



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Evaluating your learning needs using the knowledge and skills statements for practice supervisors

Introduction

The [knowledge and skills statements](#) (KSS) for practice supervisors are made up of eight key standards that outline the relevant areas of knowledge and skill that accredited practice supervisors should be able to demonstrate.

These standards are:

- 1. Promote and govern excellent practice**
- 2. Developing excellent practitioners**
- 3. Shaping and influencing the practice system**
- 4. Effective use of power and authority**
- 5. Confident analysis and decision making**
- 6. Purposeful and effective social work**
- 7. Emotionally intelligent practice supervision**
- 8. Performance management and improvement**

The first section of this tool asks you to rate your knowledge and skills against each of these eight standards. You can then review your responses focusing on both your strengths and areas for development.

Your line manager plays a key role in supporting and encouraging you to be able to work proficiently in all areas of the KSS for practice supervisors. That's why the second section of the tool prompts you to think about how to seek their support and feedback.

In order to prepare for this discussion with your line manager, you may find it useful to get feedback from a supervisee about the nature of your supervisory relationship. Guidance on how best to do this is provided in the 'Reviewing your supervisory relationship with a supervisee' learning tool, available from this section of the website. In this way, you can build a complete picture by combining self-evaluation with your manager's evaluation, as well as feedback from your supervisee.

Before you do this, it's worth noting that your hierarchical position affords you more authority and power than your supervisee, which may inhibit their capacity to be fully honest in their feedback. Similarly, it's important to consider how issues of diversity and difference might also affect their feedback.

The same goes for your relationship with your own line manager – it's worth considering how these factors might affect their feedback, and how you might engage in a discussion about this.

Section one: evaluating your knowledge, skills and confidence

Working through each of the eight KSS standards overleaf, please take a few minutes to rate on a scale of 1-5 your overall knowledge, skills and confidence.

1. Promote and govern excellent practice*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Using supervision and practice to influence your organisation to set high standards and motivate and shape others' practice.					
Helping social workers build optimistic relationships with children and families, engaging in direct work with children and supporting parents with a diverse range of needs, experiences and backgrounds.					
Acting as a conduit between the organisation and your team, promoting organisational vision and goals.					

2. Developing excellent practitioners*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Identifying practitioners' strengths, learning needs and different learning preferences (particularly where these might be different to your own) and using these to develop their practice.					
Observing social workers' practice and working alongside service users to help practitioners reflect on their practice.					
Challenging social workers' practice, values, assumptions and fixed thinking.					

3. Shaping and influencing the practice system*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Balancing a managerial, task-focused approach with an enabling, reflective leadership style.					
Building influential respectful partnerships between practitioners and partner agencies, ensuring that support is offered to help families where needed that utilises family and community strengths.					
Using supervision to closely monitor the wellbeing of children to ensure they thrive and reach their full potential.					

4. Effective use of power and authority*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Supporting practitioners to use authority in a way which is open and respectful and keeps families and children included in the decision-making process.					
Helping practitioners to recognise and intervene in patterns of relationships within professional networks, family systems and wider contexts.					
Supporting practitioners to actively address diversity, including the effects of racism, discrimination and poverty and other inequalities in their work.					

5. Confident analysis and decision making*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Enabling practitioners to consider a wide range of contexts including the individual, family, cultural, social, environmental and organisational context.					
Supporting practitioners to generate multiple hypotheses which respect the complexity of the child's and family's circumstances.					
Helping practitioners make decisions based on observations, analysis, evidence and taking the wishes and feelings of children and families into account.					

6. Purposeful and effective social work*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Helping practitioners to keep a balance between risk, need, strengths and rights, and between authoritative intervention and collaborative partnership working with children and families.					
Supporting practitioners to demonstrate curiosity and reflection as well as decision-making.					
Ensuring that practitioners involve all relevant family members, including fathers and support networks, in shaping plans that empower them to make changes.					

7. Emotionally-intelligent practice supervision*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Supporting practitioners to reflect on their own emotional responses and those of families and professionals, and to use this understanding to inform their practice.					
Supporting groups of practitioners to think reflectively and reflexively, identify bias and shift thinking.					
Supporting practitioners' personal growth and professional development, providing appropriate challenge or support where necessary e.g. where personal values and beliefs impact on practice and decision-making.					

8. Performance management and improvement*

	1 I'm still developing my knowledge, skills and confidence.	2	3 I can do this but need to strengthen my knowledge, skills and confidence.	4	5 I'm confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area.
Using feedback from complaints, mistakes and successes in order to improve practice and enabling practitioners to do the same.					
Creating communication channels within your team and organisation to share learning and inform development.					
Identifying and addressing poor practice or performance in individual practitioners, and using clear Q&A processes and taking necessary action to address this (taking diversities or individual learning needs into account).					

Section two: how can your line manager support your development?

As a practice supervisor, you are tasked with reviewing and supporting the professional development of the staff you supervise. In order to do this effectively, you need support, feedback, mentoring and guidance from your own line manager. (Although in busy work contexts it can be difficult to ensure there is protected time for you to discuss your learning and development.)

Practice supervisors who have taken part in the Practice Supervisor Development Programme (PSDP) highlight the important role their line managers play in helping them continue to develop their skills once the programme has ended – they consider regular developmental feedback to be essential. However, some practice supervisors report that they don't receive regular, reflective supervision discussions.

One way to address this is to seek feedback from your line manager, then use this as an opportunity to initiate a discussion about what you need from supervision in order to develop further. We recommend you do so by asking your manager to rate your work as you just did. Questions for line managers are available in the 'Line managers' evaluation (knowledge and skills statements for practice supervisors)' tool, available from the same section of the website as this one.

You can then ask your line manager to review your skills and learning needs by sharing their feedback with you in supervision. This gives you an opportunity to be explicit about the support you need, and to share your own feedback and ideas about how your line manager might offer this.

With this in mind, the following questions are designed to help you reflect on how your line manager can support your development.

1. What areas of the KSS for practice supervisors do you feel more confident in? What areas are you less confident in / would like to develop further?

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2. If you were interviewed in 12 months' time and reported that you were receiving excellent support from your line manager, and excelling in your role, what would they be saying and doing to make you so satisfied?

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3. Reflecting on your responses to the previous question, what you would like your line manager to stop, start or continue doing in your one-to-one supervision discussions in order to support your development?

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4. Who else in your professional network could help you to review your progress? Your supervisees? Other organisational colleagues? Professionals from other agencies? The children and families you work with? Feedback is always most beneficial when sought from those with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

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5. Having completed this tool, perhaps you'd like to set yourself a goal to achieve over the next three months?

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Other ways you can use this tool

If you have supportive peers who are practice supervisors, you may wish to give each other feedback based on the questions in section one. It can be powerful and affirming to hear feedback from others, who are often less critical of us than we are of ourselves.

You may also wish to ask your team and / or supervisees to give you feedback, using the section one questions as a guide.



We want to hear more about your experiences of using PSDP resources and tools. Connect via Twitter using #PSDP to share your ideas and hear how other practice supervisors use the resources.


References

Knowledge and skills statements for practice supervisors and practice leaders (2015)

London: Department for Education.

Available online: www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_105011-10_0.pdf

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