

Early Learning and Childcare Service Supervision Toolkit



*Compiled by: The Workforce Improvement Team and the
Improvement Team*

Introduction and Aims of this Toolkit

Good supervision can give staff an opportunity to reflect on their practice, explore any worries or concerns about the welfare of children in the setting and contribute towards developing confident and competent staff groups. All of these are known to be important in establishing safe organisations where children are safeguarded from harm.¹

This Toolkit will provide information to support managers and staff to undertake effective Supervision, it will highlight the difference between Supervision and Appraisal and the Appendix includes ready to use forms.

The Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage, Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five effective from April 2017² states that:-

3.21. Providers **must** put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides **support, coaching and training** for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of **mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement**, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

3.22. Supervision should provide opportunities for staff to:

- **discuss any issues** – particularly concerning children’s development or well-being, including child protection concerns
- **identify solutions** to address issues as they arise
- receive **coaching to improve** their personal effectiveness

Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook (August 2015):-

Effectiveness of leadership and management

147. Inspectors will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management by evaluating the extent to which leaders, managers and governors:

- improve staff practice, teaching and learning through effective systems for supervision, rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development³

¹ Supervision in Early Years Settings – In-Trac Training

² Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five, Published March 2017, Effective April 2017

³ Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook, August 2015

Ofsted Grade descriptors for the effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding (1)

- Incisive evaluation of the impact of staff practice leads to rigorous performance management, supervision and highly focused professional development. As a result, teaching is highly effective or improving rapidly.

Good (2)

- An effective and well-established programme of professional development helps practitioners to improve their knowledge, understanding and practice. Through effective systems for supervision and performance management, practitioners are monitored regularly and under-performance is tackled swiftly. As a result, teaching is consistently strong or improving steadily.

Requires improvement (3)

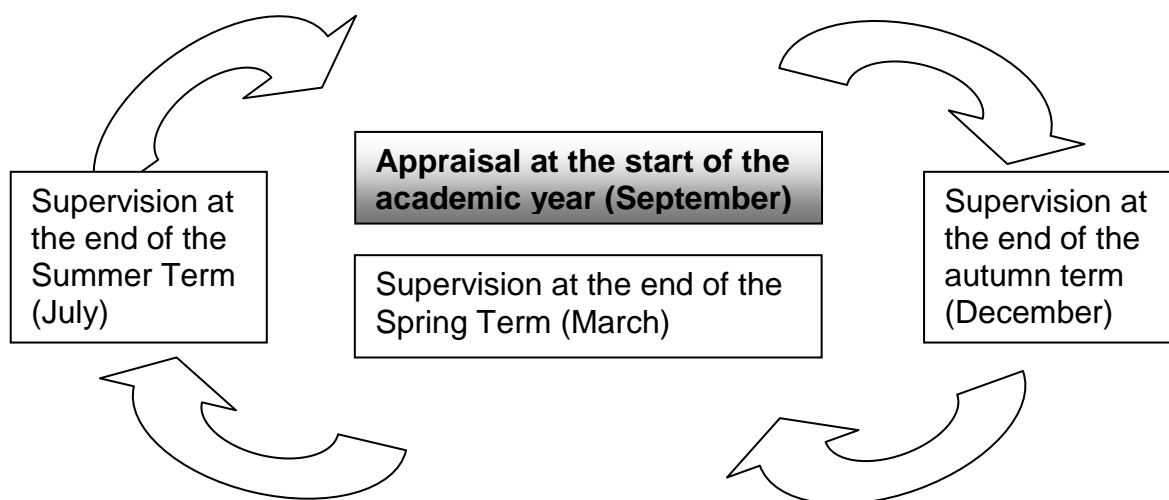
- Leadership and management are not yet good.
- Any breaches of statutory requirements do not have a significant impact on children's safety, well-being or learning and development.

Inadequate (4)

Leadership and management are likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- Leaders do not identify weaknesses in practice or understand how to improve practice or any actions taken to tackle areas of identified weakness have been insufficient or ineffective. Training for staff is ineffective.
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements are not met. Breaches have a significant impact on the safety and well-being of children.

An Example of the Supervision and Appraisal Cycle



Appraisal is not the same as supervision

The appraiser is making an assessment of performance against the Job Description and so should use the Job Description, previous year's objectives and relevant action points from team meetings. Use the setting's business plan and quality standards to determine where performance has been exceptional, good, average or poor.

