

Brighton and Hove Children's Services

Social Work Supervision Policy

July 2016

(last reviewed and updated July 2021)



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is developed from the policy that was written for Brighton & Hove by In Trac Training and Consultancy in 2013. Brighton and Hove wish to acknowledge the work of In Trac in developing that original policy. This policy had been updated to support the service redesign and the promotion of relationship-based practice which took place in October 2015. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Children's Services supervision policy, which is the overarching policy for all staff working within Children's Services in Brighton & Hove City Council.
- 1.2 We recognise that supervision is a core process in supporting the delivery of high quality social work practice and that we have a responsibility to ensure that the supervision provided to social work staff is effective in helping them to manage complex and emotionally challenging situations. The aim of supervision is to support social workers to ensure that children and families get the right help. This policy is based on the premise that supervision is an integral part of the day to day business of the service and that it will occur both formally and in other forums including informal discussions and group settings. In all of these forums, the process of supervision should be informed by the standards set out within this document.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all social work staff employed by Brighton & Hove Children's Services and provides a framework to support:
- relationship-based practice across the service;
 - the integration of Brighton & Hove City Council's values into day to day practice;
 - containment of the emotional impact of working with families in distressing situations;
 - the quality of decision making and help for children and families;
 - the implementation of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, addressing the experiences of staff and families;
 - line management and organisational accountability, including workload management;
 - the development of newly qualified social workers through the ASYE process; and
 - the continuing professional development and career progression of our staff.

2. Underpinning Principles

- 2.1 Brighton & Hove Children's Services recognises that:
1. Supervision is integral to the effective delivery of services;
 2. The quality of supervision throughout the service impacts on outcomes for

children and their families;

3. Supervision should support critical thinking and reflective relationship-based practice, which promotes anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice;
4. The delivery of high quality supervision must be a priority task within the service;
5. All social workers, including managers at all levels of the service, have the right to receive regular formal supervision from supervisors who have received appropriate training and are supported within their supervisory role;
6. All staff have a responsibility to participate in supervision and attend formal sessions;
7. The process of supervision is a shared responsibility: staff and their supervisors are expected to contribute to its effectiveness and the organisation has a responsibility to facilitate a culture which supports the process.

2.2 This policy sets out the way in which the Council delivers on the principles set out above.

3. Definition – what is supervision?

3.1 Supervision is defined as a process by which a manager is given responsibility by the organisation to work with a worker or workers in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives in order to promote positive outcomes for service users. The objectives are:

1. Competent, accountable performance. *Managerial Function*
2. Continuing professional development. *Educational/Development Function*
3. Personal support. *Supportive Function*
4. Linking the individual to the organisation. *Mediation Function*

(Definition taken from Morrison (2005) *Staff Supervision in Social Care*. Brighton: Pavilion).

3.2 The process of supervision is based on the development of a relationship between supervisors and supervisees which provides a safe environment to support the worker and facilitate reflection, challenge and critical thinking.

Supervision may have a particular focus depending on the role of supervisees:

- **Professional supervision** is focused on the work being carried out with people who use services;
- **Management supervision** is task-orientated to deliver specific organisational outcomes;
- **Clinical supervision** is focused on professional support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop knowledge and competence and assume responsibility for their practice.

4. Statement of Expectations

4.1 The organisation will:

1. Prioritise supervision as an important activity within the service;
2. Ensure that all social workers have a named supervisor who also has line management responsibility for their work and welfare;
3. Provide training and ongoing development opportunities for supervisors;
4. Ensure appropriate space is provided for meetings;
5. Regularly evaluate the quality of supervision being provided through audit, feedback from supervisees and observation of the supervision practice of all supervisors at least once a year.

4.2 Supervisors will:

1. Ensure that social workers receive appropriate supervisory support from a variety of methods, this will include the delivery of one to one supervision sessions, at a frequency of no less than every six weeks, and regular group supervision sessions;
2. Ensure that the prime focus of supervision is providing support to social workers in order to maintain the quality of service being received by children and families and that in order to do this supervision includes a focus on the impact of race and racism;
3. Plan for supervision and consider which work should be discussed and, where appropriate, use the Client Overview Report to monitor workloads;
4. Ensure that one to one supervision is recorded and that group supervision is recorded by a BSO;
5. Use the supervision agreement as the basis for the development of a relationship where supervisees can be supported in their work and critically reflect on their practice;
6. Ensure that supervisees are clear about how to raise any concerns about the quality of supervision being received;
7. Use the supervisory process to learn from good practice and give constructive feedback in order to promote professional development;
8. Use a coaching approach and coaching skills to allow safe exploration of a supervisee's experiences, including those related to their protected characteristics, and improve and enhance reflection, critical analysis and insight in the supervision process;
9. Address performance concerns as they arise and work positively with the supervisee to improve practice through engagement in one to one supervision, the PDP, and

performance management process;

10. Take responsibility for their personal development as a supervisor and use their own supervision and observation of their practice to reflect on their supervisory skills.

