

Early Years Inclusion 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 September 2021² states that:-

3.21. Providers **must** support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves.

3.22. 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**.

3.23. 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

Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision (September 2022):-

112. Inspectors will gather evidence of the effectiveness of staff supervision, performance management, training and continuing professional development, and the impact of these on children’s well-being, learning and development. This includes evidence on how effectively leaders engage with staff and make sure they are aware of and manage any of the main pressures on them.

114. Inspectors should consider how effectively senior leaders use performance management and their assessment of strengths and areas for improvement within the setting to provide a focus for professional development activities, particularly in relation to increasing children’s vocabulary and cultural capital.

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 31 March 2021, Effective September 2021

Leadership and management

191. inspectors will evaluate evidence from the range of different inspection activities set out in part 1 of the handbook when considering the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Ofsted Grade descriptors for the effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding (1)

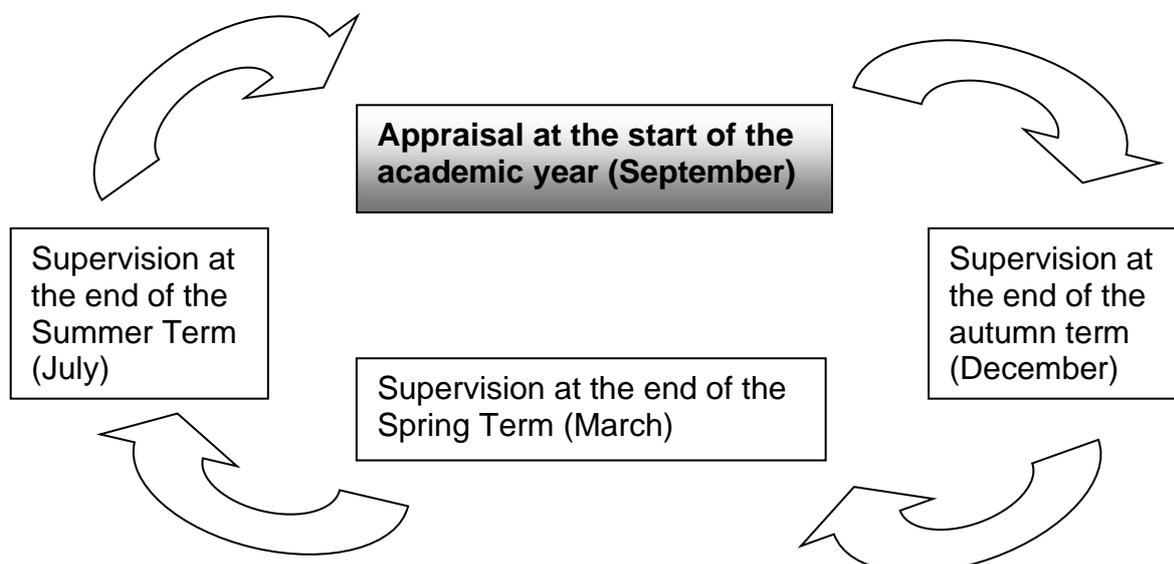
- Leaders ensure that they and practitioners receive focused and highly effective professional development.
- Leaders ensure that highly effective and meaningful engagement takes place with staff at all levels and that any issues are identified. When issues are identified they are dealt with appropriately and quickly.
- Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues.

Good (2)

- Leaders focus on improving practitioners' knowledge of the areas of learning and understanding of how children learn to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of practitioners (including those who are newly qualified) build and improve over time. Leaders have effective systems in place for the supervision and support of staff.
- Leaders engage with their staff and are aware of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload, to avoid any unnecessary burdens.

*The above statements are taken from the current grade descriptors but be aware Ofsted may change these over time. Therefore, it would be good practice to access and review the document to ensure these are current.³

An Example of the Supervision and Appraisal Cycle



³ [Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision](#)

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.

Unlike Supervision 'Annual Appraisal' is not mandatory but is best practice and provides an opportunity to:-

- review a staff members performance over the previous year
- set targets for the next year
- 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 through coaching.

Supervision is a legal requirement – 3.22. The EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2021) and will be assessed in line with the Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision (September 2022)

The purpose of supervision is:-

1. Review actions from the previous meeting including any CPD undertaken; create a cycle of development through 'reflect, plan, do, review'. Reflect, evaluate and monitor actions from previous supervision.

