



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Supervision Policy

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Executive Summary

Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services is committed to ensuring all practitioners and managers understand the value of regular supervision in positively contributing to practice.

Supervision is an important part of working with children, young people and families as it enables senior practitioners and managers to maintain effective oversight of practice and decision-making. It acts as a valuable tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses in practitioners' and teams' knowledge and skills and promotes individual, professional and organisational development.

The Supervision Standards (*see Appendix A*) set out the requirements of supervision for practitioners across Children's Social Care and Early Help. The responsibility for supervision rests with supervisors *and* supervisees. If supervision is not taking place in line with the Supervision Agreement, the supervisor and supervisee have joint responsibility for raising this in with one another in the first instance.

Supervision may take the form of individual personal and case, joint case, or group supervision and should be conducted in line with the standards, to ensure its effectiveness. The supervisory process will be subject to a robust quality assurance process, to ensure that its effectiveness is clearly evidenced.

Supervision is recognised as "the cornerstone of good social work practice" (Laming, 2003), therefore Wokingham Borough Council aims to use it as a tool to improve practice – and subsequently improve the lives of the children, young people and families that it supports.

Any questions or concerns about the contents of this policy should be raised with the Quality Assurance and Policy Team via email at: ImpactAndInspectionTeam@wokingham.gov.uk.

Policy Context

This policy is underpinned by national legislation and guidance:

- *Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners (Section 9)*
- *Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practice Supervisors*
- *Knowledge and Skills Statement for Practice Leaders*

It should be read in conjunction with other local procedures:

- *Wokingham's Practice Model for Children's Services*
- *Wokingham Borough Council Signs of Safety Practitioner's Guide*
- *Wokingham Borough Council Supervision Handbook*
- *Wokingham Borough Council Supervision Toolkit*

This policy applies to all Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services staff working in Children's Social Care, Early Help and the Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Team.

1. Introduction

Supervision plays a key role in supporting a challenging, but flourishing social care environment. It benefits staff by helping them feel supported and valued; improves workforce stability and development; and promotes better outcomes for children, young people and families by improving practice. If used correctly, supervision is mutually beneficial for individual practitioners, the organisation and service users – and thus should be taken seriously.

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to facilitating and supporting effective supervision for all Children's Services practitioners. However, it is the joint responsibility of managers, supervisors and practitioners to ensure that supervision meets the requirements set out in this policy.

The expectation is that:

- All practitioners receive supervision which is appropriate to their needs and the needs of the organisation.
- All practitioners and their managers familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy and use it to inform supervision and their day-to-day practice.
- All new practitioners within Children's Services will be made aware of this policy and the requirement to read it, as part of their induction.

This policy aims to:

- Outline how supervision will be carried out across Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services.
- Set the expected standard for supervision practice across Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services (see ***Appendix A: Supervision Standards***).

- Enable a standards-based approach to evaluating the quality of practice through supervision.

2. WHAT is Supervision?

“Supervision is the cornerstone of good social work practice” (Laming, 2003)

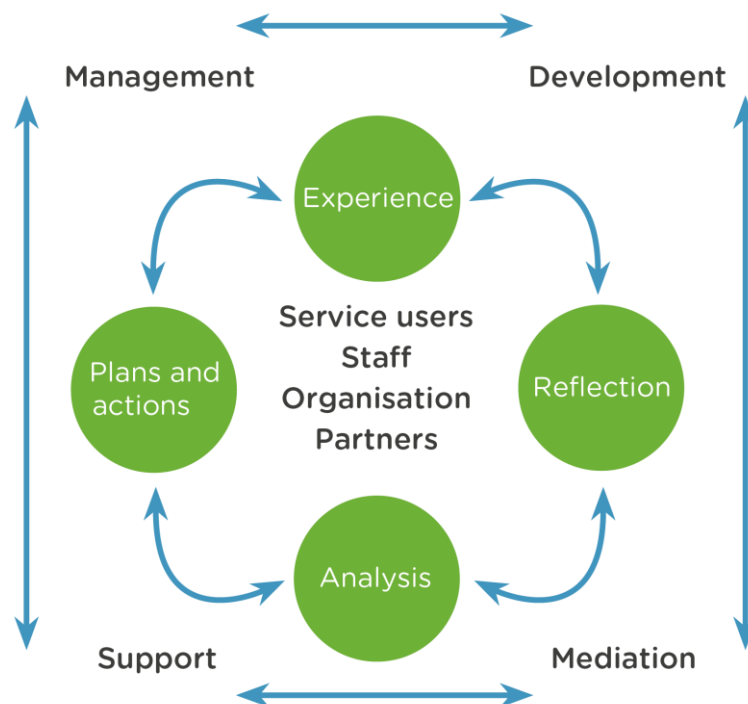
Supervision is a key tool which supports personal, professional and organisational development by providing management oversight of practice on an individual and group basis – it can be formal or informal.