4.3 **Supervisees** will:

1. Take responsibility for attending one to one supervision and group sessions as set out in their supervision agreement;
2. Prepare adequately for supervision and take an active part in the process, including preparing work for discussion at group supervision and monitoring their own work using the Client Overview Report;
3. Take responsibility for raising any concerns they may have about the quality of the supervisory relationship with the supervisor or, if this is not possible, the third party named within the supervision agreement.

5 **The supervision of newly qualified social workers**

5.1 Brighton & Hove is committed to providing effective supervision for newly qualified social workers which supports their professional development from the point of qualification onwards. Newly qualified social workers will be supported by the manager and senior social workers in their team and their practice will be assessed in line with the requirements of the Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

5.2 All newly qualified social workers will receive supervision on a weekly basis for the first six weeks and then fortnightly for the remainder of their ASYE. There will be a formal review of progress at three months and six months, with a final assessment at the end of one year.

5.3 The supervision agreement will be supplemented by the learning agreement as required by the ASYE programme. This agreement will provide a foundation for ensuring:

- Reflective supervision
- Workload management
- A Professional Development Plan is in place
- Development time.

6 **Supervision and professional registration**

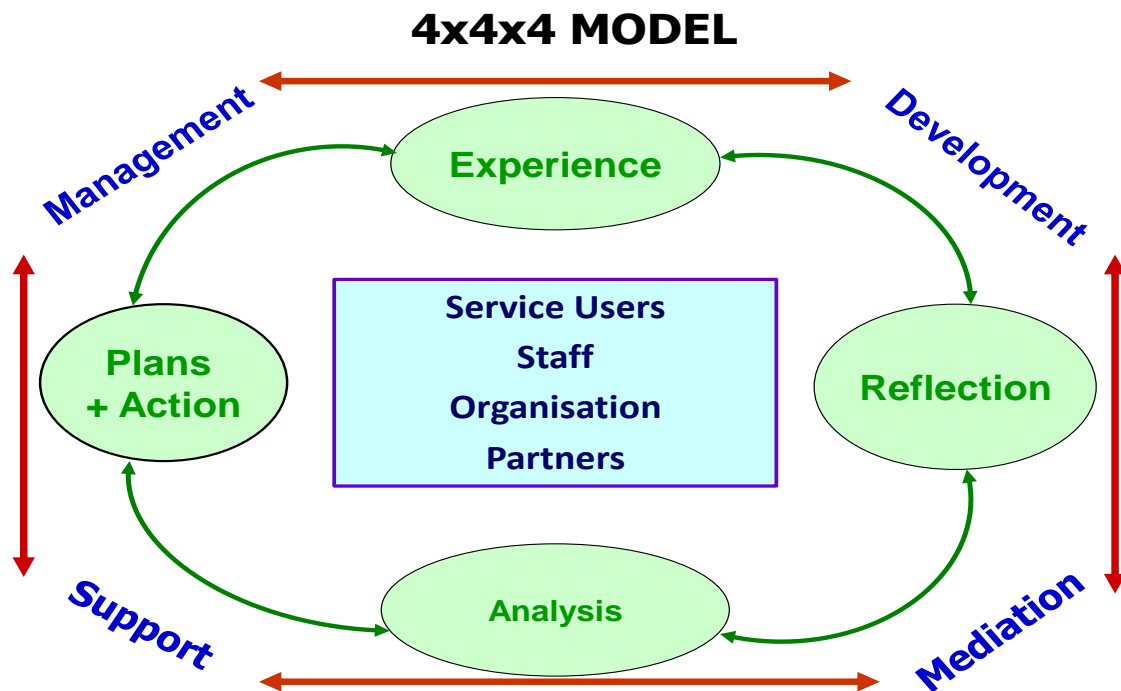
6.1 Supervision plays an important role in supporting social work staff in developing their knowledge and skills and evidencing continual professional development as required by Social Work England. Social workers should, through supervision, have the opportunity to reflect on their practice, identify knowledge and skill gaps and be supported in completing development opportunities. Supervision should be used as a means of promoting development through PDPs and [Brighton & Hove's training offer](#).

7. Method of delivery

7.1 The relationships between a manager, a team and a social worker are fundamental to the supervisory process and supervision will take place in a variety of settings and circumstances.

