



Children's Services Supervision Policy

Updated October 2024

Introduction

In Buckinghamshire it is recognised that direct work with children and families can be highly rewarding as well as complex, stressful and emotionally demanding. Supervision in Buckinghamshire is there to support our staff, providing a chance for reflection, allowing for development, growth and containment, "a good supervisor is able to contain a supervisee's anxiety, stress and hope and model the kind of relationship practitioners are expected to build with children and families and young people, support safe and proportionate decision making and keep staff well' (Earle et al, Reflective Supervision, Research in Practice, 2017.)

We recognise that supervision is a core process in supporting the delivery of high-quality social work practice and that we have a responsibility to ensure that the supervision provided to social work staff is effective in helping them to manage complex and emotionally challenging situations, support the practitioner's wellbeing and job satisfaction and support staff development and retention.

The aim of supervision is to support social workers to ensure that children and families get the right help at the right time.

This policy is based on the premise that supervision is an integral part of the day-to-day business of the service and that it will occur both formally and in other forums including informal discussions and group settings. In all of these forums, the process of supervision should be informed by the standards set out within this document.

This policy applies to all staff employed by Buckinghamshire Children's Services and provides a framework to support:

- Trauma informed practice across the service.
- The integration of Buckinghamshire Council's PACT values into day-to-day practice.
- Containment of the emotional impact of working with families in distressing situations.
- The quality of decision making and help for children and families.
- The implementation of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, addressing the experiences of staff and families.
- Time management and organisational accountability, including workload management.
- The development of newly qualified social workers through the ASYE process.

- The continuing professional development and career progression of our staff.

The purpose of this policy is to outline how supervision is to be carried out within Buckinghamshire Council's Children's Social Care Service and provide staff with guidance to support effective supervision and reflective practice.

All staff within Children's Services should expect to receive good quality supervision that supports their wellbeing and their professional practice. This policy should be considered in conjunction with Buckinghamshire's wellbeing policy and discussions around wellbeing and the support on offer should feature regularly throughout supervision. Wellness Action Plans are available for all staff to ensure they feel the right support is in place to perform at their best.

This policy applies to all practitioners working with children and families including managerial staff, irrespective of whether staff are here temporarily or on a permanent basis. This policy also applies to social work students placed within Children's Services.

Underpinning Principles

Buckinghamshire Children's Services identifies the following principles:

- Supervision is integral to the effective delivery of services.
- The process of supervision is based on the development of a relationship between supervisors and supervisees which provides a safe environment to support the worker and facilitate reflection, challenge and critical thinking.
- The quality of supervision throughout the service impacts on outcomes for children and their families.
- Supervision should support critical thinking and reflective trauma informed-based practice.
- Supervision promotes anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice.
- The delivery of high-quality supervision is a priority task within the service.
- All practitioners, including managers at all levels of the service, have the right to receive regular formal supervision from supervisors who have received appropriate training and are supported within their supervisory role.
- All staff have a responsibility to participate in supervision and attend formal sessions.
- The process of supervision is a shared responsibility: staff and their supervisors are expected to contribute to its effectiveness and the organisation has a responsibility to facilitate a culture which supports the process.
- Supervision will incorporate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to ensure staff have the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed in their job role, this may include findings from audit activity and observations of practice (where applicable).

This policy sets out the way in which the Council delivers on the principles set out above.

Definition – what is supervision?

Supervision is a partnership between the supervisee, the supervisor and provides the setting to support accountable decision making and safer outcomes for children, young people and families. It can be defined as:

“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)

Supervision Agreement

Supervision agreements establish a set of “ground rules” that clarify the rights and the expectations on both sides in order to help create a safe, secure and effective supervisory setting. (Shulman, 2005, 2011)

The development of a productive supervisory relationship starts with:

- Clarity about roles and responsibilities and organisational requirements.
- Building rapport, understanding each other’s perspective and any factors that might affect the process.
- Acknowledging that effective supervision may not always be comfortable and exploring how power, authority and differences of opinion may be negotiated.

All supervisors and supervisees will be expected to complete and sign a supervision agreement within the first 4 weeks of their employment. Supervision agreements should be reviewed at least once a year, when there is a change in supervisor or if there is a significant change in circumstances for the supervisee.

