

Managers Practice Standards

SCOPE

The Managers Practice Standards are designed to improve consistency of practice across the service, and to improve the quality of service provided to the children, young people and their families in Dudley.

This document describes the standards required of managers regarding leadership, oversight, and supervision. It has been developed using the Social Work England Professional Standards to reflect the standards necessary for safe and effective practice, and to make clear the expectations of what managers must know, understand, and be able to do; and the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practice Supervisors (Department for Education, 2018).

Social Work England Professional Standards

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/>

Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practice Supervisors

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work>

Introduction

The standards and practice expectations contained within this document should be viewed as part of an approach which ensures that services are delivered to agreed quality standards. They do not stand alone but are an integral part of service policies, procedures, and operational requirements.

There are three key drivers in any organisation for determining the way a service is delivered. These are having agreed standards, procedures, and policies.

- **Standards:** these are the rules that describe the (minimum) service or practice that can be expected by the service user. Most standards are legally set through government guidance and legislation or are based on evidence-based research. They are mandatory;
- **Procedures:** These are the steps that describe the actions needed to deliver that service or practice – the what, how, when, where and who? They are mandatory;
- **Policies:** These provide the strategic context for shaping the standards and procedures, and answer the question of why the service is delivered in a particular

way, and why the service is important. The delivery of the policy requirements, as set out by Dudley Council, is the responsibility of all staff.

The Managers Practice Standards should be read in conjunction with the Dudley Children's Services Procedures Manual and the Safeguarding Procedures relevant to the service.

Dudley's Children's Services Procedures Manual

<https://www.dudleycpp.org.uk/policies-procedures>

Safeguarding Procedures

<https://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/safeguarding/>

Management of Practice - Why this is important

The Knowledge and Skills Statement (2018) and the Professionals Capabilities Framework (2018) set out the importance of effective leadership being central to driving change and improvement to the quality and effectiveness of services provided. The decisions and actions made by managers and practitioners will have a profound impact on the lives of children and families for whom they have a responsibility. They therefore must be undertaken with the greatest care and diligence to ensure the best possible outcomes for those children and their families.

Managers across the service, including senior managers and team managers, have overall responsibility for ensuring that a good quality service is provided which includes the following:

- Providing clear direction and setting priorities in the service;
- Ensuring a professional response from the initial referral to the closure of the case;
- Overseeing good quality decisions about the type of response or investigation to be undertaken, and ensuring the skills, competences and capacity are in place for a quality service;
- Ensuring that the child or young person's voice is heard and fully considered when implementing the plan;
- Scrutinising practice to ensure good quality recording, analysis of need, and report writing;
- Providing good quality supervision, appraisals, and well organised staff and team meetings, to develop a culture of learning and improvement where staff are sufficiently stretched and mentored to meet their aspirations;
- Making sure staff work within a supportive team culture, with good communications, and routine commitment to rigorous professional practice; and;
- Demonstrating effective multi-agency collaboration and working.

To provide a quality service, practitioners need to know what their managers expect of them, and managers need to be assured that work has been carried out to an acceptable standard, in line with the Social Work England Professional Standards and Dudley's Children's Services Practice Standards for Social Workers.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that there are systems in place to monitor and review the performance of staff and provide protection, support, and professional and personal development for practitioners. This is to enable them to deliver the best possible service, as well as comply with service procedures and legal requirements. Consistent scrutiny of practice makes explicit the service's expectations of each practitioner and enables the manager to provide evidenced feedback about good or acceptable practice, or to address unacceptable performance, where identified.

These Managers Practice Standards are intended to assist managers in providing and evidencing consistent scrutiny, support and supervision, and ensuring defensible decision-making. It will also help practitioners understand better what the manager can reasonably expect from them when evidencing their child care practice through accurate and up to date records.

The Managers Practice Standards

All managers will ensure that all managerial responsibilities for children and young people for whom the Local Authority has a responsibility, will be carried out in line with the standards set out in this document.

