

Children's Social Care Staff Supervision Policy

This policy describes the Portsmouth City Council Children's Services commitment to providing quality supervision and support to all members of staff.

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Introduction

Working with the most vulnerable children and families in Portsmouth is meaningful and demanding work. In order to help achieve the necessary change for these families, practitioners themselves require considerable organisational support. Fundamental to this support is effective individual and group supervision.

Within Portsmouth, supervision is fully integrated into case management, and it occurs both formally within one to one and group supervision, and informally through unplanned case discussion and in other group settings. In whatever format, supervision must be underpinned by the supervision standards that are set out in this document.

Portsmouth recognises that supervision is based upon reflection, analysis and planning. Reflective consideration of casework leads to and informs analysis, promoting the development of different hypotheses that are tested out against evidence. This evidence is the practitioner's own observations and safeguarding experience, underpinned by research and theory. The testing out of the hypotheses leads to action – with consideration being given to the potential outcome of each action. This allows for outcome focused planning and effective contingency planning to ensure the safety of the child.

Supervision:

- Facilitates direct work with children, young people and families
- Supports safe and proportionate decision making
- Helps staff process the impact of the work which in turn supports the above
- Ensures the practitioner has a manageable and appropriate workload
- Develops a supportive climate which allows for positive performance improvement
- Enhances the practitioner's professional development
- Supports the practitioner in managing the physical and emotional demands of the work
- Facilitates clear communication between the service and the practitioner

(Adapted from Morrison, 2005 Supervision in a Social Care Setting)

1. Aims and expectations

PCC's practice model of Family Practice is based on the following key principles.

- Working whole family
- Restorative
- Trauma-informed
- Strengths-based and compassionate
- Holistic
- Hopeful
- Informed by difference
- Relational

The Model of Family Practice is based upon the principle that the worker's relationship with the child and family is the most effective approach to achieve change. In order for the practitioner to have a helpful and restorative relationship with the family they need to have

effective, helpful, restorative relationships with their manager and with others within PCC. Good quality reflective supervision provides the foundations of these relationships. The expectation is that whether you are the Deputy Director or a Personal Advisor you will be in receipt of containing, purposeful and reflective supervision where-upon you will be worked 'with' and will receive high support and high challenge.

“Good quality supervision is able to contain the supervisee’s anxiety, stress and hope and model the kind of relationship practitioners are expected to build with children and families. A supervision experience should enable the practitioner to walk away feeling less anxious than when they walked in, and with a clearer view of what the child, family and organisation require, what actions are most likely to produce the best results, and what to do next.

At its best reflective supervision offers a safe space for a practitioner to slow down and think, explore possibilities, look for meaning and a way to do their work well.”

Research in Practice Reflective Supervision Resource Pack 2017

1.1. Four key functions of supervision:

In Portsmouth we have positive expectations in respect of the supervisory relationship and work to the following principles:

- Staff want to do a good job
- No-one wants to be ineffective
- Staff work best when clear on role and responsibility
- People can and will try to change if it makes sense
- Performance can always be improved
- Clarity of what 'good' looks like helps people improve
- Focus on changing behaviour not personality
- Healthy debate creates the conditions for change
- Agreed action to improve enhances commitment and trust

There is an expectation throughout PCC Children's Services that managers will deliver the following 4 key functions through supervision (within these four key functions the [Knowledge and skills statement-child-and-family-practice-supervisors](#) (2015) has been integrated).

a. Managerial

To contribute to the achievement of excellent, accountable performance and practice by ensuring that:

- Policies, procedures and operational instructions are understood and followed (KSS Performance Management and Improvement)
- Roles and responsibilities are clear and understood
- High standards for practice are set and staff are motivated to achieve these standards (KSS Promote and Govern Excellent Practice)
- There is clarity about allocation of work, what action is required and how the action will be reviewed and supervised
- Work is reviewed regularly in line with statutory and agency requirements
- Managers and practitioners have an up to date, working knowledge of relevant legislation and case law (KSS Effective Use of Power and Authority)
- Practitioners are supported to exercise statutory powers ensuring that actions are proportionate to risk (KSS Effective Use of Power and Authority)
- Supervision should include an analysis of caseload and workload management
- A focus on safeguarding children, delivering effective services and identifying barriers to effective practice
- Records and reports are up to date
- Practitioners know when their supervisor expects to be consulted or informed
- Practitioners receive regular formal appraisal
- Research and performance data is used in supervision to understand and improve performance

