

Staff supervision in early years and childcare

Guidance for early years and out of school childcare settings

July 2022



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Introduction

This guidance provides relevant up-to-date information, advice, and examples to support early years and childcare providers, who manage staff, to carry out workplace supervision.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2021 (EYFS) requires that early years practitioners are engaged on a cycle of supervision and professional development

“Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.”

Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021, 3.22 / 3.23

Early Years Inspection handbook updated February 2022, Section: 123. Inspectors will gather evidence of the effectiveness of staff supervision, performance management, training and continuous CPD, and the impact of these on children's wellbeing, learning and development

The grade descriptors are as follows:

Outstanding

Leaders ensure that highly effective and meaningful engagement takes place with staff at all levels and that any issues are identified. When issues are identified - in particular about workload - they are consistently dealt with appropriately and quickly. Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues.

Good

Leaders engage with their staff and are aware of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload, to avoid any unnecessary burdens.

Inadequate

Leaders do not identify weaknesses in practice or understand how to improve practice or any actions taken to tackle areas of identified weakness have been insufficient or ineffective. Training for staff is ineffective.

Source: Early Years Inspection handbook updated February 2022

What is supervision?

Put simply, it's an opportunity to explore "How am I, how am I performing in my role and what support do I need?" Effective supervision gives all practitioners the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues, their teaching practice and work, their contribution to the work of the whole team, in a comfortable, confidential, and calm environment. Supervision is about good teaching practice and supports how each individual contributes to the best outcomes for children and families. Supervision is an opportunity to make sure that practitioners understand and work within the ethos of the school or setting.

Links to performance management

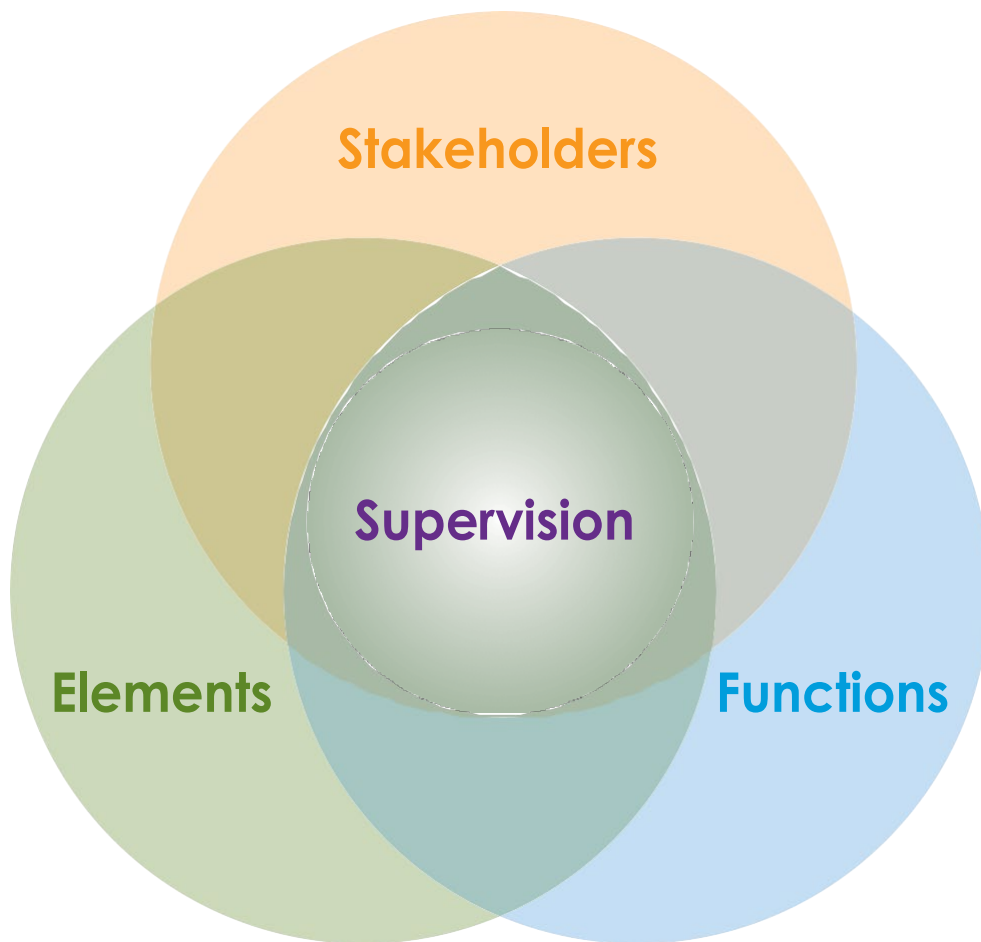
Supervision is one part of performance management. It sits alongside day-to-day conversations, whistleblowing, team meetings and annual appraisals.

