



**Children's Safeguarding and Social
Work**
Social work supervision policy

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1 Policy framework

Supervision is an integral part of social work practice in order to ensure that social workers operate in a safe and supportive environment that promotes good practice. Under social work professional standards, supervision and reflection is a key part of continuing professional development that enables social workers to reflect on and improve their practice. It also provides critical management oversight of case-work and decision-making.

Camden's policy is that all social workers receive regular supervision that is conducted within the supervision framework as set out in this policy.

The core principles of the division's supervision policy are:

- social workers are supported so that they can carry out their duties safely and effectively and have opportunities to reflect on and develop their practice and improve their skills and knowledge;
- supervision should support improvements to service delivery and better outcomes for service users;
- supervision should allow social workers and supervisors to meet corporate targets and professional standards and demonstrate how the social worker is contributing to Camden's overall duties and priorities;
- supervision should be a two-way process of open discussion and exchange of information and ideas leading to a shared responsibility for decision-making that is fully accountable.

2 Purpose of policy

The aims of this policy are to ensure:

- standards of supervisory practice across the division meets the requirements of this supervision framework;
- all workers are aware of their roles and responsibilities and what is expected of them as supervisors and supervised workers;
- supervision is properly regulated, recorded and monitored for quality;
- every worker receives regular supervision that covers all the necessary functions.

3 Scope of policy

The policy applies to all the following social work staff in the division in their role as supervisors or supervised workers, whether they are permanent or temporary members of staff:

- family support workers and personal advisors;
- social workers;
- senior practitioners;
- team managers;
- service managers.

4 Definition

Supervision is a process for monitoring, reviewing, developing and supporting social work practice. It involves social workers working jointly with an experienced worker in regular one-to-one meetings with the aim of meeting organisational, personal and professional objectives.

It is a formal process based on a set of standards and practices that recognises the unique nature of the relationship between the supervisor and social worker.

It is important that supervision is more than a managerial exercise, but also provides opportunities for workers to critically reflect on their practice, receive support and feedback on their performance and help them to build emotional resilience.

5 Structure

Formal supervision for all social workers in Camden will take place in the following ways;

- One-to-one supervision meetings between the social worker and their supervisor will cover all functions of supervision (see section 6) but will primarily concern case decision-making, individual learning and development, performance and workload management.
- Group reflective supervision involving Reflective Groups of social workers led by a senior practitioner will cover the reflective supervision under Camden's multi-systemic model of social work and will be based on group discussion of individual cases (see section 8).

Although these formal supervision methods are the primary format, some functions of supervision could be met in different forums. Managers may consider using team meetings for team management functions such as disseminating new legislation, policy and guidance and as a forum for discussing team performance, resource issues and workload pressures.

6 Key functions of supervision

The key elements of supervision are:

- **Reflective practice and quality of decision-making** that allows social workers to reflect critically on interventions and practice, the quality of services delivered and outcomes achieved, as well as barriers to effective working and the impact of the work on the social worker.
- **Line management and accountability** that ensures accountability of decision-making and enables managers to monitor performance and measure effectiveness.
- **Caseload and workload management** that provides an opportunity to analyse cases and workloads, deal with any issues arising from these and agree how cases will be progressed.
- **Personal learning and development** to ensure that social workers are professionally competent, and are able to continue to improve their skills, meet registration criteria and develop their career pathways.

It is important that in order to develop individual social worker's knowledge and skills and help them meet the Professional Capabilities Framework standards, all of these elements are covered in supervision.

7 Elements of one to one supervision

It is an expectation that all the elements described above are integrated into Camden's supervisory practice and that all of the following are addressed.

7.1 Management

As line managers, supervisors are accountable for the performance of individual workers in terms of meeting corporate targets, carrying out legal duties and meeting performance indicators and professional standards of practice.

This should cover:

- workload allocation and management of work;
- clarifying roles and responsibilities;
- performance monitoring and meeting statutory requirements and corporate targets;
- adherence to policy and procedures;
- quality of case management and recording;
- dealing with resource issues;
- addressing diversity and equality issues;
- working with other agencies and professionals.

