



# One-minute guide for middle leaders: Your journey to being a practice supervisor

## Introduction

The transition from social worker to manager / supervisor is one of the most challenging steps in any social work career. Not all great social workers will be great supervisors and the transition from social worker to manager within your own team or service can be particularly difficult.

The role of middle leaders is critical in supporting, enabling and challenging new practice supervisors and aspiring practice supervisors so that they can offer high-quality reflective supervision and management oversight to their social work staff.

Leading and governing excellent practice (as outlined in the [knowledge and skills statement for practice leaders](#)) requires you to be visible, valued, knowledgeable, skilful and clear about the purpose of the work we do.

Developing practitioners into good practice supervisors means modelling the behaviours you would like them to adopt.

Figure 1: A supervisor's journey (adapted from Wonnacott 2012)



**Challenge yourself. Think about the diagram in figure 1 and consider ways in which you influence behaviour as well as how the culture in your organisation helps (or hinders) new supervisors on their journey.**

## **Do I model effective supervisory practice by:**

- > Undertaking a supervision history with my new supervisee?
- > Developing a supervision contract or agreement with them?
- > Ensuring supervision time is protected?
- > Enabling my supervisee to reflect openly and express their anxiety in supervision?
- > Undertaking meaningful appraisal which includes feedback from children and families?
- > Identifying skill gaps and considering training / developmental opportunities to fill them?
- > Recognising and celebrating good practice and achievement?

## **Am I considering my own influence and professional development by:**

- > Involving myself in the recruitment and retention of practice supervisors?
- > Developing and utilising good peer group support?
- > Expressing my own professional needs in supervision and appraisal and using it as a space to reflect and express my anxieties so that I am resilient enough to manage and contain the anxieties and dilemmas of those I supervise?

## What opportunities am I offering?

Have you got a thorough induction plan for new practice supervisors? Does it include:

- > Opportunities for meeting with and shadowing experienced and skilled practice supervisors?
- > Bespoke support for new supervisors where needed?
- > Training and support in understanding budgets and how to interpret and use the data provided?
- > Meetings with key people like the Principal Social Worker, finance and commissioning officers, data analysts, the legal team, and the IT department?
- > Opportunities to think about issues of diversity and power throughout the organisation taking into account the social GRRRAACCEESSS (see figure 2)?

Figure 2: the social GRRRAACCEESSS (Burnham, 2013)



You can find out more about this in the tool, [‘Social GRRRAACCEESSS and the LUUUT model’](#).

## References

Burnham, J. (2013) Developments in Social GRRRAACCEESSS: visible-invisible, voiced-unvoiced. In I. Krause (Ed) *Cultural Reflexivity*. Karnac.

Wonnacott, .J (2012) *Mastering Social Work Supervision*. Kingsley

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