



# Northumberland County Council

## **SUPERVISION POLICY JULY 2019**

**(Reviewed November 2020/21 and January 2024)**

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## 1. Background

The Service's policy on the supervision of staff outlines the general expectations for the supervision of all staff working within Children's Services. It is acknowledged that this policy provides the minimum standards and there will be profession/practice specific elements relating to individual practitioner/manager supervision across Children's Services.

This policy defines supervision and provides an outline of its purpose and function as well as a framework for determining the frequency, content and recording within formal supervision arrangements.

Supervision forms an integral part of the overall performance management process. This culminates in a regular appraisal, at which individuals will evaluate, together with their line managers, their performance, achievement of goals and objectives to date as well as setting goals for the coming year.

## 2. Context

This supervision policy applies to all workers involved in work with children, young people and their families, carers, and communities. This includes direct work and the line management of such work. The policy may also be of use for those staff with less direct involvement with the above groups.

## 3. Policy

All staff as identified in this context are required to receive supervision which complies with this procedure. All supervision arrangements must comply with Northumberland County Council's Equality and Diversity policy. The supervision standards, policy and procedure may be considered in conjunction with other Departmental policies in cases of a disciplinary, capability or grievance nature. These policies include:

- Human resources; [Human Resources Link](#)
- Equality and diversity policy; [Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy](#)
- Capability and Managing Performance Policy; [Capability and Managing Performance Policy](#)
- Code of conduct; [Code of Conduct](#)
- Dignity at Work policy; [Dignity at Work Policy](#)
- Raising Concerns at Work Policy. [Raising Concerns at Work Policy](#)

Supervisors and supervisees have a joint responsibility to constructively contribute to the supervisory process and must be familiar with this policy and procedure.

Supervision is always the responsibility of the line manager. However, circumstances may dictate occasionally where the line manager may need to delegate this responsibility to another person who is agreed as being accountable in their absence.

#### **4. Purpose**

Supervision is the focal point of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. There are four aspects to supervision which involve the following elements. It is acknowledged that time dedicated to these areas will vary between sessions and supervisees as the focus of the discussion may well revolve around current issues and concerns. However, these elements must be included within the supervision session. The four elements together provide benefits to the manager and organisation, the supervisee and service users.

#### **Managerial**

The line manager will use supervision to enable these functions to be carried out:

- a. Ensure that policies and procedures are carried out;
- b. Ensure that there is clarity in terms of accountabilities and goals;
- c. Regulation and monitoring of workload;
- d. Agree and record objectives and timescales for specific tasks (recording, audit, retention);
- e. Assess and review decisions, risk management and evidence based reflective practice;
- f. Provide a forum for two-way flow of information between front line practitioners and managers at all levels.

The supervisor will use the personal supervision template in all formal supervisions as a tool to ensure supervisees are meeting the above requirements (Appendix B).

#### **Learning /Developmental**

The line manager and supervisee will need to consider any gaps in knowledge or professional aspects of the work and how it may be developed by:

- a. Review of progress to date as discussed within the appraisal;
- b. Training which can include 'on the job' training in terms of mentoring, peer supervision, informal discussion, demonstration, and formal training which is directly related to the job which may be core training or specialisms. Supervision should consider training needs and an evaluation of the impact that training completed has had on the worker and their practice
- c. Discussing performance and providing feedback;

- d. Ensuring staff read and access online appropriate and relevant professional research, journals, and documents.

### **Supportive**

The line manager may be required to support the supervisee with professional or personal issues to:

- a. Ensure that personal or professional issues which may be currently impacting upon performance are reacted to and responded to with care;
- b. To facilitate and enable staff to reflect upon their contribution both with service users and as a team member in terms of their input to the organisation and team.