7.2 Case supervision

Case supervision should allow a two-way discussion on how the case is progressing, and should cover the following:

- *The child's story/ dilemma presented:* Summarise briefly the expressed (spoken) experience and feelings of the child's situation based on conversations with the social worker since the last supervision and on observations of the child's behaviour, mood, progress and relationships. Are things better/worse at home/placement, does the child feel safer/happier etc. If the child is pre-verbal or has a disability social worker's should use observation or other communications techniques to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings.
- *Reflection and analysis:* Consider the strengths and risks and grey areas associated with the parents' capacity to meet the child(ren)'s needs. How are family and environmental factors impacting on this? What are your hypotheses and emerging themes? How do these impact on the child? Briefly explore the relevant aspects of the following: genogram, family scripts and use of social GRAACES and equality issues.
- *What has worked well/ not worked:* What impact has current intervention had on the child/ young person's situation since the last supervision? What is the evidence for the progress achieved or if there has been no change what has not worked or not happened yet? What does the child/parent/other professionals say about progress made? What do we appreciate about the family? Use of self? Are parents engaging and working to effect change? If there has been no change within an acceptable timescale or things have got worse, do you need to adapt the child's plan now?

- *Next Steps (decisions and actions):* What needs to happen now for this child/ young person? Detail any direct work to be carried out; visits and meetings to be arranged and any joint work with other agencies. Outline what action is needed, by whom and by when.

Good case supervision should improve the quality of decision-making and ensure accountability, whilst keeping the child safe at all times. It should also provide evidence of the child's voice and give a clear demonstration on how interventions are improving outcomes for the child.

Decisions taken in case supervision should demonstrate a clear partnership between the social worker and manager and allow social workers to develop their practice and improve their decision-making skills.

7.3 Equality, diversity and the social GRRACCEESS

All supervision sessions should include a discussion on the social GRRACCEESS and how these impact on a case level and personal level. The GRRAACCEESS are attributes of the individual service user (gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality, spirituality) some of which are visible, such as ethnicity and some that are invisible such as sexuality.

These GRRAACCEESS will interplay with each other to influence the lived experience of the service user and shape their relationships.

At case level, the discussion should explore the extent to which social workers have an understanding of how the social GRRAACCEESS and families' lived experience of structural inequality, discrimination and culture and ethnicity impact on them.

On a personal level, social workers should explore how their own GRRAACCEESS interact with the GRRAACCEESS of the child and family and how these may influence their relationship with the child and family.

The BASW code of professional conduct requires social workers to recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in their practice.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf/the-pcf/social-worker/diversity-and-equality>

As part of the personal supervision discussion, social workers and their supervisors should explore how the GRRAACCEESS impact on their social work practice so that they are able to:

- recognise the complexity of identity and diversity of experience and apply this to their practice;
- recognise discriminatory practices and inequality as they impact on families and consider actions and approaches that can help support families to overcome these;
- critically reflect on and manage the power of the social work role in their relationship with people using services and others, and ways in which they can adapt practice accordingly in order to reduce the risk of power misuse.

7.4 Learning and development

Supervisors should ensure that social workers are professionally competent and are able to continue to improve their skills and develop their career pathways. Supervision should be used to:

- look at training and development needs and plan how these can be enhanced through further learning opportunities;
- ensure social workers continue to meet required professional standards for registration;
- allow for open discussion, feedback and encouragement of social workers to continue to develop professionally.

7.5 Support

Supervision should be the primary source of support for social workers that recognises how their role may impact on them. Supervision should:

- provide a supportive environment where social workers feel able to explore and discuss how situations or events have affected them personally;
- how their own personal situation or experiences may impact on their practice;
- identify areas of stress and look at ways to reduce this.

7.6 Engagement

Engagement focuses on the level of integration a social worker has achieved within the wider organisation, both on a team, divisional and corporate level.

This covers:

- ensuring social workers are kept informed of any changes within the division or Camden;
- negotiating relationships with other service areas, departments and agencies on behalf of the social worker, for example dealing with any difficulties arising from team dynamics or multi-agency working;
- getting feedback from staff and representing their needs to senior management;
- looking at resource or budget pressures and how these can be resolved.

