

Supervision Policy

June 2025



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Introduction

In Sandwell Children's Trust, we have embraced and promoted our [ST*R Partnership Practice Model](#) relationship based, strength-based and trauma informed practice alongside a positive inclusive culture, reflected by our ethos.



STRENGTHS BASED PRACTICE



Understanding strengths, celebrating successes, and finding solutions

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE



Understanding trauma, its causes and its impact

RELATIONSHIP BASED PRACTICE



Developing trustful, respectful relationships

To achieve our vision and deliver positive outcomes for children and families as well as all our staff, we know that our workforce needs to experience strong inclusive leadership, including continual management support, oversight and high-quality reflective supervision.



Aims and our approach to supervision

Aims

This Supervision Policy applies to all our staff (permanent, temporary, agency full or part time), working within Sandwell Children's Trust, all of whom play their part in helping to improve children's lives. It also seeks to provide supervisees and supervisors with the key elements needed for reflective supervision to be equitable, inclusive and effective for everyone.

Reflective supervision supports this being achieved. Creating time and space in supervision to critically reflect on our work/practice is an essential part of a holistic approach and is key to increasing our knowledge, skills and developing professionally.

Approach

Reflective supervision is vital to supporting workforce development, accountability, and improved service delivery. It fosters an environment where all staff take responsibility and are accountable for the quality of their work while engaging in meaningful reflection to enhance their work/practice.

Supervision sessions will be structured to provide dedicated time for reflection on work-related challenges, enabling supervisees and supervisors to refine their roles and effectiveness. Through critical thinking, constructive feedback, and shared learning, staff will strengthen their emotional resilience and deepen their understanding of workplace relationships.

By promoting open dialogue and a culture of shared responsibility, supervision will function as a two-way process, requiring both supervisees and supervisors to prepare actively and contribute thoughtfully to discussions that advance effective working relationships.

For frontline staff working directly with children and families, and our foster carers, reflective supervision will serve as a key mechanism in achieving the best possible outcomes for children and families in collaboration with partner agencies.

The benefits of supervision

- It provides a reflective space for staff to receive support, guidance, encouragement, and praise for good work. It also provides the opportunity for constructive feedback, including areas for improvement and/or development.
- It values the contributions of our staff and increases job satisfaction and the ability to manage and prioritise workloads.
- It provides the time and space to reflect on and discuss wellbeing including home/work life balance.
- It empowers staff to work with increasing levels of autonomy and confidence which develops work/practice and decision making.
- It helps us to look after and retain our staff
- It enables effective management oversight and gives assurance that work/practice is being effectively managed
- It safeguards children and families as well as our workforce.



Overarching supervision principles

Guided by the ST*R Partnership Practice Model

Reflective supervision is a key element of the Practice Model, ensuring a strengths-based, trauma-informed, and relational approach. These principles work together to create an inclusive, supportive and solution-focused experience while maintaining transparency around personal responsibility and accountability.

1. **A Shared Understanding and Consistent Approach**

Supervision fosters a common language and framework for communication and collaboration. This is rooted in ST*R Practice Model, Our Ethos, Purpose, the EDI Strategy and Practice Standards; where both supervisors and supervisees actively model inclusive strengths-based, trauma-informed, and relational practices.

2. **Reflection at All Levels**

Supervision is not only an individual process but a collective commitment to continual analysis, learning, and development. Reflective practice ensures consistency in work, encouraging meaningful engagement across all levels of the organisation.

3. **Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**

Supervision must align with the Trust's approach to anti-discriminatory practice, inclusivity, and valuing diversity. Open reflective discussions on EDI matters should be welcomed, ensuring any concerns raised are addressed appropriately and recorded accurately.

These principles establish reflective supervision as a **two-way process**, empowering individuals to learn, grow, and contribute to an organisational culture of excellence.

