



Department of Children's Services

Supervision Policy and Procedure October 2020

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1. Introduction

Bradford MDC is committed to offer the highest quality service for the most vulnerable children, young people, families and carers in the city. Ensuring that the workforce is offered high quality supervision means that staff will be:

- offered support and guidance
- supported to develop a good understanding of the aims and expectations of the organisation.
- managed effectively.
- supported to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviour necessary to carry out their role to the highest standards

Research has demonstrated that good supervision promotes job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and can help to reduce staff turnover. It is also closely linked with worker effectiveness.

2. The aim of the supervision policy

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear framework for supervision for all staff employed by Bradford MD Council in the Department of Children's Services. It includes all staff working for Bradford Children's Social Care regardless of role although due to the specific needs of practising social workers, there is a section that deals specifically with these professional requirements. This framework is intended to provide all supervisors and supervisees with a clear understanding about the requirements and processes of staff supervision.

The framework consists of

- The Supervision Policy
- The Procedures for Supervision
- Practice Guidance for Supervision
- Appendices – the tools for use within and to support supervision.

3. Supervision for social workers

In carrying out their professional practice social workers need to be able to make informed professional judgements and display confidence in their decision making while recognising how their own values and experience may influence them.

Supervision is an important right for all those working in social care to critically analyse and reflect on their practice and to assist them to manage the emotional impact of their work. Research demonstrates that social workers will be more effective if they receive good quality supervision.

Social work supervision is a dynamic process and is fundamental to the delivery of effective social care services with children and their families. It is a process by which the organisation provides support and guidance to social workers. The BASW definition of supervision which is supported by Skills for Care is:

Supervision is a regular, planned, accountable process, which must provide a supportive environment for reflecting on practice and making well informed decisions using professional judgement and discretion. Supervision should enable social workers to:

- *Be accountable for their practice and ensure quality of service for people who use services (children, adults, young people, carers) within relevant legislation, codes of standards and ethics*
- *Uphold professional standards.*
- *Build purposeful, professional relationships and communicate effectively.*
- *Make sound professional judgements based on good practice.*
- *Manage risk and protection alongside their duty to respect rights and address need*
- *Reflect on, analyse and evaluate their practice.*
- *Manage the emotional impact of their work.*
- *Share, debrief and identify any further required resources to address responses to stressful situations.*
- *Challenge constructively in the interests of client, worker and agency.*
- *Develop the knowledge, skills and values required for their own role, professional development and as part of an integrated, multi-professional team or service.*
- *Contribute to research and use knowledge and experience to explore new ways of working.*
- *Identify and manage stress factors that may impinge on the worker, service or agency.*
- *Ensure peer and management review of professional decisions and to encourage mutual learning and development.*
- *Communicate with their line manager on organisational issues.*
- *Manage realistic workloads and caseloads.*

Supervision is a regular, formal meeting between the designated supervisor (e.g. line manager) and supervisee in order to meet organisational, professional and personal development objectives. Supervision forms a key part of individual performance management and critical reflection of practice. Supervision enables workers to develop their capacity to use their experience to review practice, receive feedback on their performance, build emotional resilience and think reflectively about the relationships they have formed with children, adults and families. Good supervision is associated with job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation, and retention. (SCIE, 2015).

4. What do we mean by “reflective supervision”?

SCIE have stated that:

One message from practice is that, too often, supervision may be dominated by management processes and task completion, and not enough time is given to reflection and critical thinking. The opportunity to promote high quality services through promoting reflection as a means of increasing the understanding of the worker and supporting practice development may therefore be lost.

In 2018 Ofsted stated that:

*Supervision is an important part of the conversations that inspectors have with frontline workers. Has it benefited an approach to a particular case? Has it helped professional development? Inspectors will always look for evidence of the **quality and impact** of any supervision.*

In places where supervision is done well Ofsted state that:

*Supervision takes place in an environment and relationship that feel safe, both to the supervisor and the supervisee. It is **emotionally supportive**, but challenges practitioners to truly **reflect on their practice** and on the needs of the children and families they are supporting.*

Ofsted suggests that how supervision “feels” is very important and that the following questions are a good guide to how reflection can assist professional development:

- *Does the way I am supervised contribute to my job satisfaction and make me want to continue to work for this organisation?*
- *Does it make me feel that my employer cares about me and my practice?*
- *Does it increase my confidence, competence and critical thinking? Does it make me a more effective advocate for children?*
- *Does it help me make better decisions for children? Am I able to change my direction of thinking when that is the right thing to do?*

To an extent these questions and the concept of reflective supervision apply to all staff in children’s social care regardless of their role. All staff need an opportunity to develop their skills and their confidence and an opportunity to learn and grow. Reflection within supervision and appraisals helps to provide this opportunity.

It is important to recognise that there can be a difference between reflection that relates specifically to the worker (for example how did something make them feel or what have they learned) and that which relates directly to the child or family (for example what approach worked well or didn’t work well, what could we have done differently) and this will be an indicator as to whether the conversation should be recorded in the employee’s personal supervision record or within the child’s file. The LCS Children and Young People Supervision Template includes a specific section for reflections related to the child or family.

