

Supervision Policy

INTRODUCTION

Here in Warrington, we are committed to adopting a Systemic approach when working with children and families, understanding that challenges rarely sit with one person and acknowledging the importance of making sense of behaviours by exploring the emotions behind them. We believe that forming strong relationships with children and families will set a foundation for bringing about change, however this may look.

To do the above, we must first recognise that this area of work can be emotive and challenging. Whilst it is fair to suggest that we come to work in settings such as this with a hope to support and improve the lives of others, we too must be given a space to make sense of our experiences, both personally and professionally. Our aim is to ensure that supervision achieves this.

Supervision is a time to bring in multiple perspectives, to self-reflect and to hypothesise, with an overall commitment to developing our knowledge and skills at the service of the young people and families we work with.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Warrington Council has a comprehensive staff development and supervision strategy which, together with the Professional Development Review, is intended to be positive, continuous and systematic, individually designed, utilising and extending each employee's knowledge, skills and experience for the benefit of the children in his/her chosen work setting and ensuring job satisfaction.

The frequency of supervision will differ according to role and the particular job purpose. This is also in line with each Children's Homes Statement of Purpose and Function.

The objectives of the Supervision Sessions are to:

- Recognise achievements, quantify potential and identify ways of enhancing and improving knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Support with appropriate guidance and counselling.
- Manage, and where appropriate, supervise.

In recognition of the national context, Warrington Council is committed to:

1. The on-going development and improvement of supervision to effect the necessary change and create positive outcomes for children who are in receipt of their services.
2. Meeting the need for all its staff members to receive good quality supervision which is of an equitable standard across the service.

This policy will provide a framework for the supervision of all employees and managerial staff working for Children's Services within Children's Homes. This standard sets out how staff can expect to be supervised and provides supervisors with the key elements needed to supervise staff effectively.

This policy applies to all staff working within the Children's Homes/Outreach services and includes all managerial positions within Warrington Children's Homes Services. This is irrespective of whether staff/managers are employed on a temporary (including agency or casual staff and students), permanent, full time or part time basis.

Employment of Staff

Regulation 33

(1) the registered person must—

(a) ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction.

(b) ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and

(c) provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee's responsibilities.

(2) The registered person must operate a disciplinary procedure which, in particular—

(a) provides for the suspension from work of an employee if necessary, in the interests of the safety or welfare of children; and (b) provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, whether past or present, in relation to a child to the appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.

(3) For the purposes of this regulation, "the appropriate person" is the registered person, an officer of HMCI, an officer of the local authority in whose area the home is located or a police officer.

(4) The registered person must ensure that all employees—

(a) undertake appropriate continuing professional development.

(b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and

(c) have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year.

Supervision Procedures

What is Supervision:

Supervision is a two way, regular and on-going process to ensure effective service delivery, which is child centred, but also meets the expectations of the organisation. The process should also include supporting staff in their personal and professional development to build a safe and effective workforce.

Good supervision ***"takes place in an environment and relationship that feels safe, both to the supervisor and supervisee. It is emotionally supportive, but challenges practitioners to truly reflect of their practice and the needs of children and their families that they are supporting. Effective supervision relationships allow practitioners to develop personally and professionally through trust, honesty and empathy. When done well, supervision contributes to how staff performance is managed, and includes practice development and teaching and coaching"*** (Yvette Stanley, Ofsted, Supervision and effective social work practice" October 2018)

Quality of Decision Making and Interventions:

This is to ensure that there is focus on the challenges faced by children's homes staff in carrying out their work. Within the context of supervision this would include:

- Reflection on what has been done, plans for future interventions and actions.
- Discussions on improvements in practice.
- A focus on protecting the children and delivering effective services.
- Reflecting on workloads, the dynamics of working with children with complex needs and the emotional and physical impact on individuals.

“Reflective and challenging supervision which encourages staff to think differently and creatively and pays attention to the impact of the case and the work on the practitioner is essential to safeguarding and should operate at all levels. It needs to help practitioners to think, to explain and to understand, with the overriding priority being a focus on the lived experience of the child”.

Helen Lincoln – Director of Family Operations (Essex).

Line Management and Organisational Accountability:

This provides mutual organisational accountability between the employer and the employee. Within the context of supervision this would include:

- Evaluation of the job and the organisational effectiveness.
- Appraisal.
- Monitoring the health of the supervisee and referral to occupational health where appropriate.
- Consulting and briefing staff in changes and developments affecting their area of work.
- Briefing managers about key issues and challenges to undertaking the role and related functions effectively.