7.7 Reflective practice and critical analysis

It is important that supervision does not focus too heavily on managerial tasks and meeting performance indicators. All supervision sessions should allow social workers to:

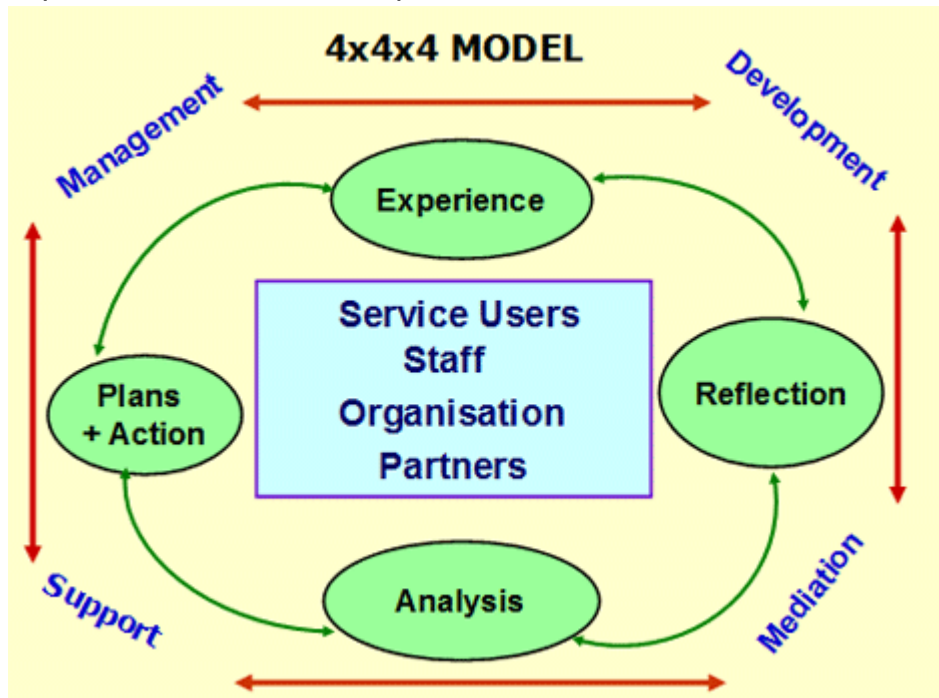
- explore their own attitudes and values and how these may impact on their perceptions of families as well as its effect on their decision-making;
- consider the impact of their interventions on outcomes for the child and family;
- critically assess their practice in order to develop it further;
- examine theories and research materials and look at its application to individual cases so they are able to develop evidence-based practice.

Reflective supervision provides social workers and their managers with opportunities to look critically at work carried out with families in order to evaluate the quality of practice and decision-making, and allows social workers to explore the emotional impact of the work in a safe environment.

This in turn facilitates discussion on how to deal with difficult feelings, improve practice and decision making and achieve better outcomes through partnership between the social worker and their supervisor.

Reflective supervision in Camden will also take place during group reflective supervision within the Reflective Group as described in section 8.

The following model for reflective supervision shows how it can integrate all aspects and functions of supervision:



8 Group reflective supervision

In line with Camden's commitment to multi-systemic and reflective practice, it is an expectation that all social workers attend group reflective supervision sessions with their Reflective Group on a monthly basis.

The purpose of this supervision is to provide opportunities for social workers to discuss cases with colleagues so that they can test hypotheses and examine alternative courses of action in cases. It also enables Reflective Groups to share the burden of risk and responsibility for cases so that social workers feel supported and are not working in isolation.

Group reflective supervision differs from one to one supervision in that it focusses solely on social work practice with regards to individual cases and does not fulfil any managerial or performance function.

Although decisions on case direction can be considered during supervision, this must be finalised with supervisors within the one to one supervision structure and in line with divisional policy. Team managers must still be responsible for making decisions such as entering the PLO or convening an initial child protection case conference.

Group reflective supervision should take place every month and should be scheduled in advance. Sessions should be led by the senior practitioner who will take the role of facilitator and oversee the conduct of the session.

The facilitator should allocate the following roles in advance of the session:

- a presenter who will present their case for discussion
- a consultant who will ask questions about the case
- observers who will join in the reflective discussion following the presentation.

Each session should last about 3 hours and each social worker in the Reflective Group should have an opportunity to present their case; the facilitator is responsible for ensuring time is allotted for each case.

All cases should be discussed during group reflective supervision at some point but priority should be given to child protection cases and complex CIN cases and cases where there is a high level of professional anxiety about the child's welfare or the trajectory of the case.

Presenters should identify a theme/dilemma within the case to be presented for discussion and on which they seek advice from their colleagues. This should be discussed with the facilitator prior to the session. The presenter should also provide a presenting issue, a case history and a genogram for the discussion.

Following the presentation all staff will contribute to the discussion, looking at possible hypotheses and sharing knowledge and experience whilst looking for possible actions to be taken to progress the case. To conclude, the facilitator should ask the presenter what they have gained from the discussion and help with deciding the next steps.

