

## North West Protocol for Standards in Supervision of Children and Families Social Workers

### Introduction

1. This protocol has been developed to support social work practice across the region. The purpose is to provide social workers and social work managers with guidance and practice tools to support effective supervision and critical reflection. This regional protocol, therefore, seeks to outline minimum regional standards with regards to supervision and reflection, to ensure consistency of practice for social workers irrespective of which Local Authority they are working for.

### Principles

2. Across the region, it has been accepted that effective supervision is
  - **Linked to the recruitment and retention** of front line practitioners.
  - Provides **a supportive environment for social care staff** to reflect on their practice and make informed decisions using professional judgement and discretion.
  - A facility for **professional development and personal support**.
  - A **source of effective challenge** to ensure the quality of work which in turn **improves services** and ultimately provides **better outcomes for children and their families**.

### Definition of supervision

3. Supervision is an on-going process in which social care staff receive guidance, support and challenge, in a formal setting, in order to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives.

### The function and content of supervision

4. Supervision and its place in professional practice has become a thorny issue in the current practice context. It has been cited in numerous Serious Case Reviews and enquiries. It is routinely cited as failing and as a necessary ingredient; as reinforced in [The Munro Review of Child Protection](#) and others previously. Many argue however, that in practice, its functions have become entangled with the management agenda. Many practitioners will argue that the purpose of supervision has become dominated by case management and management objectives leaving neither the time or space for the reflective and developmental functions. Regionally, it is accepted that Local Authorities are committed to tackling this issue.
5. There are four elements of effective supervision. Although it is not necessary to have a complete balance of the four functions in each supervision session, it is important not to let any one of them consistently dominate the supervision process.
  - i. **Managerial and accountability** - concerned with ensuring that the work of the supervisee is carried out to the expectations and standards of the service. This seeks to monitor and explore the quality of an employees' work; to ensure that statutory obligations are being met; and to provide clarity to the social worker regarding their roles and responsibilities. This element seeks to review the supervisees' case load, to establish clear and appropriate priorities and actions to inform case direction. This also involves giving the supervisee feedback on their performance; acknowledging and appreciating good performance; and identifying and planning how to address areas of underachievement.

- ii. **Development/education** - the supervisory process is a key element in the continuing professional development of staff. The role of the supervisor is to help the worker reflect on their current performance, identify areas for development and education needs and plan on how these can best be met.
  - iii. **Support** - the nature of the work carried out in Children and Young People's Services can mean that staff are faced with difficult situations, uncertainty and distress. The supportive function of supervision is extremely important to help staff cope with these difficulties by valuing staff as people and not just professionals. This element encourages supervisees to discuss their feelings as well as thoughts and actions and aims to help supervisees to explore emotional blocks to their work and how the work impacts upon them. This function also assists in monitoring the overall health and well-being of the worker with regards to stress.
  - iv. **Mediation/advocacy** - concerned with building the relationship between the individual and the service as an organisation. This may include the supervisor representing the supervisee's needs and views to higher management and briefing higher management about resource shortfalls or exercises and their impact on supervisees. This function also seeks to ensure that resources are allocated in ways that are efficient and equitable including access to training and development opportunities.
6. It is acknowledged that each Local Authority adopts a different approach to providing supervision to staff adopting its own model, policy and procedure.
7. Although the practice models may vary, it is accepted across the region that regular, planned and competent supervision is both a right and a requirement for all members of staff working for children's services, regardless of role or grade.
8. Children and Families social workers face additional challenges in terms of managing risk and the anxiety around this. Although this is not exclusive to this area, it is of particular significance given the high profile and endemic risk involved in this area of work. Using supervision as a way of working positively with anxiety and utilising it to develop and enhance learning can be useful.

