

Effective supervision in a period of crisis and remote working

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Aims

- The roles of supervision in the current period
- How effective supervision can be provided in a context in which supervision has to take place remotely
- How supervision can be organised in such a way that it meets all the needs of both the supervisee and the agency
- Strategies for ensuring supervision can still retain its critically reflective component and can act as a “safe” supportive environment for workers
- The messages from research in terms of what is effective within the supervisory process and how this can be applied to the current crisis

I want to explore....

- The impact that the crisis is having on the work we carry out
- The impact that the crisis has on staff, teams and organisations
- The role of supervision in ensuring high standards of practice and the well being of staff
- The messages from wider professional and research based literature regarding supervision and how these messages can be applied to the current crisis

Personal reflection

- Impact on family relationships and friendships
- Impact on the routine of our lives
- Impact on how we move physically around the world
- Impact on our underlying morale and mental health

Possible impacts on service users and their carers

- Overall heightened levels of anxiety and insecurity
- Poverty and economic hardship
- Social isolation poor accommodation
- Heightened levels of domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health difficulties
- Disproportionately hitting some parts of the communities more than others

Possible impact on practice

- Limited face to face contact with service users
- Many more practitioners working at home
- Modified working procedures
- Disrupted multi agency working

The legal changes – Coronavirus Act 2020

- An overview of the Act can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-bill-what-it-will-do/what-the-coronavirus-bill-will-do>

- Home visiting (inc PPE). (in addition see useful summary from BASW and guidance on home visits)

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2020/apr/coronavirus-act-2020-and-social-work-practice-briefing>

<https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-practice-guidance-home-visits-during-covid-19-pandemic>

- Ethical Framework in the COVID context

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care/responding-to-covid-19-the-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care>

Responding to COVID-19: the ethical framework for adult social care

- 1. Respect.** Recognising that every person and their human rights, personal choices, safety and dignity matters.
- 2. Reasonableness.** ensuring that decisions are rational, fair, practical, and grounded in appropriate processes, available evidence and a clear justification.
- 3. Minimising harm.** striving to reduce the amount of physical, psychological, social and economic harm that the outbreak might cause to individuals and communities. In turn, this involves ensuring that individual organisations and society as a whole cope with and recover from it to their best ability.
- 4. Inclusiveness** ensuring that people are given a fair opportunity to understand situations, be included in decisions that affect them, and offer their views and challenge. In turn, decisions and actions should aim to minimise inequalities as much as possible.

5. Accountability holding people, and ourselves, to account for how and which decisions are made. In turn, this requires being transparent about why decisions are made and who is responsible for making and communicating them.

6. Flexibility being responsive, able, and willing to adapt when faced with changed or new circumstances. It is vital that this principle is applied to the health and care workforce and wider sector, to facilitate agile and collaborative working.

7. Proportionality providing support that is proportional to needs and abilities of people, communities and staff, and the benefits and risks that are identified through decision-making processes.

8. Community commitment to get through the outbreak together by supporting one another and strengthening our communities to the best of our ability.

Further guidance from Social Work England and PSW Network

- The PSW & Social Work England COVID-19 Ethical Response and Best Practice Guide for Children and Families Services
<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Coronavirus-Ethical-Response-and-Best-Practice-Guide-20200505.pdf>
- The PSW & Social Work England Best Practice Guide for Video Call/Contact and Virtual/Online Home Visit
<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Best-Practice-Guide-for-Video-Call-and-Virtual-Home-Visit-20200505.pdf>

Challenge for practitioners

- Remote and home based working (from team/ supervisor)
- Negotiating personal / work boundaries during a time of crisis
- Complex decision making with limited “evidence”
- Feeling alone with risk and uncertainty
- Limited procedural guidance

Some voices of practitioners

“Its been ok really....I’m working at home mostly....I’ve got into a routine and we have these morning check ins when I talk to my team....my manager is always available when I need to speak to her...Its funny I feel more connected to my team than normal”

“I’ve been amazed.....really moved actually by how helpful and understanding so many service users and their families have been”

“I must be honest I have young children and its been great working from home and being able to balance work and home pressures”

However

“I have never felt so alone in social work”

“I have found it really stressful....it seems like other professionals just want to pass on all their stress to me...I am constantly getting emails and calls saying they are really worried about service users and I am just not sure what they expect me to do”

“I go up and down a lot....I just feel really low sometimes....its all so horrible and I just cant see a way out of it”

The impact on practice: practitioners voices

“I’ve been surprised how effective home visiting via WhatsApp has been. However most of the people I work with prefer a telephone conversation”

“its been very difficult.....A lot of the patients have been really anxious....some just wont answer their phones?”