### **Health and Safety**

This element gives the supervisor and supervisee the opportunity to discuss any health or safety concerns of a personal or general nature to enable:

- a. Staff to discuss any current stressful situations, either at work or home;
- b. Staff to manage any stress impact concerning any stressful work or complaints;
- c. Consideration of risks in the workplace;
- d. Management of personal safety and aggressive incidents.

If any member of staff feels that their concerns about feeling 'at risk' are not being dealt with effectively by their supervisor, they can further their concerns through line management or through the whistleblowing policy.

In addition to the above, for those involved in the provision of social care services to children and young people and their family's supervision should include consideration and discussion of the following with a record being made within the case supervision record:

- a. Ensure that the child or adult service user's views, concerns and understanding of their situation have been clearly listened to, and are included in work throughout a case, i.e. assessment, planning, intervention, and review;
- b. Reflection on their work and interaction with services users particularly regarding evidence-based practice;
- c. Include a clear outline of the case in line with the Signs of Safety approach including what we are worried about, what is working well and what needs to happen; and

- d. An evaluation of progression against the agreed care plan and any additional actions required and tasks to progress work outlining realistic timescales.

## **5. Case Supervision Minimum Requirements**

Newly opened cases, newly accommodated children and children who have newly been given a child protection plan, are subject to review after three months (4 weeks and then 12 weeks for LAC) and there is an expectation that these children are discussed formally in supervision at least twice before the first review (CIN and CPP) and the second review (CIN).

For the above groups, there is an expectation that their welfare and circumstance will be discussed in formal supervision between the supervisee and their supervisor at least twice in every review period thereafter. That will normally be twice in a six-month period to include the child's current situation, progress against review recommendations and any proposed changes in the plan.

For Early Help cases, there must be a case discussion before the first Team around the Family (TAF) meeting and then case discussion twice in every TAF review period (every three months) thereafter. Obviously, these are minimum requirements and where situations are complex and children are seen to be at high risk or workers are anxious about them, then this minimum requirement should be exceeded.

There is also an expectation that these cases will be checked by the supervisor for compliance with legal regulations/policy requirements, i.e. statutory visits, assessments, plans and reviews and case recording. There will also be an expectation that the supervisor is also actively checking whether cases are currently being managed at the appropriate level and whether the case needs to be either closed or stepped up/down based on the circumstances of the case at that point in time.

Cases selected for case discussion between the supervisee and supervisor must be rotated to ensure that the above case supervision requirements are met.

The importance of informal supervision is recognised, however, discussions around case issues must be given the appropriate time and space to allow for a reflection on the issues raised and a fully considered response from a manager. Where a decision/advice/guidance is provided by a manager, this must be recorded within the case notes for that child by the allocated worker with a copy to the Manager.

Recording of a case supervision should be on the child's record within 5 days however, in urgent situations, this needs to be on the system within 24 hours.

### **Cases held by Social Work Support Assistants (SWSA)**

It is acknowledged that there are some circumstances where cases are held by SWSAs, particularly in the Disabled Children's Team, when the focus of intervention is the provision and monitoring of packages of short break care. In those cases, it may be that SWSAs are only seeing children and families every 6 months and therefore a 3 monthly supervision regime may not be useful.

In those specific circumstances, the frequency of supervision can be set at 6 monthly. No case will go more than 6 months without a formal supervision. Team Managers should be clear about the rationale for that 6 monthly supervision frequency, and this should be recorded within the case summary.

Where there is a change in circumstance within a particular case that warrants a supervision discussion being held earlier than the set 6 monthly period, this should be arranged without delay.

**Frequency of supervision for non-social work cases:**

Needs CSM oversight/recorded on ICS to determine if the case only requires 6 monthly supervisions.

To also be informed by other agency members of the case or those settled cases.

Include Care leavers, Disabled Children, Accommodation Team and Sorted cases.

## **6. Induction and Training**

Full induction procedures for Northumberland Council are accessed via the agreed Induction Programme.