The following elements form a process for performance management:

	Day-to-day conversations	Team Meetings	Supervision	Annual appraisal*
Typical frequency	As required on any working day	As required	Two to eight weekly depending on job and individual requirements	12 monthly, with six monthly reviews
Focus and function	Dealing with day to-day issues as they arise, including whistleblowing	Information sharing, planning, sharing best practice, work priorities and peer support	Management Development Support Mediation (collaboration). (For further detail see page 7)	Review and reflection of performance against targets, a celebration of achievement, setting of objectives and identification of needs
Characteristics	Ad hoc, as required. Record significant issues and actions agreed	Planned and structured with an agenda and notes and actions recorded and agreed	Planned and structured with notes taken and actions recorded and agreed during the meeting	Planned, structured, and recorded on an appraisal template

One example of a model for effective and meaningful supervision

The components that are required for effective and meaningful supervision are stakeholders, elements, and functions. This section of the guidance document shows what this means within an early years context.



In early years supervision, what do we mean by **stakeholders**?

In relation to a setting, the 'stakeholders' are the supervisor and supervisee, and all people or organisations who have a legitimate interest in the quality of the provision. The diagram below gives some examples:



The **functions** of supervision are:

Supervision has several functions to ensure that the role and needs of all stakeholders are fully addressed.

Management Accountability for practice and quality of service. It includes managing team resources, performance issues, delegation of workload, performance appraisal, ensuring a duty of care, support, and all other people-management issues.

Development Continuing professional development for practitioners to ensure they have the relevant skills, knowledge, understanding and attributes to do the job in line with the setting's priorities. Constructive feedback and observation of practice should be included, as part of the process is to identify learning needs, target support, and build on expertise.

Professional Support Personal and professional support for the practitioner to enable them to deliver quality provision including home learning. A key aspect of this function is reviewing and reflecting the impact the practitioner's work and interventions are having on all children's development and progress.

Mediation (collaboration) Enabling the practitioner to communicate and work in partnership with colleagues, other settings, partners and other agencies, and the wider community to best support children and families.

Wellbeing Support Personal support for practitioners can have a positive impact on children, through stronger relationships between staff and children. As well as this, it can benefit personal development leading to increased productivity along with improving job satisfaction and feeling valued and supported.

The **elements** of supervision:

An effective and meaningful supervision is likely to start with an experience, problem or idea and end with an action. The focus must allow for reflection, critical analysis and problem solving throughout. An ineffective "quick fix" supervision will not empower the supervisee and moves from the experience to a solution without giving time to analyse the problem and search for suitable ways forward. The supervisee's knowledge and experience can be overlooked if the middle stages are missed. It is important for individual professional development that the supervisor creates time and strategies that support problem solving and reflection.



Key messages

Effective supervision is key to delivering positive outcomes for all children and families. All early years settings therefore need to make a positive, unambiguous commitment to a strong supervision culture.

This is likely to be achieved through:

- a clear supervision policy, with practice that supports the policy
- effective training of supervisors and strong lead and example by senior managers
- performance objectives for supervision practice in place for all supervisors
- monitoring of actual practice – frequency and quality.

