



RELATIONAL & ANTI-RACIST SUPERVISION FORM OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE PROJECT LEADER

Shabnam Ahmed is a proud member of the Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS) led by Wayne Reid (Anti-racism Visionary). Shabnam is passionate about finding ways to keep anti-racism practice alive in the supervision space (as well as wellbeing) to promote the longevity of social workers. Shabnam was asked by Wayne to produce a supervision form to integrate anti-racism in the supervisory space. The form aims to serve both social workers and social work managers to promote relational and anti-racist supervision with a strong focus on wellbeing. The supervision form is curated from Shabnam Ahmed's practice, which is influenced greatly by social work values and ethics, her passion for practice education, anti-racism and evidence-based theory. Shabnam says: "Practice has dictated the creation of this form and now the form should help to inform practice".

INTRODUCTION

Social work is a profession where the potential for secondary trauma and compassion fatigue is omnipresent. Events in 2020 – the pandemic and police brutality in the U.S.A shone a light on the disproportionate impact on people from Black and Global majorities. It also broke silences around racism and reinvigorated the Black Lives Matter movement. The wide-ranging impact on Black and ethnic minority social workers' wellbeing and morale became clearer than ever before.

The social work regulator in England, Social Work England places anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice as requirements for all social workers in their daily practice. Anti-discriminatory practice focuses on the specific characteristics and the experiences people have – for example race. Anti-oppressive practice, however, directs our attention to power disadvantages resulting from societal, organisational and individual responses to

protected characteristics and social divisions and how these intersect (Parker and Crabtree, 2018). When relating these principles specifically to race, they translate into anti-racist practice, highlighting the relevance of this to social work practice and consequently social work supervision.

According to Professor Bernard (2020), genuine engagement with Black and ethnic minority staff about their lived experiences is necessary. It is important for managers to be curious about and name the barriers within their organisations that might be reproducing racial inequalities. Accepting that all supervisors and supervisees will operate with personal bias and harbour insecurities that are difficult to contemplate and articulate, if these are left unattended, there is a danger these biases will be influence in social work practice and social work management. This could mean the difference in a child being looked-after outside of their family, rather than

extended family or close friends being considered. A containing, reflective space [assists] in promoting anti-racist social work practice (Thakrar, 2017). The supervision form enables and encourages anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist discourses through embedding it as a value of supervision.

A strong message from research in psychology highlights there are potentially detrimental effects to colour blind approaches in supervision. This not only impacts on Black supervisees' perception of supervision but is harmful to the clients they work with (Neville et al., 2000, Constantine and Wing Sue, 2007). These messages are relevant to the social work profession, given that supervision is a regular occurrence within social work, and social workers work directly with service-users from diverse racial backgrounds.

One of the ways anti-racism can be facilitated and supported for social workers in daily practice is through culturally competent social work supervision. Supervision is woven into the fabric of social work and is an act of care for the carers. In reaching out to several hundred social workers, the feedback I received revealed several themes: that supervision is not prioritised: it is often cancelled; there is a heavy focus on case management and very little focus on wellbeing or the emotional impact of social work. Discussions about anti-racism, personal factors that impact on ability to undertake the role or career progression rarely take place.

We know Black and ethnic minority social workers are not represented widely in senior management positions within social care and workplace racism has been identified as a primary barrier to career progression for them (Brockmann et al. 2001). We also know that this group of workers are over-represented in fitness to practice hearings with the social work regulator (Samuel, 2020). Therefore, ensuring the form captures staff's career aspirations, development needs, progress and potential barriers is imperative. Transparency about areas of development, as well as an opportunity to capture good work, is essential. To capture the emotional impact of the work or other factors that can impact on staff's wellbeing, such as racism is also a priority. Many Black social workers have reported their wellbeing was not considered or discussed following the murder of George Floyd.

The form has been shaped with the help of the members of the BPS, social workers nationally, student social workers, team managers, service managers and Practice Educators. It has also been shared with principal social workers, Academics, professors of social work and supervision experts for comment. Their feedback has shaped this final version which is endorsed by BASW England.

Shabnam recommends starting with the Agenda and Health and wellbeing section, and then moving around the form naturally as supervision unfolds. This is not an exclusive supervision form for staff who are from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. It is for all social workers and does not disadvantage anyone. Alongside anti-racism, it encourages all forms of oppression are considered and discussed as part of supervision. It is underpinned by a commitment to the Equality Act 2010, social justice principles and promotes equity.

A range of tools are available to support supervisors and Practice Educators to implement each section of the form. Shabnam recommends the tools for supervision available on the Research in Practice website available at:

<https://practice-supervisors.rip.org.uk/supervisors-home>

www.researchinpractice.org.uk/adults/news-views/2022/march/new-resources-to-support-practice-supervisors-and-the-implementation-of-the-post-qualifying-standards

As well as the tools she introduces through her videos through School of Shabs www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhZKV_RzUwI

It is important to emphasise the form is a template and can be adapted according to specific demographics/needs/specialisms. For example, if you are supervising a social worker, student, newly qualified social worker, apprentice, manager or a senior leader.

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