

Supervision and Management Decision Making Policy

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1 Statement of Purpose

This policy will provide a framework for the one-to-one supervision of staff working for Stoke- On-Trent Children and Families Service. This includes all levels of staff, whether qualified social workers or none qualified, whether working in a permanent or agency role, full-time or part-time basis.

This policy sets out how those staff can expect to be supervised and provides managers with the key elements needed to supervise staff effectively.

This policy will clearly outline the key areas of supervision; Professional, Reflective and Developmental, the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisee along with the requirements for recording of supervision.

The City of Stoke-on-Trent City Council Children and Families Services recognises that its staff are the most valuable asset in fulfilling its commitment to providing high-quality services to children, young people, and their families. Supervision is vital for the professional development and ethical practice of social workers. It ensures high standards of service, supports emotional wellbeing, and enhances job satisfaction. By offering a space for reflection, feedback, and emotional support, supervision helps social workers manage their workload effectively, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and deliver quality services. Regular supervision is crucial for preventing burnout and promoting the overall wellbeing of staff.

It will also outline the need for supervision records to be circulated/added to Liquid Logic/EHM within five working days of the supervision taking place.

2 Definition of Supervision

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 decision making.

The provision of regular, planned, good quality supervision is central to the development and maintenance of high standards of practice in Social Care environments. It also supports the development of a learning culture with staff supported to carry out their roles in a safe and supportive environment through reflection and flexibility.

The word supervision has a specific meaning in the social work profession with interrelated functions including line management and accountability, professional supervision and continuing professional development.

Our Children and Families Services Practice Framework is underpinned by a Restorative Model of Practice which focuses on creating the right conditions for staff and practitioners to develop through a culture of high support and high challenge.

3 Why is Supervision Important?

Supervision is the support guidance staff get from managers. It involves:

- Discussing ongoing children's cases and issues arising from them
- Talking through the impact the work personally has on individuals
- Reviewing decision-making and planning
- Making sure everyone is working safely in line with legal and statutory guidance
- Providing time to reflect on what went well and what needs to change
- Plan for opportunities for professional development

Supervision is an important right and benefit for everyone. It benefits the individual, the organisation and indirectly, as part of an intervention, it benefits those who use services.

Supervision which supports staff to critically analyse, reflect on their work and their practice where applicable, and to manage the emotional impact of what they do will result in better outcomes for families. Supervision and Management Oversight for Children and Young People is an important and critical aspect of providing support and services.

4 The Aims of Supervision

Supervision should enable all Social Care professionals to:

- Be accountable for their practice and ensure quality of service for people who use services (adults, children, young people, families, 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 a duty to respect rights and address need.
- Reflect on, analyse and evaluate practice.
- Manage the emotional impact of the 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 the role, professional development and as part of an integrated, multi-professional or multi-agency team or service.
- Provide the opportunity for Children and Young Peoples plans and assessments to be reviewed through management oversight and decision making through the child's journey.
- 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 user or agency.
- Ensure peer and management review of professional decisions and to encourage mutual learning and development.
- Communicate with a line manager on organisational issues.
- Manage realistic workloads and caseloads.

5 Supervision Process

Supervision is a regular one to one meeting between the supervisor and supervisee to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives. Supervision does not simply occur in a 1:1 session. It occurs in the context of a supervisory relationship and to be effective this must be based on trust so that a safe space is created in which uncertainty, ambiguity, mistakes, assumptions, confusion, challenge, wellbeing, success and achievement can all be explored. Building a culture of learning and developing practice is a critical aspect of supervision.

5.1 Individual Supervision Agreements

On first appointment, and at any subsequent change of Line Manager, an Individual Supervision Agreement should be written and signed by both parties. This document will ensure that the worker has read and understood the Supervision, Induction and related policies and guidelines and will set out the mutual expectations, roles, rights and responsibilities of the supervision relationship, including confidentiality, frequency and access to the records.

5.2 Reviewing the Agreement

The Individual Supervision Agreement should be reviewed by the supervisor and the supervisee at least annually and then at any point the supervisor changes.