Accountability, responsibility and Expectations

Accountability and Responsibility for Reflective Supervision

- Reflective supervision is everyone's responsibility—all individuals, at every level, must actively engage in high-quality reflective supervision.
- Supervision is held monthly between an employee (supervisee) and their direct line manager (supervisor) to support professional development and accountability.
- All supervision must align with the Trust's ethos, purpose, and the [ST*R Practice Model](#)

Core Expectations of Reflective Supervision

- Reflection should be integral to supervision, providing time to critically review work, increase knowledge, and develop professionally.
- Each supervision session must include reflective discussions; the reflections should be recorded briefly but clearly.
- Monthly personal reflective supervision covers operational, professional, and personal objectives, including learning, performance, and wellbeing.
- Supervision directly informs annual appraisals and six-month reviews. (See: [Appraisals](#))



Scheduling and Structure

- Supervision should be scheduled 12 months in advance to ensure consistency and value.
- Face-to-face supervision is preferred, conducted privately at a pre-arranged time with an agreed agenda. If necessary, video conferencing may be used with minimal interruptions.
- All supervision sessions wherever possible should start and end on time, with both participants prepared, actively listening, and engaging respectfully.
- If a session must be rescheduled due to exceptional circumstances, it should be rearranged as soon as possible, with the reason recorded.

Adapting to Workforce Needs

- Additional supervision may be necessary following a serious event—frequency adjustments should be agreed by both supervisor and supervisee.
- Staff facing difficult situations should receive timely debriefs and support, fostering a trauma-informed workplace culture.

Supervision Agreements and Documentation

- Supervision Agreements must be signed and reviewed annually, or if there is a significant change (e.g. change of supervisor/manager) See: [Supervision Agreement](#)
- All supervision records should be completed using the [Reflective Supervision Template](#)

Supervision record completion timelines

- Personal Reflective Supervision – within 3 working days by Supervisor. (Returned within further 3 working days by Supervisee)
- Group Supervision (including multi-agency) – within 3 working days
- Child Progression Supervision – within 2 working days
- All supervision records must be signed and dated by both supervisor and supervisee.

Handling Disagreements and Confidentiality

- Disagreements should first be resolved within the supervisory setting. If unresolved, escalate to the supervisor's line manager or follow the Trust's grievance policy.
- Supervision is private but not confidential. Records belong to the Trust, and supervisors may discuss content with their own line managers with the supervisee's knowledge.
- Access to supervision records is controlled and secure, though senior managers, investigators, or inspectors may review records, when necessary, with a clear rationale for doing so.



Quality Assurance and Feedback

- Supervisors must engage in Quality Assurance activities, including direct observations of supervisory practice ([See QA Framework](#)).
- Supervisee feedback is essential and should be gathered via annual surveys, annual health check, reflective spaces and consultation groups.
- Supervisees should regularly reflect on how supervision impacts their practice, ensuring continuous learning and development.

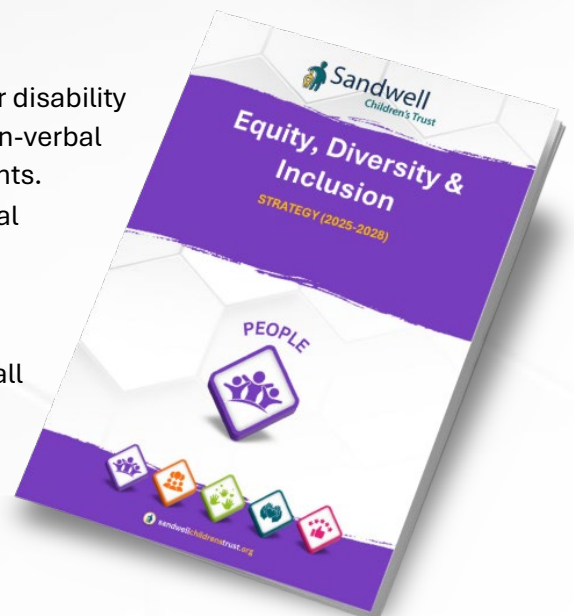
Informal guidance vs Formal Supervision

- While informal discussions with supervisors or senior colleagues can provide valuable support, they do not replace formal supervision.
- Issues or matters discussed informally should be recorded and revisited in formal supervision sessions for accountability and clarity.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- Acknowledge and support an individual's neurodiversity or disability through reasonable adjustments. Be mindful of verbal, non-verbal and alternative communication preferences or requirements.
- Respect and accommodate religious practices and cultural norms.
- Use clear, inclusive language and provide translated materials, an interpreter or support when necessary.
- Ensure a non-judgemental and affirming environment for all protected characteristics