- A balance is achieved between employing a managerial, task-focused approach and an enabling, reflective, restorative leadership style to achieve efficient day-to-day functioning (KSS Performance Management and Improvement).

b. Developmental

To assist with continuous learning, through:

- Recognising the strengths and development needs of practitioners, using practice observation, reflection and feedback mechanisms, including the views of children and families, to develop practice (KSS Developing Excellent Practitioners)
- Facilitating constant reflective thinking about the welfare of families and the safety of children (KSS Shaping and Influencing the Practice System)
- Supporting practitioner's ability to generate multiple hypotheses in order to make sense of the complexity in which children and families are living (KSS Confident Analysis and Decision-Making)
- Helping practitioners to make decisions based on observations and analyses, taking account of the wishes and feelings of children and families (KSS Confident Analysis and Decision-Making)
- Ensuring methods and tools used are based on the best evidence, that progress is frequently reviewed and that the plan is adjusted accordingly (KSS Purposeful and Effective Social Work)
- Supporting practitioners to always communicate clearly, honestly and respectfully the purpose and content of the plan (KSS Effective Use of Power and Authority)
- An awareness of individual learning styles, including supervisor's own, and how this may be a possible barrier to development and how it can be overcome
- Respond thoughtfully and proactively to complaints, mistakes and successes, creating learning opportunities for self, staff and the organisation (KSS Performance Management and Improvement)
- Providing constructive, honest and timely [feedback](#) on all aspects of performance, ensuring that successes are also recognised and acknowledged
- Facilitating access to professional consultation in areas outside the supervisor's knowledge and experience

- Assessing the learning and development needs of the practitioner and developing a CPD plan (which is regularly reviewed)
- Ensuring that the Professional Capabilities Framework at the appropriate level, is used as the basis for evaluating capacity and identifying learning needs alongside the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners (KSS CFP)
- Developing a 'culture of learning' within the team
- Supporting anti discriminatory practice and encouraging active conversation about difference using the [Social Graces \(Burnham 2013\)](#)
- Ensuring positive problem solving/restorative approaches to work and work relationships.
- Unpicking the outcomes of audits and learning reviews and ensuring that audit actions are completed.

c. Supportive

To offer support by:

- Providing a safe and containing climate in which to process the personal/emotional impact of the work.
- Identify emotional barriers affecting practice and recognise when to step in and proactively support individuals (KSS Emotionally Intelligent Supervision)
- Monitoring health and well-being especially with regard to the effects of stress and possible secondary trauma, with timely guidance and intervention to prevent stress build up (e.g. reviewing workload, assisting with time management, offering staff counselling service) in line with Portsmouth City Council policy.
- Responding robustly to situations where staff are subject to physical, psychological or discriminatory abuse from service users , colleagues or other managers
- Assisting in the timely resolution of work-related conflict, underpinned by restorative principles of building relationships, maintaining community and repairing harm.

d. Mediation

Engaging the individual with the organisation (and vice versa) through:

- Clarification of the team's role and remit
- Allocation of resources and workload in the most efficient way
- Communication of resource gaps and their implications to line management
- Communicating the needs and concerns of staff to management
- Contributing to the development of policy and practice
- Consultation and briefing about organisational change and development
- Empowering staff to contribute to policy and development.
- Restorative conversations.

1.2. Expectation of supervisees

In order to maximise the opportunity provided by supervision supervisees need to:

1. Take responsibility for attending one to one supervision and group sessions as set out in their supervision agreement
2. Prepare adequately for supervision providing a carefully prepared agenda. In addition practitioners need to actively take part in group supervision and prepare cases for discussion at these meetings, this involves providing an up-to-date case summary and genogram.
3. Prioritise cases for discussion, thinking about what is working well for the family, what are the vulnerabilities, what is your proposed plan and what specifically you need support for from your supervisor.
4. Identify cases that have outstanding audit actions and provide clarity about when those actions will be completed.