The supervisee should be emailed an electronic copy of the supervision agreement, and the supervisor will be responsible for saving a record of the supervision agreement in the confidential supervision folder on sharepoint.

<https://buckscc.sharepoint.com/sites/ChildrensServices/Staffing%20Folders/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Effective supervision can only be fully achieved where there is a partnership between the supervisee and supervisor. This can take time to build and both parties have a shared responsibility to make the supervisory relationship work. In Buckinghamshire we expect our supervisors to model the relational practice we wish to see with our families, children and young people. We expect our supervisors to invest time in building relationships with their staff to enhance the process of building trust, which in turn helps support the development of a safe and reflective space for supervision.

Staff should benefit from attending supervision and find the sessions insightful and containing. Staff should be able to feedback their experiences of supervision and feel

confident to voice any concerns they may have. Staff should have regular opportunities to feed their views into the supervision process.

Frequency of Staff Personal Supervision

It is recognised that staff require different frequencies of supervision, depending on their role and experience. It is expected that practitioners ask for immediate support if they have concerns about the immediate safety of a child/ young person or colleague.

Employee	Frequency	Additional notes
Students on placement	Weekly	To consider both case and academic work.
NQSW completing ASYE	First 6 weeks – 90 minutes each week Week 7 onwards – fortnightly Month 7 onwards – monthly	In the last 6 months of the ASYE, the supervisee and supervisor may still wish to meet more often, rather than having all their case supervisions in one session. This is at the discretion of the manager.
Social workers/Family Support Workers/alternatively qualified practitioners	At least once a calendar month	Staff may wish to meet more often, rather than having all their case supervision in one session. This is at the discretion of both parties.
Assistant Team Managers	Once per calendar month by Team Manager	
Team Managers	Once per calendar month by Service Manager	
Service Managers	Once per calendar month by Head of Service	
Heads of Service	Once per calendar month by Service Director	

Coaching for Performance (C4P)

Coaching for performance objectives should be set quarterly and discussed in personal supervision sessions to monitor performance and ensure objectives are on target to be met. Extra sessions to discuss C4P can be arranged where required.

Frequency of Case Supervisions

It is important that there is regular supervision on individual children, but the frequency of these discussions should depend on the needs, risks and circumstances of the child.

The frequency of supervision, and rationale for this frequency, will be recorded clearly by the manager in each child's file. A child should be reviewed as a minimum every 12 weeks or sooner if the child's needs, risks and circumstances change significantly.

Features of effective supervision

It is our aim to provide high quality supervision, which supports and motivates staff and encourages reflective practice. In addition to monitor the quality of our work and performance objectives to enhance the quality of services provided to our children and families.

The 2018 Post Qualifying Standards Post-qualifying standard: knowledge and skills statement for child and family practice supervisors (publishing.service.gov.uk) suggest that supervision should:

- Recognise how different relationships evoke different emotional responses, which impact upon the effectiveness of social work practice and provide responsive, high quality individual supervision.
- Use mechanisms such as peer supervision and group case consultation to help identify bias, shift thinking and the approach to case work to generate better outcomes for children and families.
- Recognise and articulate the dilemmas and challenges faced by practitioners and use this expertise and experience to guide, assist and support the provision of services. Identify emotional barriers affecting practice and recognise when to step in and proactively support individuals.
- Promote reflective thinking to drive more effective discussions so that reasoned and timely decision-making can take place.
- Demonstrate a high level of resilience within pressured environments, be attuned to the effect of high emotion and stress and respond in calm, measured and pragmatic ways.
- Reflect upon the confidence of practitioners and adapt management and leadership style according to the needs of individuals and the organisation.
- Protect practitioners from unnecessary bureaucratic or hierarchical pressures and have in place strategies to help manage the root causes of stress and anxiety. Continually energise and reaffirm commitment to support families and protect children.

Considerations of equality and diversity

Supervisors and supervisees should routinely consider conversations that emerge pertaining to equality and diversity. This should not be considered a topic that should only be addressed and considered if an issue becomes present. Indeed, supervisors and practitioners should reflect during case discussions on how issues of power, equality and diversity may present themselves. Consideration should be given to dynamics between the supervisor and the supervisee pertaining to individual characteristics for example, age, status, gender, ethnicity and lived and professional experiences. Neurodiversity and learning styles should be given considered to ensure supervision is effective.