“Its tricky.....I’m conscious of needing to hear from service users themselves but much of the time we have to be practical and rely on family and friends”

Negotiating the boundary between personal and professional

“I live in a shared house so I have to work in my bedroom. The other day I had this really hard conversation with a family about sexual abuse...and it was like in my bedroom...my bedroom...I couldn't sleep properly for a couple of nights”

“I was having this conversation with this service user on WhatsApp and it went really well.....but then suddenly I realised my unmade bed was in camera....I felt so embarrassed” (laughs)

“As well as being a social worker I am also a carer for an older relative who I live with....its been so hard....I have begged my manager to let me come back into the office as at home the two roles never stop

Any questions, thoughts
or reflections?

Challenges for agencies

- Having to redesign practice systems to fit the new circumstances
- Rapid and unpredictable change
- Balancing (and defining) high professional standards with the welfare of staff
- Creating a practice culture that reflects the above

The challenge for first line managers

- Attending to the welfare service users and staff
- Keeping a “grip” on cases
- Sustaining a strong sense of team connectedness: Redefining the life of the team in a more remote working context
- In particular redesigning supervision to fit with this new environment

The role of supervision

- Supervision has long been recognised as key component of social work
- It has features in the waves of reforms in recent years (Munro, SWRB, practice models esp SBA, KSS)
- Forms of supervision have evolved with a consensus about the need for critical reflection within it but also increasing use of team supervision

Supervision: Open to Interpretation?

- Line management
- Clinical supervision (popular in health)
- Group supervision
- “the open door”
- “reflective” supervision

Supervision: perennial debates

- Finding the time for supervision at all
- Ensuring that “everything is covered”
- Is it “surveillance or reflection”? (Beddoe, 2014)
- How do you record supervision (especially the reflective elements)?
- Mixed messages from senior managers about the value of critical reflection in supervision?

Role of supervision

- Translating policy to practice (an essential “gear” mechanism)
- Promoting better personalised outcomes for service users
- Ensuring high professional standards
- Building capacity--the workforce & resources
- Has a key role in helping workers negotiate the challenges posed by the crisis

Evidence Review (WWC for children's social care, 2020)

- This review found that supervision tends to have a positive effect on some outcomes for workers and outcomes for organisations, but this is based on very low strength evidence.
- The type of evidence included in the review could only show that supervision is associated with certain outcomes, not that it caused them.
- The evidence included in this review is all from the USA, therefore the findings may not be generalisable to the UK.
- More research is needed on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of supervision and in particular its effect on outcomes for children and families.

Supervision in child welfare: a systemic review (Carpenter et al. 2013)

- This systematic review found no high quality evidence for outcomes of supervision.
- Study designs are weak and samples limited; supervision rarely defined.
- Supervision is associated with worker satisfaction, self-efficacy and lower stress.
- Outcomes for organizations may include workload management and retention.
- No studies have investigated outcomes for consumers or the costs of supervision.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740913002703>

Some local successes

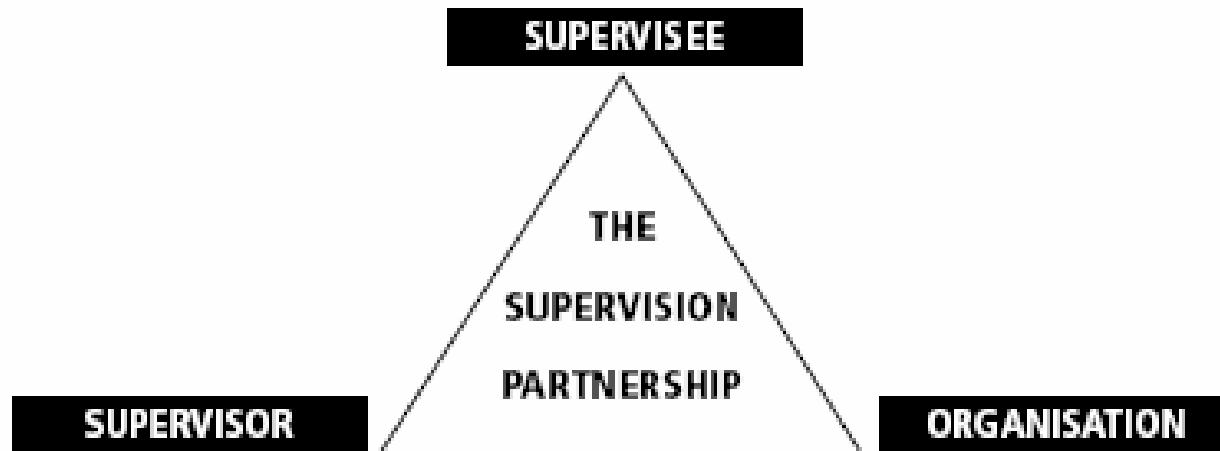
- Evaluations as part of the Innovation programme highlighted supervision (SoS, Hertfordshire, Tri-borough) but also SCIE in adult services
- We should not be dismissive of international evidence
- As Sue White cautions “lets consider what helps as well as what works....”