5. Take responsibility for raising any concerns they may have about the quality of the supervisory relationship with the supervisor or, if this is not possible, the third party named within the supervision agreement
6. Recognise their own professional limitations and how and when to seek advice from a range of sources, including named supervisors, higher grade social workers and other clinical practitioners from a range of disciplines such as psychiatry, paediatrics and psychology (KSS The Role of Supervision and Research)
7. Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development (CPD) for registered Social Workers, this includes keeping a record of their CPD to meet the [Social Work England](#) registration requirements.
8. Identify how they have used training and development opportunities and integrated it into their practice.
9. Collect and present evidence to demonstrate their professional capability at their level of practice i.e. if they are wishing to start the route for further progression and evidence that they meet KSS/PCF.

Download Research in Practice's helpful preparation for [supervision tool](#) and [framing the dilemma](#)

2. Supervision model

The model adopted by PCC is Tony Morrison's 4X4X4 approach (Morrison 2005). The model brings together the four functions of supervision as detailed above, alongside two other key elements which are the stakeholders in supervision, and the four elements of the supervisory cycle.

a. The four stakeholders in supervision:

- Children and families
- Practitioners and managers
- The organisation
- Partner organisations

b. The four functions of supervision:

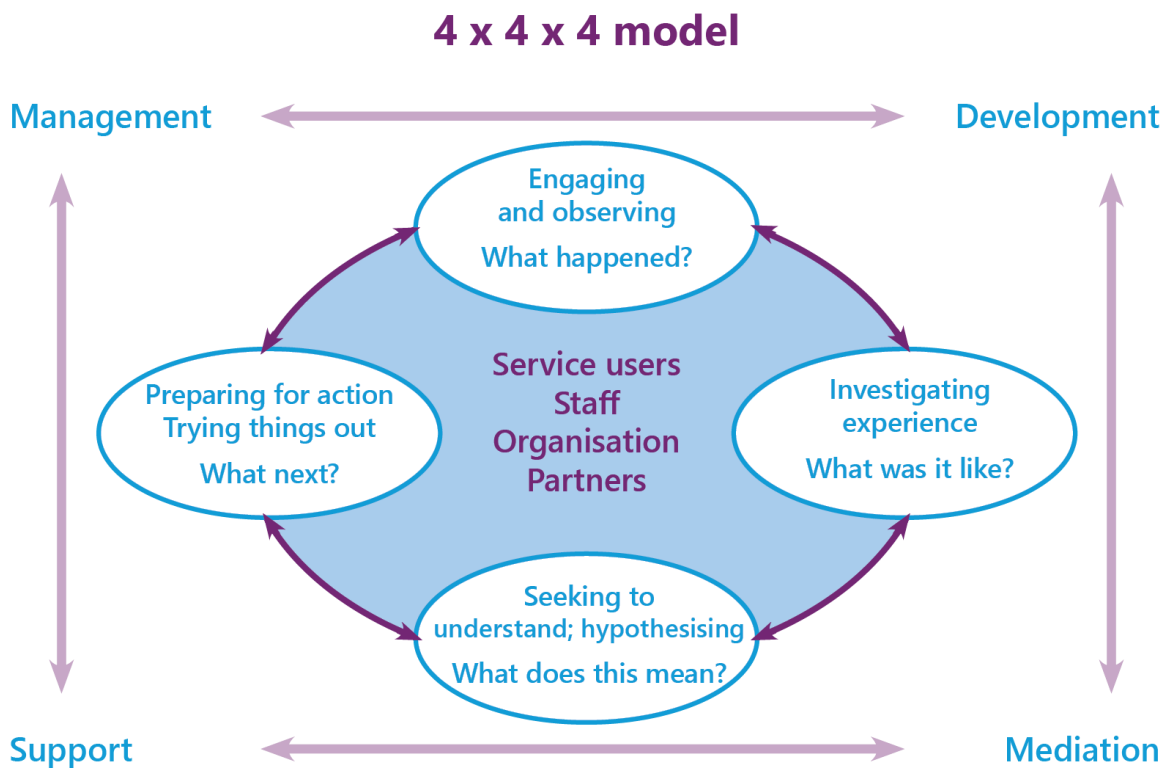
- See above

c. The four elements of the supervisory cycle:

- Experience
- Reflection
- Analysis
- Action planning

This is a dynamic model that puts relationships at the heart of the process by using the reflective supervisory cycle to fulfil the four functions and promote positive relationships with key stakeholders.