Standard 1 - Management Oversight

All children and young people for whom the Local Authority has a responsibility will have evidence in their records of managers' scrutiny of practice to make sure that decisions are made in the best interests of the child or young person, and are properly recorded.

Management oversight and scrutiny of practice will be evidenced through case file audit; feedback mechanisms, including the views of children and families; supervision; and practice observations. It is important that observation of practice is a constructive learning activity for practitioners.

Managers will ensure all recording and reports are of good quality and are completed in a timely manner.

Managers will ensure that thorough enquiries are undertaken that produce good quality assessments and analysis of needs, leading to well-argued and evidenced recommendations for actions to be taken.

Managers will ensure any management decision outside of supervision that will shape the actions and interventions of a practitioner, are recorded by the manager responsible.

The service has identified a number of key requirements to assure ourselves that children and young people are kept safe and receive a quality service. These include the requirement for an allocated Social Worker, that children's needs are assessed, and they each have a plan which meets those needs, amongst other things.

Standard 2 - Supervision

‘Professional supervision is central to effective social work... it is vital for practitioners’ wellbeing, professional development, and management oversight... supervision helps to achieve the best possible outcomes for children’ (Supervision and Effective Social Work Practice, Ofsted, October 2018).

Supervision is a planned, accountable, two-way process which should support, motivate, and ensure all practitioners develop good practice. It involves talking through the impact work has upon practitioners personally, as well as exploring decision-making. It is integral to ensuring that casework is of high quality and effective, and achieves the best possible outcomes for children and families.

The purpose of supervision is to offer a managerial, representative, supportive, and developmental element to practice.

The management element will address:

- Overall management of the quality of practice;
- Overall management of workload and priorities of resources;
- Provision of a safe environment in which to work;
- Professional discussion of performance against individual and team objectives; and
- The role of supervision in ensuring that Council policies are communicated and well understood.

The representative element will address:

- Advocacy between the practitioner, the team, senior management, and any outside agencies; and;
- The transfer of relevant information between the practitioners, the team, senior management, and any outside agencies.

The supportive element will address:

- Support for the practitioner as a professional and as an individual person in her/his own right, including acknowledgement of issues of diversity;
- Support for well-being at work;
- Support to ensure practitioners are safe within their work environment, in line with their duty of care to staff.

The developmental element will address:

- Ensuring that the practitioner has induction training;
- Identifying individual strengths;
- Identifying areas for development to carry out the job to the required standard and objectives;
- Identifying development opportunities;
- Planning how development needs could be met;

- Evaluating development opportunities taken.

Effective supervision is:

- **Regular and scheduled:** both parties need an opportunity to prepare for supervision;
- **Documented:** there needs to be a clear audit trail and record of supervision including actions required from the supervision in a SMART format;
- **Supportive:** issues such as workload, stress, safety in dangerous situations and the emotional effect of difficult cases must be addressed;
- **Probing and challenging:** cases must be discussed in detail to ensure all issues have been covered;
- **Non-adversarial:** a blame culture will lead to defensive behaviour and the cover up of omissions; and
- **Skilled:** line managers need to be fully trained in supervision skills.

Supervision Agreements and Appraisals

Managers will ensure all staff will have Supervision Agreements and Annual Appraisals in place that are being acted upon and progressed within agreed timescales (see Supervision Policy and Supervision Agreement Template (Appendix A).

Frequency of Supervision

Formal supervision for practitioners, which includes case discussion, professional development and personal support, will be held minimally monthly. The frequency of supervision sessions will also be determined by the level of experience and the complexity of the work being undertaken.

Formal supervision for newly qualified practitioners (practising for less than one year) will be undertaken every two weeks for the first six months, and monthly thereafter if agreed.

Formal supervision for practitioners who have undertaken a major change of role in transferring to a different team, and practitioners returning to work following a career break or other long-term absence, will be undertaken every two weeks for an agreed period and monthly thereafter.

Summary of frequency of supervision	
Newly qualified social workers.	Every two weeks for the first six months, and monthly thereafter if agreed.