It is an outcomes-focused approach which promotes accountability and reflection, while aiming to improve the quality of individual, group or team practice by supporting actions or goals towards achieving agreed objectives and outcomes.

Ultimately, effective supervision helps to drive improvements, reinforce best practice across Children’s Social Care and support improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

Wokingham Borough Council has adopted the 4x4x4 model of supervision (Morrison, 2005), which is made up of three elements:

- 4 Functions of supervision: Management, Development, Mediation, Support
- 4 Stakeholders in the supervisory process: Service Users, Staff, Organisation, Partners
- 4 Elements of the supervisory cycle: Experience, Reflection, Analysis, Plans and Actions



2.1. Formal Supervision

Formal supervision takes the form of a planned session specifically dedicated to the supervisory process. It can take place on an individual or group basis.

2.1.1. Individual Supervision

Individual supervision involves a one-to-one meeting between the supervisor and supervisee. Supervision must provide the opportunity for both parties to make a positive contribution and raise matters of importance to them. An agenda should be agreed and prioritised at the start of the meeting which includes discussion points identified by both the supervisee and the supervisor.

Individual supervision should include personal and case supervision. Personal supervision has a focus supporting supervisees to fulfil their role, including discussion around wellbeing and training and development needs. Case supervision involves discussion around specific casework that the supervisee has been allocated, to ensure adequate management oversight of casework across the Council.

Where practitioners are co-working on a case, joint case supervision should be undertaken. This should follow the same format and standards as for individual case supervision.

Supervision should consist of:

- **Management:** oversight and joint accountability for the day-to-day work of qualified practitioners and the quality of service. This includes decision-making regarding individual children, along with discussion on resources and caseloads, targets and overall performance.
- **Development:** recognising individual achievements and learning needs, ensuring that staff have the relevant skills, knowledge and attributes to manage their work. This includes anticipating future changes in the service, then identifying and providing developmental opportunities to respond to these.
- **Mediation:** recognising that the supervisee may have a number of roles, relationships and partnerships, within and outside the organisation, including family members, team colleagues and professional networks; exploration of the dynamics involved can provide a holistic consideration of practice and professional/personal development.
- **Support:** reviewing and reflecting on practice with a focus on the purpose, pace and impact of work with children and families. Constructive feedback and observation of practice forms part of the learning process for workers and supervisors.

2.1.2. Group Supervision

The Signs of Safety group supervision process adopted by Wokingham Borough Council specifically supports the assessment and review of individual cases. It can maximise access to support, knowledge and skills – and promotes peer-to-peer learning. Group supervision may be particularly helpful for:

- 'Stuck' cases.
- Very complex cases.
- Cases where there is a lot of uncertainty around risk.
- Cases where there is disagreement about risk.

The process is not used as a decision-making process, but is designed to help teams effectively analyse the information presented, draw conclusions and progress cases through group learning and reflection which informs the actions taken in respect of individual cases. Group supervision must not replace established professional discussions, such as Strategy Meetings.

The Signs of Safety group supervision process aims to:

- Build a shared, structured, collective team/agency culture and process for thinking through cases using the Signs of Safety approach.
- Build a shared sense of carrying risk within the whole team, which dissolves many practitioners' sense of isolation and the feeling that 'if this goes wrong it is my fault'.
- Enable child protection professionals to explore colleagues' cases as a group and offer alternative perspectives.
- Develop a shared practice of bringing a questioning approach to casework, rather than trying to arrive at answers.