At the heart of this model is the reflective supervision cycle which should guide all supervision discussions.



2.1. The aim of the supervisory cycle

In relation to front line work with children and families the aim of the supervisory cycle is to:

- Ensure that there is a complete understanding of the child's situation from the perspective of all involved
- Reflect on the emotional impact of the work and the way in which human biases will affect understanding
- Explore intuitive responses and use these appropriately to understand the child's situation
- Ensure that the potential meaning of information is fully explored, and that analysis is informed by evidence from research and practice
- Promote defensible decision making and work that is focused on improving outcomes for the child

2.2. How do you do it? Practice standards for the supervisory cycle

Each component of the supervisory cycle has the following the practice standards:

a. Focus on experience:

There needs to be a detailed recall of events. A partial description of the situation will undermine the rest of the cycle. A practitioner can be assisted to recall more than they think possible if the right questions are asked including asking what the practitioner observed, experienced and responded to. [Download some helpful prompts](#)

b. Focus on reflection:

The emphasis is on eliciting emotions, partly because they may bring out further information and also as they may reveal the worker's underlying attitudes. The kinds of questions asked are; what did you think, feel and what was left unfinished. Responses may give clues to other personal factors complicating the worker's experience. Reflection helps the worker make links between the current situation and his/her prior experiences, skills or knowledge. [Download some helpful prompts.](#)

c. Focus on analysis:

Emphasis is on probing the meanings that the supervisee and the child/young person/family attributes to the situation, the consideration of other explanations, the identification of what is not known or understood, and identification of areas for further work. Clarity on how theory, research, observation and experience can inform analysis. [Download some helpful prompts.](#)

d. Focus on action:

Focus on translating the analysis into planning, preparation and action. This includes identification of outcomes and success criteria as well as consideration of potential complications and contingency plans. [Download some helpful prompts.](#)

The following resources from Research in Practice – Reflective Supervision Pack provide frameworks for considering risk and generating helpful case discussions:

- [Five anchor assessment principles.](#)
- [Social discipline window](#)

3.3 Cultural Humility

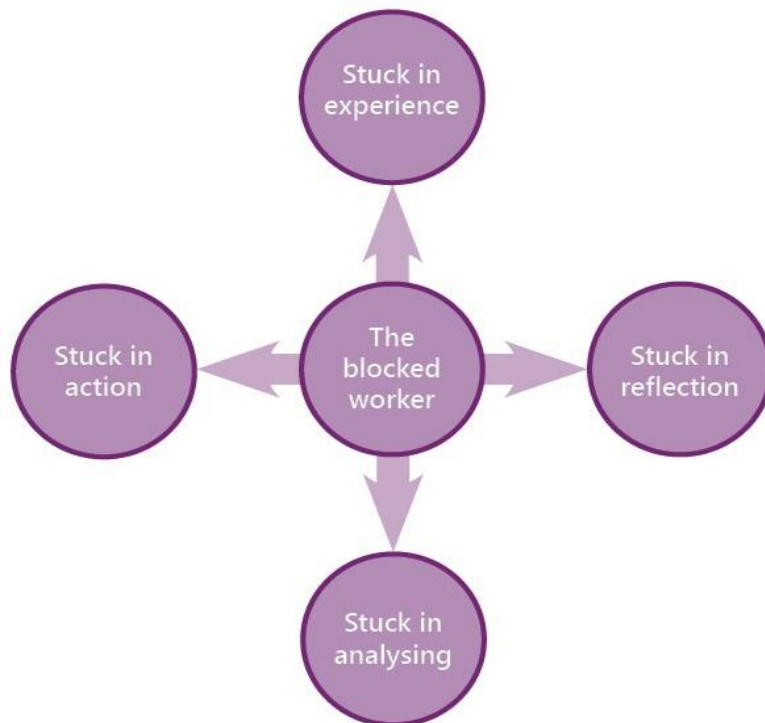
Supervision is an opportunity to reflect on and acknowledge the intersectionality of our identities within the work, and within the supervision relationship and importantly how these can relate to areas of power, social injustice, historical trauma, oppression, authority and trust. This includes honouring that each person will attach different meaning and weight to different parts of their identity, and that these will most likely change and be influenced by a range of factors and the overall context. In PCC we have adopted the [Social Graces model \(Burnham, 2012\)](#) to help us understand identity and intersectionality. There are also some helpful resources to explore diversity in supervision via this [link](#).