Social workers returning to work or who have had a major role change.	Every two weeks for an agreed period, then monthly.
Social workers with more than twelve months experience.	Minimally monthly and as required determined by the supervisor.

The Supervision Record

The Supervision Record is a key management tool for child care planning and case records. It must be used in every supervision session relating to that child and must include consideration of the following:

- The purpose of allocation, expectations of the practitioner's intervention – including the purpose of home visits; (*Laming 2003 Rec 53*);
- Guidance as to the course of action required if expectations cannot be met, and contingency plans in the event of no access visits; (*Laming 2003 rec34*);
- Any potential risk to the practitioner;
- Any training or support needs he / she may have to complete the agreed actions to an acceptable standard;
- The review of progress, ensuring the approach to practice is proportionate to identified risk and need, adjusting the Social Work Plan accordingly; (*KSS 6, DfE 2018*).

There must be a record of the discussion completed for each child at every supervision session concerning this child. It must be located on the child's file within **two working days**.

Where non-case holders (e.g. senior managers) discuss individual cases and make decisions, this must be recorded on the child's file within **one working day**.

The Team Manager must retain a copy of personal supervision for the practitioner's supervision file.

Standard 3 - Managing Performance

Managers are expected to familiarise themselves and utilise the performance data available to them to recognise poor performance and drive improvement in individuals and teams. Managers should be aware of the strengths of their teams in relation to their collective performance and have action plans in place to drive performance of their teams, where poor performance is evident. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that performance expectations are well understood by all members of their team.

Effective supervision and support, and holding practitioners to account, can substantially reduce the risk of poor or under-performance by practitioners. Where poor or under-

performance by the practitioner is identified, managers must support the practitioner in the first instance by developing an informal individual action plan and discussing this with the practitioner. Managers should also seek support and guidance from their own line managers and their Human Resources (HR) service. It is essential that managers follow HR guidance around informal support and formal processes to manager performance of their teams.

Managers will have responsibility for contributing to performance reporting to senior managers in line with the Directorate Performance Scorecard. The expectation will be to evidence how their teams are achieving good performance and where there is poor performance, what actions are being taken by the manager to address these.

Standard 4 – Service Culture and Team Development

All staff groups work best when there is a culture of mutual support, strong leadership, good communication, and clarity in defining and acting on shared understandings of professional responsibilities, standards and expectations.

All managers will lead their staff group and ensure that staff work in a professional environment that is conducive to delivering good professional practice. This includes having a workforce culture that brings **support, constructive challenge, and professional rigour** to daily practice. In addition to this, staff need support from their managers that demonstrate commitment to their professional development, that provides the practical means to work in a supportive physical environment, and gives protection so that the workload is manageable.

The Director of Children's Services, Senior Leadership Team and Principle Social Worker have a number of methods to support a culture of learning and listening. These will include regular open sessions, visiting service areas, spending time in social work offices, attending team meetings, and holding briefing/engagement sessions.

Support

Managers will lead by example and set standards of behaviour. This includes:

- Presentation and conduct that promotes good professional practice;
- Managers will cultivate a staff atmosphere that is mutually supportive and draws on the professional strengths of all staff;
- Managers will ensure that staff have manageable workloads, within the set guidelines for caseloads.
- Managers will consider the complexity of cases in line with the experience of staff;
- Managers will provide good lines of communication, ensuring that important service policy, procedures and guidance are shared, understood and acted upon;
- Managers will provide regular supervision and meaningful appraisals that take account of the strengths and areas for improvement of staff, and seek to ensure that the service continues to invest in staff's professional development; and

- Managers will ensure that the internal administrative and information sharing systems and arrangements support professional practice and team development.

Constructive challenge

- Managers will monitor the quality of the service they are responsible for through regularly scrutinising practice, auditing case recording, and take steps to rectify poor quality when identified; and
- Managers will look for opportunities to bring about improvements in practice, and support staff in delivering those improvements.