See: sctnet.uk/download/equity-diversity-inclusion-strategy



Good Practice for Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring staff within the teams they are responsible for are receiving regular, quality reflective supervision.

Supervisors should create an environment in line with our ethos, purpose and ST*R Practice Model. This allows for our staff to have an open and respectful meeting where they feel valued.

Supervisors should assure themselves that reflective supervision is being used to develop the thinking, work/practice and decision making of individuals to help create a competent and confident workforce.

It is essential that good work/practice and performance is celebrated and recorded.

Where work/practice requires improvement or under performance issues are identified, Supervisors are expected to provide both support and challenge to enable their staff to make the required improvements to their work/practice.

Supervisors should ensure compliance against the Trust's policies, procedures and priorities.

They should observe supervisions and provide constructive feedback to the supervisor outlining good supervisory practice observed as well as key areas to improve.

Where Supervisors are also responsible for allocated children, child progression supervision must provide effective oversight of children that ensures children's assessments and plans are well managed, timely and make a difference to the children and families being worked with. They should assure themselves that supervision is being used to reflect on and develop the thinking, practice and decision making of their supervisees.

Good Practice for Supervisees

Supervision is a 2-way process and every supervisee, at every level, is responsible for:

Ensuring actions agreed at each supervision are followed through and completed.

Preparing appropriately before each supervision session.

Reflecting on what has gone well, and what could have been better, and they may have found difficult.

Being open to feedback and constructive challenge and prepared to learn from it.

Being prepared to undertake training or other developmental activity.

Where supervisees are responsible for allocated children – discussing and reflecting on any child related or professional matters in an open and honest manner.



Supervision frequency

The following set of standards apply to everyone. There may be times or circumstances when an employee needs more frequent supervision. The frequency and duration of the additional supervision arrangements should be agreed between supervisor and supervisee.

Staff Group	Frequency
All Trust Staff	One to one personal reflective supervision will take place monthly for all staff Frequency of supervision regarding allocated children is dependent on individual workload needs and is set out in the 'types of supervision' section of this policy.
Staff in a probationary period	Fortnightly supervision during first four weeks and then monthly, (unless the supervisor considers that more frequent supervision is needed).
Agency/temporary staff	Supervision is the same as permanent employees.
Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS)	NQSW's should receive formal supervision weekly for the first six weeks and then fortnightly for the remainder of the first six months.

Types of supervision

Supervision can take various forms:

- Personal reflective supervision – all staff
- Group Supervision – all staff
- Appraisal – linked to professional development
- Child Progression Supervision – for practitioners with direct contact with children and families

Note: see roles, responsibilities, expectations and standards for informal advice and guidance outside of supervision sessions.

Personal Reflective Supervision – all staff

The key elements of personal reflective supervision

Personal Reflective Supervision should follow the Supervision Policy approach and principles, alongside the identified roles, responsibilities and expectations.



Here are some of the key elements of Personal Reflective Supervision

- Review of individuals performance in line with the Trust's Ethos, Values and Purpose and ST*R Partnership Practice Model.
- Professional development and well-being of the supervisee.
- Provide an opportunity to acknowledge good work/practice, to thank and praise staff, to motivate them, to check how they are feeling, and to ensure supervisees feel confident in the work they are doing.
- Identify any additional training, coaching or mentoring that will support their learning needs and development in their role
- Provide consistency of approach across the workforce and the organization.
- Provide an opportunity to review an individual's work against expectations, any workplace issues, development needs and objectives, both in connection with their appraisal, and ongoing development and identifying support needed to uplift work/practice. Individual wellbeing and interaction with other colleagues / partners should also be included.