Frequency of supervision

The optimum frequency for supervision for an individual will depend on a number of factors:

- the job role*
- the complexity of their work
- the experience of the worker
- the individual's support needs.
- the length of time in the job

Safeguarding children

Settings have a duty of care towards their members of staff including their physical and emotional well-being. Any member of staff could deal with a child protection concern and that might be upsetting or distressing to that member of staff. Additionally, the requirement of confidentiality within child protection could lead to a staff member feeling isolated. Dealing with a child protection issue could, therefore, have an adverse impact on any staff member, not just the Designated Person.

Staff who have had to deal with a child protection concern should be provided with support and supervision to ensure their well-being.

“Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues.”

Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) 3.6

Organisations should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training:
- employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role; (from page 53 of Working Together 2015):

Supervision is not, but may lead to, the identification of, or signposting to:

- training
- mentoring
- counselling
- coaching.

**Supervisors should consider what level of supervision needs to be provided for staff who do not come into regular contact with children and their families, for example administrative and catering staff.*

Frequently asked questions

- Q** **Is the Cambridgeshire County Council Staff supervision in early years and childcare mandatory?**
- A** This guidance will support you to comply with the mandatory aspects of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage concerning staff management.
- Q** **I am too busy, how can I fit this in for all my staff team?**
- A** Supervision is a requirement of the Early Years Foundation Stage. By planning ahead and arranging meetings in advance it will become part of your day-to-day role. You should discuss time pressures with your own line manager.
- Q** **Do practitioners have to wait for supervision to share concerns about practice or safeguarding?**
- A** No, all practitioners should have read and must follow the setting's safeguarding and whistleblowing policies. Concerns regarding practice or safeguarding should be shared as soon as possible via the procedure set out in the safeguarding and whistleblowing policies.
- Q** **Who supervises me? I am a manager in a voluntary managed setting where the committee changes every year.**
- A** A suitable member of the committee should be nominated as your line manager. Training is available to support all owners, committees, and managers.
- Q** **What evidence can I use to support my supervisions to prove the quality of my work?**
- A** Feedback from users, local authority officers, trainers, professionals from other agencies and your own reflective accounts of your work.
- Q** **My husband is my childminding assistant, does this guidance apply to us?**
- A** Yes, all practitioners working with early years foundation stage aged children need to be subject to supervisions.
- Q** **Will the records remain completely confidential?**
- A** The content supervisions will remain confidential; however, Ofsted can request to see supervision records and they can be used to support disciplinary processes.

Appendix 1

Model supervision policy

Every setting should have a supervision policy that includes a clear statement of the purpose of supervision and why it is important to the organisation, including how it contributes to positive outcomes for users of services.

Supervision links to the following Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements:

- Child protection
- Information and records
- Staff qualifications, training, support, and skills.

Model supervision policy

Supervision is a formal and recorded process through which the professional actions of staff are examined and regularly reviewed. It provides a recorded system of decision making that is audited to improve practice and to improve the service that is provided to children and parents.

Supervision acts as a means for ensuring that members of staff have access to the support, training, and procedures they require for their professional growth and development, and that of the setting.

Supervision enables supervisors and supervisees to examine and reflect on the quality of their practice and to facilitate discussion. Supervision meetings should provide opportunities for staff to:

- Review and monitor practice
- discuss any issues – particularly concerning children's development and well-being
- identify solutions to address issues as they arise; and
- receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness

At (insert name of setting)all practitioners who work directly with children and families are supervised by their designated line manager.

Supervision meetings are held every weeks for each staff member.

Supervision meetings are conducted in line with existing procedures and are held in a confidential space suitable for the task.

Supervision agreements are drawn up for all staff.

A copy of the supervision record form is retained by the supervisor and a copy provided to the supervisee.

Each member of staff has a supervision file which holds a copy of the supervision agreement and their supervision record form. The supervision file is stored securely at all times. The file may be requested by Ofsted during inspections.

All supervision meetings must include discussions concerning the development and well-being of each of the supervisee's key children and groups* of children.

