1.1.7 Supervision Policy and Procedure

**SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter sets out how supervision is carried out within Northamptonshire Children's Trust and applies to all members of our workforce whose role relates to children, young people and family practice.

**RELATED GUIDANCE AND LEGISLATION**

[**Research in Practice (RiP) Reflective Supervision: Resource Pack (2017)**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Post-qualifying standard: Knowledge and skills statement for child and family practitioners**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708704/Post-qualifying_standard-KSS_for_child_and_family_practitioners.pdf)

[**Post-qualifying standard: Knowledge and skills statements for child and family practice supervisors**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708705/Post-qualifying_standard-KSS_for_child_and_family_practice_supervisors.pdf)

[**Knowledge and skills statement for practice leaders**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691540/Knowledge_and_skills_statement_for_practice_leaders.pdf)

[**Northamptonshire Children's Trust - Our Relational Practice**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html) **Approach**

**AMENDMENT**

In September 2024, section 5.7 was updated to reflect changes in joint supervision arrangements for cases that are allocated to both Children in Care social workers and Personal Advisors. Section 5.2.5 (Themed Supervision) was also added to this chapter.

**1. Introduction**

Signs of Safety (SofS) underpins our practice in regards to supervision. The templates used to record supervision are based on SofS principles. Supervision is a fundamental part of effective social work practice; it enables reflective practice to occur and ensures that evidence based practice is followed. Supervision is an ongoing process that provides the opportunity for workers to think, explore and confront issues that are pertinent to their ability to perform their role to the expected standard. It is also a mutually beneficial exchange which allows supervisors and supervisees to explore what, why and how work is undertaken and managed within the overarching framework of Northamptonshire Children's Trust's objectives, values and priorities - particularly keeping children, young people and families at the heart of all we do – in every action we take and every decision we make.

The purpose of supervision includes, but is not limited to:

* Ensuring the best interest of the children young people and families is at the heart of the process;
* Ensuring the quality and standard of the service delivered to the children, young people and families. This includes ensuring high quality decision making and interventions;
* Promoting the development and skills of the workforce;
* Promoting competent, accountable, empowered and anti-oppressive practice;
* Caseload and workload management
* Identification of further personal learning, career and development opportunities

The purpose of this policy is to provide a common framework and clear expectations for supervision.

This policy has been written for all Northamptonshire Children's Trust services, in most cases it refers to the standards for oversight of social work but is designed to ensure consistent supervision practice across all areas of practice.

The policy is guided by The Social Work Care Standards Act 2000. It is also drawn from a theoretical basis in the work of Morrison, T, & Wonnacott, J (2010) and Kolb's (D) (1984) Reflective cycle. The policy is also supported by the [**'Research in Practice' (RiP) Reflective Supervision: Resource Pack (2017)**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html).

**2. Supervision Policy**

It is our policy, to provide high quality supervision, which supports and motivates all and encourages reflective practice. Supervision will also be used to monitor performance and targets set at appraisal, thereby linking individual practice and performance with our aims and objectives.

This policy and procedure sets out how the workforce will be supervised and also provides managers, practice leaders and supervisors with the framework and tools required to supervise effectively. Managers, supervisors and supervisees are jointly responsible for ensuring that supervision meets the standards as outlined in this policy and procedure.

**3. Supervision Framework**

The Supervision Framework is designed to provide the key requirements and processes for supervision. It aims to ensure a consistent approach to supervision for all.