3.4 Supervisory Cycle and Performance

Supervision is the main mechanism for improving performance, building on strength and addressing poor practice. Early recognition and attention to difficulty is crucial. It is also vital to understand the causes of poor performance in order to work with the practitioner to develop effective solutions. When using the supervisory cycle in a high challenge/high support environment, concerns will emerge more readily when practitioners are encouraged to describe their interactions with others, reflect on their

own attitudes, values, feelings and biases and use theory and research to inform their practice. If the focus is just on task completion picking up on performance concerns will be much more difficult. The supervisory cycle as detailed below can also be used to understand performance.

Blocked supervisory cycle



3.5 How to address performance concerns using the supervisory cycle:

- Stuck at Reflection – understand fear, break tasks into manageable chunks, increase supervision to track tasks
- Stuck at Analysis – Do not avoid questions relating to feelings, follow up on task completion
- Stuck at Action – Review workload to check if business is real, keep diary for a week, insist on supervision, focus on feelings, slow pace of supervision down
- Stuck at Experience – Work with motivation, identify support needs, keep eye on bottom line.

3. Different forms of supervision

In PCC the current main type of supervision is one to one reflective supervision. The minimum frequency is monthly but many front line teams deliver fortnightly supervision and newly qualified social workers have weekly supervision initially.

3.1. One to one supervision

One to one supervision is usually conducted face to face (can be via Teams). It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure all four functions of supervision (managerial, developmental, supportive and meditative) are in place for all practitioners. However it will not be possible to cover all four functions in every supervision and careful planning is required to ensure these functions are considered on a rolling basis. This form of supervision is the primary opportunity to review cases, practice issues and developmental needs. One to one supervision will usually be by the line manager where the supervisee and supervisor are from the same profession. *Where the supervisee and supervisor are from different professions it is appropriate for consideration of managerial and professional supervision to be separate in order to ensure professional accountability with external professional bodies.*

What is expected in One to One supervision (Frequency):

- a. The expected frequency of formal one to one supervision meetings for all staff working in Children's Services is **four weekly**, except where national standards or the requirements of a recognised professional accrediting body stipulate a greater frequency. Managers may determine that certain staff in certain roles should meet either more or less frequently than four weekly. For example, supervision is set at fortnightly in many busy front line child protection teams, with supervision happening less frequently for some workers depending upon experience. Such decisions must be incorporated into the written supervision agreement. Agreements for supervision meetings to take place less frequently than four weekly must be approved by the relevant Head of Service. Any disagreement or dispute about the frequency of supervision meetings should be resolved by the supervisor's line manager or Head of Service.
- b. Even where there is Head of Service approval for less frequent supervision meetings (for example, in the case of part time staff) no staff member should go without a formal supervision session for more than two months. It is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the supervisee to ensure that this does not occur.

- c. New employees working within their probation or induction period will initially receive bi-weekly supervision for a period of time as deemed necessary and agreed by both parties. As a general rule, the more responsibility the supervisee carries for making decisions which affect other people (staff or service users) the more access there should be to individual supervision.
- d. Line managers of temporary, part-time staff will be expected to ensure that the frequency of supervision meetings is appropriate to the type and volume of work being done, consistent with these standards.
- e. In the event of unplanned absence from work of more than four weeks by any supervisor, the relevant manager is responsible for ensuring that clear alternative supervision arrangements are made for the staff members affected.

3.2 Family safeguarding

Each case with an adult family safeguarding worker will have regular multidisciplinary supervision to allow all practitioners involved an opportunity to review progress, feedback on outcomes achieved, and agree on an overall risk rating. Frequency of this supervision will be reliant on the risk rating.

In addition to this, the adult family safeguarding worker will discuss individual cases with their line manager

- Within the first six weeks of the case being allocated.
- When they need additional support/guidance in respect of a particular issue.
- When there is risk of drift or delay

3.3 Group supervision and practice development

In PCC we have a model of group supervision and practice development sessions which supports 1:1 supervision and family safeguarding supervision. Group supervision and practice development should be part of a rolling timetable whereby each team has a fortnightly programme of a team meeting, a fortnight later having group supervision, and then two weeks later having a practice development session.