5.3 Disputes

Any disagreements should initially be dealt with through discussion between the supervisor and supervisee, or by reference to the supervisor's line manager if necessary.

6 Roles and Responsibilities of the Line Managers

Supervision must be conducted in accordance with this policy and guidance.

Effective supervisory relationships allow you to develop personally and professionally through trust, honesty, accountability and empathy. The supervisory relationship should be emotionally supportive but challenge you to reflect on your practice and on the needs of the people you support.

Managers will prepare prior to each supervision session and will ensure that issues to be discussed are included in an agenda.

Line managers will need to consider:

- **Professional supervision:** focused on the work being carried out with people who use services within a staff member's caseload. It is important to reflect on the progress of cases/plans/assessments and look at what is impacting on progress and the difference intervention and services are making to improving outcomes for Children and Young People.
- **Reflective/critical thinking supervision:** understanding the child's lived experience and reflecting on the approach and relationship with the family and how this impact upon engagement and progress of the plan. This is also an opportunity for a supervisee to reflect on their own wellbeing. Whilst we have chosen to place reflective supervision as an individual process here, it should run throughout all aspects of the supervision process.
- **Clinical/Professional Development supervision:** focused on professional support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop knowledge and competence and assume responsibility for their own practice. This is also an opportunity to provide feedback on performance both as an individual and as a team member and reflect on the progress made. Professional Development will also focus on the professional regulatory requirements and promote and support continuous professional development.

7 Professional supervision

Good quality practice is promoted by ensuring that all children are considered regularly and at a frequency which ensures that the intervention remains proportionate, appropriate, focused and purposeful and that drift is avoided. Positive and achievable outcomes are at the core of all case planning and subsequent case management. The child's journey must be apparent and evidenced at all points of their journey. It should be clear to the reader what decisions have been made and why.

This part of supervision is important as it is incumbent upon the supervisor to check that good quality plans are in place and being progressed in a timely way, that visits are being undertaken in line with the assessed risk.

Professional/Case Management supervision is achieved in several ways:

- In most occasions' professional supervision and children's case 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 'Management Oversight' and decision making.

Management Oversight

Ad Hoc discussions or decisions are likely to be needed between planned case supervision sessions on a case-by-case basis and may result from unexpected changes of circumstances or new incidents. Whereas a result of this discussion, activity is planned or decisions made which diverts from the plan, these discussions and decisions should be recorded on the child's record. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure accurate and timely recording of Management Oversight.

- Management oversight and key decision making for children occur at critical points in the Child and Young Person's journey, including:
- **Initial Referral, Triage, and Assessment** within the Integrated Front Door (IFD).
- **Point of Allocation** for an Early Help Assessment, Child and Family Social Work Assessment, and S.47 Child Protection Assessment.
- **For Children and Family assessments**, a 10-day review period is implemented for oversight and supervision, followed by comprehensive supervision before transferring the case to ensure best practices are maintained.
- This supports timeliness and effective assessment and planning for Children and Young People.

Multi-Agency Child in Need Meetings, Strategy Meetings and Core Groups provide further opportunities for management oversight and outcome focused decision making for Children and Young People.

Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Conference Chairs provide further oversight for Children through conferences and reviews. These decisions and outcomes are records on the Children's records.

It includes ad hoc/informal discussions: It is normal to expect that discussions and decisions about casework issues, problems arising, progress being made, and next steps may occur outside of formal supervision sessions. However, these must be recorded on the Liquid Logic/EHM module as soon as practically possible by the manager, but within 48 hours.

Other activities, such as case reviews, audits, consultation or observation of practice also play a role in day-to-day case management supervision and allows the supervisor to triangulate what they are being told in supervision with the evidence.

It is important to remember that even if ad hoc/informal supervision is taking place or supervisees and supervisors work closely together, this does not eliminate the need for regular formal one-to-one sessions. These sessions should include reflection on what is working well and consideration of whether an alternative approach is required.