The components of the framework are:

1. This policy and procedure is communicated through regular training for managers, supervisors and the wider workforce;
2. Managers are responsible for ensuring that everyone they are responsible for has a designated supervisor;
3. Well-being will be discussed and recorded as the first agenda item;
4. Both Personal and Practice Supervision is a right, it is the responsibility of the supervisor and supervisee to make this happen. Supervision must take place at least once every calendar month;
5. Training and development, including appraisal targets, will be discussed at each supervision;
6. Both supervisor and supervisee should agree the agenda for supervision in advance of the supervision meeting;
7. Supervisees and supervisors should attend prepared for the session;
8. Actions from previous supervisions will be tracked within supervisions until they are completed;
9. Both the supervisor and supervisee must sign supervision records to confirm they agree the record is a true and accurate reflection of the supervision;
10. Cases will be anonymised (ID numbers) and any decisions recorded onto the child's record (as appropriate);
11. Performance concerns will be noted along with SMART action planning to address identified issues;
12. Reflective Practice resources (e.g. Appendix F) should be used to facilitate Practice and Group Supervision. Where appropriate Group Supervision should be use;
13. Supervision will incorporate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to ensure all have the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed in their job role, this will include Observation of Practice (where applicable);
14. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all social workers in their team are registered with [**Social Work England (SWE)**](https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/);
15. Practice Leaders, Practice Supervisors and Child and Family Practitioners are responsible to ensure they meet the standards as defined within the [**Knowledge and Skills Statements (Department for Education)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work).

**4. Supervision Agreement**

A suitable Supervision Agreement is contained in Appendix A and Supervision Standards are laid out in Appendix B

The purpose of the supervision agreement is to establish the basis on which the supervisor and supervisee will work together during one to one supervisions. This establishment of “ground rules” should be through negotiation and should clarify the rights and expectations on both sides to create a safe, secure and effective supervisory setting.

When establishing the supervision agreement, the following will be discussed:

* The purpose of supervision;
* The frequency of supervision;
* The specific responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee;
* The preparation required before a session including agenda setting, producing summaries, reading;
* The recording of supervision, including where records will be kept to safeguard confidentiality, how quickly records will be given to the supervisee for agreement;
* The arrangements for any informal supervision;
* How any difficulties with supervision will be resolved;
* How and when the agreement will be reviewed;
* The practical arrangements (e.g. the process if supervision has to be cancelled/rearranged, an agreement that supervision will be uninterrupted, the anticipated length of time for each session).

**5. Supervision Procedure**

The components of the framework are to be delivered through the supervision procedure.

5.1 Definition of Supervision

Supervision is an ongoing process in which the supervisee receives guidance, support and constructive challenge in a formal setting and organisational, professional and personal objectives are reviewed.

5.2 Types of Supervision

5.2.1 Personal Supervision and Practice Supervision

On most occasions personal supervision and practice supervision will take place during the same session, but have separate elements and are recorded separately. At all times supervisors and supervisees hold individual and joint responsibility to ensure purposeful and effective supervision takes place.

At other times there will be 'Ad Hoc/Informal discussions' and decision making.

5.2.2 Ad Hoc Practice/Informal Discussions

Ad Hoc/Informal discussions or decisions are likely to be needed between planned Practice Supervision sessions on a case by case basis, and may result from unexpected changes of circumstances or new incidents. Informal supervision must not replace formal planned sessions, however can be used to evidence decision making that may change the direction of a case. All case decisions must be recorded on the electronic case file under either (Carefirst) C – Case discussion or C – Decision – management heading and the professionals involved in the discussion should agree who would record that. (Capita) comms log – management oversight, they are not formal supervisions and therefore should not be recorded as such.

5.2.3 Group Supervision

Group supervision encourages practitioners to reflect on practice and how attitudes, approaches and skills affect the relationships they have with both service users and colleagues. This may involve working through the values and principles and giving examples of how these principles have been applied in practice. Examples may relate to professionalism, conduct and confidentiality. We appreciate the value this brings to continuously improving practice and we aim to make use of group supervision at least once a month in each team / service area.

Teams may wish to make records of the group's supervision as a resource for future group supervision sessions.

