Guiding Light:
Harnessing Reflective Supervision for Effective Social Work Practice

SWU and the Bath Spa Research Team:

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Research Team :

- **Deep dive into the literature around reflective supervision.**

- **Series of individual interviews with social workers from across the UK.**

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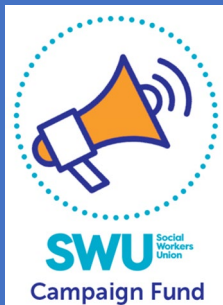
So – what is supervision ?

Three Major Components of Supervision

- **Administrative**

- **Educational**

- **Supportive**

To be an effective supervisor, you need to be skilled at each of the three areas.

Why do supervision at all?

For you

- Protected time for support and reflection = wellbeing
- Nurture – Learning and Development
- Professional development
- Strategies
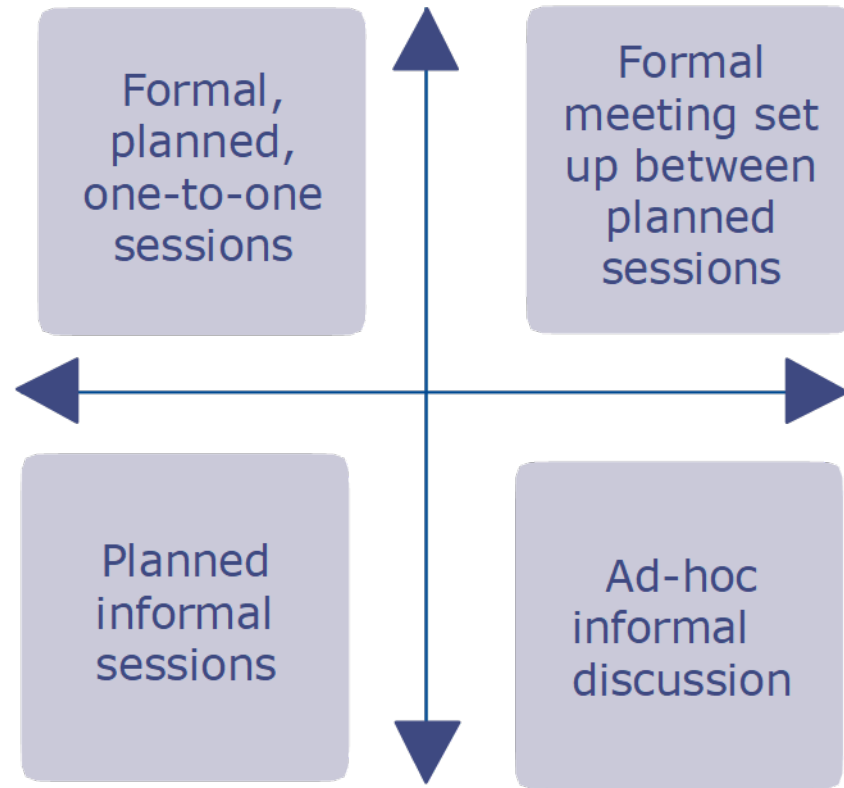- Best practice
- Best outcomes
- Job satisfaction

For your Manager

- Oversight
- Safety and wellbeing
- Empower and support
- Governance
- Quality assurance
- Efficacy
- Good outcomes
- Staff retention

Effective Supervision supports the standards and codes of social work practice in all four nations

Different types of one-to-one supervision

Formal, planned, one-to-one sessions

Formal meeting set up between planned sessions

Planned informal sessions

Ad-hoc informal discussion

Reflection

Quickly reflect on your own supervision over the last few months and consider.

- If they were formal or informal sessions

- planned or ad hoc discussions

- what impact these different types of supervision have on outcomes for you, for the organisation and for people who use our services.

Research Findings

Over to Bath Spa research team for a full analysis of the research findings.

https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article/53/4/1945/6884098

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Number of children and family social workers leaving during year

4,995

up by 16% compared to 2020 and the highest number in the last 5 years

Vacancies at 30 September (FTE)

6,522

up by 7% from last year and the highest number in the last 5 years

Number of agency workers at 30 September (FTE)

5,977

an increase of 3% compared to the same point in 2020. The associated agency worker rate was relatively unchanged from last year, at 15.5%.

Campaign Fund

In 2019-2020, we shouted that 35% of social workers were looking to leave the job in the next 18 months.

Highest turnover in 5 years – up 16% in a year

Highest number of vacancies in 5 years

Highest number of agency workers in a couple of years.

The Effects of Chronic Stress

Chronic stress within the workplace can have devastating effects on both our mental and physical wellbeing
This fact becomes increasingly concerning as it has been found that chronic stress is highly prevalent within the social work sector.

This may contribute towards:

Increased likelihood of suicide
(Milner et al., 2018)

Health Risks such as insomnia (Clint et al., 2018)
and cardiovascular disease (Rosengren et al., 2004

How to improve Wellbeing

From the first 70 responses to a surve **consisting of questionnaires, the most frequent themes were:**

1. Peer Support

"Having a good team around you to discuss issues helps, although most cannot help with workloads, as they are also in the same situation with unmanageable caseloads."

2. Family Support

"Rest at home and family time"

3. Managerial Support

"A brilliant manager who stands up for me and recognises I am giving my all"

4. Flexible Working

"Flexible working and autonomy"

Rapid Review

Purpose of the review

- **What does best practice for social work supervision look like?**

- **Why doesn't supervision take place? How can this be overcome?**

- **The impacts of reflective supervision on social worker well-being and service user outcomes**

Key Findings

- **Successful reflective supervision relies on regular supervision with a supportive, available manager or peer-group, recognising the autonomy of the social worker.**

- **Unsuccessful reflective supervision is often the result of an accountability focused, task-oriented approach to supervision.**

Aims

- Using the data collected in the rapid review, this study has engaged with social workers to co-construct a best practice reflective supervision workbook.

- Based on the understanding that the workbook should be made for social workers, by social workers.

- Aiming to support the wellbeing and best outcomes for both social workers and service users.

- Working with SWU to develop a reflective supervision best practice guide based on a rapid review, interviews and focus groups

Data Collection

Data collection involves voluntary participation of registered social workers.

Individual Semi-structured Interviews

- **The interviewees' role and the HSE model of hazards**
- **The interviewees' understanding of reflective supervision and its utility**
- **The impacts of reflective supervision**
- **The interviewees understanding of best practice reflective supervision, incorporating findings from rapid review.**

Data Collection

Focus Groups

- **Impacts and influence of reflective supervision**

- **Best practice reflective supervision – questions based on systematic review and interviews**

- **Practicalities of reflective supervision – how should it be conducted?**

- **The reflective supervision guidebook – how should it be structured and promoted?**

Findings

Why is Reflective Supervision important?

- Supports practice
- Supports social worker wellbeing
- Means better outcomes for those who social workers work with.

Reflective Supervision improves practice

"I'm working with one woman in particular. I've been very reflective in supervision about the approach that I'm using, which is a strength-based approach and a task-centered approach with her. Because I'm aware of that, I'm seeing, I'm probably noticing more the difference in her and how empowered she actually is and how motivated and committed she is to stay in abstinent from alcohol. I'm probably using some better reflective language with her because I'm having that reflections myself, if that makes sense."

What does best supervision practice look like?

No one size fits all, but:

- **Does it have to be a line manager?**
- **Regularity is important.**
- **Not tick-boxing.**
- **Sometimes less overt structure can be helpful.**
- **Pools resources and ideas.**
- **Reflects on actions, ideas, and theory connected to specific cases.**

Thank You.

Thank You to All Social Workers!