To validate the assessments, evidence should be collated to illustrate any points that are made. Examples may include positive comments from parents, observations of practice, contribution at events such as parents' evenings or ideas presented for activities that have been successful for the children, attendance records, complaints or the implementation of change and learning following the completion of training; or development plans set at previous appraisals or team meetings. If the appraisal is with a new staff member then the induction notes will help to identify progress.

The appraisal form can also offer a unique opportunity for an employer to gain feedback on the business and to ask for comments on specific issues which may affect staff welfare; for example, work/life balance issues, length of journey time, staff facilities or even general staff morale within the provision or group. **Appraisals are annual meetings** to review a staff members performance over the previous year, set targets for the next year and discuss any training needs / CPD (Continuing Professional Development) linked to the setting business plan and quality improvement plan.⁴

Supervision is not the same as appraisal

Supervision is a formal and recorded process through which the professional actions of staff are examined and regularly reviewed. It provides a recorded system of decision making that is audited to improve practice and to improve the service that is provided to children and parents.

Supervision acts as a means for ensuring that members of staff have access to the support, training and procedures they require for professional growth and development.

Supervision enables supervisors and supervisees to examine and reflect on the quality of their practice and to facilitate discussion.

Supervision is a legal requirement – in the revised EYFS Statutory Framework (2014) supervision of staff became a '**must**' this is upheld in the 2017 revision of the Framework. In previous versions of the EYFS including the 2012 Framework; supervision appeared only as a '**should**'.

Supervision Policy should – include a clear statement of purpose; clarify confidentiality and access to notes; reference the supervision contract and record; state clear expectations and boundaries; stipulate the frequency, duration and recording of meetings; and demonstrate how quality supervision links to staff retention and motivation, performance management and safeguarding of all employees and children.

The Supervision Agreement should – clarify confidentiality and access to notes; state clear expectations and boundaries; stipulate the frequency, duration and recording of meetings; and be signed and adhered to by both the supervisor and supervisee.

⁴ Sheffield Early Years Safeguarding Supervision Toolkit Third and Final Edition August 2013 SAEY

Supervision is a confidential regular face to face, between a named supervisor and supervisee, provided at a time and date that is suitable for both parties, which should be agreed in advance. Supervision should support, direct and monitor the work of the supervisee enabling and empowering professional and personal development. The notes from previous supervision meetings should be reviewed and staff should be supported to explore and reflect upon their work with children and families – including any safeguarding issues. Supervision should provide an opportunity to reflect on practice rather than just act as a tick-box to check on what practitioners are doing. Discussing individual cases is a valuable part of the process so long as this is done in a way that encourages reflective practice and does not take over the supervision process.

Supervisions should be recorded – in order to keep track of discussions and actions, especially ongoing actions in need of regular review. A format for recording supervision meetings is available online under [‘Sample Staff Supervision Agreement’](#).

The purpose of supervision is:-

- To provide a regular ‘safe space’ for staff/volunteers to be supported and reflect upon their work and all areas affecting their health and wellbeing
- To assess staff/volunteers suitability to work with young children, review any changes regarding the Health Declaration and DBS check
- To develop understanding and skills within your work and direct to training as appropriate
- To be praised or constructively challenged as appropriate
- To clarify priorities
- To monitor and reflect on personal performance and caseload; including individual cases, identify strengths and how to improve practice
- To recognise and resolve potential and existing problems
- To discuss how personal factors are affecting work and provide support
- An opportunity to moderate, observe practice and review judgements to ensure accurate and consistent assessment of children’s developmental milestones/concerns about children
- An opportunity to discuss any concerns regarding specific children
- Supervision sessions and objectives are linked to the setting business plan

Who should have supervision and how often?

You cannot support if you yourself are not supported, therefore the manager/leader must also receive regular supervisions. Supervision should be regular, Ofsted does not specify how often Supervision should take place or how long it should last. (See example diagram P Page 6)

Supervision is Important in Early Years

Supervision will promote and model the following indicators of a safe setting:

- Staff are respectful to all employees as well as children
- Staff are open about discussing good and poor practice
- Blame only occurs in extreme circumstances
- Leaders model the appropriate behaviour
- Staff are knowledgeable about the vulnerability of the children that they look after
- Staff are aware that abusers may already be in the employment of the provision
- Children are actively listened to
- Staff are valued, listened to and empowered to challenge poor practice
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in planning their child's care and are welcomed into the provision
- The culture of the setting is embedded and fortified
- Whistle-blowing procedures are in place and staff know how to use them

Supervision will benefit the Provision:

- To find out about staff as individuals and enable them to see the direction of the provision they work for and how they can contribute to it
- An opportunity to respectfully challenge practice
- To manage performance and capabilities
- Reiterates provisional expectations and the culture of the setting
- To make sure children and their families receive the highest quality of care and service
- To improve communication and share responsibility
- Assist staff retention
- Maximise safeguarding of children

Supervision will benefit the Practitioner:

- Opportunity to look at your role and responsibilities, where you are now and where you would like to go. This could include training opportunities
- To reflect on, analyse and evaluate their own practice
- Supports the setting of personal goals and a chance to review, change or adapt recent or past actions
- Promotes confidence and safe working practices
- Provides an opportunity to agree actions for both parties
- Allows disagreements to be recorded and solutions explored at the earliest opportunity



Supervision is Supportive

- It is a time to listen to each other, value, motivate and empower staff their work and ongoing commitment
- Get staff involved in decision-making and problem solving
- Can be used to reduce stress and explore staff feelings
- Will support staff to manage work effectively
- Any issues can be discussed including issues related to health and safety, safeguarding and caseload
- Allows implementation of Coaching and Delegation⁵ (See Appendix for Coaching Model)

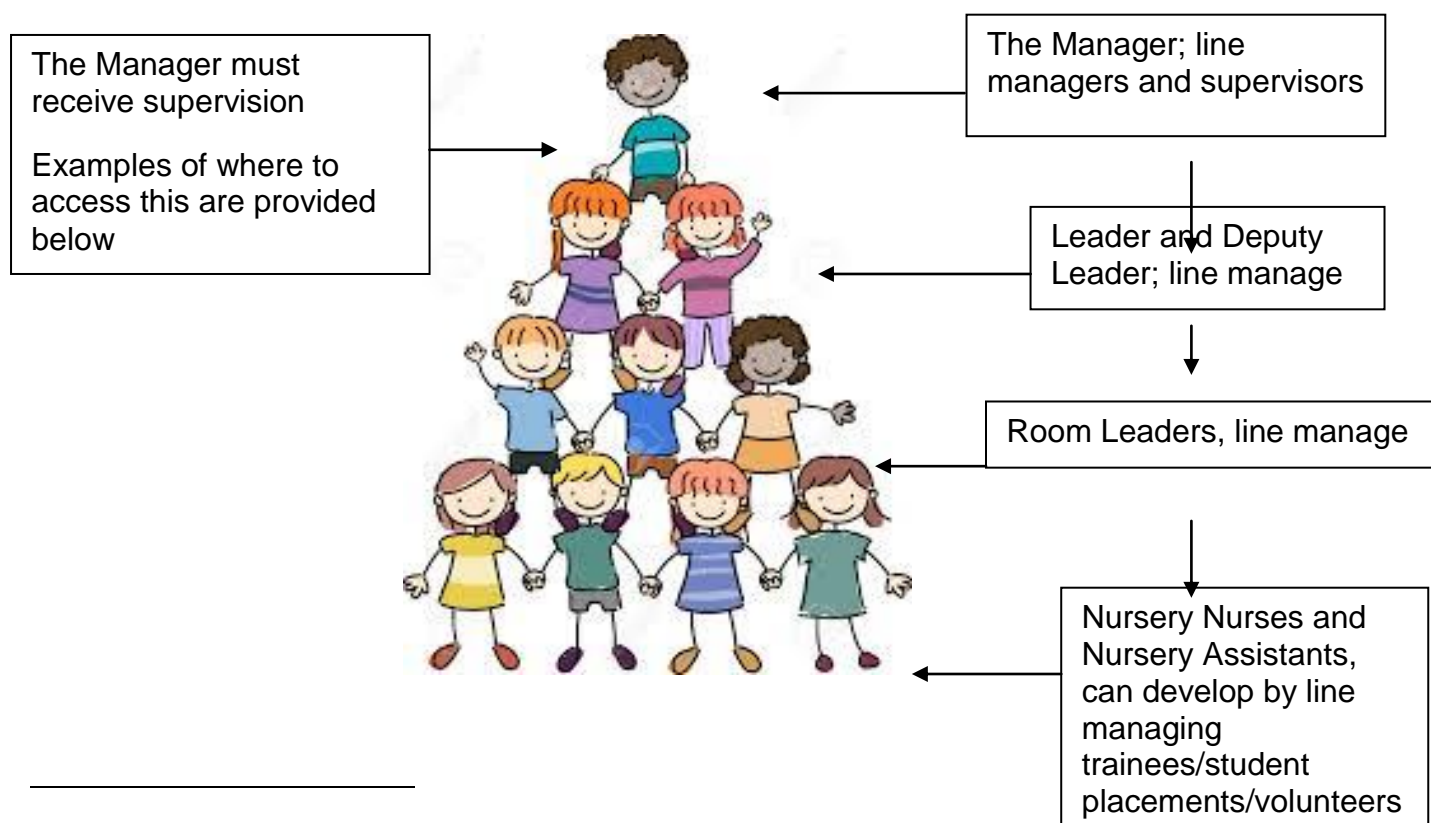
First Things First – Organise Your Organisation