5. Supervision Procedure

Formal Supervision

Formal supervision can be described as a pre-arranged meeting that takes place at least every month.

Frequency of Supervision

The frequency of supervision will be dependent on your role within the organisation. Some staff will require more frequent supervision and this will be agreed on an individual basis depending on need and the stage of development working within the minimum requirements as set out below.

Newly Qualified Social Workers

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) was recommended by the Social Work Task Force and introduced in September 2012.

When supervising newly qualified social workers, team managers/assessors must refer to the ASYE handbook.

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It is expected that the NQSWs will have:

- regular formal supervision meetings – at least 1½ hours duration of uninterrupted time:
 - weekly for the first 6 weeks
 - fortnightly up to the 6 month review
 - at least monthly thereafter
- protected professional development time – roughly 10% of their working week
- Regular formal reviews at 3, 6 and 9 months with the final review at the 11 month point
- continuous holistic assessment

Residential, fostering and adoption services.

Colleagues working in residential services must receive supervision to meet the requirements of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015

Colleagues working in fostering must receive supervision to meet the requirements of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011: These standards also specify the requirements for supervision of foster carers.

Summary of the (minimum) frequency of supervision

Staff who are working in a role that does not require a social work qualification (regardless of role)	Every month at a minimum and more frequently if the role or the worker requires this.
Student Social Workers	Weekly for the duration of the placement with a Practice Educator who has completed the Practice Educator Award.
Newly Qualified Social Workers (ASYE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly for the first 6 weeks • Fortnightly until the 6-month review • 4 weekly thereafter
Social Workers with at least 12 months experience (includes Practice Supervisors)	Monthly
Team Managers	Monthly
Service Managers	Monthly
Heads of Service	Monthly
Children's home staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff will receive one to one supervision at least fortnightly during the first 6 months of their employment. • Then at least 1½ hours of supervision every 4 weeks from a senior member of staff each month.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency staff and those employed infrequently to cover staff absences must receive one to one supervision no less frequently than after each 8 shifts worked in the home
IROs and CP Coordinators	Monthly

Flexibility about the frequency of supervision is important. During the first six months in post and where the individual needs for greater support (formal or informal), supervision will be more frequent.

The Supervision Agreement

At the start of a new supervision relationship a supervision agreement or contract should be agreed and signed by both the supervisor and the supervisee. The Individual Supervision Agreement (Appendix 1) should clearly outline the responsibilities and expectations of both parties. A copy of this agreement will be retained on the file held by the supervisor for the supervisee. The supervisee should be given a copy; this agreement is essential and will form part of the supervision records; it should be reviewed annually.

If at any time during the supervisory relationship or if the supervision agreement is not being upheld, both parties have a responsibility to raise this in line with the Dispute Resolution process.

Cancellation of supervision.

In the event that a scheduled supervision session is cancelled by either party this will need to be re-scheduled quickly and the new session should take place within 7 working days of the original planned session.

Co-working arrangements

Where there are co-working arrangements for a particular case, it is important that both workers are supervised on that case; confirmation of the co-working relationship should be included in the supervision and clarity given as to the role of each worker and a reflection on how well the arrangement is working.

Dispute Resolution

The dispute resolution process has been put in place for supervisees who feel that they are not receiving supervision to the expected frequency or standard. In the first instance the supervisee should raise this with their supervisor to try to resolve the difficulties that may have arisen. However, if solutions and agreements are not reached the supervisor and the supervisee should meet with the supervisor's Line Manager to resolve this satisfactorily. The Supervisor's line manager may wish to observe supervision to help both parties understand the difficulties and identify solutions.

Preparing for Supervision

In order to make the best use of the time available, both supervisors and supervisees should prepare for supervision sessions and read any relevant documents beforehand.

The Supervision Meeting.

The supervision meeting will include:

Personal supervision

- Worker wellbeing
- Appraising feedback from others obtained by the line manager

- Analysis of evidence of observed practice (at least one a quarter)
- Setting and reviewing actions relating to learning and development including learning from any audits that have been completed

Case supervision

- Case discussions
- Smart action planning in respect of children
- Review of previous actions in respect of children.
- Reflection for example what has worked, what impact has our involvement had etc.

Minimum frequency of case discussions

Type	Required minimum frequency
Single Assessments	Where a single assessment is open at the time of supervision, the case should be discussed as normal and the supervision recorded in the child's file. Some assessments will have been completed and closed or stepped down prior to supervision. These cases will have management oversight recorded at least at the point of allocation and sign off and potentially during the assessment if management discussion has been required.
Child subject to a Child Protection Plan	Monthly
Child subject to PLO and legal proceedings	Monthly
Child in care – placed with parents	Monthly
Children in care	Monthly unless the child is felt to be settled and has an agreed plan of permanence in their current placement. Where visits have safely reduced to three monthly then supervision can also be reduced to every three months.
Young adults aged 18 or over in receipt of a leaving care service	Monthly unless they are felt to be settled, have a secure place to live and are assessed to be achieving. Where visits have safely reduced to three monthly then supervision can also be reduced to every three months.
Children in need	Monthly
Targeted early help cases	Monthly
Youth Offending Service cases	Monthly
Foster Carer Supervision	Monthly during the first year of approval or when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations or practice issues have been raised • Placement stability meetings are taking place. In all other cases, minimum frequency of supervision is every other month.