Four Functions of Supervision:

In line with the above accountability there are also other functions, although it is not necessary to have a complete balance of the four functions in each supervision session, it is important not to let any one of them consistently dominate the supervision process. Supervisors and supervisees should monitor any tendency to concentrate on one function and think about why this may be happening.

The Managerial and Accountability Function:

This function is concerned with ensuring that the work of the supervisee is carried out to the Directorates expectations and standards by:

- Ensuring that managers take responsibility for supervising their staff and understand it is an essential part of safeguarding practice.
- Ensuring that the overall quality of the supervisee's work is monitored.
- Ensuring that supervisees are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensuring that supervisees know, understand, and follow all policies, procedures and integrate changes or new developments into their practice.
- Ensuring that supervisees act in the best interests of children whenever possible and maintain professional standards.
- Encouraging supervisees to review their work, establishing clear and appropriate priorities and action plans which are then evaluated.
- Ensuring that the basis of decisions and professional judgements about practice is clear and made explicit in records.
- Giving supervisees feedback on their performance, acknowledging and appreciating good performance and identifying and planning how to address areas of under achievement.
- Ensuring that anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities are promoted and integral to the work of all supervisees.
- Encouraging supervisees to act as positive members of the team and relate appropriately to other agencies.

- Encouraging supervisees to deal with differences between themselves and colleagues professionally and constructively.
- Offering professional consultation and advice, or guiding individuals to where such advice can be accessed as appropriate.
- Identifying resource shortfalls or other constraints that may affect the ability of supervisees to do their work to the standard expected.
- Ensuring that records are maintained according to policies.

The Development Function:

The supervisory process is a key element in the continuing professional development and education of staff. The role of the supervisor is to help staff reflect on their current performance, identify development and education needs and plan how these can best be met by:

- Developing the competence of supervisees within their role;
- Helping supervisees identify their theoretical base skills and knowledge.
- Encouraging supervisees to be explicit about their value base in relation to race, gender etc. and its impact on their work.
- Encouraging supervisees to adopt a child centred and reflective approach leading to informed actions which aim to improve outcomes for children and families. Developing the skills of self-appraisal and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Understanding each supervisee's preferred learning style, blocks to learning and responding to these as appropriate.
- Giving regular and specific feedback which may be positive or constructively critical, on all aspects of a supervisee's work.
- Helping supervisees to try new approaches and methods of work as well as integrate changes in policy legislation or practice into their work.
- Encouraging supervisees to reflect on their interaction with children, colleagues and other agencies.
- Identifying educational and development needs and planning a range of ways in which these might be met.
- Encouraging the giving and getting of feedback about the supervision process itself so that both the supervisor and supervisees can develop their supervisory skills.

The Supportive Function:

The nature of the work carried out in Children's Homes can mean that staff are faced with difficult situations, uncertainty, and stress. An important function of supervision is to help staff cope with these difficulties by:

- Valuing supervisees both as people and as professionals.
- Creating a safe environment within supervision for supervisees to reflect on their practice.
- Encouraging supervisees to talk about their feelings as well as thoughts and actions.
- Helping supervisees to explore emotional blocks to their work and how the work impacts upon them.
- Helping supervisees to explore issues about discrimination in a safe setting.
- Supporting staff who may be experiencing abuse or harassment.

- Monitoring the overall health and wellbeing of supervisees especially regarding stress.
- Encouraging supervisees to make use of the Directorate's health and staff care provision or external support as appropriate.
- Fostering and promoting productive working relationships amongst team members.
- Encouraging supervisees to be proactive in resolving conflict.

The Mediation/Advocacy Function:

This function is concerned with building the relationship between the individual.

- Representing supervisee's needs and views to senior management.
- Briefing senior management about resource shortfalls or exercises and their impact on supervisees.
- Ensuring that resources are allocated in ways that are efficient and equitable including access to training and development opportunities.
- Ensuring supervisees have up to date information about developments and changes.
- Involving supervisees in decision making including encouraging them to play an active part in consultation when appropriate.
- Mediating or advocating between staff within the team, with children or with outside agencies.
- Supporting supervisees who may be experiencing abuse, harassment, or discrimination within the team.
- Dealing sensitively, but clearly and equitably, with complaints against supervisees. Planning Supervision Sessions: Supervision sessions should take place regularly.
- Each session should be arranged in advance.
- The Supervising Manager should send through calendar invites:
- The length of the sessions should be agreed in advance, making sure there is sufficient time for supervision to be adequate.
- A supervision planner for all staff should be made visible to them.
- The supervisor and supervisee should each prepare for the session and the supervisee should submit their paperwork in advance of the meeting.
- An agenda for the session should be prepared in advance. 1. Supervision Sessions: Employees will be entitled to the following:
- Supervision should be held in a private place, free of interruptions; this includes not responding to calls, informing others the supervision session is in process and not to be interrupted.
- A clear understanding of the intention of the Supervision meetings.
- Dependent upon role, regular Supervision and Review Sessions.
- Ad hoc Supervision Sessions if deemed appropriate by the Supervising Line Manager.
- Individual Support, of limited duration, depending upon the issue for which it is provided.
- In-service training.
- Notes of Supervision Sessions these can be recorded by either the supervisor or supervisee.
- An annual Appraisal & Development Review, underpinned by the ongoing supervision process.