Before the supervision process can be implemented, the following MUST be in place:-

1. Organisational Structure

Line Management Structure; what is this in your provision and is it clearly communicated? Depending on the size of the provision it may not be appropriate for the manager to be managing the whole team, each supervisor should only line manage a handful of people. Room Leaders/Deputy should be line managing the people they supervise not only does this allow for development and progression opportunities, it builds relationships within the team and frees up the managers time for strategic tasks. Sharing responsibility will develop the skills of your whole team; home grown talent builds a more competent team.

If the provision is committee run then the manager should be attending committee meetings. This will allow opportunity to discuss budgets, training, capacity, numbers, policy.



⁵ Surrey County Council – Supervision Guidance for early years and childcare settings

2. Good Quality Supervisions for the Manager

You cannot support if you yourself are not supported. The manager must receive supervisions - this could be with:-

- Committee Chair/nominated person for childcare
- School Governor/Head/Deputy/nominated person for childcare
- Manager and Leader/Deputy could line manage each other
- The Manager; join up with another provision and receive supervision from each other (peer to peer), this would work really well in a chain or an existing network group.
- EYP/EYT via another provision
- The Owner
- The Area Manager

3. Clear Job Descriptions (JD) and Person Specifications (PS)

From recruiting the right staff, to ensuring staff are competent; everything hinges on having clear and accurate JDs and PSs, these can be referred to in the supervision and appraisal process.

Where and How Do You Start?

Once the above 3 elements are in place, the supervision process is ready to start

The Supervision process will be more effective if the whole team 'buy in' and commit, therefore have a discussion at a team meeting regarding how it will work, be implemented and what is important, together set a standardised Supervision Agenda, Agreement and Policy.

Start the process with the Manager and the senior staff she/he supervises, then progress to the next and subsequent layers of staff. The Deputy/Leader needs to receive good quality supervision in order to give good quality supervision, so spend some time at the top of the organisational chart first; lead by example.

The process should be about the individual's wellbeing, emotional support and development in order to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.

Positive Practice Tool - Signs of Safety

Consider developing and delivering a strengths-based tool to support the management of staff. This method is called the Positive Practice Tool and is based on the Signs of Safety approach used by Leicestershire Social care to support children and families in child protection cases.

What is the Signs of Safety approach and how does it work?

The basic model takes into account three areas

- **What is working well?**
- **What are we worried about?**
- **What needs to happen?**

How could you use this in supervision of staff?

The approach will help to identify what the supervisee does well, what are the issues that you/they are worried or concerned about and what you/they need to do or implement to address those concerns. The approach will build on the individual's strengths.

The purpose of working in this way helps to develop collaboration and partnership working within the setting in order to tackle issues and work towards a solution focused approach to ensure the best outcomes for children.

Find more [information on our website for Signs of Safety](#).

In this toolkit supervision has been split into 3 sections; CPD, the job, and wellbeing:-

Part 1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Consider initially choosing an area for development and focus on this; for example it could be an area of the setting they wish to develop such as 'the environment' or it could be an area of their practice which needs development such as 'story-telling' or 'behaviour management'. If they can't think of something they want to develop or research, choose a topic that the individual has an interest in or an area of strength.

Or it could be an area of weakness that they or the setting needs to work on. By choosing the topic together you will gain 'buy in', ownership and commitment from the individual.

Use SMART goals to set targets

- Be **Specific** about what you want to achieve.
- It must be **Measurable** so you know when you have achieved it.
- Don't set yourself up to fail, goals must therefore be **Achievable**
- Is this goal **Realistic** in the time allowed?
- Tasks need to be completed in a **Timely** fashion, so set a completion date.



Using the **GROW Model**, during the supervision sessions '**Coach**' the practitioner; ask coaching questions to support them in achieving their goal. Delegating tasks will alleviate pressure from the manager by letting someone else lead in an area.