Reflection/Critical Thinking Supervision

It is important to remember that even if ad hoc/informal supervision is taking place or supervisees and supervisors work closely together, this does not eliminate the need for regular formal one-to-one sessions. These sessions should include reflection on what is working well, consideration of whether an alternative approach is required, and the application of professional curiosity to explore all aspects of casework thoroughly. Supervisors need to recognise that reflection is not just a process and requires more than just creating a forum for reflective discussion, it's about:

1. A focus on relationships and the wider environment that may impact upon a family;
2. Creative methods to working;
3. Consideration of outcomes of practice;
4. Discussions about evidence and testing that evidence;
5. A focus on feedback;
6. Space to discuss feelings, thoughts, values and the impact of these on actions/practice.

This is also an opportunity for supervisees to focus on their wellbeing; how they are feeling, reflect on the progress they are making and for supervisors to review any absences through sickness and make sure they are taking leave regularly as required.

Reflection is an opportunity for staff to think about the families that they are working with from a systemic perspective. This involves considering the nature of the relationship established between the worker and the client family and how this relationship might be helping or hindering the on-going social work intervention.

The supervisee should also be encouraged to develop different ideas about how they might work with the family to make change, and to avoid the pitfall of following one approach rigidly in their work with families.

This will be an opportunity to reflect on what worked well with a family and what didn't work so well in order that this approach could be used in future to effect positive change.

The general themes of reflective supervision should be recorded on the staff members own supervision record (Appendix 1) together with any actions arising from supervision.

This record will include reflective discussions held with the practitioner about the impact of the work they are undertaking, their values and attitudes, and any effect these may have on their practice. Regular effective supervision is a factor in promoting well-being and resilience in social workers and the wider CAF workforce.

The main elements of the supervision framework support and promote the development of effective staff wellbeing. Ensuring the wellbeing of staff is integral to effective supervision and will enable those working to support children and families to establish better relationships and ensure better outcomes.

Helping all staff who work with children and young people requires the use of self as the main agent for relationship building, offering support and challenge and effecting change.

Key questions to explore include:

- What is the issue the practitioner wants to address?
- What areas did we consider (bullets)?
- What are the agreed outcomes/agreed next steps of this discussion?
- What is the intended impact on the child?

This record will **not** be included in the child's case file.

As part of the reflective process managers will want to review the Social Work England Standards to support staff to fulfil these requirements. A pro forma has been added to Appendix 3 to support this reflection. This mirrors the requirements of SWE and can then be copied and pasted onto the workers CPD within the SWE website.

9 Clinical Supervision/Professional and Personal development

This part of the supervision process will be recorded on the staff members own supervision record (Appendix 1) and will explore the workers identified learning needs, their areas of strength and those needing to be developed. It is important that staff know what is expected of them and the standards to be aimed for. It is the supervisor's role to support them to achieve these standards and ensure that they have the tools with which to achieve them. Some of these discussions may be hard and there is training available to managers about having those "difficult conversations" but as previously stated they need to be done in a respectful and timely way.

This part of the supervision will enable staff to look at where they want to be in terms of their own career development and facilitate discussion on what supports are needed to attain their professional goal.

Feedback to staff regarding their practice needs to be done in a timely way and should not be raised within the annual appraisal process unless it has previously been discussed and recorded in a supervision session. This feedback should include a constructive discussion about how that person is performing as an individual and within the wider team.

It is important that all staff feel valued and respected within Stoke-On- Trent as their role is important to the overall efficiency of the service. Regular reference to the strategic priorities is important to underpin a worker's contribution to the organisations strategic aims and will align with the annual appraisal process more readily.

Personal and Professional Supervision records will be recorded using the template and can be uploaded to the Learning Management System. Please see the additional guidance on this which is available on the [Supervision page on the Practice Hub](#).

10 Frequency of Cases Being Discussed

Social Care Staff: In the City of Stoke-On-Trent, the frequency of formal Social Work supervision should be **monthly**.

