



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Social work supervision policy

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

1 Policy framework

Supervision is an integral part of social work practice that enables social workers to operate in a safe and supportive environment to promote good practice. It is a key part of continuing professional development that enables social workers to reflect on and improve their practice and provides critical management oversight of casework 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 principle aims of supervision are:

- supporting social workers to carry out their duties safely and effectively and have opportunities to reflect on and develop their practice and improve their skills and knowledge.
- supporting improvements to service delivery and better outcomes for service users.
- allowing social workers and managers to meet corporate targets and professional standards.
- facilitating 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.

The aims of this policy are to ensure:

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

Supervision practice should be relational; for more details on supervision and Relational Practice please see the practice guide: [practice-on-a-page-supervision-and-relational-practice.pdf](#)

For Camden's short guide to social work supervision please go to: [supervision-short-guide.pdf](#)

2 Structure

Supervision for all social care workers in Camden will take place in the following ways.

- Formal one-to-one supervision meetings between the social worker and their manager will cover all functions of supervision but will primarily concern personal supervision, learning and development and case decisions.
- Group reflective supervision within Reflective Groups of social workers will be based on group discussion of individual cases. For details on
- 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.

3 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 can continue to improve their skills, meet registration criteria and develop their career pathways.

4 Supervision of team managers

Although all the above functions 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 monthly, using the *Management supervision record* available on the policy hub.

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 CSFH 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.

5 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 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 where it is likely that the 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 Family, Friends and Fostering workers must be agreed with the manager in the first instance. Ideally, managers 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.

6 Elements of supervision

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.

The contract should set out the following:

Frequency and duration

- One to one supervision with the designated manager 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 can also attend group reflective supervision sessions as arranged.

Postponement

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

Agenda

The agenda for supervision sessions should be agreed by the manager and social worker at the start of the session. However, the CSFH standard supervision agenda sets out the standing items that must be part of any supervision discussion. 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.

Confidentiality

The manager 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 manager should explain with whom, what information and why.

Mediation

The relationship between social workers and their manager 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 manager.

Case discussion

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

- Child protection cases every month
- CIN and CLA 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 manager. Child protection cases should be discussed at least monthly or more frequently if this is recommended by the chair of the conference.

7 Recording

- Managers 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 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 manager, Manager's decisions, Consultation with CPO/IRO, Consultation with Principal officer.*
- Managers 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*. Fostering teams should record their supervision in the same way but using the *case supervision record – carers episode*.
- *Individual case/reflective group supervision* records for every case discussed in supervision should be recorded on the relevant case supervision record available on MOSAIC.
- 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 are available at: [personal-supervision-record-for-social-workers.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 manager 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 when this is undertaken.