All newly appointed Local Authority employees of the Children's Workforce must be given a copy of the Supervision Policy and related paperwork. Employees are required to ensure that they familiarise themselves with these procedures. All new in post supervisors must attend a half day introductory supervisors training course run by Learning and Development within their first 6 months in post. It will be expected that supervisors will follow this training up by completing the 2-day supervision training course in a period agreed with their supervisor and informed by their appraisal targets. Senior Managers will also regularly sample to quality assure supervisions being provided as part of Managers professional development.

## **7. Making Supervision Work**

### **Frequency**

All full-time established staff must have supervision at least monthly. Where a supervisor has a larger number of direct reports, i.e. over eight, then this monthly timeframe can extend to 6-weekly with the authorisation of their line manager. There may be exceptions to this, i.e. where possible it is recommended that staff new to the role have more frequent supervision e.g. weekly for at least the first month. All Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) staff must have fortnightly supervision for the duration of the ASYE period if there are difficulties regarding competence or capability or other difficulties then more frequent supervision may be required depending on accountabilities or the tasks supervisees are managing.

The frequency of supervision should be determined and recorded as an agreement between the supervisor and supervisee. Where supervision is cancelled (for whatever reason) by either party, this must be rearranged within the next month. Both parties should pursue this, but it is ultimately the supervisor's responsibility to arrange/rearrange supervision. In circumstances where supervision needs to be rearranged, the supervisor must record the reasons for supervision being cancelled and date of original supervision session. This will help supervisors track that the expected frequency of supervision is being both offered and taken up.

## **Time**

When arranging supervision, consideration must be given to the suitability of the time of day for arranging this and how competing demands can impact on either the supervisor or supervisee's ability to deliver/receive high quality supervision.

## **Setting**

The environment must be non-threatening and:

- a. Appropriate to both parties;
- b. Accessible to staff with any disability;
- c. Quiet and undisturbed in terms of confidentiality;
- d. Without distractions;
- e. Comply with insurance and health and safety requirements.

## **Duration**

The recommendation is for supervision sessions to have an allocated time set aside of 2 hours per session, however, it is recognised that this may need to vary according to the needs of individuals. Sufficient time must be set aside for preparation in order that all supervision elements are covered adequately.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality must be discussed during the initial induction period and during the signing of the Supervision Agreement between supervisor and supervisee so that both are clear when this may be breached.

The following will also apply and must be made explicit:

1. Should the supervisee disclose personal matters that have a bearing on their work they may request that no details are recorded or shared with other members of the department. The decision on whether to record and share the information and the amount of detail necessary will be determined by the supervisor, as far as possible with the agreement of the supervisee. However, the overwhelming consideration will be the welfare of children and the need to provide them with a professional and safe service;
2. Written records of supervision sessions must be subject to bi-annual audits by the supervisor's line manager to ensure compliance with Service procedures;
3. The supervisor as part of their own supervision will sometimes find it necessary to disclose material discussed in supervision with their line manager. This must have been discussed in principle when signing the supervision agreement;



4. Regulators in the course of their work may need to audit individual supervision files. Supervision files may therefore be read during inspections etc.

### **Nature of the Supervisory Relationship**

The supervisor is responsible for the supervisee's work. The supervisor must therefore be kept aware and informed of the supervisee's workload and other issues that may affect performance e.g. any personal issues, stress management, time management issues etc. Supervision is also the appropriate forum to ensure that staff have the support that they need to deal with issues relating to any complaints, discrimination or racism from service users, customers, or colleagues.

Responsibility for preparing the supervision agenda is a two-way responsibility. Supervisees and supervisors must take the time prior to supervision sessions to arrange specific items they wish to discuss within the session. Supervisee's must take a proactive part in supervision by considering cases to be discussed, training and development needs and any policy, practice issues that are pertinent.

Supervision takes place usually on a one-to-one basis but can take place in groups for peer supervision. Peer supervision may provide additional benefits for staff in terms of support and provide a forum for open debate, but it is not a substitute for an accountable and on-going supervisory relationship. Group supervision will be offered to support ongoing professional development using the Signs of Safety approach.