Supervision in Buckinghamshire should be culturally competent, anti-racist and anti-oppressive. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) has developed range of [tools and resources](#) which are available to support supervisors and supervisees. Staff should spend time familiarising themselves with such concepts as they pertain to supervision.

Particular attention should be given to these considerations when the Supervisor and Supervisee are discussing and reflecting on the views, wishes and feelings of the children, young people and families receiving our services. The voices and lived experiences of our families, children and young people should form a critical part of the discussion and thought should be given in how best to elicit and amplify these views during the supervision process.

Types of Supervision:

To support good quality practice and personal development, a range of supervision opportunities may be utilised. These include:

Formal One to One Supervision

One to One supervision is at the heart of the professional development process and all staff should receive regular one to one supervision which focuses on their learning needs. As well as fulfilling elements of the management function of supervision, one to one supervision should also provide an opportunity for professional support and learning. One to one supervision allows managers to ensure adequate management oversight for children and should be used to augment reflective decisions regarding support for children provided by group supervision. Discussions regarding support for children in one to one supervision should also be recorded on a supervision record. It is a joint responsibility of the manager and staff to ensure effective supervision takes place.

Case Management Discussions (Ad Hoc Supervision)

Case management discussion is the dialogue that takes place between a supervisor and supervisee as the need arises. This is available to all staff but is not a substitute for formal supervision. The value of ad hoc supervision is that it is an important way of supporting staff, improving performance, keeping pace with change and ensuring that organisational requirements are met. Where management decisions are made and where there is a change in direction from the original plan this should be recorded. It is the manager's responsibility to record these decisions on the child's file as a management oversight. Staff are responsible for highlighting any changes in circumstances or increases in risk to a child and request such unscheduled case discussion.

Group Case Supervision

Group Supervision provides social workers with containment and the opportunity to critically reflect on their work with others. Group supervision is the key to reflective decision-making in teams and should promote collaborative working and shared learning. However, it should be complemented by one to one supervision as it does not allow for reflective discussion of all work on a frequent enough basis or sufficient attention to be paid to individual learning needs. Where group case supervision takes place, and there are any changes in circumstances, new information obtained, or where there is a change in direction from the

original plan this should be recorded. It is the manager's responsibility to record these decisions on the file. Staff are responsible for highlighting any changes in circumstances or increases in risk to a child.

Attendance at Case Conference

Where a case conference takes place, managers will quality assure documentation prior to conference taking place. The chair of the conference will explore the reports from various partners and outcomes from conference will be agreed and shared. The manager will have oversight in relation to outcomes from conference and record oversight in the child's file.

Attendance at Panels

Case holders will attend various panels, with their managers, where they will receive case oversight from Heads of Service, managers and other agencies.

Audit Activity

Managers will undertake case file audits of cases held by case holding staff in line with monthly case file allocations. This should be a collaborative process involving the auditor and the case holder. The audit and any recommendations made will be recorded on the child's file and any actions recommended be completed by the worker with oversight from their manager. Additional, service led audit activity will take place directed by the Heads of Service.

Practice Observations of Case Holders

Managers and leaders may undertake practice observations of case holding staff. Examples of practice observed may include a home visit, multi-agency meeting, case conference or direct work with a child/family.

Preparation for supervision

The key to successful supervision is effective preparation. Both the supervisor and supervisee should take responsibility for preparing in advance, with both parties clear about what will be discussed during the session.

For case supervisions, supervisees should be clear about key dates/information/tasks 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 and recorded in individual outlook calendars.

Recording of supervision

This guidance takes account of the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and in particular the need to ensure that any personal information held on an individual is accurate, adequate, relevant, not excessive, and available to the subject and kept no longer than is necessary. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and the supervisee to comply with these principles at all times.

It is very important that relevant records are kept of both one-to-one supervision discussions and ad-hoc discussions.

The supervisor is responsible for making sure that a record is made of personal supervision meetings using the personal supervision record (Appendix 2). Where this record contains information about service users, initials only should be used. The personal supervision notes will be emailed to the supervisee within 5 working days, and the supervisee will have 5 working days to respond to the contents. A confirmation email from the supervisee can be used to confirm that the supervision record is accurate in place of a signature. Where there is a disagreement about the content of the record a note should be made on the record of the different views and signed by both the supervisor and supervisee.