Benefits of group supervision

- It provides a useful environment in which to discuss and reflect on the challenges of child and family work.

- The different perspectives bring curiosity when developing a hypothesis.
- Enables you to build supportive relationships with colleagues.

What is expected in group supervision

Group supervision should be used for case discussion and planning and therefore needs to be chaired by the Team Leader. In Portsmouth we are not prescriptive about a particular model but any model utilised should follow the below steps.

- Guidance for group members about the different roles (facilitator, presenter, group member) and what they each entail.
- A presenter's description of a dilemma or difficult practice situation with a genogram.
- An opportunity for group members to ask questions and share their ideas.
- An opportunity for the presenter to reflect on the ideas they have heard.
- A clear SMART action plan and 'what next'.

Research in Practice provide ideas and guidance regarding a number of different [models](#).

What is expected in practice development sessions:

These sessions can be led by a higher grade social worker or experienced practitioner and can be used to explore a theme, learning opportunity, team dynamics or learning from success.

What is expected in ad-hoc supervision session:

This is where case discussion takes place between a supervisor and supervisee as the need arises. This should be available to all staff but is not a substitute for formal supervision. The value of ad hoc supervision is that it is an important way of supporting staff, keeping pace with change and ensuring that organisational/ statutory requirements are met. Ad hoc supervision discussions should be recorded on MOSAIC as a Management Advice/Guidance record.

3.4 NQSW supervision

Portsmouth is committed to providing effective supervision for newly qualified social workers which supports their professional development from the point of qualification onwards. All newly qualified social workers will be assigned a supervisor who, in most cases, will be responsible for both supporting their development and assessing their practice in line with the requirements of Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). On occasion newly qualified social workers are assigned an off-site ASYE assessor from within the organisation.

All newly qualified social workers will receive supervision weekly for eight weeks and then fortnightly for the remainder of their ASYE. There will be a formal probationary and appointment support review of progress at 3, 6, and 10 months. These progress reviews run alongside ASYE reviews at 3, 6, 9 (if required) and 12 months.

The supervision agreement will be supplemented by the learning agreement as required by the ASYE programme. This agreement will provide a foundation for ensuring:

- Reflective supervision
- Workload management □ Professional Development Plan
- Development time.

4 Annual Performance Conversation

The Annual Performance Conversation is an integral part of supervision. It contributes to the achievement of all of the four functions of supervision described above by providing a framework and process for:

- regular formal performance appraisal
- assessment of training and development needs
- creating and implementing a personal development plan including personal targets and objectives
- re-inforcing the links between individual performance and the achievement of the purposes and objectives of the team or service.

5 Supervision Agreements

All supervisory relationships must be established on a clear, secure and transparent footing that provides a safe and positive environment that enables the worker and supervisor to keep the needs of children, young people at the forefront. [Supervision Agreements](#) underpin this clarity by:

- Ensuring managers and practitioners are aware of their roles and responsibilities in supervision
- Clarifying accountability and authority
- Providing a basis for reviewing and developing the supervision arrangements including the supervisory relationship.
- Provide a benchmark for auditing the quality of supervision

5.1 What are the steps?

1. Following discussion with the supervisee clarifying the aims and purposes, rights and responsibilities and practice standards set out in this document, the supervisor and supervisee will create a written supervision agreement jointly.
2. Develop a supervision agreement, including agreement about the appropriate frequency of supervision meetings, tailored to the needs of the individual supervisee, with reference to:
 - the responsibilities carried by the supervisee
 - how long they have held those responsibilities
 - the supervisees relevant previous experience
 - the context in which the work is being done
3. Set out in the agreement a clear process for the resolution of conflict or dissatisfaction in the supervisory relationship. This process should involve a restorative conversation in the first instance and will normally involve the supervisor's immediate line manager.
4. Supervision agreements will be reviewed at a meeting at least once per year, and, where necessary, revised to take account of any changes in the work, or in the supervisee's development and support needs.

5. Managers will monitor these reviews and ensure that they occur.
6. It is important that supervisors are themselves supervised in line with this policy. Supervisor's supervision agreements will include an agreement about how their supervisory responsibilities will be supported and monitored by their supervisor.