Focus of the Supervision Session:

The session will enable the Employee to:

- Reflect regularly on the content and process of the work.
- Develop understanding and skills within the work setting.
- Receive information on a regular basis from the Supervising Line Manager concerning individual performance.
- Be supported as a person and an employee.
- Not left to carry unnecessary difficulties, problems, and projections alone.
- Have space to explore and express personal distress, re-stimulation, transference or countertransference.
- Plan and utilise personal and professional resources for the benefit of children.
- Be pro-active rather than re-active.
- Provide a quality service.
- Identify training and development needs.

Process:

At the first Supervision Session, the Line Manager and Employee will set out and agree the purpose and content of the Supervision meetings, including:

- The Line Manager's observations of the employee at work.
- Identification of any training and development needs.
- Identification of targets.

Identification of Personal Learning, Career and Development Opportunities:

This function focuses on the developmental needs of the supervisee. Within the context of supervision this would include:

- Career development advice.
- Obtaining training opportunities and further qualifications.
- Maintaining a Personal Development Record of training and career development opportunities.

These functions are interdependent and need to form part of supervision. If the supervision were to focus solely on the line management and organisational accountability functions, then this would potentially leave the supervisee feeling micro-managed and with a view that the role of supervision is to simply be checked upon and is not conducive with systemic practices.

Supervision needs to move beyond checking and accountability and become a process whereby the worker is able to reflect and learn from their experiences in order to inform their future practice.

"Supervision should be open and supportive, focusing on the quality of decisions, good risk analysis and improving outcomes for children rather than meeting targets." (Laming, 2009, paragraph 3.15).

The above standards are key and relevant functions of quality supervision across all disciplines of professionals working with children.

Supervision Agreements:

Creating a supportive supervision environment where trust and confidentiality are maintained is essential, and supervision agreements can help to support this process. The supervision agreement establishes a basis for which the supervisor and supervisee will work together during supervision sessions.

The establishment of a set of "ground rules" will clarify the rights and expectations on both sides to create a safe, secure and effective supervisory setting.

The supervision agreement includes:

- The frequency and duration of supervision.
- Specific responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee.
- The recording of supervision.
- The arrangements for any informal or unplanned supervision.
- The practical arrangements (the process if supervision has to be cancelled and/or rearranged).
- The arrangements for agenda setting.
- Any specific issues relating to individual supervisees.

All supervisors and supervisees will be expected to sign a supervision agreement. The supervision agreement will be signed within the first four weeks of employment.

Supervision agreements will be reviewed as a minimum on a yearly basis to ensure that they are up to date and reflect the needs of the supervisee. However, it is recognised that there may need to be more frequent updates in line with individual requirements.

Supervision agreements should be saved electronically and stored securely where only managers have access. A paper copy should be signed by both parties and then scanned and placed in the secure electronic file or held on hard files if only accessed by managers.

Frequency of Supervision Sessions

Each service and in Residential Services this is likely to be regular and as defined in the Home's Statement of Purpose. There may be circumstances that result in the supervisee requiring more than the agreed minimum levels of supervision, e.g., due to the emotional impact of the work, or specific learning and support needs. This will be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee.

New staff will be supervised more frequently and in line with Warrington Council's monthly probation reviews which normally cover a six-monthly probation period.

Agenda and Supervision

There is a balance to be struck between ensuring that the requirements of Warrington Council are met and for supervision to be flexible and creative. Being overly prescriptive will inevitably lead to dissatisfaction amongst staff, however, it is expected that there will be an agenda for each supervision meeting, so that discussion is focused, and all key elements are considered, albeit there is a supervision format in place. It is important that supervision is given priority. This is to ensure that the supervisee is being supported in their career development and ensuring that they have access to training to enhance their practice. Personal supervision should also serve to acknowledge the emotional impact of the work we do. In addition, employers need a forum where the quality of

practice can be scrutinised, staff member's development needs to be explored, and workers given the opportunity to:

- Manage anxiety.
- Consider how their own biases and beliefs may be affecting practice.
- Reflect on the dynamic of the interaction between themselves and those using the services.
- Use their intellectual capabilities to form professional judgments, decisions and plans.