The supervisor will keep an electronic copy of the supervision record. If there is a change of supervisor within the service the files should be transferred to the new supervisor. If the supervisee leaves the organisation the supervision records should be stored by Human Resources for a period of at least 7 years.

The supervisee will keep a copy of the supervision record for their own use which they will need to store responsibly. They are not required to keep the copy and may destroy them when they no longer have a use for them.

What is included in the supervision record should be detailed enough should it need to be revisited but should also be concise and clear. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to record the supervision.

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

Cancellation of supervision

In the event of cancellation by either party then it should be re-booked to take place within 5 working days of the cancellation or within 5 days of returning to work (if cancellation was due to sickness/leave).

If the supervisor is absent from work for more than 2 weeks unplanned leave/sickness, then it is the responsibility of the supervisee to report to their supervisor's line manager for alternative supervision arrangements to be made.

Confidentiality of and access to supervision records

The case supervision record must be stored on the LCS supervision template for the relevant child/ young person.

The personal supervision must be stored in the relevant secure folder on sharepoint.

Whilst supervision offers a private and protected space to discuss cases and personal circumstances the supervision records cannot be entirely confidential. Supervision records are the property of Buckinghamshire Council and there will be occasions where supervisors will need to discuss the content of supervisions (both case and personal) with others, such as their own line manager. This should always be with the knowledge and agreement of the supervisee.

Supervisors and supervisees should be aware that any references to client personal data could be disclosed as part of a subject access request. Information about a child, young person or family should be recorded within LCS and not referenced on personal supervision records.

Elements of the case supervision record which relate to the social worker and the administration of their role would not need to be shared and therefore can be redacted. The information relating to the family would be shared although some information contained in the supervision record could be considered for redaction if:

- It would be likely to prejudice the carrying out of social work because of the risk of serious harm of the subject or someone else.
- In giving it could hinder the prevention or detection of a crime.
- It is legally privileged (advice/correspondence between team and solicitors). Information in adoption records. (this would need to be dealt with by the relevant adoption team under their regulations).
- It is someone else's information i.e. third-party information.

Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for arranging appropriate professional supervision for all of their staff in accordance with this policy.

Employees are responsible for ensuring they have access to and use personal and professional supervision supplemented by regular discussions with their supervisor in between sessions.

Resolution process

If there is disagreement between Supervisor and Supervisee which cannot be resolved between the two parties, the issues should be referred to the Supervisor's Line Manager and discussed as part of a three-way meeting. The aim of this three-way meeting is to achieve where possible resolution, but all parties should be aware of Buckinghamshire's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures where relevant.

Quality assurance of supervision

Supervision is embedded in the Quality Assurance Framework and social work audits include consideration of the effectiveness of supervision.

Social workers may be asked to provide feedback on supervision, as well as completing the Buckinghamshire Council Staff Survey each year. The findings from these surveys will be carefully considered by the department and any issues or concerns arising are addressed by Heads of Services, managers and social workers.

The engagement and involvement of front line staff in the development of the service is also achieved through the Champions Group which meet monthly. Lead Practitioners will ensure that any practice development themes from these groups, including supervision, will be taken forward with the Senior Management Team.

Appendix 1

Supervision Agreement

Buckinghamshire Council Supervision Agreement between:

Name of Staff Member:	
Name of Supervisor:	
Date of agreement:	
Staff Member has read the supervision policy:	
Supervisor has read the supervision policy:	

Frequency

We agree to ensure that supervision takes place within the appropriate timescales, as set out in the supervision policy.

Values

We support the values for partnership working in supervision.

The Supervision Partnership will:

- Be a confidential (subject to safety of service users and staff)
- Be a continuous process of learning and development
- Be a two-way process
- Be mutually respectful
- Be focused
- Be planned and in a private space
- Deal with situations clearly and provide clarity
- Anticipate, acknowledge, discuss and manage the emotional impact of the work
- Recognise good performance and achievements
- Support professional development

Preparation

We both agree to be prepared for supervision.

Supervisee:

I will come prepared for supervision, knowing key dates and will have given consideration to the cases for discussion prior to supervision using the preparation for case supervision form.

Supervisor:

I will consider LCS and performance reports and examine cases in more detail prior to supervision where it is felt it will support the supervision process.

The supervision sessions will be booked by the supervisor.

Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice

We will ensure that supervision is based on anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory principles and should be sensitive to race, gender, disability, impairment, age, religion and sexuality.