### **Critically Reflective Practice**

9. Reflective supervision has a clear tradition in social work as a way of supervisees gaining practice knowledge and as a prime site for developing professionally. Its potential in bringing practice experiences and theoretical perspectives together lends itself to this.
10. Critical reflection is significant in enhancing practice through all levels of social work and the importance of critically reflective practice to good social work is accepted regionally. Reflective supervision combines theories of adult learning and reflective practice. Reflective supervision can be defined as the process of facilitating and engaging in reflection and reflective practice.
11. Reflective supervision can be provided by the line manager. Alternatively, this task could be delegated to another person with suitable status and relevant experience. A key part of the supervisor's role is the ability to utilise reflective supervision as a learning and management tool but also as integral to the development of the worker. Expectations of supervision should be clearly defined through the supervision contract.
12. The preferred model for reflective supervision, which will apply to the majority of staff in the service, should be that of 'one-to-one'. If this model of supervision is not practicable, group reflective

supervision may be acceptable providing that there is recorded evidence that supervisees are periodically offered opportunities for individual reflective supervision.

13. It is agreed that regionally, the service will ensure that all those facilitating reflective supervision have the necessary skills to supervise and will provide training as appropriate.

### **National guidance**

14. In February 2014 the Department for Education published Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers- [Making the education of social workers consistently effective](#). In his report Sir Martin identified the need for a single, concise document setting out what a newly qualified social worker needs to know and be able to do. Consequently, the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families developed the Knowledge and Skills Statement- [Knowledge and skills for child and family social work](#), published in July 2015.
15. The statement of Knowledge and Skills provides the basis for accreditation in child and family social work. This document recognises the importance of emotionally intelligent practice supervision and emphasises the importance of supervision and research in the professional development of social work practitioners. Section 10 of the document focuses on the role of supervision and research.
16. The Knowledge and Skills Statement highlights that children and families social workers should be able to:  
  
*“demonstrate a critical understanding of the difference between theory, research, evidence and expertise and the role of professional judgement within that; how to utilise research skills in assessment and analysis; how to identify which methods will be of help for a specific child or family and the limitations of different approaches; and how to make effective use of the best evidence from research to inform the complex judgements and decisions needed to support families and protect children”.*
17. There is a clear expectation from the statement that practice supervision should seek to explore how different relationships evoke different emotional responses, which impact upon the effectiveness of social work practice. There is a need for practitioners to be creative in their approach to supervision, to help identify bias, shift thinking and the approach to case work in order to generate better outcomes for children and their families. Managers are guided to promote reflective thinking to drive more effective discussions so that reasoned and timely decision making can take place.
18. The College of Social Work - Professional Capabilities Framework is clear in its stipulation of providing reflective supervision as part of Domain 9- Professional Leadership. Similarly, for workers, their development and active participation in reflective supervision is essential and is linked to Domain 1- Professionalism of the PCF.

### **Models and Recording**

19. There are a number of different reflective supervision models that can be adopted. A selection of models and templates are appended to this document along with a list of useful questions to guide reflective supervision.
20. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that details of the supervision session are recorded appropriately on one of the attached forms. A clear differentiation is required when recording discussions from a reflective supervision session as oppose to formal case work supervision sessions. In

order to avoid confusion, it may be helpful for the reflective element of supervision to be delegated to someone other than the team manager (for example a senior practitioner on the team).

21. A copy of the supervision record should be kept on the social worker's supervision file or stored in line with the respective Local Authorities' supervision policy and procedure.

## Regional Standards

To summarise, the importance of detailed, regular supervision is acknowledged and accepted on a regional level. In addition, it is agreed regionally that critical reflective practice is the main vehicle for continued professional development - related to social work standards, the HCPC expectations and the overall regulation of professional practice.

The importance of critically reflective practice to good social work is recognised by its inclusion as one of the nine domains in the Professional Capabilities Framework and its inclusion in the newly developed Knowledge and Skills statement and is significant in enhancing practice in all levels of social work.

Each Local Authority has its own supervision policies and delivery methods which fulfil the requirement of the individual service. Therefore it is not possible to adopt a standardised approach to delivering supervision across the region. However, the following minimum regional standards are agreed and accepted:

- Although the practice models may vary, it is accepted across the region that **regular, planned and competent supervision is both a right and a requirement** for all members of staff working for children's services, regardless of role or grade.
- The **importance of critically reflective practice to good social work is accepted regionally**- all practitioners will be offered the opportunity to engage in critical reflection at regular intervals.
- **Records from critical reflective sessions will be stored on the individual workers supervision file** and may be used as evidence to support continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision can be **provided by the line manager or be delegated to another person with suitable status and relevant experience**.
- Each **Local Authority will ensure that all those facilitating reflective supervision have the necessary skills to supervise and will provide training** as appropriate.
- The frequency of supervision for an individual will be dependent upon various factors; including the length of time in the job, complexity of their work and individual support needs. This will be negotiated on an individual basis and clearly recorded in the supervision contract.
- Regionally, there is an agreed **commitment to provide supervision in line with the minimum frequency set out [The Standards for employers of Social Workers in England](#)**.
- All supervision sessions **will take place in a suitable, private place; free from interruption**.
- All supervision should **reflect the respective Local Authority's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice; respecting and valuing diversity** and addressing the causes and consequences of discrimination and inequality.

## Useful questions to guide reflective supervision

### Experience

- What was your role? What was your aim?
- What planning did you do?
- What did you expect to happen? What happened?
- What did you say and do? What did the service user say, do or show?
- What were the key moments and what stuck out?
- What words non-verbal signals, interactions, sounds, images or smell struck you?
- What or who was hard to observe and what observations or concerns do other agencies have?
- What went according to plan and what didn't happen?

### Reflection

- What did you feel at the start of the visit/interview?
- Describe your feelings?
- What feelings/thoughts/ideas did you feel during?
- What patterns did you see? Any links to historical information you have seen, any new information?
- What did you think the service user was feeling?
- Any factors that influenced your feelings for example gender or race?
- Where and when did you feel least/most comfortable?
- Any change/similarities/difference since last encounter with the service user?

### Analysis

- Define your role/agency role?
- How do the service users define your role?
- What went well, or not well, and why?
- What aims/outcomes were not achieved?
- What do you need to revisit or feel is not known?
- What areas of further assessment/resources are required?
- What bits of theory, training, research, policy or values might help you make sense of what happened?

### Action

- What are the current strengths, needs, and risks for the different service users?
- What is urgent and essential? What would be desirable?
- What would be a successful outcome of the next session from your perspective? The service users' perspective?
- What are the best or worse responses from the service user?
- What contingency plans are needed?
- Who need to be involved (colleagues, supervisor, agency) what would you like from them?
- Any safety issues for you or others?

Reflective Supervision Journal Template

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

DATE:

Brief description of significant event

What was I feeling at the time?

How did I react and why? What was informing my decisions?

On reflection I achieved/learned...

And I could have done differently ...

My future learning needs are ...



Supervision Contract Exemplar (Cheshire East)



**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**SUPERVISION CONTRACT**

**Name of Supervisee:**

**Name of Supervisor/Manager:**

**KEY TASKS OF SUPERVISEE:**

*This may include individual cases, administrative or practical duties, depending on the nature of the service. It should also include any additional responsibilities undertaken e.g. auditing of practice, mentoring, multi-agency practice.*

<b>Workload</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>

**MANDATE FOR SUPERVISION:**

Cheshire East Council expects all staff to be supervised as a minimum on a monthly basis. However, for certain staff, such as those in their probationary period; newly qualified social workers in their Assessed & Supported Year of Employment or in situations where there is little responsibility assigned to the post this will be more or less frequent. The principal functions of the supervisory process are:

- a) To ensure that the supervisee carries out their job responsibilities to CEC standards and those of their professional code of conduct. (See Corporate and Directorate policies, procedures and practice.)
- b) To ensure that the supervisee understands their roles and responsibilities (supervisee job description should be available as a basis of discussions).
- c) To assist with the professional development of the supervisee.
- d) To be a primary source of support for the supervisee recognising the considerable demands of the job.
- e) Provide both regular constructive feedback to the supervisee, and to link with the Performance Development Plan and Review process.

**FORMAT OF SUPERVISION:**

- The supervision meeting will take place in privacy and there will only be interruptions if .....
- The frequency of supervision will be .....
- The supervision meeting will last for a minimum of: .....
- Method of recording the session will be by ..... and the person responsible for recording the session will be ..... The record will be shared within 10 working days and will be signed by both parties once agreed as a true record.
- Supervision records will be held by both parties and stored .....