Group Supervision – all staff

Group Supervision can complement, but should not replace, personal reflective supervision. It is an opportunity to bring together a group or team of staff (led by a supervisor, Advanced Practitioner or experienced supervisee), to learn from each other's work/practice together as a team. It can be particularly useful to discuss work/practice situations to offer ideas, solutions, direction or address situations that may not be progressing as predicted.

Group Supervision is an opportunity for reflection, analysis and planning; and to explore themes. It is useful for less experienced workers/practitioners as it allows more experienced workers/practitioners to coach less experienced workers in an effective and timely way that promotes learning and development.

Personal matters should not be discussed within a group supervision setting.

Supervisors are encouraged to create an inclusive and supportive group supervision environment by considering individual differences - such as neurodiversity, preferred learning styles, disabilities and communication needs. This should include the recognition of reasonable adjustments, for example, sharing key discussions in advance of meetings or ensuring the format of the room is appropriate to ensure all supervisees are able to engage meaningfully.

Group supervision should follow the [Group Supervision Model](#) wherever possible and use the Group Supervision template to record the Group Supervision: sctnet.uk/download/group-supervision-template

Note: For those practitioners and managers involved in direct practice with children and families There is an expectation that Group Supervisions are held with teams on a monthly basis. During 2025 multi-agency group supervisions will be developed and implemented.



Appraisal – linked to professional development

Good personal reflective supervision leads to a good appraisal. Professional development is closely linked to the Trust's appraisal system to make sure that individual development needs are clearly recorded and progressed. The appraisal process should be separate to personal reflective supervision, with objectives and development needs being agreed annually with a review period at 6 months to ensure progress is being made and to allow for any amendments.

An appraisal should offer time and a reflective space to consider how supervisees are progressing in their development, work/practice that they are proud of, and their achievements as well as to identify any issues which could affect their ability to work/practice and allow time to plan key areas of work/practice improvement, as well as their continuous professional development.



For more details and specifics about appraisals – see sctnet.uk/download/appraisal-policy

Child Progressions Supervision – for Practitioners with direct contact and responsibility/accountability for children

The purpose of children's supervision is to support workers to explore and reflect on the strengths & risks within families. It is to examine the potential barriers to reducing impairment, vulnerabilities or harm, and progressing children's plans. Strong supervisory oversight enables practitioners to safely manage impairment, vulnerability and harm for children, and offer the right help at the right time. It also ensures timely support understanding the best way that we can help and support a family, whilst helping practitioners to prioritise and manage interventions and tasks within their workload. Frequency varies depending on the status and circumstances of the child.

Where practitioners have co-allocated children there is an expectation that both practitioners will attend (lead practitioner must attend, and it is desirable for the co-allocated practitioner to attend) the child progression supervision for the child with the manager.

The purpose is to assure themselves that workers are practicing in line with the ST*R Practice Model as well as agreed policy and guidance, using good judgement and making best decisions for children. It is also an opportunity to pick up any areas for development and provide support and guidance to the worker to enable them to develop into the best practitioner they can be.

Child Progression Supervision is an opportunity for managers and practitioners to discuss children in detail. This is dedicated time to support, challenge, hypothesise and reflect on what is happening together. This is where practitioners can discuss what is happening in the child's life; how the plan is progressing to help improve life for the child; and any barriers to progress and success.

Managers can use this time to assure themselves that assessments are thorough and analytical, plans are simple, and SMART and that decisions are timely with a clear rationale. Managers should also assure themselves that the planning and intervention (including direct work with children and parents and life and memory work) undertaken by the practitioner is effective and is making a difference and has an impact on the child's life.



