



PSDP–Resources for Managers of Practice Supervisors: Giving feedback to managers of practice supervisors

Introduction

This tool has been developed for senior leaders in children's social care who have line management responsibility for the managers of practice supervisors (i.e. middle leaders).

It can be used to provide developmental feedback, e.g. as part of an appraisal process (a middle leader you supervise may well have asked you to complete this).

Middle leaders often line manage practice supervisors as well as overseeing aspects of service delivery. Working within such a busy environment can make it challenging for them to find the necessary time and space for their own reflective supervision.

Getting feedback on your performance and taking time to evaluate your skills is a valuable process, irrespective of the position you hold. However, supervision discussions are often dominated by operational issues and do not provide enough space to reflect on supervision practice or seek feedback about performance. In order to embed and deliver more reflective supervision, middle leaders need support, feedback, mentoring and guidance from their own line managers.

This tool asks you to review the performance of the middle leader you supervise using a selection of standards from the [Post-qualifying standard: knowledge and skills statement for child and family practice supervisors](#) and from the [Knowledge and skills statement for practice leaders](#).

Both standards are relevant because middle leaders demonstrate line management and supervision roles alongside practice leadership.

The second section of the tool prompts you to review the middle leader's strengths and areas for development in preparation to give feedback, as well as thinking about how you might address any gaps in your knowledge about their performance. Once you've completed the form, we suggest you use it as a springboard for discussion in supervision.

Before you do this, it's important to note that your hierarchical position affords you more authority and power than the middle leaders you supervise. It's also important to consider how issues of diversity and difference might affect their interaction with you. For example, if a member of staff has experienced discrimination in the workplace, how might this influence their feedback and your response to it? How would you approach a discussion on the subject?

The last section of the tool acts as a prompt for you to consider how you can promote a more positive supervision culture within your organisation.

Section one: evaluating your knowledge, skills and confidence

Please take a few minutes to rate the middle leader you supervise on a scale of 1-5 for each of the following questions (informed by the Post-qualifying standard: knowledge and skills statement for child and family practice supervisors and by the Knowledge and skills statement for practice leaders).

| 1. Lead and govern excellent practice (practice leader KSS 1) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area |
| Be a highly visible and highly valued figure, occupying a position of significant influence at a local level, and be known for exceptional knowledge and skill in the profession of child and family social work. | | | | | |
| Be accountable for child and family social work practice and its impact on the lives of local children and families. | | | | | |
| Secure an up to date, working knowledge of relevant legislation and case law and lead by example with integrity, creativity, resilience, and clarity of purpose. | | | | | |

2. Creating a context for excellent practice (Practice Leader KSS 2)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Champion the organisation's vision and drive strategic leadership throughout the organisation, so that it is applied to everyday practice. | | | | | |
| Focus on best outcomes for children and families and ensure that the vision, purpose and plan for the organisation is welcomed and owned by all. | | | | | |
| Create a culture in which excellent practice is expected and celebrated, critical incidents are handled with grace and discipline, and public commitment to protecting children and supporting families is frequent and authentic. | | | | | |

3. Effective use of power and authority - (from practice supervisor in child and family social work KSS 4)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are 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. | | | | | |

4. Developing excellent practitioners (practice leader KSS 4)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Critically appraise theory and the best evidence and rationale for different practice approaches. | | | | | |
| Secure the resources and support needed to implement the practice framework and shape, in partnership with others, the current and future quality of practice through effective training and sustained professional development for all staff and throughout a practice career. | | | | | |
| Provide sufficient organisational, professional and personal support to ensure the wellbeing of practitioners so they can provide excellent social work services to children and families. | | | | | |

5. Support effective decision-making (Practice Leader KSS 5)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Build a culture where managed risk is accepted and understood as being inherent in every decision that is made and make sound and complex decisions in high pressure, fast-paced conditions, striking a balance between speed and depth of thought. | | | | | |
| Encourage practitioners to make decisions and take subsequent actions in this context, making sure they know they have the backing of the organisation to act reasonably and in a child's best interests. | | | | | |
| Actively demonstrate trust in the workforce and develop a culture that promotes learning, reflection and the acceptance of accountability. | | | | | |

6. Quality assurance and improvement (practice leader KSS 6)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in this area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Set and uphold high quality practice standards, instilling a strong sense of accountability in staff for the impact of their work on the lives of children and families. | | | | | |
| Establish rigorous and fair processes for managing the performance of staff, including accurate measures of practice through direct observation. | | | | | |
| Recognise and commend hard work and excellent practice, which builds social workers' confidence. Meet complacency with a commitment to continued improvement and confidently hold poor practice to account. | | | | | |

7. Emotionally intelligent practice supervision – (from practice supervisor in child and family social work KSS 7)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are 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. | | | | | |
| Supporting practitioner's 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. Purposeful and effective social work 5 – (from practice supervisor in child and family social work KSS 6)

| | 1 They are still developing their knowledge, skills and confidence | 2 | 3 They can do this but need to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence | 4 | 5 They are 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. | | | | | |

Section two: reflecting on your response and support for future development

In preparing to give feedback to the middle leader, please spend time reviewing your responses to the above statements then consider the following questions

1. What strengths have you identified?

2. What areas do you think need to be developed further?

3. How can you support the middle leader to work on these learning needs?

4. If you've identified any gaps in your knowledge about the middle leader's performance, how will you ensure you improve your understanding in future?

Section three: promoting a positive culture of supervision in the organisation

The following quote is from the knowledge briefing ‘Building a positive supervision culture’, a resource for the managers of practice supervisors:

‘Promoting a positive supervision culture amounts to creating the conditions in which effective supervision can take place. Responsibility for this sits at different levels within an organisation but it’s most likely to be successful when:

> there are consistent messages, and congruence between them, about what good supervision looks like

> expected behaviours for *everyone* responsible for good supervision are communicated

> a whole-system approach is employed, paying attention to both what is said and what is done at organisational, team and professional practice levels. (Wonnacott, 2020)’

This excerpt is food for thought about the role of senior leaders in creating an organisational culture in which reflective supervision can thrive.

You may therefore find it useful to reflect on whether or not there is anything more you can do to improve the quality of the supervision you offer, or to support the middle leader you line manage in better supervising their practice supervisors. It may also be useful to reflect on how you might get a broader view of how supervision is practiced and experienced across the organisation as a whole.

One way to support the development of a positive culture of supervision is by encouraging line managers to regularly observe supervision and give feedback.

Three tools support this process in the ‘Resources for Managers of Practice Supervisors’ section of the [PSDP website](#):

- > An evidence-informed approach to observing supervision
- > Preparing to observe supervision and give feedback
- > A template to guide you when observing supervision

Other ways you can use this tool:

You could fill out the evaluation statements in collaboration with the middle leader.

You could use the questions to support an observation of the middle leader's supervision practice, to provide them with more detailed feedback.



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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