**Others who may see the record**

**The supervision meeting will consist of the following:**

- 1. Performance Management discussions** to include:
  - Activities undertaken
  - Case Consultation and discussion (where applicable)
  - Case file audit discussion (where applicable)
- 2. Professional Development discussions of your skills, knowledge base and value base** to include:
  - Induction requirements (as appropriate)
  - Training requirements (and formal completion of Performance Development Plans and Reviews )
  - Longer term development plans and setting of professional goals.
  - For Registered Social Workers: Review of training progress against the post-registration CPD requirements set out by the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the College of Social Work's Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).
  - For NQSW's in the Assessed and Supported Year of Employment, on-going assessment and appraisal using the ASYE level of the Professional Capabilities Framework.

**3. Welfare/Support Issues**

- Factors affecting performance
- Personal issues (as appropriate)
- Stress-related issues
- Absence(s) from work
- Health and Safety
- Opportunity for you to give feedback on your experience of and expectation of supervision

- Equal Opportunities – to discuss any issues of oppression that the supervisee wishes to raise, from personal experience to institutional and structural matters
- Annual Leave
- Flexi/Time of in Lieu

**Auditing of Practice (if applicable):**

Cases which the worker is currently, or has previously been involved with may be selected for audit via the monthly Children & Families Service, CAF or multi-agency file audit process. Workers may also have been involved in cases subject of Serious Case Review or other learning and improvement process.

In preparation the supervisor will discuss the process with the supervisee prior to audit. The supervisor will also discuss the process with the supervisee following audit to identify any learning and the impact that this has had upon the worker.

**Expectations of Supervision:**

Good quality reflective supervision requires preparation by both the supervisor and the supervisee.

Following discussion, these are the ways we have agreed to work together in order to get the most out of supervision:

- a) What I want from you as my supervisor .....
- b) What I will contribute as a supervisee .....
- c) What I want from you as the supervisee .....
- d) What I will contribute as the supervisor .....
- e) As the supervisor I am responsible for .....
- f) As the supervisee I am responsible for .....

**ANY OTHER ISSUES**

**Disagreements**

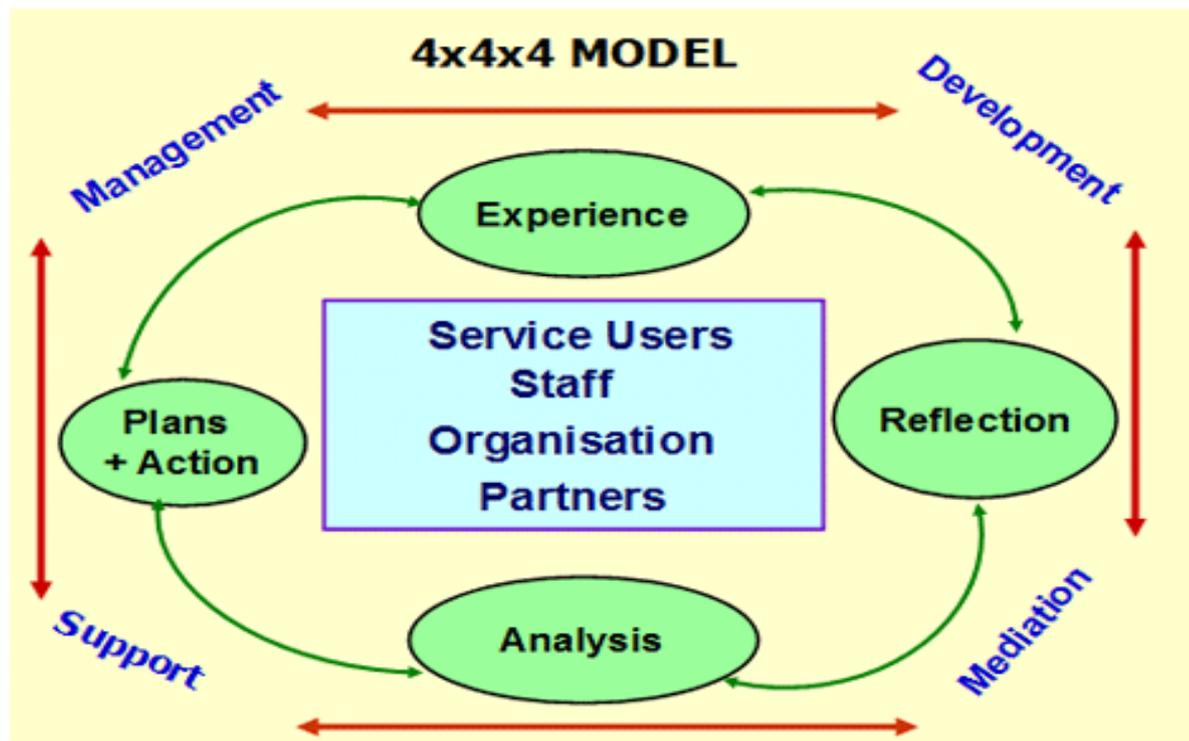
- If the Manager and supervisee cannot agree on any aspect of work performance or service delivery, either party may refer the issue to the