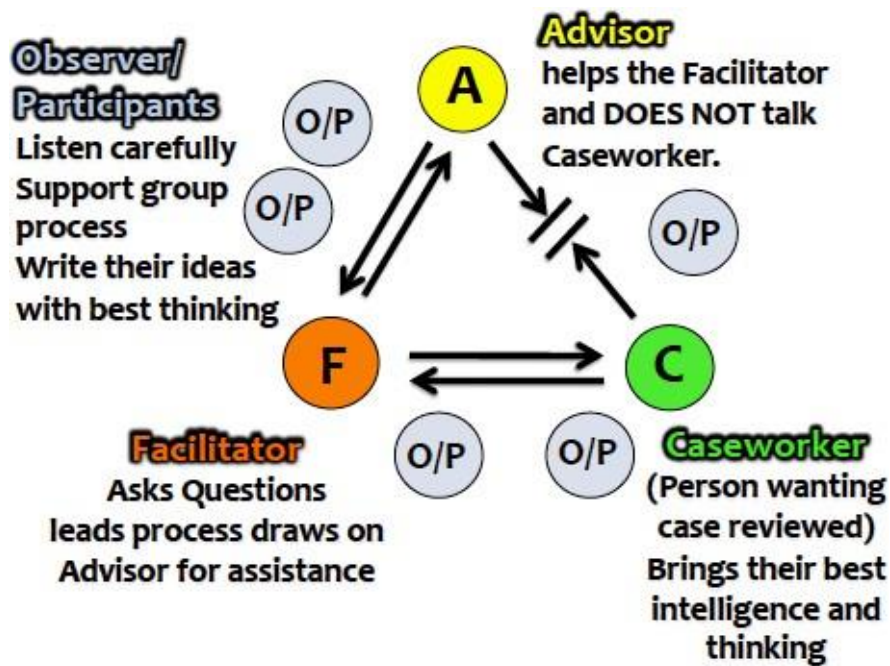
The process is designed for groups of 4-10 people, facilitated by a trained facilitator who is assisted by an advisor. The membership and roles of group supervision are:

Facilitator – asks questions, leads the process and draws on the Advisor for assistance. Speaks directly to the Caseworker and asks Observer/Participants to think of their best questions, in order to share them with the Caseworker.

Advisor – helps the Facilitator and does not talk to the Caseworker.

Caseworker – person wanting their case reviewed. Brings their best intelligence and thinking, along with their mapping to date and details about the child's network (see *below*).

Observer/Participants – listen carefully, support the group process and write their ideas with best thinking.



Practitioners are responsible for relaying ideas and actions generated by the group for consideration during their individual supervision.

See [Wokingham Borough Council Signs of Safety Practitioner's Guide](#) for more information on the group supervision process.

2.2. Informal Supervision

Informal supervision, or management oversight, involves the supervisee having ad-hoc discussions with their supervisor outside of formal, planned supervision. Given the pace of work, changes in circumstances and frequency of formal arrangements, informal supervision is a normal and acceptable part of the supervisor/supervisee relationship. However, informal supervision and 'corridor conversations' *must not* be relied upon as a substitute for formal arrangements (Laming, 2003).

The following points should be kept in mind when considering informal supervision:

- Any significant decisions made in relation to the case must be clearly recorded on MOSAIC. The rationale for management endorsement of a decision must be set out in sufficient detail to ensure transparency and accountability. Management oversight entries on MOSAIC must be clear and specific in order to evidence the decision-making process outside of formal supervision and demonstrate that standards of intervention are met.
- Where supervisors and supervisees work closely together, this does not negate the need for regular and formal individual supervision – which remains important.

3. WHEN should supervision take place?

The frequency of formal individual supervision (including for agency, temporary and part-time staff) should be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee(s), but as a minimum should take place monthly, with the following exceptions:

- Newly Qualified Social Workers (ASYE) should have supervision at least weekly for the first 6 weeks and at least fortnightly for the first 6 months. After the first 6 months, supervision should take place at least monthly.
- Practitioners in their probationary period (i.e. first 6 months of service at Wokingham Borough Council) should have supervision fortnightly.
- Where any circumstances apply to the practitioner which means they may require more frequent supervision (e.g. difficult piece of work, level of risk associated with work, personal difficulties, performance issues, or stress), the frequency of sessions should be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee.