Any difficulties regarding chronic lateness, cancellations or interruptions should be recorded within the supervision notes. If there are problems which cannot be resolved between the supervisor and supervisee then the supervisor's line manager must be involved and consulted to resolve the problem. Any subsequent resolution must be by agreement and may involve a third party.

### **Appraisal**

Supervision is an integral part of the appraisal process and goals set in any appraisal year must be formally reviewed on at least a 6 monthly basis and discussed and reviewed in supervision on a regular basis. This must include identification of developmental needs and the requisite support to meet these, i.e. registering with Research in Practice, providing opportunities for shadowing, and coaching etc.

Staff development discussions and actions should also be informed by feedback from case audits that will help to highlight areas where professional development is needed.

## **Further Development of supervision**

Between November and December 2023 managers piloted using a new individual supervision form in the live recording system (see Appendix D). This promotes deeper and more focused thinking about the wellbeing/safety/success of a child, the effectiveness of their plan, reflections on practice and what needs to happen. Information is recorded as a quantitative scale and qualitative narrative about what made the practitioner score that high and what stopped them scoring higher. This aligns with the meaningful measures.

Themes from managers and practitioners about what they liked included the supervision record being on a form rather than a case note, the action section because it is more specific, the opportunity to reflect and practitioners being able to pre-populate the form in preparation for the discussion. The suggestions about what could be better highlighted there are different understandings of what supervision should include. When the issues were explored further it was more about the form asking people to think in a different but more focused way. Many of the issues identified have an easy solution through ongoing guidance, support and regular use over time. However, the wording of the scaling questions and how information pulls forward from the last form are areas to be developed.

Audits of the forms identified that the quality of supervision and how the discussion was recorded varied across managers and teams. Strengths included the use of clear and simple language and an acknowledgement of strengths and worries about a child's wellbeing/safety/success and the progress of their plan. Most supervision discussions aligned to the reason why CSC were involved and there was some evidence of reflective discussions taking place. Areas to develop included using the views of the family, using behavioural specific language that identifies impact and making sure the discussion considered how the plan can and does work in times of stress and possible danger over a sufficient period.

The next steps identified are to work with colleagues in North Yorkshire to share learning and to develop the form further, explore the use of an incident form and group supervision forms and to develop a supervision framework for the service.

## **8. Supervision Agreement**

A formal Supervision Agreement should be made during the induction process, within the first week of employment of any new employee (Appendix A). This Supervision Agreement will be reviewed when there is a change of supervisor.

## **9. Recording, Audit and Retention**

Supervision sessions will always be recorded using the agreed corporate format. The

records will be maintained with a copy kept by the Supervisor and Supervisee. A copy of the supervision record will be provided to the supervisee within 5 days and confirmation that the copy is accurate will be signed at the next supervision with any amendments noted. The personal supervision record includes training and development, sickness, flexi, and any information relating to performance both areas of good practice and areas for development.

The recording of case specific information in the supervision of front-line staff must be inputted on Liquid Logic (the electronic recording system for children and families) by the supervisor. Ideally this will take place during the supervision session or, if this is not possible, within 5 days of the meeting (24 hours if urgent).

Bearing in mind this is the child's record, detail relating to personnel, personal or sensitive issues should be recorded on personnel records/files and retained as detailed within this section. In addition, the supervision record on Liquid Logic will be used to record reflective practice or analysis of theory or method where this discussion relates directly to ongoing work on that case.

The supervisor's line manager will ensure that a system is in place to monitor that supervision takes place at appropriate intervals.

The Supervision record is the property of Northumberland County Council and will be retained by the Council. Supervision records of staff working directly with children and young people are covered by Northumberland County Council Retention of Records Policy and therefore should be kept for 25 years. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to ensure that such records are archived appropriately.