Vision of Group Supervision

The logic within group supervision is to 'slow the thinking down'. This enables the following:

* Creating and building a shared, structured, collective team and agency learning culture and enable a safe process for thinking through cases using the Signs of Safety approach which is our overarching framework;
* Enable workers to explore each other's cases, bringing their best thinking, including alternative perspectives, and to do this without getting caught in one or two people dominating or the group telling the practitioner whose case it is what they must do;
* Develop a shared practice of bringing a questioning approach to casework rather than trying to arrive at answers.

5.2.4 Peer Group Supervision

Peer Group Supervision is an effective form of leaderless peer group discussions. Team members confer with one another by reciprocating key topics of their professional everyday lives, in order to provide solutions for difficult situations with colleagues. The participants learn better ways to manage professional problems and offers new ideas and support. This results in the group members' increased professionalism within their work environments.

Two examples of models that can be used to support this activity are referenced in appendices F & G. If sessions are effectively managed and prepared in accordance with this policy, this time frame will be manageable.

The frequency of formal supervision for NQSWs is covered in section 4.4 Frequency of Personal Supervision.

5.2.5 Themed Supervision

Themed Supervision is an effective form of peer group discussions within the Leaving Care Service. Team Managers agree on themes i.e. areas of practice that require development. Each month, Team Managers and their teams will review cases that fall within the remit of that month’s theme. Patterns that emerge are recorded and used to identify remedial action and development work , to improved practice and achieve better outcomes for young people.

5.3 Personal Supervision

Personal supervision is the opportunity for supervisors/managers and supervisee to:

* Spend dedicated time to support professional and career development and to ensure that the supervisee understands the role to which they are appointed to and are supported to achieve their best in their role;
* Give time and space to ensure that the supervisor can hear of any issues both personal and professional which are affecting the supervisee within the post held, and ensures support is in place. For example, this would include agreeing leave arrangements or discussing health and wellbeing, or problems in the workplace;
* Give and receive constructive feedback this incudes focusing on individual strengths and how the supervisor is supporting the individual to achieve their best in the role;
* Agree prioritisation of tasks and work planning, and for the supervisor to provide support including ensuring that lieu time arrangements are agreed;
* Jointly review continual professional development needs and agree how these needs will be met. The learning and developments 'needs' are to be explicit to ensure excellent practice standards for the child and family and to ensure the qualified social workers, will meet the NAAS (National Assessment and Accreditation System);
* Provide a forum in which any performance or quality of practice concerns are identified and plans formulated to improve performance and/or quality and monitor such plans;
* Provide a basis for the collection of evidence for the annual appraisal, with particular reference to training, learning and development needs;
* Provides an opportunity to review workers current case load and ensures that this is within the individuals' professional competency and capacity. This should be balanced against the demands of the case load at that point. Case load management is a fluid dynamic process.

5.4 Frequency of Personal Supervision

Personal Supervision will be held every 4 weeks.

The frequency of personal supervision must may need to increase depending on the needs of the supervisee and the complexity of their workload. If a supervision session needs to be rearranged it should only be done by mutual consent and should be rescheduled within 7 working days to ensure supervision is not missed. The reason for the postponement will be recorded in the supervision record.

The template for recording Personal Supervision is at Appendix C. The record should be agreed by both parties and held on the supervisee's supervision file.

5.5 Newly Appointed, Newly Qualified or Supervisee with Performance Management Plans

Supervisees, in their probationary period or with identified performance improvement Needs, will benefit from more frequent supervision.

Newly Qualified Social Workers will receive formal supervision on a weekly basis for the initial six weeks and then fortnightly for the duration of the first six months and a minimum of one supervision every 4 weeks for the remainder of their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE). Formal supervision consists of both Personal and Practice Supervision with their line manager and reflective supervision with their Professional Social Work Educator. When supervising newly qualified social workers, team managers and supervisors must refer to Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Booklet and any other related ASYE documents.

During their probation period staff will receive supervision within their first week, fortnightly for the first three months and thereafter at a frequency that is no less 4 weekly.

For supervisee on performance improvement plans the frequency will be determined in the plan and proportionate to the identified concerns.

