers to their work.	
Explore discrimination and diversity issues in a safe setting.	

The following model is included to provide a method to ensure reflection and analysis on cases. Often the stages of reflection and analysis are not included and the tendency is to jump directly from the experience to plans and action.



Appendix 2: Example of a supervision agreement

Sample Supervision Agreement

This is an Agreement between and which outlines the agreement for the two-way supervision process.

1. Formal supervision will take place every ... weeks for a maximum of 2 hours. The venue will normally be at ...
2. Additional ad-hoc supervision will be available as and when required. Any decisions made during such supervision will be recorded on the child or provider's record.
3. Supervision dates will be mutually agreed in advance.

If supervision has to be cancelled for any reason, it is the responsibility of both parties to rearrange as soon as possible.

..... and will try and ensure that the supervision time is uninterrupted (barring emergencies) and that privacy can be maintained.

A joint agenda will be prepared at the start of each supervision session. Both parties are expected to prepare and bring relevant issues for discussion.

A record will be kept of supervision discussions. The record of the worker's personal supervision (i.e. worker specific and non-child-related discussions about Professional Development, Personal and Performance matters) will be stored electronically in the designated secure drive. The management supervision template will be used for this. Child-related discussions and decisions will be recorded separately using the prescribed template. This record will be uploaded onto the child's Framework record. The names of the children (but not the detail) will be noted on the personal supervision record.

Ordinarily, only the parties to the supervision record will have access to it. It is not, however, a confidential document and may be used in a different context e.g. for audit purposes or in legal and disciplinary proceedings.

Supervision is intended to fulfil a variety of purposes:

1. Workload monitoring and performance management.
2. Case discussion and decision-making where appropriate.
3. Discussion of equal opportunities and any issues relating to anti-oppressive practice.
4. Professional development and training.
5. Provision of two-way feedback on performance.
6. Staff Review and Development Managers.
7. Identification of problem areas where assistance/advice required.
8. Identification of support needs.
9. Sharing management information and statistics.

Discussion of team issues – staffing, sickness issues, individual performance, quality standards, workload, team dynamics, individual and team development. Making Supervision work. What each will contribute?

What will contribute as supervisee to make this happen?

What wants from as a Supervisee?

What will contribute as Supervisor to make this happen?

SignedDated.....

Supervisor

SignedDated

Supervisee

Appendix 3: Example of a supervision record

Record of Safeguarding Supervision

Supervisee	
Supervisor	
Date	

Agenda Items

1. Review of agreed action points from last meeting/matters arising
2. Supervision Prompt sheet
3. Discussion under 3 key functions
4. AOB and date of next meeting

Review of previous supervision session	
Progress on actions	
Notes of discussion	
Management e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewing performance in relation to safeguarding practice• Application of safeguarding policies and procedures• Safeguarding roles and responsibilities• Development and monitoring of action plans• Monitoring safeguarding workload	
Professional Development e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying preferred learning style and barriers to learning• Assessing development needs and identifying learning opportunities• Giving and receiving constructive feedback on performance• Reflecting on learning opportunities undertaken and applying that learning to the	

workplace.			
Support e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling and empowering expression of feelings in relation to the work role • Discussion of personal issues impacting on performance at work • Health and safety 			
Names of individual children discussed <i>The details of a discussion of an individual child should be recorded in the child's individual record.</i>			
Actions agreed			
Management	Agreed actions	By whom	By when
Professional Development	Agreed actions	By whom	By when
Support	Agreed actions	By whom	By when

Supervisee's signature.....

Supervisor's signature.....

Date of Next Meeting.....

Supervision Recording – Individual CYP/Family Record

Record of Case Supervision

Name of CYP/Family	
D.O.B. of CYP	
Supervision Date	
Supervisee	
Supervisor/Manager	
Brief synopsis of safeguarding history	
Concerns	
Actions agreed	

Signature of Supervisor:

Signature of Supervisee:

This form should be stored in the supervisee's supervision file and a copy placed on the child's CP record. An entry should be recorded on the child's chronology.