

Support and Supervision Policy for those who work in a paid or unpaid capacity with vulnerable children in schools

See also "Practice Guidance" below

CONTEXT

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) states "Working to ensure children are protected from harm requires sound professional judgements to be made. It is demanding work that can be distressing and stressful. All those involved should have access to advice and support from, for example, peers, managers, named and designated professionals". (Para 4.48)

PSCB Safeguarding Procedures (2010) state "Agencies should ensure that all staff members working with vulnerable children have access to effective management and supervision". (Para 9.13)

DEFINITION

Supervision has been described as "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 outcomes". ("Providing Effective Supervision", Children's Workforce Development Council, 2007).

PURPOSE

It is widespread practice in statutory agencies to provide supervision for staff responsible for child protection practice. This is seen as an effective means of ensuring compliance with procedures, providing support and identifying professional development needs.

It is the role of the designated person to consider what needs to be put in place in school in order to address these three functions and it is the role of the school's governing body to ensure that designated personnel have appropriate support and supervision. **Support and supervision should also be available for those working in an unpaid capacity where relevant**

PSCB Safeguarding Procedures state that it is the role of the supervisor to:

- provide a safe environment where staff working with vulnerable children can reflect on their work.
- be a source of advice and expertise.
- scrutinise and challenge practice in order to assess the competence of the worker.
- provide an opportunity for the practitioner to explore cases in depth in order to promote objectivity and sound professional judgement. There

should be consideration of the way in which feelings about the work might affect both thoughts and actions.

- Enable practitioners to clarify their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to the roles of others in the professional network.
- Assess training and development needs and ensure that these are met.

The concept of “support and supervision” covers both immediate situations requiring support and guidance and also on-going, planned sessions regarding the role of the designated person and also issues arising about individual children.

This could be achieved in a number of ways - see Practice Guidance for further details

BENEFITS OF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Benefits to all staff

Schools have a duty of care towards their members of staff in relation to their physical and emotional well-being. As any member of staff could potentially deal with a child protection concern any staff could become upset or distressed. Additionally, the requirement of confidentiality could lead to a staff member feeling isolated.

Offering support and supervision to all staff as required, may reduce some of the impacts highlighted above leading to increased staff well-being; this will in turn have a beneficial effect on the rest of the school community.

Benefits to designated personnel for child protection

Designated personnel will specifically benefit so as to achieve

- support in dealing with emotionally-challenging situations.
- challenge and reflection to ensure that all possible actions have been considered and objectivity is maintained.
- shared responsibility for decision-making

Benefits to children

A system which provides good support and supervision will promote robust, authoritative action to protect children

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that all schools put in place a system for staff support and supervision. Please refer to the separate Practice Guidance for suggestions as to how this might be achieved.

Practice Guidance - *to be read in conjunction with the above policy.*

Scope of the Guidance

Support and supervision are crucial to effective risk management in child protection work. Staff who are dealing with child protection issues need access to guidance and support at the time they are doing the work and, in some cases, afterwards.

Support and supervision may need to be immediate, responding to need and also planned ahead in the diary.

This policy and guidance, therefore, extends to all staff in schools and forms part of the school's duty of care to all staff and pupils.

Possible Models of Provision

Here are some suggestions as to ways in which schools might meet the requirement for support and supervision

- Meetings of the "team" of designated personnel
- Termly cluster meetings between a secondary school and nearby primary schools
- One to one meetings within schools where there is a high level of need
- Counselling for staff who have been affected by difficult cases.
 - to share any issues that have arisen in relation to the designated person role
 - to problem-solve those issues.
 - to share information about individual children/young people for whom there are concerns,
 - to provide an opportunity to share information regarding families with partner agencies.

Attendance at Support and Supervision Sessions

Regular attendance should be strongly encouraged since commitment is essential if the sessions are to achieve the benefits

Recording Supervision Sessions (Individual or Group)

It is important to adhere to the principle that any discussion about a named child or young person **must be recorded in that child or young person's child protection file**. In this way there will be a clear paper-trail regarding discussion/advice about individual children.

General discussion about the role of the Designated Person and issues arising can be recorded in the way agreed by the meeting members.