Group reflective supervision should provide social workers with learning opportunities and enable them to enhance skills and learn from the experience of others. Observers should be able to extend discussion on presented cases to their own caseloads (resonance).

To ensure positive outcomes for group reflective supervision, senior practitioners and managers should ensure that next steps agreed during group reflective supervision have been carried out.

9 Supervision of team managers

Although all the above functions and elements should be covered in the supervision of team managers, the focus will be on their operational management role rather than on day to day decisions on cases.

Supervision should be carried out by the relevant service manager on a monthly basis, using the *Management supervision record* available at this link. [Management supervision record.docx](#)

Key elements for discussion include the following:

- discussion on specific cases and reflective practice;
- staffing issues such as performance or morale;
- issues relating to working with other agencies and professionals;
- manager's personal support and learning and development needs;
- performance targets and other quality assurance activities such as audits;
- resource issues, including budgets and staffing levels;
- any operational difficulties encountered by the team, for example staffing levels, that is impacting on service delivery and quality;
- contributing to the division's service plan and other corporate plans;
- long-term planning for the service area.

When selecting cases for discussion in supervision, team managers should prioritise cases where there are concerns, are high profile, or need a fresh perspective or second opinion from the service manager in order to move the case on.

10 Supervision responsibilities

The responsibilities of individual workers for the various tasks relating to one to one supervision, including monitoring supervisory practice, are set out here.

10.1 Supervisors:

- ensuring supervision takes place within the framework of this policy;
- making arrangements for supervision to take place, for example scheduling dates and booking meeting rooms;
- drawing up the supervision contract;

- reviewing case files prior to supervision;
- recording decisions made in supervision on case supervision records and the social worker's personal supervision file;
- ensuring tasks agreed in supervision are carried out and any concerns raised by social workers are adequately dealt with;
- raising any concerns relating to the worker's practice or performance with the social worker in the first instance and with the relevant senior manager where necessary.

10.2 Supervised workers:

- attending and participating fully in supervision sessions in line with this policy;
- ensuring case recording is up to date prior to supervision and that each child has a written plan;
- implementing any decisions agreed in supervision and alerting supervisors of any difficulties in carrying out agreed actions.

10.3 Service managers/senior management team:

- ensuring the policy is fully implemented;
- ensuring staff who carry out supervision receive appropriate training within the prescribed timescale;
- for service managers, regularly monitoring the quality of supervision and ensuring it takes place at prescribed intervals;
- for staff responsible for carrying out case audits, monitoring supervisory quality and practice;
- responding to any issues arising from supervision practice or concerns reported by any supervisory staff.

Responsibilities and tasks for group reflective supervision are set out in section 8.

11 Supervision contract

To establish effective supervisory relationships, every social worker should have a supervision contract that sets out the agreed principles on how supervision will be managed and conducted. This also applies to agency and other temporary staff.

The contract should be negotiated at the first supervision meeting when the social worker joins Camden or changes manager and should be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the appraisal process. A template of the contract is available at this link.

The following items must be included in the supervision contract:

11.1 Frequency and duration

- One to one supervision with the designated supervisor must take place at least every 4 weeks for all social workers with 1 year post-qualification experience. However, the parties may agree to more frequent supervision where there is a clear need for this.
- Under Camden's probation policy, new workers must receive supervision on a weekly basis for the first 4-6 weeks.
- Newly qualified social workers must receive supervision weekly for the first 6 weeks, then fortnightly for the first 6 months of their employment, which may be reduced to monthly following review of their progress.
- Supervision sessions should last for about 2 hours, with some time set aside to discuss non-casework aspects of supervision.
- Supervision dates should be set in advance as far as possible. After each supervision session the date of the next session should be recorded on MOSAIC.
- Social workers should also attend group reflective supervision sessions each month with their Reflective Group as arranged by the senior practitioner.

11.2 Postponement

Supervision must only be postponed because an urgent situation has arisen on a case or the social worker or supervisor is on sick leave. Where a supervision session is postponed, it should be immediately rescheduled to take place within 3 working days.

If a supervisor is likely to be away from work for more than 2 months, service managers must agree alternative arrangements for another worker to take over the supervisory role.

11.3 Agenda

The agenda for supervision sessions should be agreed by the supervisor and social worker at the start of the session. However, the division's standard supervision agenda (available at the link below) sets out the standing items that must be part of any supervision discussion.