The frequency of supervision should be confirmed in line with the guidance above and recorded within the Supervision Agreement (*see Section 5*).

Where individual supervision does not take place in accordance with the above guidance, this should be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee and clearly recorded within the Supervision Agreement.

Individual supervision sessions should normally last a minimum of 1.5 hours, although this may be shorter for part-time staff. The balance of content within sessions will vary, but each child or young person who the practitioner works with must be discussed in supervision on a regular basis, in line with the frequency outlined in the Supervision Standards (*see Appendix A: Supervision Standards*).

Group supervision should be undertaken as and when required, therefore its frequency will vary.

4. HOW do we make supervision effective?

To be effective, supervision must be regular, planned and conducted in a private space where those involved will not be disturbed. Supervision can be undertaken face-to-face or virtually, but must consist of both case and personal supervision. The supervisory process is two-way, therefore the supervisor and the supervisee must both bring items for discussion and have read relevant materials, reports and case records in advance.

As a general rule, each supervisor should have no more than 4-6 supervisees, to ensure the quality of supervision is retained.

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Supervision must act as a safe space for reflection and critical analysis of practice, where practitioners can take responsibility for the quality of their own work, build confidence around their decision-making and identify areas for development.

A supportive, respectful relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee is a core condition of effective supervision. The supervisor and the supervisee should work together to form a set of clear, achievable and outcomes-focused aims and objectives, including a plan of how they will be achieved.

It is the expectation that formal supervision should always be carried out by the same supervisor for individual practitioners to ensure a good working relationship based on trust, openness and honesty is established.

Where a supervisor is absent for a period longer than 3 weeks, the supervisor's line manager must ensure effective alternative arrangements are put in place for their supervisees. This includes access to advice and the use of group supervision.

5. Supervision Agreements

A Supervision Agreement is a co-produced document which sets out how supervision will be conducted, including the rights and expectations of the supervisor and supervisee. This helps to create a safe, secure and effective supervision setting.

All staff must have a current written individual Supervision Agreement which, as a minimum, should be reviewed annually.

The contents of individual Supervision Agreements may vary, as practitioners have different needs. Development of the Supervision Agreement should begin during the first supervision session and it should be completed, agreed and signed within 1 month of the supervision relationship commencing. However, a Supervision Agreement is a working document which should be updated on an ongoing basis to meet the changing needs of the supervisee.

6. Recording Supervision

Supervisors are responsible for completing a clear record of each formal individual supervision, which should be stored on the supervisee's staff file index. Responsibility for recording group supervision should be agreed, but the final record must be signed-off by the Facilitator.

Each individual staff file index will contain:

- Emergency contact details
- Supervision Agreement
- Supervision records

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- Performance appraisals and personal development plan
- Learning and development and performance-related records
- Records of reflective practice/observations/feedback
- Complaints
- Absence/sickness management
- Health and safety assessment
- Relevant correspondence

Supervisors must ensure that:

- Casework decisions and agreed actions are recorded separately, including on the child(ren)'s file in MOSAIC using the standard template.
- The record of supervision is signed by the supervisor and supervisee and placed in the supervisee's staff file index following each supervision. A copy should be emailed to the practitioner.
- Case files include regular evidence of management oversight (i.e. they have been read, reviewed and signed) in between case supervision sessions.
- For group supervision, responsibility for recording the session on the child(ren)'s file in MOSAIC, using the group supervision form, is agreed. The final version of the record must be signed-off by the Facilitator.

7. Records Management

Where a child or young person has been the subject of an individual or group supervision, a copy of the record of supervision must be recorded on their file on MOSAIC.

Records of personal supervision should be stored electronically on the supervisee's staff file index.

All records belong to Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services, rather than individual practitioners. Access to supervision records is generally limited to supervisors and supervisees (*see Section 9: Confidentiality and Access*) and all records must be stored securely to prevent unauthorised access. Records must therefore be stored in password protected electronic files. Older, paper-based records should be stored in locked cabinets.

The retention and destruction of supervision records must comply with the requirements of Wokingham Borough Council's retention schedule and [Management of Sensitive Personal Data Policy](#).

