

Managers Focus Group – Children’s Services Supervision Policy - 30th September 2015

Question
1) Are you aware of the current policy and guidance on supervision?
All managers present said that there were aware of the policy and follow it. They also induct their new social workers and make them aware of the policy. All said that they had been following it for some time.
2) How did you get to hear about the policy?
All had been aware for some time and expressed that they met with their social workers regularly. They are aware of it through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their supervision contract • A hard copy is placed on their supervision file • Via the induction process – they have been involved in inducting new members of staff
3) How often do you receive / undertake supervision?
The managers in the room aim for 4 weekly however case load can be a factor in increasing the length between the supervision meetings There are different degrees of supervision dependant on the seniority of the SW. Those that are NQ receive weekly or fortnightly meetings where as other more experienced can be longer – monthly. Staff can always request additional supervision if they feel it’s necessary. Informal supervision takes place quite a bit – ad hoc conversations when passing. However the managers stated that if a decision or advice is given they record it on file, although it was recognised that this doesn’t always happen for smaller decisions and advice.
4) Which members of staff receive supervision?
All the managers give supervision to their staff. All SW staff receive supervision. There was no representatives from non SW managers – and therefore it was hard to gauge whether the practice is similar within that filed – although managers said that they are subject to supervision. Senior Practitioners supervise some of the unqualified staff in the N’hood Teams
5) What is in place to support you as a manager / supervisor to carry out effective supervision?
Managers feel supported. The meet with their own managers and have supervision – not a frequently as they supervise their SW but it is still regular and they feel able to raise issues. All managers had an open door policy. Training within the last 12 months had improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision training for new managers • Leadership and management training • Delivery of training has improved • Recent years have seen new models of supervision come and go – so they seems to have developed a toolkit of different models of supervision – as no one size fits all. <p>Sup Q – does the supervision policy have the flexibility to enable you to use different supervision models</p> <p>A: Yes – the policy sets a structure / timescale for when supervision should be done and things that it needs to include, the different models are just different ways to delivering that.</p>

6) What do you consider are the barriers to effective supervision?

Volume of work (caseload) was cited as the biggest barrier to effective supervision and also improving outcomes for children. Caseload has been slightly addressed but it was increasing- in most cases to over 20. They felt that a good number would be around 15. However legislation is changing to reduce the time which may appear to be good for children on the face of it but sometimes, longer intervention will have a better impact on the child.

Timescales for the MASH (24hrs) are too tight and often missed if supervision is taking place when a case comes in. They need to do supervision and understand the value – but at the same time they need to be meeting their targets, which is where the pressure comes from.

The complexity of cases is also a factor and take longer, as well as other factors, such as demographics, including poverty, English as a second language and DV and drug use.

Complex issues can mean that SW heads are not always in the right place for supervision.

The SW service is case load and deadline driven and this can sometimes be counterproductive. By this they mean that sometimes investing more time with a family will achieve a better result for the child and the family and is not always the first cause of action

The RAS had improved greatly but this had seen a lot of recent investment.

They said that they did not have unallocated cases now - which was a problem historically.

Also waiting lists with other agencies that are referred to often slow up the timescales for a particular case – there is no slack in the system

7) How does the Council's new 'Our Behaviours' framework (performance appraisal) work in practice for you?

All managers had heard about the new approach to appraisals – most of which they feel is within the supervision that they undertake / receive. It is a new system that will need to be reviewed alongside what they do already to adapt and refine.

Have to be integrated into supervision rather than alongside, there may be additional time requirements but it might save time at the other end. Will need to monitor the impact.

8) Is there continuity between your supervision meetings – by this I mean – are they linked together and for part of a longer ongoing conversation?

Yes there is a thread between meetings – with a review and look forward element
Managers from across the service meet in improvement practice meetings to share good work and address challenges.

Managers said that they carry out health checks regularly and one manager had just completed this

They carry out regular audits

SupQ is it a 2-way improvement process – can a SW affect change / improvement

A: yes there are many ways that this can happen. Team meetings, supervision, there are lots of opportunities to raise issues for practice improvement, bringing managers together in improvement practice groups

9) What impact has the new supervision policy had on the quality of practice and outcomes for children? Can they evidence any changes?

Managers felt that it was hard to attribute any change to the policy in isolation – as there are many factors however they felt that a good supervision policy and its delivery makes for better outcomes.

Within the last year new training programmes have been held - SW now attend better trainings giving them better insight into the welfare of children and that the best answer isn't always to take them away from the family.

A manager cited an example of where the better use of skills obtained from training and also emotional intelligence had led to a much better outcome for a child and their family, which had been discussed during supervision.

10) Has the new policy made a difference to you in carrying out your work? How?

New training for SW had been rolled out this year – which was seen by managers as excellent and has enabled SW to feel more confident in making

One manager said that SW's are thinking about what they do more now – so they are now making the decision that they should feel confident in making – therefore freeing up the managers time

However managers in the room were keen to stress that they felt that their supervision practice had not changed as a consequence of the policy – as they have always practiced supervision

Good supervision also offers emotional support to the SW, which is not necessarily recorded. They rely on the good will of the social worker to work the extra hours and good supervision can help keep people.

11) What impact has the new supervision policy had on systems and processes?

As above – managers felt that they had always carried out supervision to their SW

12) How do you share good practice across teams?

This prompted a good debate. In summary Managers share good practice as they meet in the practice improvement forum and there are cluster meetings where good practice is shared.

It was felt that sharing could be improved as it was good within buildings / settings – but not across the city.

It was also recognised how important it is to value staff and celebrate good practice, and this was an area of work that needed improving. Managers considered that morale of staff was low.

13) Is good practice celebrated? Can you give an example?

Similar to above – good practice is celebrated within teams – but not more widely. It was recognised that sometimes other pressures take priority such as the focus on the improvement plan.

There needs to be a move from praising the 'quantity' of work to praising the 'quality' of work – quicker isn't always better and sometimes spending longer supporting a family can have better results. They recognised that quality of work may be reflected in supervision notes but is not shared wider.