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

2. 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
3. To assess staff/volunteers suitability to work with young children, review any changes regarding the Health Declaration and [DBS check/DBS Update Service](#)
4. An opportunity for early discussion regarding any concerns about specific children's welfare and safety.
5. An opportunity for early discussion regarding any concerns about specific children's learning and development.
6. An opportunity to moderate and review judgements through observation of practice linked to assessment to ensure accurate and consistent recording of children's development such as risk of delay.
7. To identify and acknowledge strengths, deliver praise and provide targeted support to enable growth and development of practice using coaching methods.
8. To monitor and reflect on personal performance; in particular workload and pressures.
9. To recognise any potential and existing problems to ensure they are dealt with appropriately and quickly.
10. To discuss how personal factors are affecting work and provide effective wellbeing support.
11. To develop understanding and skills within the supervisees work and direct to professional training as appropriate.
12. Supervision sessions and objectives are linked to the setting business plan.
13. To clarify priorities.

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.

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, monitor and review actions, especially ongoing actions in need of regular reflection and review. A format for recording supervision meetings is available here in the [Supervision Toolkit Appendices and templates](#)

Supervision is Important in Early Years

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.

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

- Staff are valued, listened to and empowered to challenge practice
- Staff are respectful to all employees, children, parents, carers and other professionals
- Staff are open to change and the development of their practice
- Leaders model positive behaviour
- Staff are in tune with and knowledgeable about the vulnerability of the children that they look after
- Positive, trusting two-way relationships with parents are developed and encouraged to be involved in planning their child's care and are welcomed into the provision
- The culture and ethos of the setting is embedded and fortified and works in conjunction with the cultural capital of the families who attend the provision
- Children are actively listened to through quality interactions and appropriate responses
- Staff are able to think the unthinkable and always ensure children are advocated for and at the centre
- Staff recognise that children and young people are capable of abusing their peers and are open to the possibility that abusers may already be in employment or involved in the child's life and this risk is covered in the provisions Safeguarding Policy
- There is a culture of vigilance supported by staff regularly attending Safeguarding training that encourages and promotes awareness of the signs that a child is being abused and are alert to any issues in the child's life and concerns are discussed in supervision.
- Whistle-blowing procedures are in place and staff know how to use them.
- Managers and staff are able to check, clarify and challenge and changes which may impact their continued suitability to work with children and carry out their roles and responsibilities.

The Power of Supervision – Done right the benefits are limitless!

Supervision will benefit the Provision:

- To find out about staff as individuals and enable them to see the ethos and ambitious vision for providing high quality, inclusive care and education to all children and how they can contribute to it
- An opportunity to respectfully build and improve practice
- To monitor and manage performance and capabilities
- Reiterates provisional expectations and the culture and ethos of the setting
- To make sure children and their families receive the highest quality of care and service
- To have effective communication and share responsibility
- Assist staff retention
- Maximise safeguarding of children
- Enable early identification of children at risk of delay



Supervision will benefit the Practitioner:

- Opportunity to look at their role and responsibilities, where they are now and where and how they would like to develop and access training opportunities
- To monitor, reflect on and evaluate their own practice
- Supports the setting of personal goals, a chance to reflect, change or adapt recent or past actions
- Promotes confidence, well-being and safe working practices
- Provides an opportunity to agree actions for both supervisor and supervisee
- Have a voice that allows issues to be discussed, recorded and solutions explored appropriately and quickly

Supervision is Supportive

- To be a primary source of support for the supervisee by creating a safe environment within supervision where trust and confidentiality are maintained
- To assist in the supervisees personal and professional development through mentoring and coaching approaches
- Clarifying the boundaries between support and counselling in the supervisory relationship

- Value and motivate staff through coaching methods enabling and empowering expression of feelings in relation to the work role
- Monitoring the health and well-being of the supervisee and referring to occupational health or counselling when appropriate
- Any personal or work-related issues can be discussed particularly their key children but also including concerns related to well-being, health and safety, safeguarding
- Allows implementation of coaching, mentoring and delegation⁵ [See Appendix for Coaching Model](#)