5.6 Practice Observation

In any one year the supervisor should arrange to undertake two practice observations for all case holding staff, some examples of which may include a home visit, presentation at case conference/meeting, attendance at court or direct work with children. The observation should be recorded appropriately on the electronic case record as practice observation. The observation completed could be in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Framework process and the same template should be used for both.

5.7 Frequency of Practice Supervision

The frequency of Practice Supervision will depend on the child's status, as well as complexity of the case and needs of the supervisee. All Practice Supervision must be recorded on the child / young person's electronic record. The frequency is as follows;

* All children should be discussed within supervision within four weeks of allocation or transfer to allocated worker
* Leaving Care (18+) – every eight weeks;
* Based on the needs of the young people, where a social worker and a Leaving Care Personal Advisor are involved, joint supervision should take place no less than three monthly. In all other circumstances where there is co-working involved, joint supervision should take place every eight weeks, where it is helpful and effective to do so. .
* Early Help and Prevention team – every eight weeks;
* Private Fostering case – every eight weeks;
* Post Order – every twelve weeks;
* Child in Need – every four weeks (minimum frequency);
* Child Protection – every four weeks (minimum frequency);
* Children in Care (including in care proceedings, and short breaks) – every four weeks;
* Children in permanent foster care (ratified by panel) – every two months. This should only happen once the child has been in the placement a year and the visits have reduced to every twelve weeks;
* Children with disabilities if the child is open to the Disabled Children's Team and has a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or Child in Care Plan the same timescales as above should be followed;
* Children with disabilities – Family Support Direct payments (care package) – every twelve weeks.

Monthly group reflective supervision is encouraged.

5.8 Frequency of Practice Supervision – Foster Carers and Adopters

For foster carers, the frequency Practice Supervision is dependent on the placement type. Practice Supervision must be recorded on the foster carers or adopters electronic record.

* Foster Carers – 4 weeks except if the placement is 'long term', in which case this takes place every twelve weeks, or more frequent as required;
* Adopters – 4 weeks.

5.9 Recording of Practice Supervision

Supervisors must prepare for supervision by having the individual workers' case load list available from BIPI or Carefirst. This is to ensure all cases are prioritised for discussion along with follow up of outstanding actions and timely throughput to Step down or case closure.

Supervisees must prepare for supervision by covering the following sections in the Carefirst observations 'Supervision' dropdown:

* What are we worried about;
* What's working well;
* Voice of the Child.

for every child on their case load. When a case is first allocated this will potentially be a lengthy task however completion of subsequent observations can be by way of update only, unless a new episode occurs such as a child becoming looked after.

During supervision, supervisors along with the supervisees, must cover the following sections in the Carefirst observations 'Supervision' dropdown:

* Actions reviewed from previous supervision. Where were we last time? Reflection on the actions from previous practice supervision, anything outstanding why? If still relevant timescales to complete;
* Overview of 'significant' changes in circumstances, reflection of impact of change (what is different since the last conversation, practice supervision?) Last time the child was seen, whether it was seen alone? Child's voice/ What has changed for the child? How does that impact upon the assessed risks and therefore what is the impact on the plan? Are things better/ worse? What have we done and what is the impact of our intervention;
* What needs to happen. Where next? Is the plan still suitable to meet identified risks and needs? SMART action planning, do we need to step up or step down? Are we making expected progress to meet the child/ren timescales Any immediate safeguarding actions required? Any actions from the monthly audit to be followed up? Is case recording up to date and contemporaneous.

All supervision sessions, including group sessions, must be recorded in the electronic record at the time of the supervision, or if not possible, within 72 hours (three working days). Practice supervision for children being supported by social care will be recorded in the 'Supervision' dropdown available in Carefirst observations, unless the case is for a child whose records are on Capita.

