



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Reviewing your learning

Introduction

As you undoubtedly know, continuing professional development (CPD) is important. As well as making a difference to how people work, it also affects how they feel about the work they do, and the organisation they work for.

As a practitioner and practice supervisor, you know that taking time out from work for professional development means time away from children and families. Training courses can also be expensive and put pressure on team and individual workloads.

It is important to recognise that practitioners are more likely to successfully transfer learning from any CPD activity into their practice if they are supported by practice supervisors to do so, particularly if practice supervisors take a keen interest in what they have learnt. So it's really important that you know how to create a learning culture that helps your supervisees make the most of learning opportunities, which in turn will positively impact on the work they do with children and families. It is also equally important that you are able to focus your attention on how you can make the best use of any training or learning opportunities you access in your role as practice supervisor.

This tool, divided into two sections, is designed to help you do that. In the first section you are asked to read a short booklet published by Research in Practice, which explains what training transfer is. This is followed by a structured reflection that asks you to use the key principles of this to explore how you might facilitate a learning culture in your team that promotes training transfer.

The second section of the tool provides you with a template that you can use to structure discussions with staff you supervise about their learning and development needs. A suggested format is provided for you to capture the results of this review, which may be helpful as a CPD log or tracker.

Section one: using the principles of training transfer to embed learning in practice

Task one

If you have not already done so please read the short booklet called, 'Training transfer: getting learning into practice', which you can access from the website next to this learning tool.

Task two

Now please think about the questions in the table overleaf. We suggest you allow about one hour for this activity. If you don't have this time available to you now, you can read through the information and reflect on the questions at a time and pace that works for you.

You will see that there are a number of questions to consider in the table, allowing you to reflect in detail on how you can work effectively to support learning in your team, based on the key principles of training transfer. It is worth spending time on this activity as it will provide you with the opportunity to engage in a 'deep dive' review of how you can support learning in your team in your role as practice supervisor.

| Training transfer principle | Questions for you to consider: |
|--|---|
| <p>Individual factors</p> <p>Individual factors such as personality, motivation and perceptions of whether or not the training is useful or relevant.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > What motivates you and people in your team to undertake training and learning activities? > Who is most enthusiastic about training in the team? > Are there any patterns about who goes on training and who doesn't? > What kind of training or learning opportunities would your supervisees find useful? Are these currently provided in your organisation? What ideas do you have about how this could be done differently? What would your supervisees say if you asked them? > How do you help people overcome barriers to training such as caring responsibilities, anxiety about learning, a lack of confidence in their skills, or workload distractions? > Do your supervisees regularly talk about their learning and identify how this influences their practice? Does this tend to be individual conversations in supervision or in whole-team discussions? > Do you ask questions about attitudes to learning in supervision, in whole-team discussions or at recruitment? > Are different types of learning equally celebrated? > Is it helpful to consider the social GRRRAACCEEESSS (a model which describes aspects of personal and social identity which include gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, education, ethnicity, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality - Burnham, 2013) to identify whether any individual differences or experiences impact on different learning needs and styles? > Can you identify different ways of learning (or applying learning in the context of practice) in your organisation? What would you like to see done differently to improve this? > How does your attitude to learning affect the way that you respond to people in your team who may be resistant to, or very enthusiastic about, learning opportunities? > How can you help motivate your team to develop a learning culture and to see the relevance of spending time on training and development? > How do you tackle issues where there may be resistance (e.g. mandatory training)? |

Your responses:

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| Training transfer principle | Questions for you to consider: |
|---|---|
| <p>Training design and delivery</p> <p>Training design and delivery such as the relevance of course content to identified learning needs, evaluation, action plan and follow up.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Do you discuss learning goals before people undertake CPD activity and review them afterwards? > How do you evaluate learning activities that occur in your team or locality such as workshops, peer observation or group supervision? > Do you discuss action plans and how learning can be embedded as part of your supervision discussions? > How do you encourage people to think about how they learn best and identify learning activities which best suit them and their goals? > How do you ensure learning activities are accessible to all staff, particularly those with specific needs (for example, a team member with dyslexia who might require additional support)? > How do you feedback to your managers and learning and development teams when you identify learning needs in your team or organisation? > What kind of feedback do you provide to trainers and commissioners regarding what has worked well or needs to change for future cohorts? > Do you include training needs as part of your team plan? |

| Training transfer principle | Questions for you to consider: |
|---|---|
| <p>Workplace factors</p> <p>Workplace factors are the incentives, opportunities or barriers to practicing skills or implementing learning in the workplace</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Do you have a sense of the range of formal and informal learning activities available to the staff you supervise? > Do team members have a sense of agency in being able to identify learning needs or develop learning opportunities (hosting learning lunches, emailing information from training to the team etc.)? > Do you regularly ask the staff you supervise to jointly discuss how they can support each other to develop a culture of learning in the team, and what training opportunities might support the development of skills in the wider team? > How do you let staff members know you are interested in their learning? Do you regularly support them to review their learning plans? > How do you ensure that people proactively use new knowledge and skills promptly? Will you allow them time to do so? > Do you provide any formal routes for people to feedback to the team about their learning (e.g. a slot in the team meeting / email summary / shared file where people can add learning resources / team notice board)? > Do you let senior managers and people in other teams know about specialist knowledge or skills that your team have? > Do you encourage workers to share their skills with others? Or to talk to managers about ideas they have brought back to practice? |

Your responses:

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| Training transfer principle | Questions for you to consider: |
|--|---|
| <p>Subject climate</p> <p>Subject climate is the match between the course content and the practice reality for workers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Are people able to use the new learning in their work? How do you know if they do or don't? If you don't, what needs to change to allow you to know? > How do you help workers make sense of learning where there might not be an easy 'fit' with current practice (e.g. reflecting on feedback from children and families which changes the way they think they should practice but the practice system doesn't make it easy)? > Where learning requires whole-system change, how can you motivate staff who are frontrunners on training to enable them to keep their skills fresh? > What if you are not familiar with the new concepts? What about people who haven't or won't be trained? > How do you encourage people to be supportive of their peers' learning and development needs? > What opportunities can you use to provide feedback to individuals on how they have used their training practice? > Who are the people who can help influence the practice system and bring changes (within your team, organisation or multi-agency system)? Where might there be barriers? > Who can support you in your endeavours? Are there any other practice supervisors or senior managers who are trying to build a culture of learning? Is there an organisational lead with a brief on this area? |

Having spent time considering these questions, we recommend that you develop your ideas further as an action plan which identifies your priorities for building a learning culture in your team, using the principles of training transfer.

We suggest that it is then useful to discuss this with the staff you supervise if you have the opportunity to meet with the team as a whole.

Your responses:

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Getting feedback from your supervisees and identifying their views about how to build a joint culture of learning is an essential step in developing your ideas further. Having put this topic on the agenda, you can then regularly check in with supervisees both individually in supervision and with the team as a whole to review it. You can use the template provided in the next section as the focus for these discussions.

Section two: reviewing learning activities

The questions set out below aim to help your supervisees evidence their learning and reflect further on how this can be put into practice.

You could use them to aid a group discussion with people you supervise, or to review your own learning activities.

Depending on the type of learning activity and the timing of the conversation, you may want to give different amounts of attention to different sections.

Learning activity

What learning activities have you taken part in?

Provide a brief summary of the CPD activity undertaken.

[Social Work England](#) outline that this could be one of a number of activities including:

- > **Work-based learning**
For example, reflecting on experiences at work, considering feedback from children and families, or being a member of a committee.
- > **Professional activity**
For example, being involved in a professional body or giving a presentation at a conference.
- > **Formal education**
For example, going on formal courses or carrying out research.
- > **Self-directed learning**
For example, reading articles or books.

Learning goals

What do you hope to get out of any learning activity?

These can be broken down into three areas (Bell, 1993 in Research in Practice 2012):

- > to meet the needs of children and families
- > to contribute towards achieving organisational goals
- > to meet the professional development needs of the individual.

How is this training relevant to my current or future role?

Will this help me develop my practice with children and families, or my work with colleagues?

What do I hope will be better for the children and families I work with as a result of me doing this?

Are there any links to my development plan or my organisation's priorities?

Have I discussed my goals with my manager?

What do I hope my manager and colleagues will see is different?

What do I need to do to prepare?

What do I need to do to leave work behind and be ready for learning?

Evaluation

What impact do I think this learning activity will have on my practice?
Is there anything I will stop doing? Start doing? Keep on doing?
What do I feel more confident about as a result of this training?
What am I excited about or want to know more about?
What would have made the training more helpful to me or my organisation? Are there any learning goals that need to be met in a different way?
Did I experience any barriers or enablers for learning that I need to provide feedback about?
Who will I discuss and review my learning with?

Action plan

What actions can I take to meet my learning goals as a result of this learning?
Will I need new or specific opportunities to try out new skills?
What are the opportunities in my role and organisation to share this learning for it to have a positive impact on practice?
What opportunities can I create to review learning with peers once we have had the opportunity to try the learning in practice?
How will I keep my knowledge and skills up to date? How can my manager help me make this happen?
Do these new skills 'fit' with the way my organisation expects me to practice? Are there any conversations that need to happen with senior leadership?
When will I review this and capture what impact it has had on my practice, and for children and families?

Review

What impact has this learning had on the quality of my practice and for the benefit of the children and families who I support?

Were there any personal barriers or enablers that I should be mindful of for planning my future learning activities?

Is there any evidence that I need to capture for my CPD log? For example, feedback from children and families, a case study, leaflets etc. **(See Social Work England's CPD Standards for more guidance about what can be included as evidence).**

Have further learning needs arisen? Have I supplemented this learning with other activities?

Has my thinking or behaviour changed as a result of this activity? Did things change for a while and then revert to how it was before?

Concluding comments

Continuing professional development is not limited to attending courses, it can include a range of activities like:

- > self-directed reading
- > reflection
- > learning from colleagues and other professionals
- > learning from children and families
- > group supervision
- > observation of practice
- > listening to feedback.

One of the golden threads we have woven into all resources on this website is that reflective discussions in one-to-one and group supervision, and within the wider team focusing on practice with children and families, facilitates learning and development for practitioners. Encouraging such discussions will help you ensure that learning from this has a positive impact on the quality of practice.

If you are interested in thinking more about this you might find it useful to read the learning tool, 'A 3D model of support for social workers' in the 'Talking about practice in supervision' section of the website.

In this tool, Dr David Wilkins suggests we need to move away from thinking that supervision is the main forum for talking about practice and towards creating a much wider range of opportunities within the organisation for these discussions.

Other ways you can use this tool

You can use this tool in a team meeting where people interview each other in twos about a learning activity (formal or informal) which they have planned or have undertaken. You could repeat the exercise a few weeks later to do the 'review' section, or to plan the next learning activity.

You could ask a group of people who have undertaken the same training to use the tool to identify what support they would like and how you can make best use of their new knowledge and skills.




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

Burnham J (2013) 'Developments in Social GRRRAACCEEESSS: visible-invisible, voiced-unvoiced' in Krause I (ed.) *Cultural Reflexivity*. London: Karnac.

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