## **10. Miscellaneous**

### **Supervision through Internal Secondments**

Staff who are seconded will, in terms of supervision, become the responsibility of the line manager of the seconded post. Objectives must be set that outline the value the secondee can add to the organisation achieving its desired outcomes.

### **Agency Staff**

All agency staff utilised by Children's Services will be subject to the same standards and expectations as directly employed staff.



# Northumberland County Council

## SUPERVISION CONTRACT

**Between:**

**Frequency:**

**Location:**

**Duration of Session.:**

All information between supervisor and supervisee will be treated with respect and in a professional manner; this will include maintaining confidentiality of the information shared, unless prior agreement by both parties to discuss information out with the session; or there is “a need to know” to maintain safe working practice.

### Record Keeping

A supervision record will be kept for each session. Both supervisor and supervisee to retain a copy of these records which will be signed and dated by both.

### Agenda

Each supervision session will have a set agenda with an opportunity for both parties to add to the agenda.

### Preparation for Supervision

Both parties have the right to expect that each will come to the session prepared for the topics on the agenda.

### Commitment

Commitment to contracted arrangements should be a responsibility shared between supervisor and supervisee and should form an agenda item in supervision from time to time.

Both parties can throughout the reporting period request a supervision session, also the supervisee can make this request of a senior staff member (Line Manager for the supervisor) if the direct supervisor is unable to accommodate outside normal working arrangements.

### Content

Supervision sessions may cover:

The teams/your personal workload, tasks, including ways of working, working environment, your well-being, any training, and development you have undertaken, or would like to undertake, your flexi time and annual leave and any other relevant areas that you would like to discuss.

Disagreements

Areas of disagreement between supervisor and supervisee will be recorded on the supervision records. Areas of disagreement that cannot be resolved will be referred to the Line Manager.

**This contract will be reviewed on:**

**Signed (supervisee):**

**Date:**

**Signed (supervisor):**

**Date:**

## Appendix B Personal Supervision Template



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### Monthly One to One Supervision Pro-forma

Employee Name:	
Manager/Supervisor Name:	
Date of last 1:1	
Date of this 1:1	
<b>Overall Wellbeing</b>	
Date last Stress Risk Assessment (SRA) completed or reviewed:	
Current status of SRA (including any outstanding actions):	
Date last Wellbeing Plan completed or reviewed:	
Current status of Wellbeing Plan (including any outstanding actions)	
Details of all reasonable adjustments (in line with the Equality Act (2010)) in place or to be implemented?	
Date last formal review with Occupational Health took place in relation to review of reasonable adjustments in place?	
Any new matters to bring to the attention of manager (including personal or professional concerns)?	
Any new matters to bring to the attention of	

<p>manager (including work environment and relationships with colleagues)?</p>		
<p>Any proposed suggested changes to ongoing supervision arrangements including venue, frequency, structure etc?</p>		
<p><b>Work Supervision</b></p>		
<p>Review of action points from previous one to one:</p>		
<p>Current Key Issues</p>		<p>Actions</p>





## Appendix C Principles of Supervision Statement



# Northumberland County Council

## **Northumberland County Council** **Principles of Effective Supervision in Children's Social Care**

**“Good social work involves the capacity to develop/maintain relationships, manage the emotional dimension of the work and make judgements and decisions. This is demanding work and will only be effective if social workers reflect critically on their practice and continue to develop their knowledge and skills.”**