Personal supervision should be the focus for the first part of the supervision meeting. The discussion should be recorded using the supervision record template.

The following agenda items should be considered during personal supervision:

Agenda Items/Areas for Discussion:

1. Previous Supervision Actions:
2. Supervisee's Agenda Points/Discussion:
3. Supervisor's Agenda Points/Discussion:
4. Personal Reflective Discussion – How am I Doing? (Enabling the worker to discuss the emotional impact of the work and support that may be of benefit. Include any difficulties the worker is currently facing and how they can be supported or any areas of achievement)
5. Reflective Practice – Promoting Improved Practice: (This section is to be used to discuss work practice that may have gone really well and what difference it has made or not as planned – and for the supervisee to discuss with their supervisor the best ways in which to work in future remaining solution-focussed – How can we improve the quality of practice with children/young people?)
6. Relational Practice – Care: (This section is to be used to discuss work with the children & young people, including if completing additional roles such as a key worker, co-key worker etc.)
7. Relational Practice – What is Your Teams Purpose: (Could include team achievements, compliments, staff dynamics, staffing levels, team development – remaining solution-focussed)
8. Opportunities to Develop & Grow: (include training attended/or needs, research & practice, policy & procedures, training, learning and development, any feedback from children, families, and other professionals and how all these examples can influence future practice)
9. Professional Development Discussion: (include links to the Annual Review/PDR/ reading, research, training, learning and development, career progression, feedback from children and families and other professionals and how all these examples can influence future practice)
10. Development Path - Additional Areas of Responsibility
11. Equality & Diversity: (includes identifying possible discrimination in the workplace with regards to disability, gender, sexual orientation etc. Concerns regarding lack of opportunities to progress etc.)
12. Health & Safety/Safeguarding: (includes areas of safeguarding – any concerns, lone working, resources to complete work, occupational health etc.)
13. Annual Leave/TOIL /Absences from Work: (include recording TOIL accrued, compassionate leave/other leave etc.)
14. Next Steps – (what do we hope to achieve over the next month – this will be the basis for discussion that is practice and outcome focused next time)
15. A.O.B: Any other business (self-explanatory). In completing the personal development supervision record it is important that actions should have a date assigned to them and it must be clearly recorded who is responsible for completing them. Where details of personal circumstances

are discussed, they need to be recorded but it is important that the supervisor gives due consideration to how and what is written. Once confirmed and agreed between the supervisor and supervisee at the end of the supervision meeting or prior to the next meeting taking place, the personal supervision record should be stored electronically on the management drive relating to the home, and if possible, password protected and in personal files in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The Supervisor has a Further Responsibility to:

- Encourage a positive attitude to supervision.
- Work towards creating an open and honest 'learning' environment in supervision.
- Help the supervisee reflect and analyse any presenting problem.
- Clarify and summarise both the content and the perceptions of the issues under discussion.
- Deal with the situation early if there are concerns about the professional competence or behaviour of the supervisee giving specific and concrete example of these concerns.
- Confront and challenge constructively.
- Be aware of how issues of anti-discriminatory practice may affect the supervisory relationship.
- Ensure that supervision does not become solely a workforce management tool.
- Identify training and development needs and the need to consolidate practice in line with knowledge and skills statements for qualified social workers.
- Assist with generating solutions and realistic action plans.
- Avoid running out of time or not facing up to risks/difficult issues.

The Supervisee has a Further Responsibility to:

- Maintain a competent standard of practice and to seek help and guidance if unable to do so for any reason.
- Express opinions, disagree where appropriate and to learn from mistakes and be honest if unsure of what to do.
- Make the supervisor is aware of his or her own work and development needs.
- Be open to feedback both about good practice and areas of concern.
- Be open to challenge and take responsibility for higher learning and professional development, ensuring he/she keeps up to date with developments in Safeguarding via training and research.
- Explore alternatives, find solutions and make realistic action plans.
- Make any disagreements with the record of supervision known.
- Do what you say you will do – be reliable.
- Keep the child at the centre of discussions about practice.