[Supervision agenda.docx](#)

All supervision sessions should begin with a discussion on the welfare of the worker and deal with practical and support issues before discussion of cases.

11.4 Confidentiality

The supervisor must make the social worker clear regarding what information shared in meetings about their individual performance may be passed on to senior managers and what can be considered confidential. If any information about individual performance does need to be shared, the supervisor should explain with whom, what information and why.

11.5 Mediation

The relationship between social workers and their supervisor is critical to the provision of a high quality supervision that meets the needs of the worker, creates positive benefits for service users and keeps children safe.

Parties to any supervision contract must remain aware of any disagreements, differences of opinion or other factors that may negatively impact on the quality of this relationship. Issues should be raised and discussed so that a solution can be agreed as early as possible before problems escalate.

Where this is not possible, there should be a named mediator who can be approached to help resolve the issues. The circumstances when a mediator may be used should be agreed by the parties and any use of mediation should be consented to by the social worker and the supervisor.

11.6 Case discussion

All cases allocated to the social worker must be discussed at the following frequencies:

- Child protection cases every month
- CIN and LAC cases every 2 months
- 18+ care leaver cases every 3 months.

Some complex cases may need to be discussed at a greater frequency as the case requires and as agreed between the social worker and supervisor. Child protection cases should be discussed at least monthly or more frequently if this is recommended by the chair of the conference. Frequency for case discussion in group reflective supervision is set out in section 8.

12 Recording

- Supervisors are responsible for recording a brief note of discussions and outcomes and actions agreed in supervision sessions. An update on progress of actions from the previous supervision must be recorded and timescales for future actions clearly set out
- Team managers and supervisors must ensure they record evidence of management oversight of cases so that there is a clear audit trail of decision-making on cases within the MOSAIC case record. It is important that major decisions on cases, such as stepping up or ending interventions, convening a strategy meeting, accommodating a child or discharging them from care or closing cases are clearly recorded with reasons given for why that action was chosen.
- Use should be made of the following case note types on MOSAIC to record decisions taken during consultation and discussion outside supervision: *Consultation with supervisor, Manager's decisions, Consultation with CPO/IRO, Consultation with Principal officer.*
- Supervision and manager/supervisor decisions should be recorded on case files in a timely manner with the reasons for decisions clearly set out.
- Individual case supervision should be recorded on the *individual case/reflective group supervision record episode* which is accessed initially from the *Start, new* option on MOSAIC and the subsequent supervision session will be generated by MOSAIC once the supervisor has selected the next *individual case/reflective group supervision record* outcome. Fostering and Permanence teams should record their supervision in the same way but using the *case supervision record – carers* episode.
- The episode has 2 tasks, *SW to agree individual case/reflective group supervision record* and *pass to manager for supervision*; these can be used to pass the supervision record between the manager and the social worker as necessary.

- *Individual case/reflective group supervision* records for every case discussed in supervision should be recorded on the relevant case supervision record available on MOSAIC and at: [Individual Case Reflective Group Supervision.pdf](#)
- All training or other career development activity should be recorded on the social worker's development plan which is part of the performance development process.
- Notes of any discussions relating directly to the social worker, for example individual performance or health and safety issues, should be recorded separately and kept on their supervision file, with a copy provided to the worker. Standard templates for recording personal supervision discussions with social workers and senior practitioners are available at the link below.
[Personal supervision record for social workers.docx](#)
[Personal supervision record for senior practitioners.docx](#)
- All social workers should have an individual development plan that is devised at their annual appraisal. This plan should be reviewed and updated at every supervision session to refresh learning targets.
- If supervision is postponed, the supervisor will record this on MOSAIC giving the reason for the postponement and the date supervision will take place, which must be within 3 working days.
- The following documents should be kept on the personal supervision file:
 - supervision contract;
 - performance development documents/development plan;
 - a copy of staff member's DBS confirmation email from HR with number and expiry date;
 - a copy of the staff member's registration letter with registration number and expiry date;
 - notes of the personal supervision meeting.
- Group reflective supervision should be recorded on the *individual case/reflective group supervision* record with notes made by the facilitator and the observers. The same steps and workflow should be used to record group reflective supervision as set out above for case supervision.

13 Training for supervisors

Supervising social work staff is a complex task requiring very specific skills. For this reason, CSSW has commissioned the following specialist supervision courses, as the general Camden supervision training does not meet the division's managerial requirements.