***(Wonnacott, 2012)***

1. All social workers/practitioners will have a written supervision agreement, and this should be reviewed at least annually and at each change of supervisor.
2. All practitioners and managers in Northumberland Children's Services will receive monthly formal supervision sessions. New starters (at all levels) will receive additional supervision in their first and third week of employment and newly qualified social workers (AYSE) will receive fortnightly supervision from their line manager and allocated consultant social worker or principal social worker. We will increase the frequency of supervision if the job requires it.
3. Supervision will provide a safe space in which practice can be discussed openly and critically. It will take place within the supervisor's and supervisee's paid hours of employment and in a quiet area, where case details can be discussed without being overheard and interruptions kept to a minimum. Access to ICS/electronic databases and other electronic records should be available.
4. To ensure that we maintain consistent standards, supervision will cover: professional learning and development needs; performance and competency; professional accountability and responsibility; and emotional well-being and resilience.
5. Both supervisee and supervisor must prepare for formal supervision sessions.
6. Staff will decide in advance of the supervision which priority cases need to be discussed. All cases must be discussed at least once every three months, to allow managers oversight of all children's cases within supervision.
7. Supervision should reflect our understanding of and commitment to diversity and equality issues. It must support evidence informed practice, with signposting to literature, research, and Tri-x (policy and procedures).
8. All supervision sessions MUST be recorded by the supervisor and signed/dated by both supervisor and supervisee. Casework reflection and analysis, with decisions and agreed actions MUST be recorded on Liquid Logic by the manager within the timescales reflected in the supervision policy.

9. All practitioners and managers will have two observations of practice each year, as an integral part of continual professional development. This will be planned and discussed within supervision.

10. If the supervisor is absent from work for a period longer than four weeks, alternative formal supervision arrangements will be put in place. In any urgent situation a staff member should feel free to approach a manager for directions or support.

11. Any supervisee who is concerned about the quality or quantity of supervision received should discuss this with the supervisor in the first instance. Any concerns not resolved, should then be raised with the supervisor's line manager.

12. Supervision training is mandatory for managers and practitioners carrying out supervision.

*These Principles should be read along with Northumberland County Council Supervision Policy*

### **Bibliography**

**Wonnacott, J. (2012) *Mastering Social Work Supervision*, Jessica Kinglsey, London**

## Appendix D Individual Supervision Template used in pilot

Details of supervision	
Supervision type	
Supervisors name	
Worker's name	
Date of supervision	
Details of the children/young people	
Is the child/young persons personal information up to date?	
Are the family network details up to date?	
Date the child/young person was last seen	
Wellbeing/Safety/Success of the child/young person	
On a scale of 0 to 10 where 10 means everybody is confident and satisfied that everything is on track in the child/young person's home and life to enable them to grow up well and be successful and 0 means there are so many worries for the child/young person across all areas of their life that we can't see how they will grow up to have the success in their life they are capable of, where do you rate this situation today?	
What are the things that made you score this high?	
What stops you from scoring any higher?	
What are the things that need to happen to make things better and safer for the child/ young person?	
Progress of the plan of the child/young person, family and the network	
On a scale of 0-10 where 10 is the plan has a clear goal, the action and behaviours and outcomes to aim to be achieved; they have all been explained and understood by the child/young person, family and network members, the plan has been signed up and agreed with a network lead and tested/fire drilled over an agreed time span and 0 is a plan has been agreed in principle, but this has yet to begin with the child/young person, family and network and we still need to talk about the worries or goals, let alone who is going to do what when and how.	
What are the things that made you score this high?	
What stops you from scoring any higher?	
What are the very next things that need to happen to make progress with the plan for the child/young person?	
Practitioner's Reflection and Next Steps	
On a scale of 0 – 10 where 10 is you know where you are going with your work with the family, you are very grounded in making things better and safer for the child/young person in this situation, and you have the support you need, and 0 is you don't know where to go next, and you don't have the support you need?	
What are the things that made you score this high?	
What are the very next things that need to happen to move up the scale?	

What are the most important things you need help with to progress the work and by when?	
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**Actions**  
 The purpose of this table is to record and track any actions identified and agreed in supervision. This allows the supervisor to check against agreed actions and consider progress. It will be helpful for the supervisor and practitioner to check against the timeline for possible new actions from this supervision.

Actions from supervision	Who will do it	When will it be done by?	Update	Completed (Y/N)