The supervisor should ask the practitioner to come to supervision, prepared with the children they need to discuss, and which need direction or reflection time. Supervisors should also choose a number of children they want to discuss. It is the joint responsibility of the supervisor and supervisee to make sure that children are discussed proportionate to the level of need and in line with the Practice Standards and expectations. Recording of formal child supervision is the responsibility of the appropriate supervisor with records being available on child's record in line with the Supervision Policy of **within 2 working days for child progression supervision**. Below is a guide; it is the responsibility of managers to understand the full circumstances of the children and adjust the frequency of supervision based on need.

Minimum Supervision Frequencies

Strengthening Family Service

- During assessment – management oversight at day 10 and 25.
- Supervision - within the first month of assessment being completed and then every 8 weeks as a minimum thereafter.
- If circumstances change for a child, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.

Assessment and Intervention Service

(including Child in Need)

- During assessment – management oversight at day 10, 25 and 35 – using the Management Oversight case note (see Practice Expectation for details of requirement for Management Oversight).
- Supervision – within one month of completion of assessment and then every 2 months as a minimum thereafter.
- If circumstances change for a child, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.

Child Protection and Court Team

(including child protection, children in PLO and children in court)

- Supervision - within one month of the ICPC or change of legal status, and then monthly as a minimum thereafter.
- If circumstances change for a child, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.

Youth Justice Service

- Supervision within one month of assessment and then every 2 months as a minimum thereafter
- If circumstances change for a child, then supervision may be required more frequently
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs



Intervention Services

FST, FGC, DECCA, Horizons

- Individual reflective supervision to take place monthly
- Individual clinical supervision to take place monthly (DECCA only)
- Group supervision to take place monthly
- If circumstances change for a child / family, then supervision may be required more frequently
- Supervision to be tailored to the child / families' needs.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.

MST and MST CAN (as per National MST Supervision Guidelines)

- Individual reflective supervision to take place monthly
- Group clinical supervision to take place weekly
- MST Consultation with external MST Consultant to take place weekly
- Clinician development supervision to take place bi monthly

Children We Care For Service

- Supervision - within one month of the Initial Review, transfer into the service, or move of home, and then every 2 months as a minimum thereafter.
- Supervision - children in unregulated arrangements, residential homes or placed with parents (Reg 17) – minimum of monthly.
- If circumstances change for a child, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.

Fostering Service

(for more details about Fostering Service supervision see: [‘Supervision and Support of Foster Carers’](#))

- During carer assessment – management oversight at day 10, 25 and 35.
- Supervision TM with Supervising SW – within one month of assessment and then every 2 months as a minimum thereafter.
- Supervision Supervising SW with Foster Carer – within one month of the carer assessment and then in line with the Fostering Service supervision policy.
- If circumstances change for a carer and/or a child, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the carer and/or child's needs.

Care Experienced Service

- Supervision - within one month of transfer into the service and then every 2 months as a minimum thereafter.
- If circumstances change for a young person or young adult, then supervision may be required more frequently than the minimum standard above.
- Supervision should be individually tailored to the child's needs.



Training and learning for staff for effective supervision

All Supervisors should provide good quality and meaningful reflective supervision for all supervisees in our workforce, whether or not they work directly with children and families. Therefore, we need to provide the training, learning and development necessary to equip them to do so. We have:

- Training
- Reflective Spaces

Training

We want to provide Supervisees with a training package that supports learning about the standards, expectations and personal accountability and responsibilities of being a Supervisee, and what constitutes good quality personal reflective supervision.

We also want to provide Supervisors with a training and development package which focuses on every aspect of the supervisory managerial role, including the standards, expectations, personal accountability and responsibilities of being a supervisor. In addition, we will provide management and leadership programmes to support learning and development of Supervisors.

The range of training, learning and development is available through our core training offer:

<https://sctnet.uk/human-resources/learning-development/>

Note: For Supervisors who have allocated children in their teams there are also opportunities to train with other managers regionally and nationally through the DfE recognised national management programmes.

There are additional learning resources of Research in Practice and CC Inform.