8. Quality Assurance

To ensure its effectiveness, supervision will be subject to a robust quality assurance process which will check that the expected standards of supervision are being adhered to. The quality assurance process will involve:

Supervision Observation – supervision should be observed by the supervisor's manager at least annually, for all or part of the session. Observation should be discussed and recorded during the supervisor's individual personal supervision.

Practice Observation – practice should be observed by supervisors at least annually for all case-holding practitioners (with the exception of ASYE practitioners, for whom practice observation is more regular), facilitated by joint visits/meetings. Practice observations should be used as a development opportunity and be discussed and recorded during supervision. In addition, practice observation should take place at least once during the first six months of employment.

Practice Weeks – Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services holds bi-annual Practice Weeks, which involve practice observation and sharing wider learning around best practice across the Service.

Supervision Audits – audits of personal supervision records should be undertaken on an annual basis by relevant managers. Records of supervision audits should be discussed with the supervisor and placed on the supervisor's file. Audits of case supervision will be arranged as part of the annual Quality Assurance forward plan and communicated with supervisors.

9. Confidentiality and Access

Supervision is a private process, but is not confidential. Where a supervisor needs to discuss the content of supervision with others, the supervisee should be made aware of this.

Information that is shared in relation to supervision should only be shared with a limited number of people, on a 'need to know' basis. It is the expectation that any information shared is treated with discretion.

Where personal matters relating to the individual practitioner are recorded in the supervision record, this information is protected under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Where necessary, access will be granted to others, such as:

- Senior Managers (for case progression and quality assurance purposes).
- Performance staff (for audit and quality assurance purposes).
- The Family Proceedings Court (where decisions have been made in supervision).

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- Inspectors (e.g. Ofsted or commissioned auditors).
- Investigating officers (e.g. for disciplinary purposes).

The supervisee should be made aware when others are required to access the supervision record, except for in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where there are time or legal constraints).

For group supervision, participants should understand the need for confidentiality and this should always be discussed at the start of the session, but there is no requirement for this to be recorded. Where group supervision involves the participation of multi-agency partners, consideration should be given to gaining consent from families.

10. Disputes and Complaints

In the first instance, supervisees should discuss any complaints or dissatisfaction with their supervisor and attempt to reach a resolution within the normal supervision process. To aid this process, feedback should be requested by the supervisor for each supervision session.

Where a complaint or dispute arises which cannot be resolved by discussion between the supervisor and the supervisee, it should be brought to the attention of the supervisor's manager. This process should also be followed where the supervisee and/or supervisor feel that the terms of the Supervision Agreement are not being met.

The Supervision Agreement should clearly indicate the named manager that should be contacted in such circumstances.

Appendix A: Supervision Standards

The following supervision standards apply to all practitioners and practice supervisors working in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services:

GENERAL

1. Practice supervisors will attend mandatory training and continuously develop their supervisory practice to ensure they are confident and competent in the delivery of supervision and the application of the supervision policy.
2. As a general rule, Supervisors will have no more than 4-6 supervisees at any one time.
3. Supervision will be planned in advance and will take place according to the agreed frequency and sufficient time will be allowed to enable quality supervision to take place, in line with the *Frequency and Duration of Personal Supervision* and *Frequency of Case Supervision* Standards below.
4. The Individual Supervision Agreement will be completed, agreed and signed within **1 month** of the supervision relationship commencing. This will be used within supervision and subsequently developed and reviewed.
5. Supervision will be reflective, supportive and developmental, and will provide critical and constructive challenge.
6. Supervisees and supervisors are required to prepare for supervision, ensuring actions agreed at previous supervisions have been completed and areas for discussion are identified in advance.
7. Supervision should be seen to actively progress children's care plans.

RECORDING

8. All supervision will be recorded within a maximum of **5 days** after the supervision session.
9. Names or personal details of clients will not be recorded within personal supervision notes. The client's MOSAIC ID should be used in place of any personal details.
10. Any conduct or practice development actions should be recorded, together with proposed activities to support the supervisee, to meet the required practice or professional standard.
11. Each child discussed in supervision will have a record of this supervision entered into the MOSAIC case file for that child.

