

'Whole system' approach to developing reflective supervision

Case studies and resources to illustrate the implementation of continuing professional development in social work



This case study illustrates how a reflective supervision programme can be designed and delivered across a partnership. A 'whole organisation' approach is described, supporting the development of the giving and receiving of reflective supervision practice, using a flexible blended learning approach including e-learning. Links to formal academic modules have been developed. The project builds on the development of an organisational policy framework, which itself includes links between the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#), continuing professional development approach (CPD), career pathways, Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CFWI) supply & demand model, National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) and [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#) registration.

Whole systems approach to supporting continuing professional development

The partner organisations had already embarked on a whole system approach to integration of the PCF. Southend had reviewed their supervision policy and aligned the professional development planning process with the PCF. Thurrock were working on aligning HR processes with the PCF and utilising a number of resources to establish a career pathway for social workers from their entry to the organisation.

The next stage and the starting point for this project was the development of reflective supervision, because as a partnership we considered this the platform for skills development and full integration of CPD. It was our opinion that where a workforce provides and receives good supervision there will be a solid base from which to develop skills, embed new practices and establish ways of working using reflection to improve practice.

An audit was undertaken as advised by the [Standards for Employers and Supervision framework](#), to assess the organisations' strengths and identify development needs in relation to supervision practice.

Whole system approach to developing reflective supervision

A flexible blended learning approach was developed with a three stage e-learning programme at its core. This programme is aimed at both those receiving and those delivering reflective supervision. The three stages build incrementally and social workers are expected to progress through the stages. The differential is not in the materials being delivered through this e-platform but is in the different design of the assessment for each level (social worker, experienced social worker, manager).

To ensure engagement a series of master classes are provided.

These master classes are for all participants and include an introduction, information on the challenges of supervision, and action learning.

The e-learning programme is then introduced, starting with participants undertaking a self-assessment of their knowledge and skills in key areas including:

- reflective practice
- supervision skills
- principles, policies and procedures
- the Professional Capabilities Framework.

This identifies skills gaps to be addressed.

Organisational outcomes

We have achieved our desired outcomes, in that we have a tool that all social workers can use to self-assess and develop skills and knowledge.

As organisations we can use the information from this as a baseline for introducing the requirement for enhanced reflective supervision, using local policy, procedure and guidance to support learning.

Academic accreditation

Recognising the need to integrate this development with formal academic accreditation, work has been undertaken in partnership with the University of Essex to revise the existing CPD modules on supervision, safeguarding vulnerable adults and personalisation.

All modules have been aligned to the PCF at social worker and experienced social worker level. Guidance has been developed for assessors, and publicity updated to reflect the changes.

The outcome is that we have an improved academic CPD programme that workers can access and be assessed against the PCF at the correct professional level. Importantly this includes a supervision module that builds on the e-learning and assessment of reflective supervision skills

We now also have the opportunity to develop the e-learning module further into a supervision blended learning programme for a wider audience and with more detailed content. This will build on the skills required for enhanced reflective supervision and enable learners to achieve academic credits as part of their CPD.

Did we achieve everything we set out to do?

The challenge of working across two local authorities to align policies and processes is still there, but working together in a partnership enabled us to agree common standards and expectations for supervision skills and links to CPD that we will be able to embed through our processes.

Supervision, CPD and appraisal are now all aligned to the PCF. Our shared procedures and supervision programme now provide us with a common baseline for CPD.

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