### 4x4x4 Integrated Model of Supervision

Morrison, T (2005) Staff Supervision in Social Care: Making a Real Difference to Staff and Service Users, (3rd edit.) Pavilion, Brighton

This model brings together the functions, stakeholders and the main processes involved in supervision. The emphasis being that supervision is an integral part of the intervention with adults, children and families.



This model integrates the four functions of supervision in blue, with the reflective supervision cycle in the green ovals and focuses on the needs and priorities of the four stakeholders in the centre box.

For professional development or problem solving to be fully effective, all four parts of the learning cycle need to be engaged. External reflective supervision, should develop workers own 'internal supervisor'.

## Gibbs Model of Reflection

Gibbs, G. (1988) Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. Oxford: Further Educational Unit, Oxford Polytechnic

Gibbs' reflective cycle is fairly straightforward and encourages a clear description of the situation, analysis of feelings, evaluation of the experience, analysis to make sense of the experience, conclusion where other options are considered and reflection upon experience to examine what you would do if the situation arose again.

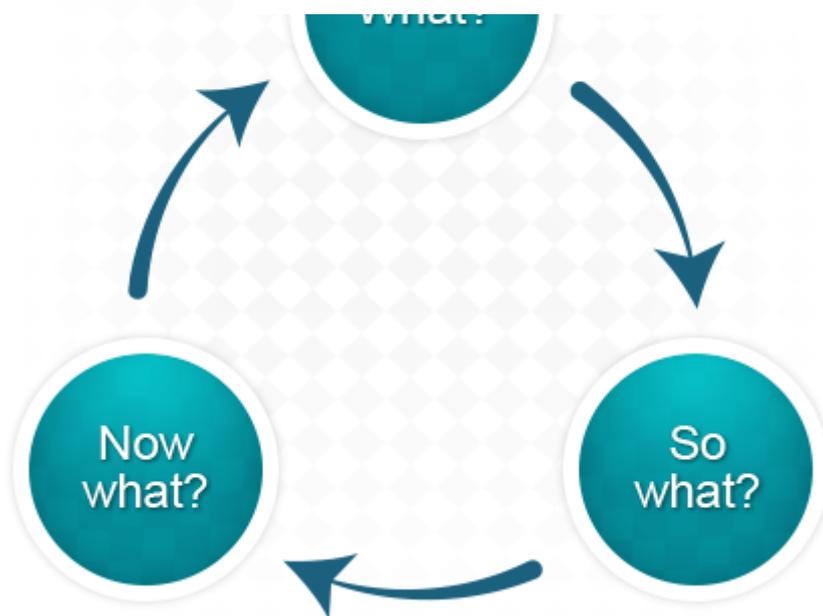


- Description** What is the family and child scenario you are working with?
- Feelings** Whilst working with the family, what were you thinking and feeling?
- Evaluation** What was good and bad about the scenario?
- Analysis** What sense can you make of the situation, from your point of view, the child's and family members?
- Conclusion** What do you need to improve, and assist the child and family? Action Plan: If it arose again what would you do?

**Rolfe et al 'So What' Model**

Rolfe, G, Freshwater, D., Jasper, M. (2001) Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: a user's guide. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

- What happened? What did I do? What did others do?
- What was I trying to achieve?
- What was actually achieved?



- Now what do I need to do?
  - Now what different options have I got?
  - Now what will be the consequences?
- 
- So what is the importance of this?
  - So what more do I need to know?
  - So what have I learnt?