**PSW Brief September 2019**

At Buckinghamshire Council Children’s Services our most important asset is our staff and it is recognised that direct work with children and families can be highly rewarding as well as complex, stressful and emotionally demanding. Therefore, we have a duty of care to our workforce and good-quality supervision can support practitioners’ wellbeing and job satisfaction, and will support workforce retention (Supervision Policy 2019)

Through the work of the Practice Development Team and Service Audits, Supervision has been highlighted as an area for improvement/development. Supervision should enable social workers to reflect on their work, sound out their hypotheses and reach sound evidence-based decisions. Feedback from our social workers identifies that they feel more confident when the decision making process is supported within the supervisory relationship. Audits evidence that when supervision discusses/explores the child’s journey and a clear plan is agreed, this drives the plan forward and improves outcomes for children.

**The Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) requires practitioners to:**

*Recognise one’s own professional limitations and how and when to seek advice from a range of sources, including practice supervisors, senior practice leaders and other clinical practioners from a range of disciplines such as psychiatry, paediatrics and psychology. Discuss, debate, reflect upon and test hypotheses about what is happening within families, and with families.*

*Explore the potential for bias in the decision-making and resolve tensions emerging from, for example, ethical dilemmas, conflicting information or differing professional positions. Identify which methods will be of help for a specific child or family and the limitations of different approaches. Make use of the best evidence from research to inform the complex judgements and decisions needed to support families and protect children.*

*Reflect on the emotional experience of working relationships with parents, carers and children, and consciously identify where personal triggers are affecting the quality of analysis or help. Identify strategies to build professional resilience and management of self.*

**Functions of Supervision –**

* **Ensuring competent accountable practice –** space for Practitioners to discuss their work and reach decisions with guidance, creating a level of shared decision making and clearly agreed accountability.
* **Encouraging continuing professional development –** Opportunity for reflective discussion about practice to enable learning and development. Space to discuss learning objectives and career development.
* **Offering personal support to practitioners –** Personalised support in the challenges of the role. Space for discussion about the emotional context of practice.
* **Engaging the individual practitioner with the organisation –** Understanding of professional role and clarity about responsibilities in the organisational setting.

**Forms of Supervision –**

* **Direct:** Originally, direct supervision referred to supervision ‘on the job’ – basically discussion, advice and guidance whilst a social worker is undertaking a task.
* **Informal:** Informal supervision is unplanned. Basically, any discussion or consultation providing advice, guidance and answers to a supervisee’s questions is informal supervision.
* **Formal:**  Formal supervision is planned and structured, has a formal agenda and should take place in a private environment with no interruptions.
* **Group:** Group supervision is not simply a team meeting but allows space and time for the four functions of supervision to be addressed.

## Preparation for supervision -

The key to successful supervision is effective preparation. Both the supervisor and supervisee should take responsibility for preparing all the information needed. Social workers must be able to present an analysis and recommendation to managers to enable shared decision making.

Actions agreed at the last supervision should be followed up and reviewed in successive sessions.

For case supervisions, supervisees should be clear about key dates/appointments on their cases and consider the following:

* What is worrying me and/or others?
* This is what is working well
* This what I decided to do
* This is what I need help with today

Supervisors will be expected to prepare for case supervision by utilising LCS records and performance reports to check that workflow is being managed, and scheduled visits and other appointments are taking place. Any difficulties in completing tasks should be discussed and a plan with remedial actions developed with the supervisee.

Supervisions should be scheduled in advance for the whole year and recorded in individual outlook calendars.

**Recording of Supervision**

What is included in the supervision record should be detailed enough should it need to be revisited however, it should be concise. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to record the supervision.

Personal supervisions are to be recorded on the personal supervision template, shared with the supervisee and stored in the electronic supervision folders.

Case supervisions are to be recorded on the Supervision Case Note template on the individual child/young person’s LCS file within 5 working days.

If there are disagreements about the contents amendments should only be made by the supervisor following a discussion with the supervisee.

Buckinghamshire Council Children’s Services Supervision Policy April 2019 lays out our commitment to all staff regarding the level of supervision to be provided to each worker and details the escalation process should this commitment not be fulfilled. We all have a responsibility to ensure we receive and provide supervisions for our teams.

Sandra Carnall, Principal Social Worker. September 2019.