The role of supervision (Morrison, 2007)

Based on models developed by Kadushkin (2002), Schon (1983) with Munson (2004) reporting that modern supervision can be traced back to 1920's

- **Managerial**
- **Supportive**
- **Educative**
- **Mediation**

Supervision: thinking systemically



Supervision styles--but also practice styles?(Morrison, 2009)

- Authoritative
- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- neglectful

Supervision styles

Authoritative

- Committed
- Structured and focused
- Empathic and containing
- Knowledgeable

Authoritarian

- Controlling
- Inflexible
- Limited knowledge base

Neglectful

- Unavailable
- Uncaring
- Limited knowledge base

Permissive

- Unstructured
- Unwilling to address issues
- Collusive or rescuing

Three Meanings of Reflection

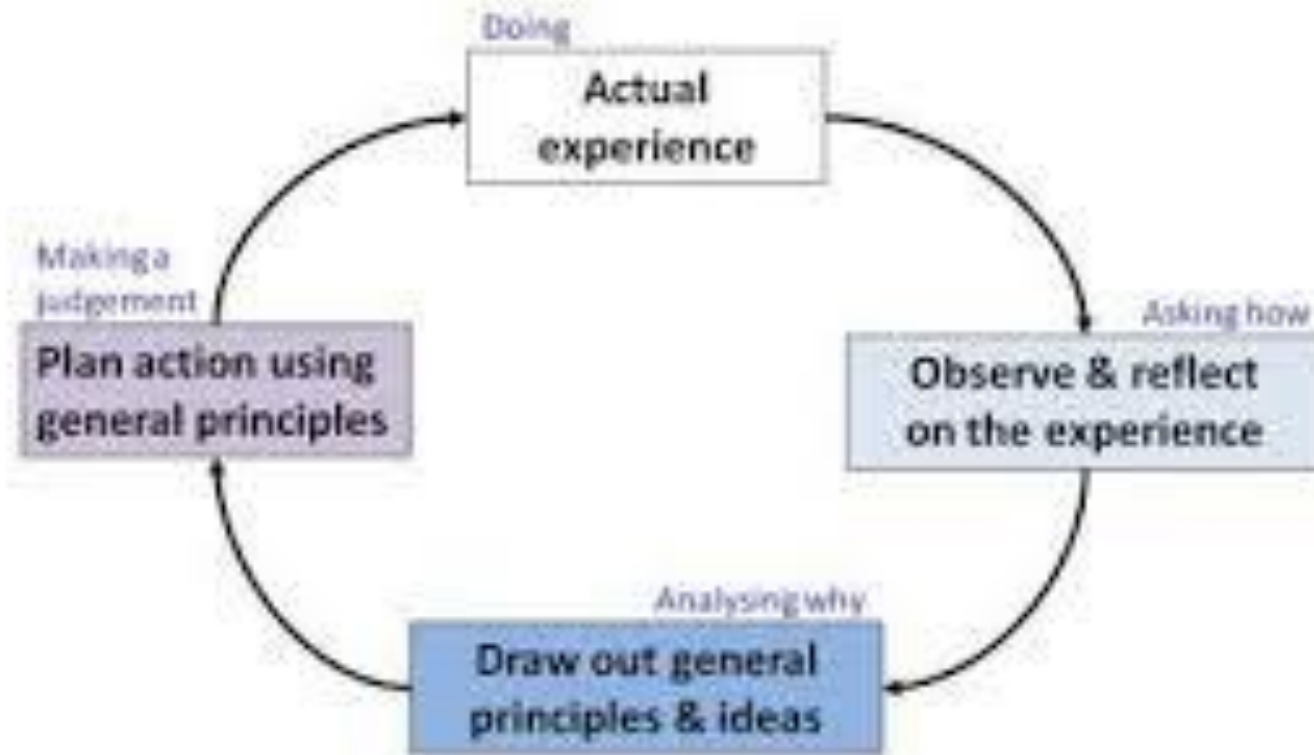
- Thinking things through
- Questioning our own guidelines and developing our theories to respond to new situations
- Understanding how our relationships with clients reflect their own experiences and relationships and give us access to how they are experiencing the world (Payne, 2014)