Professional rigour

- Managers will keep up to date with research findings in practice and policy and guidance documents relevant to their area of work, and maintain their continuing professional development. They will routinely access Research in Practice and other materials provided through practice development websites and publications;
- Managers will expect staff to develop their professional skills and expertise by keeping up to date with applied research; and
- Managers will ensure that all staff adhere to the Dudley Children's Services Practice Standards for Social Workers, and the Social Work England Professional Standards; and that staff at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner in terms of their dress, language and behaviours.

Induction

All managers will ensure that new employees undergo a mandatory induction to develop an awareness of the service practices and processes and to understand how their role fits into the priorities and aspirations of the service.

All permanent employees will undergo a mandatory two week induction programme, at the start of their employment. Agency staff will also have some induction in line with their role and based upon the judgement of their Service Manager.

Team Meetings

Managers need to ensure that there are regular team meetings so that staff understand the key messages within the organisation and the expectations of them. Managers should model the expected standards for their teams which includes:

- Being on time for meetings;
- Being prepared for meetings and briefings;
- Taking action as required in a timely way;
- Having a good knowledge of the cases within the team; and
- By supporting and challenging appropriately.

Appraisals

All staff must have an annual appraisal. This is an important opportunity to formally note achievements in the past twelve months and record any actions needed to address learning and development needs identified during ongoing supervision and case discussions. The annual appraisal will set goals for the coming year.

As part of preparation for the appraisal, the team manager will have directly observed the practice of the social worker (on a home visit where appropriate), and will provide constructive feedback and record this on the review documentation.

Standard 5 – Quality Assurance and Auditing

Managers are responsible for the auditing of children's records to ensure that:

- The details held on the child and family on the front screen, and the paper file, are accurate and up to date;
- The chronology is up to date;
- Records are up to date, timely, and well written, with entries owned by the practitioner;
- Records must meet agreed standards of practice, e.g. regarding statutory visits, seeing the child alone, recording the child's views;
- The record is maintained electronically and management oversight must be logged;
- There is a recent photograph of the child, with name and date on the back, correctly located on file for Children Looked After;
- There is a birth certificate correctly located on file for Children Looked After;
- There is a quarterly case summary based on case records, case discussion, agreed actions, plans, contact arrangements and recent reports;
- The child's most recent Plan and Review minutes are on record;
- The most recent Court Order, where appropriate, is on record;
- All documents are located in the correct sections and in the correct order;
- In accordance with the Data Protection Act, only documents that are relevant to the child in question are retained, and they are not kept longer than is necessary;
- Managers' supervision records for the child are filed with the case recording under the appropriate section;
- The confidential section of the 'electronic record' is used only for essential third party; documents that it would not be appropriate to share with the child.

Any action needed to address poorly maintained records must be discussed with the practitioner and steps to address this recorded on the child's file.

Regular case file checks will be conducted by social workers and their team managers. This will ensure that case files are well presented and maintained to the required standards should they be required for auditing by:

- Team Managers;
- Service Managers;
- Heads of Service;
- Independent Reviewing Officers;
- Senior Managers of Children's Social Work Service;
- Director/s.

Standard 6 – Leadership in Multi Agency Working

Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education, 2018) sets out the importance of Local Authorities working together with partner organisations and agencies to provide high quality and effective support for children. The Local Authority is under a duty to make arrangements to promote co-operation between itself and agencies to improve the wellbeing of children, from strategic level through to operational delivery.

Managers are responsible for building strong relationships with partner agencies, and ensuring practitioners do the same, enabling partner agencies to become fully involved in care planning and intervention for children and young people.

Managers will support partner agencies to understand their respective roles and responsibilities. Differences will be dealt with appropriately, and issues will be dealt with early to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of children. If concerns are not resolved at the earliest levels, they will be escalated using the Multi-Agency Escalation Protocol (DSPP) to resolve the issues, and to involve senior managers appropriately in case decisions.

Through regular audit of cases, case discussions, and supervision, managers will ensure;

- Information from partner agencies is evident on file;
- Strategy Discussions involve Police and the appropriate representative from the health system as a minimum and Education where possible;
- There is evidence that agencies attend key meetings;
- Agencies contributions to the plan are clearly set out;
- Joint work and information sharing is improving outcomes for children;
- Identify any service gaps or areas where improvements can be made in a constructive and collaborative way.