Recording of Reflective Supervision:

Reflective supervision is the activity within the supervision session whereby the supervisor asks the supervisee to reflect on certain situations that may require a deeper understanding of how human behaviour and our own interactions with others are having an impact on those situations. Discussions about the relationship with the children we care for which reflect on the planning process are important as they demonstrate the thinking behind decisions taken.

It is acknowledged that not all discussions require a reflective approach as some discussions just need a management decision or just confirmation that the work is on track with some suggestions made. However, in certain circumstances, the discussions need to be more reflective and will always inform why certain decisions are taken thereby providing a context to the reader of the file on why those decisions were made. Recording of this reflective discussion should be on the supervision record and placed on file.

Supervision files will be audited to ensure reflective supervision takes place as required and that the auditor is able to track the evidence from the supervision records and other criteria that needs to form the employee's personal records.

The supervisor may explore issues that are external to the employee that may have an influence on how we work. This may be related to situations outside of the workplace e.g., family trauma, or situations within the workplace e.g. team dynamics or organisational change.

The Cancellation of Supervision:

Supervision is a joint responsibility and both supervisor and supervisee should honour the appointments that have been made. It is recognised that there are some instances where supervision will need to be cancelled and rescheduled due to an emergency or due to staff absence. If supervision does need to be cancelled, then it is important that a further date for the subsequent supervision is agreed at the point of cancellation. This ensures that there is no delay and evidence that supervision is being valued. A record must be made of any rearrangements made. Where a supervisee is on sick leave then the steps above should be taken but it is recognised that a rescheduled date cannot be entered. Instead, it should be recorded that a further supervision date will be arranged within five working days of the supervisee's return to work.

When a supervisor is on sick leave then rather than cancel the supervision and so supervision is valued another supervisor should undertake the supervision and for best practice the usual supervisor should arrange a further supervision within 5 days of them returning to work.

Confidentiality and Access:

Whilst supervision offers a private area to discuss work and personal circumstances the supervision records cannot be entirely confidential. Supervision records are the property of Warrington Council. There will be occasions where supervisors will need to discuss the content of supervisions with others, such as their own line manager, Human Resources etc. This should always be with the knowledge of the supervisee. Reasons why records may need to be accessed are for quality assurance purposes, disciplinary purposes, and Ofsted inspections. Copies of supervision records should be kept by both parties. These will be accessible to the supervisee and their line manager, and to the line manager's line manager, throughout the organisation to ensure a clear line of sight from the top of the organisation to the front line. This will not include line manager's access to peer's supervision, unless specifically agreed with their line manager, for example as part of an agreed plan to cover long term sickness absence arrangements. The finalised supervision record should always when held electronically be a scanned copy and where possible password protected, in particular managers; this is to safeguard both the supervisor and the supervisee in the case of investigations (e.g., disciplinary or complaint) and to ensure that documents are not altered in any way.

Quality Assurance:

To be effective, the supervision process requires monitoring and quality assurance arrangements. The quality assurance process ensures that the standards of supervision as outlined in this document are being followed:

- Staff are being supervised effectively and at regular intervals.
- Supervision sessions are being recorded on the appropriate template.
- Individual Supervision Agreements are being developed, reviewed and used.
- The supervision process promotes equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

The quality assurance arrangements involve:

- Audits of a random selection of supervision files on an agreed basis, with each workers supervision record audited at least twice annually.
- Discussion during supervision, for example, between the Residential Service Manager about the Registered Manager's practice in supervising their staff.
- Sharing examples of good practice. Review Meeting and Professional Development Review: Periodic Reviews should take place in the Supervision Sessions. These will provide the Employee and Line Manager with the opportunity to analyse and share the issues that have arisen in the period since the previous Review. The Professional Development Review, which takes place, normally in April of each year after the first 12 months of employment, will collate all the developments, issues and training and development needs which have occurred since the last formal review.

The Review provides the formal setting for the Employee and the Line Manager to complete their assessment of the previous 12 months and to identify and agree targets, and training & development needs for the coming 12 months.

Completed Documentation:

A copy of the documented Supervision Sessions will be given to each Employee, following each session that is undertaken and a copy will be stored electronically with their line manager and this must be signed by the employee and supervising manager. Appropriate levels of confidentiality will be observed.

Supervisory Management:

Supervision Sessions should be undertaken by the same person who conducts the Professional Development Review. Breakdown of the Supervision Relationship: Both supervisee and supervisor should work to establish a purposeful and effective relationship within supervision. If the supervision relationship breaks down and the problem cannot be resolved by the supervisor and supervisee, the supervisor's line manager should investigate the reasons for the breakdown, consider solutions or alternative options, and take appropriate action.

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