Templates for recording both Personal Supervision and Practice Supervision of fostering/adoption cases are included in the appendices – see Appendix C and D2, respectively. The Personal Supervision Record (Appendix C) should be agreed and signed by both parties and held on the supervisee's supervision file. The case discussion record prepared by the worker (Appendix D2 depending which area of the service) should be uploaded to care store.

Discretion can be used as to the depth of discussion on some cases; for example, if a case has had a number of informal discussions in the preceding month, which have been recorded at the time, then a supervision record on Carefirst can be noted to this effect and reference made to the previous case discussions.

Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that each worker has an up to date Personal Appraisal and Development Programme (PADP) which is reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year. The worker is responsible for maintaining their own CPD record, also known as a Learning Log (required for Social Work England registration).

5.10 Personal Supervision File

All must have an electronic personal supervision file held confidentially that contains:

* Supervision Agreement (Appendix A);
* The supervisee's CPD record or Learning Log. The supervisee is responsible for maintaining their own record;
* Information such as date of last Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, Social Work England registration, driving licence and insurance check
* PADP;
* Agreed records of personal supervision.

Matters arising with regard to the following must always be shared and recorded:

* Issues concerning performance and conduct;
* Case issues which have the potential to/or have generated a complaint from a service user;
* Learning from case file audits and Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs);
* Issues concerning safety of those we support and the supervisee;
* Matters involving legal issues affecting the service or the supervisee;
* Annual Personal Development Plans which are shared with the supervisee and workforce development team.

Personal Supervision Records will be stored for the duration of the employees' period of employment and will be accessible to both the supervisor and supervisee as a reference tool.

Supervision files will be made available to inspectors who may wish to review them as part of the inspection, and/ or to supervisor's managers for quality assurance purposes.

Upon the employee leaving Northamptonshire Children's Trust, Personal Supervision Records will be retained for 10 years in accordance with the Record retention guidelines before being destroyed.

**6. Annual Performance Appraisal**

We are all accountable for continuously learning, improving the quality of our work and safeguarding high standards of care. Performance appraisals give individuals and their supervisor an opportunity to reflect on and review the effectiveness of what we do (our objectives), how we do it (our behaviours) and the impact this has. Our objectives and development plan help us to focus on what we need to achieve personally to make a positive difference for children, as part of our services and ultimately as an important part of Northamptonshire Children's Trust; and any support we need to achieve the best we can and to develop further.

The annual appraisal will be informed by the outcomes of supervision activities and will focus on:

* Maintaining high quality service delivery and excellent practice that makes a difference for children;
* Support and Learning and Development needs to compliment the KSS standards;
* Ensuring compliance with corporate policies, procedures and statutory responsibilities.

Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that each worker has an up to date Personal Appraisal and Development Plan (PADP) which is reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year, in line with NCT policy.

**7. Resolving Supervision Difficulties – Conflict Resolution**

Supervisors must, on a regular basis, consult with those they supervise to establish if the needs of the supervisee are being met. Supervisees who have concerns about whether their supervisory needs are being met, should raise this issue with their supervisor in the first instance. If issues cannot be resolved by discussion with the supervisor, the supervisee should raise the issue with their supervisor's manager named in the Supervision Agreement.

**8. Quality Assurance**

The following measures will be used to monitor the quality of supervision:

* All supervisors will receive training for supervision;
* Supervisors will be encouraged to seek feedback from those they supervise;
* All will be encouraged to comment about supervision via an annual survey;
* Supervision Audits and Observation.

**Appendices**

[**Appendix A – Supervision Agreement**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix B – Supervision Principles**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix C – Personal Supervision Record**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix D1 – Practice Supervision**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix D2 – Practice Supervision – Fostering / Adoption**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix D3 – Practice Supervision – Carefirst**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix E – Useful Questions to Guide Supervision – Prompts for Reflective Practice**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix F – Systemic Reflective Space – A Model for Reflective Group Supervision**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

[**Appendix G – Decision Making Hats Tool – A Model for Individual and Group Reflective Supervision**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_supervision.html)

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