Children in Care: should be discussed **every eight weeks**, unless they are **placed in the care of their parents**, in which case they will be discussed **every six weeks**.

Children who have been **long term matched with their carer**, will be discussed in line with their statutory visits of **once every 12 weeks**. If the stability of the child's arrangement becomes of concern, then the frequency of discussions will increase to monthly until such time, stability is achieved.

Children in receipt of short breaks should be discussed **every 12 weeks**.

Care Leavers should be every **12 weeks**. **Children on Child Protection Plan:** All children on a Child Protection Plan should be discussed at supervision **each month** to ensure the plan remains appropriate, is being progressed and children are visited according to assessed risk.

Children in Need: All children should be discussed in supervision at least once **every six weeks** to ensure that their plans are being progressed, they are being visited according to assessed risk, and any step-up or step-down processes are actioned in a timely manner.

Supporting Families Early Help Staff: In the **Supporting Families Early Help** service formal supervision will take place between **six-eight weeks** depending on risk level but this will be reviewed regularly.

Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) in their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) must receive reflective supervision:

- For the first six weeks weekly for a minimum of 90 mins;
- For the remainder of the first six months, fortnightly;
- After six months, if this is appropriate and in line with the development and experience of the NQSW, supervision may be reviewed. The actual frequency for ASYE's should be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee when negotiating the terms of the Individual Supervision Agreement but will always, as a minimum, be monthly;
- In addition to formal case supervision and personal supervision, Advanced Practitioners from the Learning and Development Academy hold mentoring sessions with NQSWs in their ASYE on a fortnightly basis. These sessions can be conducted individually or in groups. Attendance at all sessions is essential to support the continuous learning and development of NQSWs.
- At the point of allocation, the manager should discuss the case with the allocated worker, identify actions required and ensure that there is clear direction and management oversight on the case file so that the member of staff is clear about what initial steps need to be taken.

Whilst reflective practice is central to the supervision process and should be a part of all case discussion, each supervision session must include at least one in-depth reflective discussion regarding one case.

The reasons for any missed supervision sessions will be recorded on the supervisees file.

Supervision must occur on a 1-1 basis as described above, however there is scope to include "group supervision" on occasion. This is particularly helpful for practice discussion where there is a particular issue, or it has become "stuck" and would benefit from a wider discussion with team members. These discussions are a method of support and challenge but should not replace formal supervision.

11 Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisees

It is the responsibility of supervisees to attend supervision sessions with their Line Manager. They should use these sessions positively to discuss their work and development and to implement agreed actions following supervision.

It is the employee's responsibility to prepare prior to each supervision session and bring any item they wish to discuss to the agenda to promote the two-way discussion.

Supervision is an opportunity to have protected time with a manager to talk through the impact the work has on you personally, as well as exploring decision making and ensuring this is values-based and person-centred. It is essential for all staffs' wellbeing and professional development, and most importantly, helps us to achieve the best outcomes for the people we work for. We can take time to consider what we're doing, why and whether that's working for the person we are working with from their perspective, and if not, consider whether there might be another way forward.

COVID-19 and learning from the pandemic has enabled us to reconsider our ways of working, from different working patterns, homeworking and how we maintain and develop positive relationships with our teams and the people we support. This isn't easy and can feel isolating if there aren't good support mechanisms in place. Supervision should be a safe place to talk about how the current situation is affecting people on a personal level, but also how relationships in teams and with individuals may be changing. Supervision is crucial to letting off steam and talking through challenges to help find solutions.

It is important to remember that supervision is a two-way process and supervisee's have a responsibility to advise their manager of anything that may affect their practice.

12 Recording of Supervision

Professional/Child Specific Supervision Record

This will be completed on the proforma within Liquid Logic on the child's case record. This will be a summary of the discussion and the decisions and action points arising. Any Health and Safety risks to staff, as discussed, will be noted along with agreed actions.

Integral to the case discussion is consideration of the child's perspective and their journey; this will include the child's experience, their wishes and feelings and an evaluation of how the outcomes are improving for the child. All plans for children and young people should have an outcome focus, and supervision is the point at which a practitioner and their manager review progress against the planned action.