Reflective practice

- *“These three meanings of being reflective emphasise the point that it is not enough as a practitioner to travel along guidelines and conventions. Much of the time this will be satisfactory, however any given situation may need us to develop and change our guidelines, responding to new aspects of the work and to social circumstances we meet. We must look underneath the surface relationship and events which are presented to us”. (Payne, 2014)*

Kolb's contribution

Reflection and learning (Kolb, 1984)



Reflective supervision and Kolb's cycle (Morrison, 2005)

Experience – *“working with the supervisee to understand what is happening in their current practice. Where this relates directly to work with people who use services it is an opportunity to make sure that their perspective is introduced into the discussion.”*

Reflection

“Engaging with the supervisee to explore their feelings, reactions and intuitive responses. This is an opportunity to discuss any anxieties and acknowledge situations where stress may be impacting on their work.

Where the discussion relates to specific work with people who use services it is an opportunity to explore any assumptions and biases that might be driving practice. This can be an important element of working with diversity and promoting anti-oppressive practice”.

Analysis

“Helping the supervisee to consider the meaning of the current situation and use their knowledge of similar situations to inform their thinking. At this point alternative explanations may be explored and, where the needs of a service user are being discussed, this is an opportunity to consider the relevance of research and practice knowledge. This in turn may be useful in identifying any learning and development needs for the supervisee”.

Action planning

“Working with the supervisee to identify where they wish to get to and how they are going to get there. Action will automatically result in a need to re-engage with the experience of carrying out identified plans”.

Therefore reflection is crucial

- To help the supervisee remain self aware both in terms of their own emotional state and what ideas/ beliefs are driving their practice
- To be purposeful in their practice
- Being able to remain attuned to the needs of service users
- To help understand others (service users/ other professionals/ colleagues) behaviour
- To recognise be able to access help and support when necessary

Group supervision

- Limited research but widely used reportedly valued
- Key is implementation and quality (clarity around model and good facilitation)
- Can play a key role in the current crisis—team connectedness. It can work online
- Needs careful facilitation— harder to read emotional “traffic” online and ensure all participants participation is managed

Messages for agencies/ Practice leaders

- Think about the tone for practice that is being set in your organisation
- Balancing the need for high professional standards and the welfare of staff
- QA processes can be double edged
- Be clear about expectations for supervision in your practice system
- Communication is key—be aware of overt and covert messages within your practice system (Reason, Woods)
- Think about the needs of first line managers

Messages for practitioners

- Be aware of where you are emotionally—you will go up and down
- Prepare for and use supervision: be more strategic than normal.
- Keep in running list of issues you want to discuss
- More widely stay connected to your team and participate in the life of the team
- Build, structure routine and variety into you day

Messages for first line managers

- Remain attuned to where all of your staff are emotionally—staff will go up and down
- Plan to ensure the team remain connected via team meetings and check ins
- Think about the informal life of the team
- Devise systems for keeping a “grip” on all of the cases outside of supervision
- Retain a sense of structure and purpose to supervision—not a catch up over the phone
- Be aware the tone you set in the team will set a tone for practice

Practical steps

- Identify individual (and team) supervision's role within a wider strategy for keeping the team connected
- Carefully structure the agenda—an hour is usually the limit online
- Think about how you check in re the supervisees welfare (Authenticity and relationship based)
- Balance those cases that your can check in on and those that need deeper exploration.
- Try to record “defensible” (as opposed to defensive) decision making

Conclusions

- These are extraordinary times and there are not “glib” solutions to a number of complex challenges
- Nevertheless we have to collectively find ways of remaining and helpful to families
- How we look out for ourselves and each in other work will have a direct impact on the services we can offer service users and their carers
- In all these respects a maintaining or building strong supervisory culture is crucial

And over to you.....