- It should become an automatic process to reflect
- Reflect on practice together using video camera footage
- Use coaching styles:-
 - How did it go?
 - How did it feel?
 - Why did it not work? Etc.
- Ask them to develop the rest of the settings knowledge and expertise in this area/topic



More information on the GROW model can be found in the Appendices

Part 2 Children and Families

Moderate Learning Journeys, Observation Assessment and Planning, Parents/Families/Safeguarding.

Part 3 Individual/Wellbeing/Emotional Support

This is the most important part of supervision in the caring services.

Staff can only fully support the children and their families if they are supported themselves. Are staff emotionally secure?

If early years practitioners are to provide the kind of encouragement and support necessary for the support, development and challenge of children and families, they need to be encouraged, supported and challenged as well – ideally through formal supervision. People who work with complexity, discouragement and distress, are at risk of becoming overburdened, discouraged and distressed. It is only possible for a practitioner to fully support the children and families they are working with if they are supported themselves. Practitioners need to be able to recognise and contain emotions rather than leaking them onto others, this requires support structures and safe spaces, such as individual and team supervision that offer regular opportunities for reflecting and communicating openly, sharing perceptions, practice dilemmas and concerns with others, and together deciding on a way forward. Appropriate support in supervision can help staff members achieve distance and perspective.⁶

In this section you should also ask if there have been any changes affecting their DBS Check and Health Declaration.

Further items for inclusion in Supervision Sessions:-

The setting training plan should be incorporated into supervision sessions, training should be selected to meet a specific need, setting targets and setting business plan.

Settings should plan training using a structured needs based approach that integrates with recruitment systems and links to Job Descriptions and Person Specifications.

Do you brief staff prior to them attending a training course?

Do you de-brief staff after they have attended a training course? – ask staff to complete a training evaluation sheet, this will reveal the value of the course and points to be shared and cascaded; you need to get your money's worth, factor in time to cascade learning with rest of the staff team.

Supervision should be linked to the Job Description and Person Specification; are they meeting all the job requirements?

In order to be able to address competency issues and suitability to undertake the role, the Job Description and Person Specification must be clear and accurate so you can see what you are measuring against.

The above should provide enough topics to really get discussion going, supervision can feel like quite a strange process if it's new to both parties, so it's important to have a rough plan at the beginning. As a team review the process, assess how it's working and make appropriate changes to improve effectiveness.

⁶ Nursery World – Equipped to lead article 'Supervision'

| Audit Tool Supervision Checklist | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Actions |
|--|---|--|----------------|
| Does your provision have a clear organisational structure? | | | |
| Do you line manage and therefore supervise more than 5 people? | | | |
| Does everyone in your provision have a clear and concise Job Description and Person Specification? | | | |
| Is the practitioner meeting the job requirements according to the Job Description and Person Specification? | | | |
| Are you the supervisor currently receiving good quality supervision? | | | |
| Reflect on past examples of positive and negative supervision experiences, who are your positive role models and why? | | | |
| From these experiences what styles and qualities will you adopt and avoid? | | | |
| What do you do now in terms of Supervision and Appraisal? | | | |
| How often do you currently hold Supervision and Appraisal? | | | |
| Do you set targets during the Appraisal and review these throughout the year/after 6 months? | | | |
| Why is it important for your provision to retain staff? | | | |
| What factors affect your staff's motivation and job satisfaction both positively and negatively? | | | |
| Do you currently use a setting training plan? Or how is training currently decided/selected? | | | |
| Is training decided by using a structured needs based approach that integrates with recruitment systems and links to the Job Description and Person Specification? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Do you brief staff prior to them attending a training course? | | | |
| Do you de-brief staff after they have attended a training course? | | | |
| Do you factor in time for them to cascade the learning to the rest of the staff team? | | | |
| Why is Supervision and Appraisal important for the individual? | | | |
| Why is Supervision and Appraisal important for the manager? | | | |
| Why is Supervision and Appraisal important for the provision? | | | |
| What factors influence staff motivation, job satisfaction and retention? | | | |
| What do you as a manager need to have in place to get the best out of your staff? | | | |
| What is Supervision? | | | |
| What is Appraisal? | | | |
| How do you currently deal with underperformance and competencies? | | | |
| How do you currently establish any changes to your staff's Health Declaration and DBS Check? | | | |
| Have all staff completed the Safeguarding Questionnaire? | | | |