



Camden

Practice guidance on the use of live supervision

Definition and purpose

Live supervision enables supervisors to observe social work practice during direct work with children and families so that they are better able to support the social worker in developing their practice. It can also help supervisors to get a better understanding of the child and family and the problems they face.

Live supervision supports the key aims of supervision by providing opportunities for social workers to:

- reflect on their practice and interaction with families and professionals
- encourage them to have clear aims and outcomes when attending home visits and meetings
- instigate and encourage use of reflective discussion.

This allows social workers to build on their own skills and insights as a practitioner, and reflect on any aspect of their profession and their client relationships, leading to enhanced service provision and a safeguard to the social worker's well-being.

The process should be focussed on providing direct and immediate support and constructive feedback to the social worker as a means of training. This critical feedback must help the social worker to build skills and improve practice, thus meeting their personal and professional supervision needs.

It should be acknowledged that the direct scrutiny associated with live supervision may generate resistance from experienced practitioners who may sense a challenge to their professional competence. Therefore the manner and delivery of feedback must be considered sensitively in each individual case. Additionally, clear explanations must be given to the supervisee as to the aims and purpose of Live supervision.

Practice issues

Live supervision involves having the supervisor present at the time of the direct work or meeting, to observe the social worker's practice as well as observing how social workers go about setting and meeting agreed aims.

The advantages to the supervisor being present are that supervisory support can be immediate if needed, feedback provided is relevant with the supervisor having made observations of interaction and engagement, and the scope for reflective discussion is greater and timely given the direct attendance of the supervisor.

The disadvantage is that the social worker and client's anxiety may be increased by having a person of authority in the room, and/or the social worker's confidence may be decreased. Supervisors must take steps wherever possible to minimise these anxieties.

Before live supervision can take place, the social worker should notify parents and get their consent. The social worker and supervisor should meet prior to the home visit or other direct work event to discuss the aims of the direct work and any other important background information about the case.

Supervisors should record notes of the live supervision on the live supervision record (appendix 1), and should:

- give an opinion on whether the stated aims of the visit/direct work were achieved
- comment on the social worker's professional conduct, for example punctuality, and the quality of their communications with family members
- provide evidence of good and weak social work practice, including evidence of challenge and managing conflict
- reflect on the quality of the relationship between the social worker and family members.

The recording of the Live supervision should be uploaded onto Framework i under the documents section and marked as confidential. The frequency of live supervision should be quarterly but this can be increased when it is identified that there are concerns around a social worker's practice, or when case audits identify drift and complexity.

When observing practice, supervisors should use the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Work as outlined in Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency 2012 for Social Workers as a guidance tool and provide concrete examples to the social worker of areas of strength as well as weakness (appendix 2).

It would be unrealistic to expect social workers to meet the entire standards list in one observation, but below are examples of areas that might be observed. Supervisors should however acquaint themselves with the HPC Standards of Proficiency list in its entirety.

Conflict Resolution

If a situation should arise where the social worker and supervisor do not agree to the observation findings then in the first instance steps should be taken to resolve this through face to face discussion and honest exploration of both viewpoints. In the event this does not rectify the disagreement then a three way meeting with line management should be requested for further discussion and support.

Appendix 1

Live Supervision Record

Observer;	Social Worker;
Family Name;	Date of observation;

Aim Of Visit/direct work (as discussed and agreed with Social worker prior to meeting/home visit)
Observations (this is to include whether the agreed aims were met and highlight social worker strengths and weaknesses in practice)
Reflective Discussion (record of any discussion held post observation in relation to case history, social work concerns, presentation of family members, and or any other presenting issues)
Actions (for either social worker or line management)
Social Worker comments

Appendix 2

The standards of proficiency (SOPs) set out what a social worker in England should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their social work training so that they can register with the HCPC. They set out clear expectations of a social worker's knowledge and abilities when they start practising" (HPC standards 2012).

Examples of practice taken from HCPC Standards of Proficiency

Registrant social workers must:

- be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately
- be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty
- be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately
- understand the need to promote the best interests of service users and carers at all times
- understand the need to protect, safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- be able to manage competing or conflicting interests
- understand the need to respect and uphold the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user and carer
- recognise that relationships with service users and carers should be based on respect and honesty
- recognise the power dynamics in relationships with service users and carers and be able to manage those dynamics appropriately
- understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct
- be able to establish and maintain personal and professional boundaries
- be able to assess a situation, determine its nature and severity and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with it
- be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available
- be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice
- be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner
- be able to maintain confidentiality
- be able to communicate effectively
- be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating advice, instruction, information and professional opinion to colleagues, service users and carers
- understand how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of a range of factors including age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability
- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status
- be able to engage in inter-professional and inter-agency communication
- be able to listen actively to service users and carers and others

- be able to prepare and present formal reports in line with applicable protocols and guidelines
- be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet needs and outcomes
- be able to work in partnership with others, including those working in other agencies and roles
- be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team
- recognise the contribution that service users' and carers' own resources and strengths can bring to social work
- be able to work with resistance and conflict
- be able to understand the emotional dynamics of interactions with service users and carers
- be able to reflect on and review practice
- understand the value of critical reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection appropriately
- recognise the value of supervision, case reviews and other methods of reflection and review
- be able to gather, analyse, critically evaluate and use information and knowledge to make recommendations or modify their practice
- be able to select and use appropriate assessment tools
- be able to prepare, implement, review, evaluate, revise and conclude plans to meet needs and circumstances in conjunction with service users and carers
- be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts
- understand the need to maintain the safety of service users, carers and colleagues
- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
- be able to work safely in challenging environments, including being able to take appropriate actions to manage environmental risk.