Where concerns are raised, the supervisor and supervisee must seek to identify solutions and identify further actions that need to be taken – these are recorded on the child's file and may include support from external agencies.

All aspects of supervision must ultimately focus on promoting the interests and needs of children.

During supervision meetings members of staff are able to discuss any concerns they have about inappropriate behaviour displayed by colleagues.

During supervision meetings staff are reminded of the need to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings relating to themselves (or anyone in their household) which may affect their suitability to work with children that have occurred during their employment with the setting.

Adoption and annual review of the policy

This policy was adopted at a meeting of:
(Insert name of setting)

Held on:
(Insert meeting date)

Signed on behalf of the Management
Committee / Proprietor:
(Insert signature) (Insert role of signatory)

This policy was reviewed on:
(Insert date) (Insert signature)

* As defined in *The Common Inspection Framework: Education, Skills and Early Years, August 2015*.

Appendix 2

Model supervision agreement

It is recommended that every supervisor should have a written agreement with each person they supervise. In some organisations this is called a supervision contract. The detail may be standard across an organisation or there may be scope for individual elements to be agreed. The agreement should be reviewed periodically to ensure that all elements are being covered and that the agreement is still fit for purpose.

Model Supervision Agreement

We agree that supervision will be given and received in accordance with the (insert name of setting) supervision policy which includes more details of the supervision process.

This supervision agreement is between (insert name of supervisor) and (insert name of supervisee) and outlines what each of us can expect from the supervision process and what our responsibilities are.

- We will arrange supervisions on a.....basis and neither of us will cancel these unless there is an urgent reason to do so.
- Supervisions will start promptly and will finish after an hour or when we have had time to discuss all issues.
- We will treat our conversations with respect for each other's views. Both of us should feel free to express personal views and opinions without prejudice.
- We will hold supervisions in a quiet area where other people cannot overhear us. We will keep the contents of supervisions confidential, although some issues may need to be referred to the supervisor's Line Manager or other agencies if necessary (e.g., Social Care).
- We will keep a written record of each supervision meeting which we shall both sign and each of us shall have a copy.
- We will both complete any actions agreed at supervision within the agreed timescale. At our next supervision, we will review the notes of the previous supervision to ensure that all actions have been carried out.

Signed:
(Supervisor signature)

Signed:
(Supervisee signature)

Date:

Date:

Appendix 3

Guidance notes for Supervisors

Guidance notes for Supervisors

Being a supervisor is a significant responsibility and one which needs to be taken seriously. Your setting and the individuals you supervise expect you to provide supervision that is:

- based on a written agreement or contract
- planned well in advance and only changed in exceptional circumstances
- well-structured, allowing both you and the individual to contribute to the agenda
- provided in an appropriate location and free of interruptions
- inclusive of all the functions outlined in the section below
- properly and promptly recorded, with notes copied to the individual
- based on the Early Years Foundation Stage* and considers the supervisor's contribution to the setting's learning environment, considers each child's individual needs, and enables the supervisee to evidence their own professional skill and expertise.

Preparation

- Have you made appropriate arrangements for the meeting e.g., quiet locations, adequate time, and no interruptions?
- Have you planned the meeting schedules in advance?
- Have you made sure you have the correct format for recording the meeting?
- Have all supervisees contributed to the content of their supervision agreements?
- Have you got a copy of the last notes of meeting?

Conducting the supervision meeting

- Is the supervision meeting structured to be child focused?
- Will the supervision meeting provide opportunities to discuss pastoral issues such as workload, annual leave, work concerns?
- Are you using the agreed recording format to record the notes of the meeting?

Ending the discussion

- Do all supervision notes indicate the actions that have been agreed?
- Have any training or development needs been identified?
- Are clear timescales agreed?
- Has the date of the next supervision meeting been agreed?
- Have you signed the notes?
- Have you given a copy to the supervisee?

Supervisors should keep a copy of all notes of supervision meetings in secure and confidential staff folders.

**Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2021)*

Appendix 4

Guidance notes for Supervisees

Guidance notes for Supervisees

Supervision is an important right and benefit for all those working in children's services. It is the main way in which your organisation monitors and reviews your work but also ensures you are properly supported and continue to develop your skills. It is therefore important that you are fully involved and make the most of the opportunities that supervision offers.

In particular you should:

- prepare for each supervision meeting by reviewing notes from the previous meeting and thinking about the things you want to raise and discuss
- be ready to share your thoughts and ideas in the meeting
- be open about what has gone well and what you have found difficult
- be ready to plan and undertake training and other development activities as agreed with your supervisor
- check and read the notes of your meetings and make sure you follow through and complete any actions as agreed.

Preparation

- Do you know the date and time of the supervision meeting in advance?
- Have you made provision to be able to attend this meeting?
- Have you confirmed you will be attending the meeting as arranged?
- Are your key children development notes up to date?
- Have you got any other information you can bring to the meeting such as training or meetings that you have attended?
- Have you got a copy of your last supervision notes?

During the supervision meeting

- Be open about any areas of difficulty.
- Ensure the discussion is recorded by your supervisor using the agreed format.

Ending the discussion

- Do all supervision notes indicate the actions that have been agreed?
- Have any training or development needs been identified?
- Are clear timescales agreed?
- Has the date of the next supervision meeting been agreed?
- Have you signed the supervision notes?
- Have you got a copy of the notes?

Appendix 5

Model form for recording supervision meetings

It is important that all supervision discussions are properly and promptly recorded to:

- maximise impact,
- support completion of agreed actions within agreed timescales, and
- avoid any confusion or disputes.

It is advisable that both parties sign the supervision record with the opportunity to record any points of disagreement.

The most appropriate method of recording will depend on the working environment, the resources available and the personal preference of the supervisor. For instance, many supervisors prefer to take brief notes during the meeting and then write or type these up later. Others, particularly people with several supervisees, may struggle to complete their records promptly and prefer to do handwritten notes during the meeting. Although this may disrupt the flow of the meeting, pauses to record decisions or actions agreed can be useful and this method provides the opportunity for:

- the exact wording to be agreed
- both to sign the notes at the end of the meeting, and
- a copy of the record to be given to the supervisee immediately.

Whichever method is chosen, it is important that key decisions and actions agreed are recorded with clear timescales and responsibilities. This will reduce any confusion and the chances of actions not being followed through or delayed. This will be as important to the supervisee as to the supervisor and reinforces the two-way nature of the process.

Supervision meeting record

Name of Supervisee:

Name of Supervisor:

Date:

Number of key children:

Progress on actions agreed from previous meeting:

Management: (resources, workload, targets, specific duties, time management)

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>When:</i>
		<i>By whom:</i>

Professional Support: (key person role including review and reflection of work with individual children, groups, and the progress of each of their key children, observation, assessment, planning, and children's next steps, evaluation of practitioners work and interventions, safeguarding, designated person role, work life balance and well being)

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>When:</i>
		<i>By whom:</i>

Mediation/collaboration: (work relationships, communication, safeguarding, work with other agencies, work with parents, and where appropriate other settings which their key children attend)

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>When:</i>
		<i>By whom:</i>

Development needs: (skills, knowledge of child development and EYFS, understanding and attributes to complete the role, constructive feedback and observation of practice, training needs including Safeguarding updates)

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>When:</i>
		<i>By whom:</i>

Has there been any **change in your circumstances** which is relevant to the setting or your role e.g., you being investigated, cautioned, or charged for an offence which calls into question your **suitability** for the role, disqualification by association etc.? Since your last

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>When:</i>
		<i>By whom:</i>

Wellbeing Support: (work/life balance, current wellbeing levels, any support needed to improve wellbeing)

Any other areas for discussion:

Number of days holiday outstanding for current leave year:

Planned dates for leave in the current leave year:

Date of next meeting:

Signed: (Supervisee)

Signed: (Supervisor)

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