5.2 Well-being Action Plan

Well-being is an important priority for PCC and we are committed to creating a more open and understanding culture around mental health in the workplace. As such, all practitioners will be invited to undertake a [wellbeing action plan](#) with their line manager at the start of the supervisory relationship to proactively manage mental and physical health and well-being at work. It is expected that this is reviewed regularly. Other [resilience and wellbeing](#) tools and resources are also available.

6 Supervision Recording

1. The supervision record needs to be structured so that it evidences the cycle of engaging, reflection, analysis and planning. Supervision records need to be clear, to the point and devoid of jargon.
2. Content should be a brief summary rather than a narrative of the supervision discussion.
3. The level of detail included should be proportionate to the level of the discussion that took place within the supervision. Team Leaders should use their professional judgment as to when this level of detail is required.

6.1 What is recorded:

- **What is the story-**Case summary (supervisee should come to supervision with this prepared). Case summary should include the date that the child was last seen and any other key dates. What is the family [culture](#), what is important to them as a family. Make brief statements about work undertaken with the family, how this will be evidenced in assessment and planning, rationale for decisions made.
- **Analysis-** Family and child history and how this impacts on current functioning. Detail of hypotheses which explain the presenting problem and what is this based on: observation, worker's own experience, research and theory. Make explicit progress and what is different from the last supervision. Explain how this (may)

change the original hypotheses/ assessment/ plan/ intervention and in what way. Record any outstanding actions and provide rationale why this has not been completed and reset timescales (to avoid drift). Ensure that you outline areas of strength as well as what you are worried about.

- **Reflection-** Summarise any discussion about the impact of the work on the practitioner and how this informs and impacts on assessment and intervention. Summarise through practitioner observation what life is like for that child/young person, what is their lived experience. Reflective supervision requires ongoing discussion regarding understanding, regulating and using your own feelings and how to respond thoughtfully in emotionally intense interactions. The Team Leader needs to make a judgement about where to record this e.g. if it is part of a personal development discussion it is recorded on the social worker's personal supervision record; if the discussion is pertinent to case planning it is summarised on the child's record.
- **Actions-** Record what needs to happen to test out the hypotheses/ undertake the assessment with timescales and what safeguards need to be put in place whilst this work occurs. When summarising plan of intervention also detail contingency plan if risks remain or escalate. Actions should be SMART.

6.2 How supervision is recorded and stored

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

There are three types of supervision records:

- The emotional wellbeing and professional development supervision record which is used to record supervision/ discussions that do not relate directly to a particular child;
- The casework supervision record on the child's electronic file, completed by manager and stored on the child's electronic MOSAIC record.
- Management Decisions completed by a manager following ad hoc supervision or case discussions in one to one supervision and stored only on the electronic MOSAIC record.

The emotional wellbeing and professional development record focuses upon the supervisee's workload, professional development, emotional wellbeing, what is working well and on any performance issues. It is completed by the supervisor and shared with the supervisee. A confirmation email from the supervisee can be used to confirm that the supervision record is accurate in place of a signature. Where there is a disagreement about the content of the record, a note should be made on the record of the different views and signed by both the supervisor and supervisee. In order to comply with data legislation this record should not contain any service user information.

The supervisor will keep the emotional wellbeing and professional development record as a secure electronic record. If there is a change of supervisor the file should be transferred to the new supervisor. If the supervisee leaves the organisation the supervision records should be stored by Human Resources for a period of at least 7 years. The supervisee will keep a copy of this record for their own use which they will need to store responsibly.

There are also some circumstances where the records may be made available to third parties for the purposes of formal Learning Reviews, legal proceedings, issues of professional conduct or HR processes.

7 Quality Assurance

In PCC we believe that it is important to regularly observe (on an annual basis) practice supervisors working in supervision, and to use [observation](#) as an opportunity to support them to further develop their skills in this aspect of their role. In addition, we expect there to be an annual conversation where the supervisor and supervisee review the [supervisory relationship](#) and amend the supervision agreement if needed. Supervisees will also have the opportunity to comment on the quality of their supervision in the annual LGA social work health check survey.

Finally, a quarterly dip-sample of case supervision documents will be undertaken to ensure that the recording of supervision is at the standard required.