First Things First – Organise Your Organisation

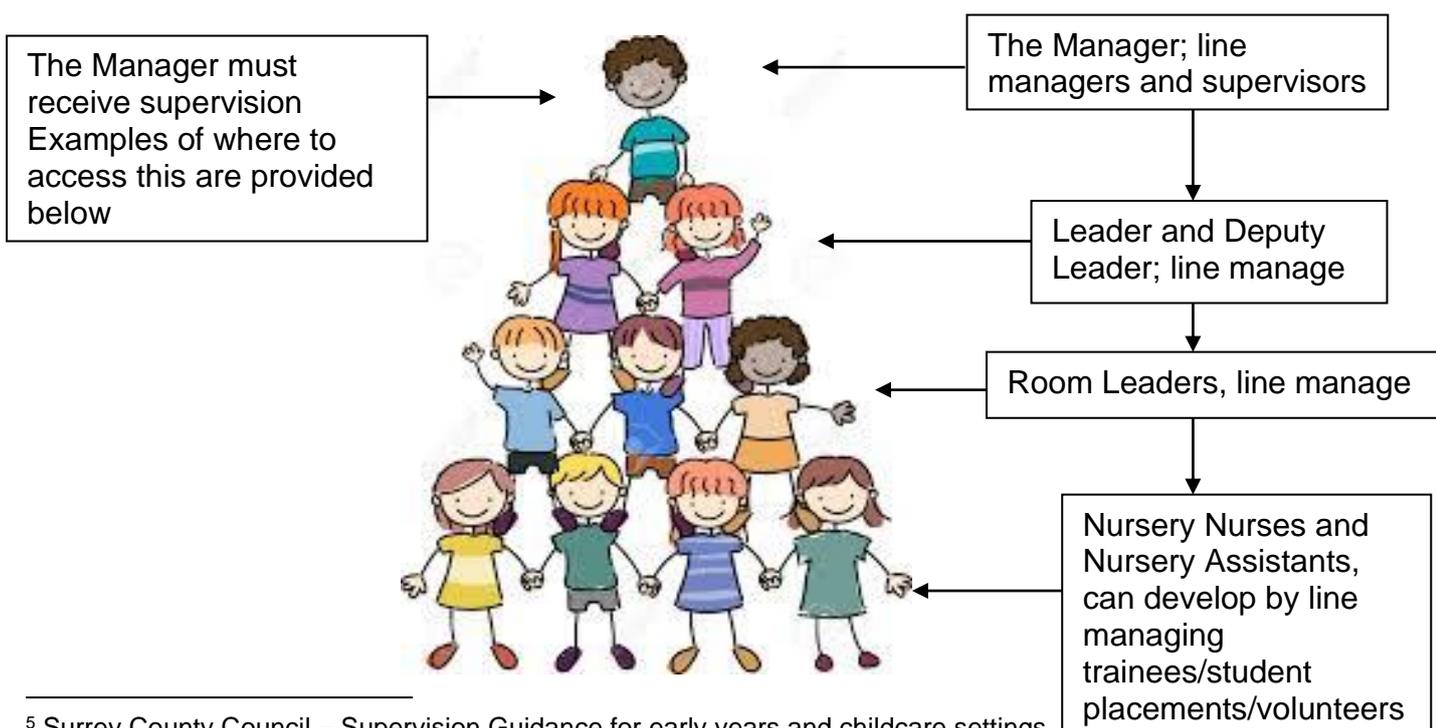
Before the supervision process can be implemented, the following MUST be in place:-

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. Using coaching and mentoring approaches by all supervisors will support this process.

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. [Committee Roles and Responsibilities](#)

Organisational Structure Diagram



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 could 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.
- Consultant, Coach, Training Provider
- EYP/EYT via another provision
- The Owner
- The Area Manager
- If none of the above are possible or practical could the manager receive supervision/1:1 support from someone outside of the sector? The manager will be more effective if their wellbeing is regularly supported through 1:1 sessions even if the person providing the supervision is from outside of the sector.

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 JD's and PS's](#), these can be referred to in the supervision and appraisal process.

The Supervision Process

You should have a standardised Supervision Agenda, Agreement and Policy. 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.

Everyone needs to receive good quality supervision in order to give good quality, see the **Organisational Structure Diagram** above on page 7, the Manager will typically line manage the fewest people as they will need have an oversight of the whole setting and all of its workforce. The Manager should lead by example, demonstrating the value of supervision by making a time commitment to have their own. The Manager then delivers high quality supervision to the Deputy/Leader; who in turn delivers good quality supervision to the staff they line manage; this could be room leaders, who in turn supervise the subsequent layer of staff and so on.