Record keeping

We will ensure that supervisions are recorded in line with Buckinghamshire Council's supervision policy.

Disagreements

If we cannot agree on an item, then the disagreement will be formally recorded within supervision. We acknowledge that either party have the right to refer to the next tier of management if we have been unable to resolve the issue amongst ourselves.

Final statement

It is our responsibility to ensure that we are familiar with the policy and understand what we can expect from each other. We agree that supervision will be given and received in accordance with Buckinghamshire Council's Supervision Policy wherein more details regarding supervision can be located.

Signature of supervisee:

Date:

Signature of supervisor:

Date:

Appendix 2

Personal and professional supervision

Name of Staff Member:	
Name of Supervisor:	
Date of Supervision:	

<p>Agenda</p> <p>Provide the opportunity for supervisee to contribute.</p> <p>Both supervisor and supervisee come with their agenda items.</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical and mental health• Sleep• Feelings• Stress• Work life balance• Self-care <p>The discussions should include any impact and barriers around protected factors -i.e., race / disability discrimination.</p> <p>Support identified / has a Wellness action plan been considered?</p>	
<p>Annual leave / sickness</p> <p>It is a good idea to follow on from above to discuss and address how annual leave is being taken and any issues around sick leave.</p> <p>It is also an opportunity to acknowledge and</p>	

<p>capture wellness.</p>	
<p>Current allocations discussion</p> <p>Discuss high risk / complex / court work / safeguarding both from the point of view of supervisee but also supervisor.</p> <p>Do you need to bring anyone else in on the discussion (Joint supervision discussions with FSW or other services)</p> <p>Any that require decisions and direction and support?</p> <p>Are there any allocations that are keeping you up at night, or wake you from sleep?</p> <p>Note any allocations that the person has had long term. What is the impact of this, is there a plan to avoid any negative impact on supervisee?</p> <p>Address and highlight any emotional impact of the work.</p> <p>May discuss an allocation where there has been a positive outcome or learning moments.</p> <p>If staff is a supervisor, then an update on the staff / student they supervise</p>	
<p>Reflective practice discussions (linked to above)</p> <p>Select as appropriate to review through a reflective lens e.g. Poverty / Anti-racist practice / Trauma informed or Strengths based practice.</p> <p>Might select a social grace – Race, Disability, Gender, Sexuality</p> <p>Values & Ethics</p>	
<p>Personal / Team and organisational discussions</p> <p>This is an opportunity for supervisor to check in if socio-political context is having any impact on supervisee. As an example – The murder of George Floyd.</p> <p>An opportunity to take feedback on any positive</p>	

<p>team initiatives or concerns.</p> <p>Listen to the impact of any organisational discussions to take back up to senior management.</p> <p>Supervisor to share any key organisational priorities.</p>	
<p>Professional development discussions – linked to C4P</p> <p>Learning and development that supervisee has accessed – key learning.</p> <p>Future interests and areas of development / mandatory training required to fulfil duties of role.</p> <p>Career progression discussions - strengths / satisfactions and areas of growth / barriers.</p> <p>Think what opportunities the supervisee can be connected to in order to facilitate their aspiration for progression. What spaces can they be invited to / shadow / what is in your immediate gift as their line manager</p>	
<p>Feedback from supervisor (Positive and Constructive)</p> <p>You might agree different themes, for example to give feedback on recording, assessments, legal literacy, strengths-based practice, best practice, team player, Safeguarding meeting, anti-racist practice.</p> <p>Could relate to PCF's, KSS, Social Work England standards (SWEPS) or other relevant standards.</p> <p>Useful to agree feedback model (E.g., Corbs)</p> <p>Supervisee should have a clear understanding from you on how you experience their performance, so that there are no surprises if there are performance related concerns.</p> <p>Record rewards and recognition discussions and positive feedback from you and others.</p> <p>Feedback from people with lived experience and</p>	

that the social worker is working with.	
<p>Feedback from supervisee</p> <p>Ensuring feedback is reciprocal.</p> <p>Could ask for feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision • Relationship • Support • Strengths • Anything you could be doing better or differently. 	
<p>Any other business</p>	
<p>Actions agreed</p>	
<p>Date of Next Supervision</p>	

<p>Staff Member Signature:</p>	<p>Supervisors Signature:</p>
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------