Standard 7 – Developing Improvements Across the Service

The Knowledge and Skills Statement (2018) and the Professionals Capabilities Framework (2018) sets out the importance of effective leadership being central to driving change and improvement to the quality and effectiveness of services provided. Managers have a responsibility to support the developmental activity set out within the improvement agenda. This includes improving the quality of frontline practice by strengthening communication and partnership working across service areas; engaging with Practice Improvement Forums and Quality Assurance to develop a shared understanding of what

good practice looks like and creating a learning environment, which develops professional capability, increasing the stability of the workforce.

Children and young people are listened to both individually in relation to their unique lives and also to influence and improve services. A range of consultation with Children and Families is embedded within practice through participation links, learning from compliments and complaints, and direct work with children. This will inform and contribute to service development and help service leaders and practitioners to understand their experience of the service.

Managers are responsible for;

- Responding to complaints and compliments and influencing change where areas of development are required.
- Managers will embed reflection and learning into practice through participation in Group Supervision, Team Meetings, Managers Forums, and Practitioner Forum Events.
- Managers will celebrate and share Good Practice Examples and support and promote participation events within the wider service.

Appendix 1: Supervision Agreement Meeting Template

Supervision Agreement

This Supervision Agreement is made between:

Name of Supervisee:	Job Title:
Name of Supervisor:	Job Title:
Date of Agreement:	

The purpose of this Supervision Agreement is to serve as a resource for our work together.

Aims of Supervision

Supervisee: To have a safe relationship to reflect on challenging issues, positive outcomes and to feel supported in practice.

Supervisor: To provide a safe and supportive supervisory environment that promotes engagement, effective, safe practice, and professional development.

Regularity of Supervision

- We will meet at least times a year – once every weeks for a session. This will only change in the event of annual leave, sickness or emergency situations.
- Formal supervision sessions will be for 1.5 to 2 hours each.
- If there is a need to meet outside of our regular times for work related issues this will be respected, explored and accounted for as informal supervision.
- We will book the dates for supervision, any probationary period, and appraisal in advance, confirming the next appointment at the end of each session and arranging to meet at a mutually convenient place and time.
- If the arrangement needs to be changed the onus is on the person who needs to make the

change to notify the other, giving as much notice as possible.

Interruptions

As your supervisor I will arrange a private and confidential space for us to meet, ensuring that you have my undivided attention for your supervision. Interruptions will be kept as a minimum. These will occur in emergency situations only.

Recording of Sessions

We agree to abide by the guidelines as laid down in the Supervision Policy document with regard to confidentiality and standards for note and record keeping.

The supervisor will take main responsibility for recording supervision discussions. A copy will be given to the supervisee to sign. The supervisee will take responsibility for photocopying to ensure she/he has a copy of the signed supervision notes/minutes for their record.

All case discussions from supervision will be recorded directly onto the child/family file.

Content of Supervision

- **Casework** - decision-making and reflection
- **Caseload** - workload management
- **Career** – professional development
- **Care** - Line management and organisational accountability

At the end of each session we will agree any action points necessary; we will review the effectiveness of our sessions every 12 months.

Statement of Service

The Supervisor will endeavour to provide the following:

- Consistency
- Regular support
- Availability
- Professional experience
- Sensitivity

Statement of Responsibility

- The supervisor will maintain line management responsibility.
- The supervisee will follow plans as agreed during supervision sessions and work to meet timescales set.

- Both supervisor and supervisee will maintain a commitment to equal opportunities in relation to both service-users and staff.
- It is the responsibility of both the supervisor and supervisee to recognise, respect and value people's differences via promoting equality of opportunity.

Confidentiality

Minutes will be kept by both supervisor and supervisee. Paper supervision records will be kept by the supervisor in a supervision folder and stored in a locked cabinet.