Actions from the previous supervision record need to be reviewed to ensure that they have been progressed. The supervisor must make a note of when the child was last seen alone and when the next visit is planned and review the quality and progress of the plan for the child. Other statutory requirements will be reviewed outside of the supervision session by the manager and any requirements will be noted on the Liquid Logic/EHM record.

When decisions have been made in between formal supervision sessions, the Manager must make sure that any decision made with regard to an individual child is clearly recorded on the child's file (as a Management Oversight, Liquid Logic case note) as they are an integral part of the narrative of the child's journey.

When decisions are made in formal supervision in relation to specific service users, the Manager must ensure these decisions are recorded on the child's file.

These areas of the supervision will be recorded on the supervisees own supervision record and will **NOT** form part of the Liquid Logic/EHM record.

All Line Managers will keep a record of supervision sessions for their staff along with the reasons that any are missed.

The recording of supervision sessions is the responsibility of the supervisor. The details included are a matter of judgement but, in general, the record should be detailed enough so that the issues can be revisited, if necessary, later and still be understood.

The supervision records will reflect the supervision sessions and will be completed on the appropriate pro forma (Appendix 1).

Records should clearly detail any decisions that have been made, the reasons for these, any agreed actions, including who will take responsibility, and the timescale for carrying out these actions. If there is disagreement as to the content of the record this should be noted by the supervisor.

All records should be typed and those going onto the practitioners own file should be signed by both parties.

13 Timescales for Recording

Supervision notes should be typed up and circulated to the supervisee by the supervisor within 48 hours. The supervisee will then review the document and sign as an accurate record and return it to the supervisor whilst retaining a copy of their own record within five working days.

14 Storage and Retention of individuals Supervision

A worker's electronic supervision file should be maintained by the Line Manager so that the record can be reviewed at appropriate times (e.g. Induction, Progression, significant case related issues).

The format of the electronic supervision file should be standard across the service and contain the following:

- **Section 1:** Date of last DBS and Social Work England Registration & Qualifications, emergency contact details;
- **Section 2:** Supervision Agreement & Supervision History;
- **Section 3:** Supervision Record;
- **Section 4:** Appraisal Plan Record;
- **Section 5:** Training including CPD Activity;
- **Section 6:** Career Progression/HR documents;
- **Section 7:** Health & Wellbeing (including sickness absence return to work interviews);
- **Section 8:** Miscellaneous.

Records of supervision should be seen as transferable and should follow the member of staff in the event of transferring to other roles within the service.

15 Confidentiality and Access to Worker Specific Supervision

Supervision is a private but not a confidential process. This means that the 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, e.g. their own Line Managers. This should usually be with the knowledge of the supervisee. Access to supervision records should be controlled and all records should be retained securely.

Other people may from time to time require access to supervision records. 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).

16 Confidentiality and Access to Child Specific Supervision

These will be associated to the child's file and available to:

- All who have access to the file within the organisation;
- Any successful applicant who has made application for access to personal information held about themselves or for a child for whom they hold Parental Responsibility;
- Managers providing cover in the absence of the Line Manager;
- Senior Managers;
- Investigating Officers for serious case reviews/complaints/capability/disciplinary/investigations;
- Inspectors (e.g. during Inspections);
- Regulatory Bodies (e.g. Social Work England/Health Care Professions Council) in relation to Fitness to Practice;
- Performance and Quality Assurance staff (e.g. for audit and quality assurance purposes).

Appendices

[Appendix 1: Proforma for recording supervision](#)

[Appendix 2: Additional guidance for supervisors](#)

[Appendix 3: Supervision Agreement](#)

[Appendix 4: CPD/SWE learning record](#)

[Appendix 5: Case Supervision Templates](#)

[Appendix 5 blank duty and assessment case supervision.pdf](#)

[Appendix 5 blank short breaks case supervision.pdf](#)

[Appendix 5 blank standard case supervision.pdf](#)