



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Using supervision agreements

Why is a supervision agreement important?

A supervision agreement emerges from a discussion between you and those you supervise about what is important for you to know about each other if you are to work together effectively.

Supervision agreements help to:

- > set out the expectations you have of one another in how you conduct the supervisory relationship
- > encourage a discussion about your priorities
- > make clear what is negotiable and what is not
- > clarify the expectations from the organisation as well as the registrar
- > underline the importance of supervision and clarify expectations about why you are meeting and what is likely to happen as a result
- > establish expectations about the emotional labour of work with children, young people and families – who will sometimes be highly distressed – that make it easier to manage emotionally distressing or difficult conversations should they arise in the future.

Negotiating an agreement tailored to each other's needs, as much as the constraints of the organisation allow, emphasises the importance of your relationship. This could include core values, world views and aspects of social identity such as 'race', ethnicity, culture, disability, sexuality etc. This is good modelling for how staff negotiate agreements with the children, young people and families they are working with, too.

Importantly, using the language of an agreement, rather than a contract, shifts the onus on to each party to recognise the significance of their role in the relationship to make supervision effective.

For a supervision agreement to be successfully negotiated, there needs to be discussion between supervisor and supervisee(s) about what matters to each of them, as well as what is important for other stakeholders (children and families, the organisation, multi-disciplinary colleagues and so on). It gives supervisees as well as supervisors an essential voice in what happens in supervision, and models the importance of being collaborative and respectful as a method of learning to trust each other.

Supervision agreements are often negotiated at the start of a supervisory relationship, with a shared commitment to review the agreement to ensure it remains purposeful. That said, should this not happen for any reason, agreements can also be developed at any point after you and your supervisee begin to work with each other.

Using this tool

This tool focuses on how you negotiate an agreement with your supervisee about working together in supervision.

In section one, there are some questions to consider as you prepare to discuss an agreement. There are also links to other resources on the website that are designed to help with this task.

In section two, you will find an example supervision agreement which you may wish to use.

Section three helps you to consider how you can apply your learning about using supervision agreements in practice.

Section four provides some reflective questions to help you review using supervision agreements if you start to use these with your team.

Section one: preparing to negotiate an agreement

Prior to discussing a supervision agreement with a supervisee, it is useful to reflect on the following questions:

What is your understanding of the purpose of supervision? Are there policies or organisational / registration expectations you need to reference? (Typically, supervision is expected to include managerial accountability, professional development, emotional support and ensuring that the supervisee is working to the expected standards.)

What is essential, from your perspective, and needs to be in a supervision agreement (e.g. whether records are typed up simultaneously / avoiding Friday afternoons)?

What is non-negotiable, either because it's part of what the organisation expects or part of a condition of the role (e.g. responsibilities under equalities and health and safety legislation)?

What preparation does your supervisee require to be able to fully participate in negotiating an agreement?

Throughout your professional development as a practice supervisor, you will be considering how you use your power and authority effectively. Developing an agreement with supervisees is an opportunity to think with them about how you and they understand and use power and authority. You might both wish to reflect on the experiences which have formed your personal, social, professional and role identities.

We suggest that you consider how your own social location and that of your supervisee affects the development of your supervisory relationship, particularly if you are working across a difference of race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, etc. This will allow you to reflect on how you can use this conversation to create a socially-just and culturally-affirmative environment for supervision.

The 'Lifeline exercise' learning tool in this section of the website gives you more opportunity to think about this area should you wish to expand your thinking on how these identities intersect, and the impact you have as a supervisor in other people's lives.

You might also find it helpful to ask your supervisee to undertake their own supervision history, or to ask some questions about their past experience of supervision.

How might this help you both to discuss your supervisory agreement? Thinking about this will give you some idea about what's guiding your supervisory style, which is useful to consider before discussing a supervision agreement with a member of your team.

The 'Your supervision history' learning tool in this section of the website provides more information about this.

Section two: an example supervision agreement

You can use this example supervision agreement as a template.

Supervision agreement
Agreement between
.....
And
.....
<p>This agreement is designed to be a working tool to underpin the development and maintenance of a good supervisory relationship. The agreement should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> completed at the start of a new supervisory relationship, or at the earliest point after that> reviewed at least once a year. <p>The expectations of the organisation regarding supervision are set out within the supervision policy, non-negotiable, and provide the framework for this agreement.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the supervision agreement depends upon the quality of conversation between the supervisor and supervisee, and it is very important that this document provides a foundation for discussion. It should be completed at the conclusion of a discussion in supervision rather than filled out at the time.</p>
Practical arrangements
Frequency of one-to-one / group supervision
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Venue

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Arrangements if either party needs to cancel

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Availability of the supervisor for ad hoc discussions between sessions will be

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Content

The process for agreeing the agenda will be

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Preparation for supervision will include

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Particular priority areas to be discussed regularly

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Making supervision work

What does the supervisee bring to this relationship (e.g. previous work experience, experience of being supervised, preferred learning style)?

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What are the supervisee's expectations of the supervisor?

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What are the supervisor's expectations of the supervisee?

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Are there any factors to acknowledge as relevant to the development of the supervisory relationship (e.g. race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, impairment, including learning difficulties)?

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Agreed 'permissions' e.g. it's OK for the supervisor not to know all the answers / for the supervisee to say they are stuck, etc.

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How will we recognise when the supervisory relationship is not working effectively?

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What methods will be used to resolve any difficulties in working together?

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Any other relevant issues for this agreement?

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Signed (supervisee)

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Signed (supervisor)

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Date

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Review date

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Section three: reflective questions about the template

Having looked at the example supervision agreement, please now consider the following questions:

What do you like about the example supervision agreement?

What is missing from your perspective?

What do you need to think about before using this to guide discussion in a supervision session?

How are you going to involve your supervisee in preparing for this discussion?

What additional tailored support or continuing development opportunities might this supervisee require, particularly in respect of a 'protected characteristic' (Equalities Act 2010)?

Section four: reflective questions

You might like to return to this activity when you have written a supervision agreement with your supervisee(s):

What did you learn from discussing your agreement in supervision?

What has worked well as a result of having a supervision agreement?

What feedback did your supervisee give you about how they felt you negotiated the agreement with them? If you did not receive feedback, might it be useful to ask for this in future?

To what extent were you able to use the agreement to establish a platform for supervision where issues related to power, privilege and intersectionality are regularly addressed?

Can you identify any learning from the experience of negotiating a supervision agreement which is useful for you to take forward?

How well is the organisational commitment to address barriers to inclusion and career progression reflected within the supervision agreement?

Are there any aspects of using a supervision agreement which you might want to discuss with your own supervisor?

Other ways you can use this tool

Think about how you might use parts of this tool to facilitate a discussion with your whole team, to negotiate how you could work together in group supervision:

What is helpful and can be retained?

Which aspects would need to be altered?



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.

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