Plan for providing feedback to one another and handling stumbling blocks and/or disagreements:

We will strive for openness between us, and any difficulties that may arise within the supervision relationship should be discussed between us in the first instance. If this is simply not possible – for whatever reason – the person who is dissatisfied with the relationship must follow the guidelines as laid down in the policy document.

Our plans for handling disagreements/stumbling blocks are:

- Discuss with each other during supervision.
- Arrange a meeting outside of supervision to discuss with each other.

We have read, understood and agree with the content of the Supervision Policy and this Supervision Agreement.

Supervisee Signature:

Date:

Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: Management Standards, Acceptable / Unacceptable Practice

Theme	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Auditing practice	Evidence of regular auditing of case records to ensure that practice standards are met routinely. Evidence of follow up of corrective action requirements arising from audits.	Little or no auditing of case records and practice. Little or no evidenced understanding of the quality of the service.
Quality of Assessments, Plans and Reports	Evidence of managers' signatures/electronic equivalents. Evidence of management scrutiny of the quality of the work undertaken leading to good quality assessments and plans with good outcomes for children.	Management sign off is tokenistic and does not show that work has been scrutinised or met required standards. Inadequate assessments being signed off by the manager.
Addressing poor performance	Evidence that appropriate steps are being taken to address poor or unacceptable performance of practitioners to bring about improvements. Timely use of formal procedures around improving performance.	Acceptance of practice that is below standards and an inability or unwillingness to tackle issues to bring about improvements. Continued use of informal measures where formal processes should be displayed.
Supervision: Supervision Agreement and frequency	Evidence that regular quality supervision is taking place with all staff within the supervision policy standards. Management advice and decisions are well evidenced and professionally sound. Recording of supervision demonstrates reflective practice. Supervision Agreement is in place.	No evidence of regular supervision or it is sporadic and does not meet staff professional development needs and is not compliant with supervision policy. Little evidence of management decisions and advice is unclear. No Supervision Agreement in place.

Appraisals	Evidence that annual reviews take place within guidance and play an active part in the recognition and development of staff skills.	Annual reviews do not happen or are tokenistic and the opportunities they provide to develop staff are not utilised.
Support and Development of staff	Manager has a proactive approach to developing staff professional skills, both on an individual level and team level.	Manager acts in a way that simply reacts to service demands and gives little attention to staff development.
Acknowledging and stretching good practice	Manager acknowledges and gives credit to good practice and promotes this within and outside the staff group.	Good practice is not acknowledged, shared or celebrated. Little attention is given to cultivating this within the staff group.
Policy, Research and Practice	Manager keeps up to date with key policy and research and uses this in practice and this is evidenced in the quality of the work undertaken within the team.	Policy, guidance and research are given little or no recognition in practice.
Culture and Workloads	The manager ensures that the work demands are matched to the skills and abilities of staff members, and staff capacities and capabilities are defined and protected. This leads to good quality social work practice.	The manager does not match work demands to capacity and skills of the staff. This results in staff feeling overloaded and not working efficiently or effectively.
Communication	The manager ensures that good communication takes place within the staff group, and all staff are informed of important matters affecting their work. Regular staff meetings take place and are properly set up, chaired and recorded. Staff meetings have formal agendas and are fully minuted.	Communication arrangements are absent or sporadic. Staff meetings are poorly organised. Important developments and information are not shared with staff. No records of staff meetings.
Staff mutual support	The manager cultivates a staff group atmosphere that is mutually supportive and respectful. An	The manager oversees a staff group that is not supportive, where conflicts

	<p>office atmosphere that is calm, purposeful and one in which staff are focused to work.</p>	<p>and disputes are allowed to fester, and where staff are unhappy working in the setting.</p>
<p>Challenge and professional rigour</p>	<p>The manager sets an example as to how to conduct oneself as a professional, sets expectation of good practice that must be adhered to, and creates an atmosphere of professionalism.</p>	<p>The manager is inconsistent and unprofessional in their conduct and sets a poor example of conduct. The manager does not set expectations that ensure staff work professionally.</p>