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 Positive Practice Tool 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.

For more information on the Positive Practice Tool please see our web page: [Leicestershire Positive Practice Tool](#) an exemplar can be found within the [Supervision Toolkit Appendices and templates](#)

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

Part 1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Point 49. Of the Ofsted Early Years Inspection handbook states 'Inspectors should tell the provider that the relevant documentation or information they may need access to includes: a list of current staff and their qualifications, including in paediatric first aid'.⁶

Adding CPD to the Supervision Agenda works as a great 'prompt' reminder to ensure the supervisor briefs the supervisee prior to attending any CPD opportunities and de-briefs them afterwards, all CPD undertaken must 'add value'; how has the CPD impacted on the individual practitioner, the children they support and the setting as a whole?

The settings training plan should be incorporated into supervision sessions, training should be selected to meet a specific need or/and development, the setting targets and the 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; are they meeting all the job requirements, skills, knowledge, identify any competence gaps?

⁶ [Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision](#)

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.

CPD could also be linked to an area for development that has been chosen together with the supervisor because it's an area of interest or something they wish to develop such as 'the environment' or it could be an area of their practice which needs improvement such as 'story-telling' or 'behaviour management'. A great way to gain maximum value for money from training undertaken and embed the training into their practice is for the practitioner to cascade the learning to the team, this could be done through team meetings, delivering in house training, writing an article or blog.

- Do you brief staff prior to them attending a training course?
- Do you de-brief staff in supervision 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. Remember teaching 'it' to someone else is the best and most effective way to embed new learning.

The introduction of a 'Quality of education' judgement in the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) states leaders are expected to 'ensure that they and practitioners receive focused and highly effective professional development'. Subdivided into three parts, the new judgement comprises 'Intent' (principally curriculum), 'Implementation' (curriculum delivery and pedagogy) and 'Impact' (evaluation of outcomes).

- **Intent** What are your curriculum priorities specific to the needs of the children in your setting and how are you going to address them?
- **Implementation** What strategies will you use to address your curriculum priorities and how will you ensure each practitioner understands and supports the intended learning approaches?
- **Impact** How have the teaching and learning approaches in your setting improved the experiences and learning of children, within the environment and of staff?

Tracking the team's progress through the supervision process under these headings helps to see in their improvements over time: clear intent, consistent and careful implementation, and a robust and reflective evaluation of impact.

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.

**Delegated tasks could include non-direct childcare tasks such as; raising invoices, staff rotas, ordering supplies etc.*

- 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

What's the difference between Coaching and Mentoring?

The term 'mentoring' and 'coaching' are sometimes interchangeable.

At the simplest level **coaching** is a process and relationship within which the person being coached decides what the course of action will be and devises their own solution. **Coaching** accesses a deep level of self-motivation and learning for the person who is being coached. It helps people to order their thoughts and move themselves in achievable steps to the next level of performance.

Mentoring means the mentor may provide advice and have specific knowledge about the area of support they are providing.

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 and do they consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues.

Point 112. Of the Ofsted Early Years Inspection handbook states that inspectors will be looking for ‘evidence on how effectively leaders engage with staff and make sure they are aware of and manage any of the main pressures on them.’

The Ofsted Early Years Inspection handbook grade descriptor for Outstanding states: ‘Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues.’

If early year’s 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.⁷

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

Audit Tool Supervision Checklist	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Actions
What do you do now in terms of Supervision and Appraisal?			
How often do you currently hold Supervision and Appraisal?			
Does your provision have a clear organisational structure? Is it effective?			
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; that are regularly reviewed and updated?			
Is the practitioner meeting the job requirements according to the Job Description and Person Specification?			

⁷ Nursery World – Equipped to lead article ‘Supervision’

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? Do you use a coaching and/or mentoring approach?			
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?			
Do you 'buy in' training providers, select from existing available courses, use E-learning resources, or use in house training to develop and deliver your own courses to your staff?			
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 in supervision or outside of it 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?			
Do you monitor staff motivation, job satisfaction and staff retention?			
How do you identify, monitor and support staff well-being?			
How do you identify, monitor and support staff workloads?			
What do you as a manager need to have in place to get the best out of your staff? How do you know this? Do you monitor and review this regularly?			

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?			
Do all staff add to their own Safeguarding Competency Framework Grid and is this shared and discussed in supervision?			