SUPERVISOR ABSENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPERVISION

12. In the event of a supervisor absence, which would result in the agreed frequency not been adhered to, the line managers will make alternative arrangements.
13. If a supervisor is absent from work for a long period (i.e. more than 3 weeks) the line manager should ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the supervision of the affected staff and their work. This may include access to advice and the use of group supervision processes.
14. In the event that supervision does not take place within 3 weeks of the due date, the supervisee is responsible for raising it with their supervisor.
15. If supervisees do not receive personal or case supervision at the agreed frequency they have the responsibility to raise this with their supervisor in the first instance. If the situation is not rectified they **must** escalate this to their supervisor's line manager.

FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF PERSONAL SUPERVISION

16. All Social Care, Early Help and Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Team practitioners will receive personal supervision on a **monthly** basis, with the following exceptions:
 - **Newly Qualified Social Workers** undertaking their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) should have supervision at least weekly for the first 6 weeks, and at least fortnightly for the following 6 months. Thereafter it should be at least monthly. These sessions should last a minimum of one hour.
 - If the employee is in their **probationary period** (usually the **first 6 months of service**) supervision should take place fortnightly. These may be quite short supervision sessions but they will enable the supervisor to assess the employee's suitability for the role and ensure an effective relationship is formed in the early days of employment.
 - **Agency and temporary staff** (who do not usually have a probationary period) should have supervision fortnightly during their **first 3 months of service**. These may be quite short supervision sessions but they will enable the supervisor to assess the employee's suitability for the role and ensure an effective relationship is formed in the early days of employment.
 - Any particular circumstances that apply to the employee or particular pieces of work which means they may require more frequent supervision, which may become apparent through risk assessments and action plans (e.g. complexity and difficulty, the level of risk associated with the work, personal difficulties, performance issues or levels of stress).

17. **Part-time** staff should be supervised **monthly**, however, the session will usually be shorter in duration than for a full-time member of staff.
18. **Agency and temporary staff** should receive supervision on the same basis as permanent staff, *excluding their first 3 months of service (outlined in 16 above)*.
19. Any variation from the recommended frequency detailed above should be by agreement between the supervisor and supervisee and clearly recorded (with reasoning) as an amendment to the Supervision Agreement – this should include details of review arrangements. However, in all cases supervision should still take place in line with Standards 16-18.
20. Individual supervision sessions will vary in length, but should normally last a **minimum of 1.5 hours** when conducted monthly. The balance of content within these will vary from session to session.

FREQUENCY OF CASE SUPERVISION

*This guidance provides the **minimum** frequency on which each type of case must be the subject of recorded case work supervision between the allocated worker and their supervisor. **Given the differing levels of complexity of cases, risk and the experience of supervisees, managers will need to make judgements on whether certain cases require a higher level/frequency of supervision and oversight.***

Supervisees and supervisors can request that any case is considered at supervision on a more frequent basis if they have concerns, such as: high level of risk, increase in activity/complexity, lack of progress, or difficulties in implementing the plan.

21. **All cases** must be supervised **within a month** of being allocated; this includes allocation to a new worker. *The only exception to this is where a case has been referred to a team (e.g. Duty, Triage and Assessment) but is closed or transferred to another team within a month, therefore case supervision may not always happen while the case is allocated within the initial team.*
22. **Child Protection** – all cases where children are the subject of a child protection plan will be supervised on at least a **bi-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight in between. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.
23. **Children in Care** - cases will be supervised on at least a **bi-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight on alternate months. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.

24. **Children in Need** - cases will be supervised on at least a **three-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight on alternate months. In addition, there should be recorded management oversight at decision-making and review points, to include the rationale for any decision/recommendation. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.
25. **Early Help** – cases will be supervised on at least a **bi-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight on alternate months. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.
26. **Care Leavers** - cases will be supervised on at least a **three-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight on alternate months. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.
27. **Supervising Social Workers** – cases will be supervised on at least a **bi-monthly basis**, with recorded management oversight on alternate months. In the event that the manager's review of the case identifies the need for more frequent supervision, the case will be supervised as necessary.
28. **Joint Supervision** – cases where practitioners are co-working on a case will be supervised on the same frequency as individual case supervision (*set out above*).