Staff carrying out supervisory duties must have received this training within 12 months of moving into a supervisory role. Team managers and service managers are responsible for monitoring attendance at training within this timescale.

- **Child care supervisory skills:** This course is an introduction to the framework for supervision and appraisal, covering the functions of supervision as well as required standards of practice.
- **Reflective supervision:** This course enables supervisors to establish positive reflective practice in supervision in order to empower workers to be more confident about their own professional judgements and think analytically and help them to explore different ways of dealing with complex situations. This in turn enables managers to consider approaches to raise practice standards within the team.
- **Managing people and leading a team:** This covers management skills such as motivating people, conflict resolution, team building and dealing with performance issues.
- **Multi-systemic supervision training:** This training is essential for all senior practitioners who lead Reflective Groups and will be responsible for overseeing and facilitating group reflective supervision.

14 Consultation

The nature of social work can mean that occasionally, social workers need to seek advice or guidance on a case outside the formal framework of supervision, and consult with their supervisor, manager or a specialist worker such as an IRO.

Whilst consultation cannot take the place of supervision in terms of fulfilling the need for long-term planning on cases, it is useful for dealing with urgent situations requiring an immediate response or decision or to get input from a member of staff with expertise in a specific area.

In emergencies, social workers should consult with their manager or supervisor where it is likely that a manager's authorisation is needed on a decision, for example accommodating a child or initiating legal action.

Following any case decision made outside supervision, the manager should record the outcome of the discussion and any action agreed on the manager's decision case note on the child's MOSAIC record.

Consultations with specialist staff such as IROs or fostering and permanence workers must be agreed with the supervisor in the first instance. Ideally, supervisors should attend any consultation and there must be a clear purpose for seeking advice.

Any advice given or actions agreed during consultation should be recorded by the specialist worker on the relevant case note on the child's MOSAIC record. This will automatically send an alert to the social worker that the record has been updated. General advice on procedure does not need to be recorded.

Staff should also refer to the Working with IROs policies for looked after children and child protection cases.

[..\Child protection\Working with IROs on cp cases.doc](#)

[..\Looked after children\Working with IROs.doc](#)

15 Practice guidance

15.1 First supervision session

When a new social worker joins a team, the manager should decide who would be most suitable person in the team to supervise the worker. The supervision process should be explained to the worker during induction.

[..\Induction policy and practice](#)

The first supervision session should be used to draw up the supervision contract and to carry out an assessment of the worker's training and development needs so that supervisors can make a decision on what training the new worker will need.

It is Camden's policy that social workers are entitled to access all training that is relevant to their needs. Supervisors should refer to the division's training strategy for guidance on training generally, and details of core training can be found in the induction policy.

15.2 Conducting one to one supervision

To achieve all the functions, supervision needs to be planned and purposeful and held in a positive environment that encourages open discussion and constructive feedback.

The management element of supervision should have a quality assurance function in relation to standards of practice and how these meet specific performance requirements and improve outcomes for service users. It should also allow for full scrutiny and accountability and joint case decision-making.

However, supervision should not be too focussed on management processes and individual performance, but should provide social workers with assistance to carry out their role, opportunities to learn from their supervisor's own experience as a social worker and the emotional support needed to help the social worker cope with the demands of the role.

Assessment of training needs should be an on-going process that is addressed at each supervision session to review the social worker's training and learning and development needs with regard to any objectives that have been set and should enable social workers to:

- reach and maintain the requirement for professional registration
- have the necessary skills to carry out their statutory duties and any other tasks assigned to them
- improve their understanding of specific issues, especially emerging issues
- continue their professional and career development, especially in management or supervisory roles
- ensure the team has a good basis of knowledge.

Social workers may want to think about their preferred learning method when planning training, and all planned training and development activities should be recorded on the learning and development plan.

Although social workers will have many sources of personal support within the team and elsewhere, supervision should be the principal forum for discussing the impact of the job and devising ways of reducing stress and the emotional impact of case work. Supervisors need to be able to gauge how social workers are coping and what extra support they need through a full discussion in supervision.

16 Resources

The following websites and publications contain information about social work supervision that staff may find useful.

- [Workforce development - Social Care Institute for Excellence \(SCIE\)](#)
- [Research in practice](#)
- Social work England professional standards
<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/>
- Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
<https://www.basw.co.uk/social-work-training/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf>
- Post Qualifying Standards Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work>