Routine management oversight

Management oversight and intervention takes place routinely throughout the day. It takes place outside of the formal supervision meeting and includes things like allocation decisions, case consultation, problem solving and decision-making. It can also involve managers having direct contact with service users or undertaking quality-assurance activity.

It is delivered at the point of need; taking place in day-to-day case planning and review discussions, over the phone and face-to-face, during group discussion in meetings and through email consultation.

It is an essential part of both operational and specialist role line management to support the timely and high quality completion of work.

The recording of management oversight and decision-making on a child's file is best practice and therefore strongly encouraged. In this way the child's file will contain a full history of the decisions made, how they were made and by whom.

However this form of management oversight does not take the place of formal supervision and should not be recorded as such.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Supervisor

It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- Make sure that formal supervision takes place for all staff for whom they have managerial responsibility every month or more frequently if this for a NQSW.
- Ensure that supervision is well-prepared and that all supporting document has been read prior to the meeting taking place.
- Ensure that actions agreed in previous meetings have been completed and record progress.
- Ensure that supervision is of a high quality and is reflective.
- Ensure that the Professional Capabilities Framework at the appropriate level is used as the basis for evaluating capacity and identifying learning needs (Standards for Employers of Social Workers, 2014).
- Complete an accurate and timely record of the supervision

In children's homes the Registered Person should ensure that a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision (Children's Homes – National Minimum Standards 2011, Standard 19)

Supervisee

It is the supervisee's responsibility is to make sure that they:

- Attend all supervision sessions as arranged
- Use sessions positively and prepare for and contribute to the sessions.
- Implement any agreed actions

- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development (CPD) which includes keeping a record of their CPD to meet the HCPC registration requirements
- Identify how they have used training and development opportunities
- Identify their learning needs and propose ideas about how these will be met
- Collect and present evidence to demonstrate their professional capability at their level of practice i.e. if they are aiming to successfully achieve a qualification for example the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment or, are wishing to start the route for further progression.

7. Annual Appraisals

Performance and development reviews provide an important opportunity for all employees to have structured and productive conversations, to review performance objectives and progress and to identify any training or development needs.

To be relevant and meaningful performance should be assessed on an on-going basis as part of regular 121 or supervision sessions, rather than on an annual or bi-annual basis.

Performance management is about being clear on the objectives of the organisation, how this links to individual and team performance and how our people practices align to deliver our services.

The objective of effective performance management is to drive organisational performance, develop people and reward equitably.

The key benefits of a clear performance management framework are:

- Outcome focussed performance culture.
- Expectations of all employees are clearly communicated.
- Consistent behaviour where everyone is accountable.
- Improved engagement for high performers.
- It is also important for the supervisee to reflect on their developmental and learning needs and discuss with the supervisor how these can be met; again this discussion should be held regularly within 1-2-1 supervision rather than waiting for the annual appraisal.
- Appraisals support the supervision function.

8. Recording supervision

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that an accurate and timely record of supervision is kept.

Supervision relating to individual children (i.e. "case supervision") will need to be recorded on the child's file using either the LCS Case Supervision Template or as a case-note dependant on the area of service that is working with the child and the information system that is in use.

- In LCS click "menu"
- In the "jump to" box type "supervision"
- Follow the process to enter the date of the supervision meeting and select the worker being supervised
- This will then show you a list of all the children currently allocated to the worker

- Select the child(ren) who are to be discussed (in the case of sibling groups it is possible to select more than one child if appropriate to do so).
- Click “create”
- Select a blank form to open and complete. Where multiple children have been selected the form will be identical for all of them.
- In the next screen select any elements to be copied forward from the previous supervision (where applicable)
- Select whether the supervision is related to a child or a foster carer.
- Complete and finalise the supervision form.
- This will then be held in the “completed forms” section of the child’s record.

Personal supervision, in which issues such as welfare and professional development will be discussed, should be recorded on the appropriate template. A specific personal supervision file for each worker should be maintained by the line manager so that the record can be reviewed at appropriate times (e.g. induction, appraisal, progression, significant case related issues). Nowadays this file is likely to be held electronically and this must be done in a way that prevents unauthorised access. All staff should have access to a secure folder linked to their system username that only they can access (although IT can access this if needed, subject to appropriate permissions) in which they can store personal documents that are confidential.

Records of supervision should be seen as transferable and should follow the member of staff in the event of transfer within the service.

Supervision records are the property of the organisation, not the individual. From time to time supervisors will need to discuss the content of supervision sessions with others. These might include:

- Managers providing cover in the absence of line manager
- Senior Managers (for quality assurance purposes)
- Investigating officers (e.g. for capability or disciplinary purposes)
- Inspectors

9. Quality Assurance and audits

Audits will be undertaken of supervision files periodically and this may include checking your file to ensure that supervision is taking place to the frequency and standard required.

In some services observations of practice are undertaken which may include observation of supervision