



Hampshire
Safeguarding
Children
Partnership



Principles and Standards for Safeguarding Supervision

1. Introduction

For the purposes of these standards, the following definition of supervision has been agreed:

‘Supervision is an accountable process which supports, assures and develops the knowledge, skills and values of an individual, group or team. The purpose is to improve the quality of their work to achieve agreed objectives and outcomes’ (Providing effective supervision CWDC/Skills for Care 2007).

Safeguarding supervision is complementary to, but separate from, managerial supervision, which is about monitoring and appraising the performance of staff. These are examples of where safeguarding supervision takes place:

- One-to-ones
- Case discussions
- Work reviews

Any conversation (planned or unplanned, formal or informal) where you discuss your concerns about a child or family, talk through different ways of engaging with them and discuss different options of support comes under the scope of this document. Safeguarding supervision enables the supervisee to reflect on certain situations that may require a deeper understanding of how human behaviour and our own interactions with others are having an impact on those situations.

Working to ensure that children are safeguarded is demanding and requires sound professional judgements to be made. It may also be distressing and stressful for the professionals involved. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states:

‘Effective professional supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child’s welfare. Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family’.

This paper outlines the core principles of effective safeguarding supervision to which the four Local Safeguarding Children Boards covering Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight require all member agencies to implement.

2. Background

The expectation is that the principles outlined within this document are incorporated within organisational policies that set out the specific safeguarding supervision processes. It is recognised that there is no single model for the delivery of effective safeguarding supervision. However, fundamental principles are applicable to all organisations and to all services.

3. Functions of safeguarding supervision

Safeguarding supervision uses the supervisory relationship to promote positive outcomes for children and families through creating a safe contained environment where the practitioner has the capacity to think and reflect. It enables the practitioner to take responsibility for their own practice and response to the safeguarding needs of children and families. Effective supervision should take into account the wider family and social context. This relates specifically to their cases but also generally in their professional development. As a result safeguarding supervision will:

- Enable the individual to reduce the negative impact of human factors on their performance through the recognition of personal triggers and the personal and organisational resources they have to support them in developing and sustaining resilience in the face of challenging and complex work.
- Facilitate recognition of gaps in knowledge and skills needed for effective safeguarding practice; challenge discrepancies in thinking processes e.g. biases and assumptions.
- Enhance the ability of practitioners to work effectively with colleagues and within their own organisation and support changes in behaviour that have led to ineffective relationships.
- Contribute to organisational responsibility for competent accountable performance.

Safeguarding supervision should be provided within a structured process. Good practice requires an experienced supervisor with knowledge of safeguarding appropriate to the context in which the supervisee works. Supervisors should be supported in accessing additional training and guidance from the safeguarding lead(s) within the organisation that hold responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of statutory legislation and guidance (e.g. Working Together 2018, The Intercollegiate Document).

All practitioners have a responsibility to seek safeguarding supervision if they are concerned about the welfare of a child and require support and advice about whether action is needed to safeguard that child. It would be appropriate for any member of staff to seek advice and guidance on safeguarding issues from any member of staff providing safeguarding supervision in their department/organisation. Where additional safeguarding supervision is sought, feedback should be given to the member of staff's manager to inform their own management supervision.

Effective supervision can help to:

- Promote and develop competence and skill in safeguarding practice.
- Maintain a focus on the child.
- Avoid the potential for 'drift'/delay.
- Provide an opportunity for exploring professional difference and challenging fixed views.
- Review the evidence-base for agreed actions and decisions.
- Address the emotional impact of the work.

The more stressful aspects of case management may require debriefing processes to explore the emotional aspects outside of formal safeguarding supervision.

5. Types of Safeguarding Supervision

Planned 1:1 safeguarding supervision

This is planned supervision with a safeguarding supervisor within the organisation. The supervisee presenting cases for discussion will be responsible for implementing any agreed actions. If not the formal line-manager, the safeguarding supervisor should provide assurance that the supervision is taking place and provide feedback as per organisational policy.

Responsive safeguarding supervision

This refers to requests made from any professional to the safeguarding team or lead safeguarding professional for advice and support on safeguarding issues when they have concerns about a child or family. This advice should be sought as and when issues arise and should not be delayed by waiting for regular planned supervision. The supervisee presenting any cases for discussion will be responsible for implementing any agreed actions. If not the formal line-manager, the safeguarding supervisor should provide assurance that the supervision is taking place and provide feedback as per organisational policy.

Group safeguarding supervision

Group supervision can be utilised with any team that has common caseloads or across teams where staff report safeguarding challenges or issues. The purpose of group supervision is to support the team in working effectively to ensure the most appropriate care provision and to promote a consistent and a cohesive approach. Cases are discussed constructively to improve practice. This could include learning points from internal reviews, Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and changes in policies and protocols.

Unplanned face-to-face contact in the working environment

Whilst unplanned conversations can be both timely and helpful, staff should be encouraged to share information and seek advice on safeguarding issues in private settings. Some settings are not conducive to good communication and are not sufficiently private to discuss confidential or personal details of cases. It is important to ensure that agreed actions are recorded and followed-up in line with organisational policy.

6. The 4LSCB Safeguarding Standards

- 1. Each agency should have a written policy for the safeguarding supervision of staff working with children, young people and families which reflects these standards.** The policy should outline the different types of safeguarding supervision applicable to various staff groups.
- 2. Safeguarding supervision should be provided by an appropriately experienced supervisor.** Each agency has a responsibility to assure itself that supervisors are identified within the organisation as being sufficiently competent and confident in working with others to assure the safety of children. Any member of staff providing safeguarding supervision is required to have undertaken appropriate training in accordance with the organisation's policy.
- 3. Some groups of staff should have regular, planned, protected time and space for safeguarding supervision whether this is on a one-to-one or group basis.** This should be uninterrupted time that is a priority for both the supervisor and supervisees. Dates and times should be planned in advance and prioritised.
- 4. For one-to-one safeguarding supervision, there should be a written agreement that explains the purpose of the safeguarding supervision, its value and importance in developing practice and the roles of the supervisor and supervisee.**
- 5. A written record should be kept of each session in line with the specific organisation's own supervision policy and/or agreed processes.**
- 6. Decisions relating to children, young people and families should be recorded (or cross-referenced) on the child/young person's or family's case file or record.** Good practice would require recording as soon as possible and within two working days of the decision being made (unless an immediate response is required). Safeguarding supervision records will be kept securely by the agency in line with agency policies and procedures.
- 7. Professionals should receive regular safeguarding supervision in accordance with their role and the organisation's policy (more frequently for some staff groups).**
- 8. An open culture of learning and development and commitment to continuous improvement in practice should be promoted.**

9. There is a duty to escalate the following concerns should they arise within safeguarding supervision discussion:

- a. Child/family member may be at risk of significant harm.
- b. There is unsafe practice placing people at risk.
- c. There is illegal activity.

Other issues should not be taken outside of safeguarding supervision without advising the supervisor/supervisee first unless this places people at risk. Safeguarding supervision records are the property of the organisation and the organisation has access to supervision records for audit or inspection purposes.

10. Each agency should have a process for handling complaints and disagreements with regards to safeguarding supervision. The complaint or disagreement should be discussed, agreed and recorded with the supervisee. This will usually involve an agreement to involve the supervisor's line manager in a three-way discussion to resolve any issue that the worker and supervisor cannot resolve themselves. Such discussions should take place with reference to relevant organisational policies and the safeguarding supervision agreement.

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