Reflective Spaces

Reflective Spaces ensure regular reflection and critical analysis takes place within our workforce to improve services delivered to children and families. The reflective spaces encourage, help and support our workforce to think and act reflectively, using the ST*R Practice Model, and incorporate this way of working within their daily work/practice. In SCT we have a variety of reflective spaces:

Personal Reflective Supervision (min monthly)

As outlined in the Supervision Policy. Giving the opportunity to reflect in your supervision with your supervisor about the quality of your work/practice.

Group Supervisions (monthly)

As outlined in the Supervision Policy. Giving the opportunity to reflect as a team on a particular individual issue/topic.

Team Meetings (min monthly)

All team meetings have the opportunity within them to reflect as a team on the service and direction as an organisation and how the team can help and support key improvements.



Leadership Hub (quarterly)

An opportunity for all Managers to come together to reflect on the work of the organisation and collaboratively and collectively work on priorities and improvements to the overall service. These are topic based reflective leadership sessions that are based on the SCT Priorities.

Market Place Events (3 x annually)

An opportunity for everyone in the organisation to reflect on key topics of interest and improvement for the whole organisation using a consultation and feedback methodology alongside reflection.

Note: for those practitioners and managers in direct contact with children and families there are the additional reflective spaces of:

Practitioner Forum (monthly)

These sessions provide a wider forum for all practitioners to come together to consider national developments and current practice issues within the Trust. The purpose of these are designed to:

- Reflect on and influence our practice, informed by research and our own quality assurance processes
- Ensure that you as practitioners influence, shape and inform improvements across the Trust by sharing your views on various topics
- Give all our practitioners the opportunity to keep informed about national and local developments

Managers Reflective Session (bi-monthly)

An opportunity for all front facing Managers to come together to reflect on the practice within the organisation with our children and families. To reflect collaboratively and collectively on improvements to practice. These are topic practice based reflective sessions that are based on the SCT Priorities.

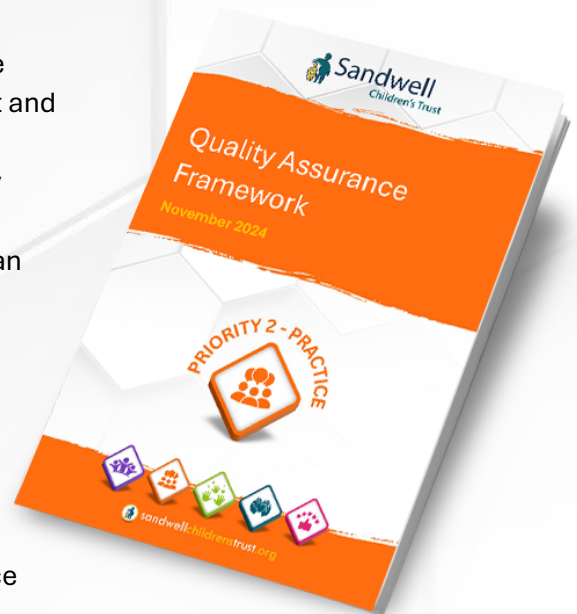


Quality Assurance, monitoring and review

The Trust's Quality Assurance framework sets out requirements for quality assurance. Quality assurance of work is the responsibility of all staff, and supervisors and senior leaders are responsible and accountable for ensuring that this happens. The quality assurance process aims to ensure that supervision standards are being followed.

These include making sure that:

- Staff are benefiting from regular and meaningful reflective supervision, providing the appropriate balance of support and challenge to workers/practitioners.
- All reflective supervision sessions are being appropriately recorded in a timely manner.
- The impact of reflective supervision is evident leading to an improved proactive, effective workforce.
- Reflective Supervision is being used to develop the work/practice of supervisees with a balance of support and challenge.
- The reflective supervision process promotes equal opportunities and inclusivity.
- The quality assurance process seeks to ascertain, by a variety of methods, whether reflective supervision practice is meeting our commitment to, and aims of, supervision.



For more information, please visit the Quality Assurance section on the Trust intranet:

<https://sctnet.uk/quality-assurance/quality-assurance-framework/>