All methods of delivering supervision should be informed by the integrated 4x4x4 model (Morrison 2005) which focuses on the interrelationship between:

The four stakeholders in supervision: ➤ Service users ➤ Staff ➤ The organisation ➤ Partner organisations	The four functions of supervision: ➤ Management ➤ Support ➤ Development ➤ Mediation	The four elements of the supervisory cycle: ➤ Experience ➤ Reflection ➤ Analysis ➤ Action planning.
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At the heart of this model is the reflective supervision cycle which should guide all supervision discussions. The aim of the supervision cycle is to:

- Encourage a shared understanding of the issues that the supervisee is working with on a day to day basis, including in relation to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice;
- Give supervisees an opportunity to reflect on their reactions to the work and within the workplace, including any factors that might be affecting their performance;
- Consider best practice within their role, the context for their work, including organisational expectations and priorities, and any support, learning or development

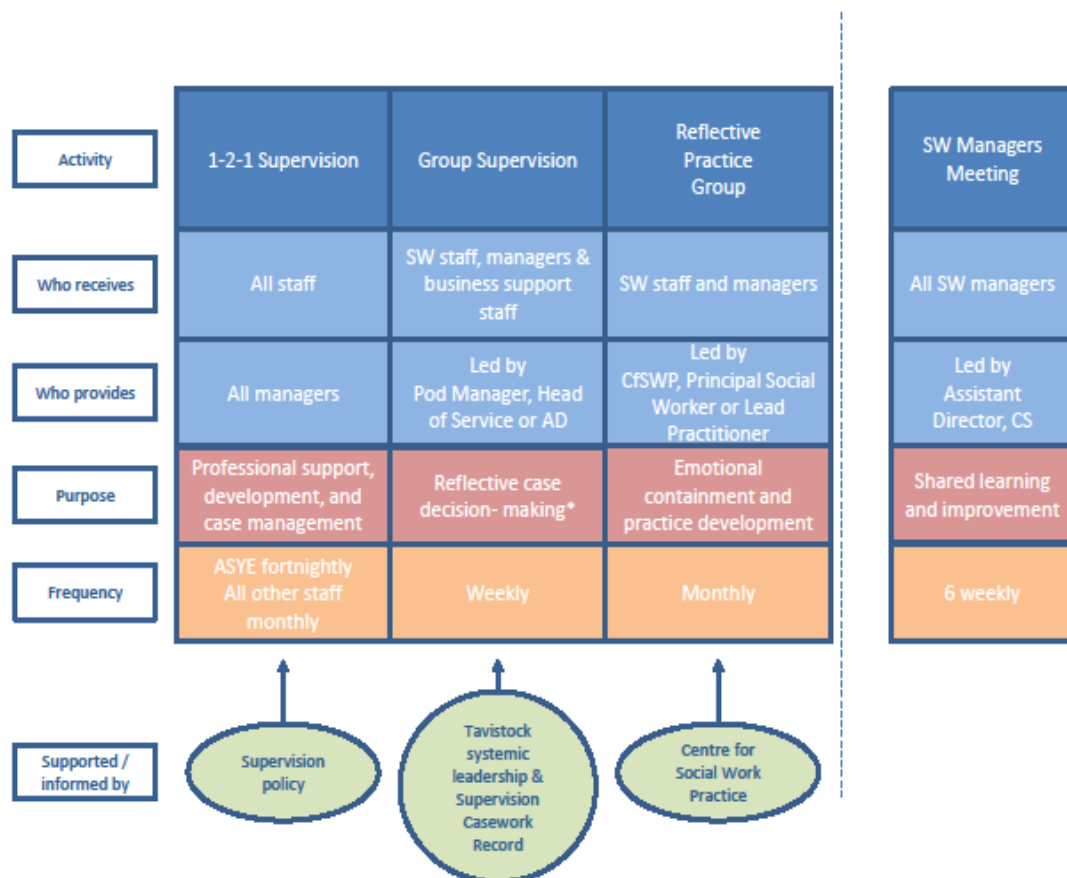
needs that they may have;

- Agree how to achieve what needs to be achieved in order to ensure the best possible service is provided to children and their families and the best possible outcomes achieved.

In relation to front line work with children and families the aim of the supervisory cycle is to:

- Ensure that there is a complete understanding of the child’s situation from the perspective of all involved;
- Reflect on the emotional impact of the work, the supervisee’s experiences, and the way in which human biases will affect understanding;
- Explore intuitive responses and use these appropriately to understand the child’s situation;
- Ensure that the potential meaning of information is fully explored and that analysis is informed by evidence from research and practice;
- Promote defensible decision making and work that is focused on improving outcomes for the child.

METHODS OF DELIVERING SUPERVISION



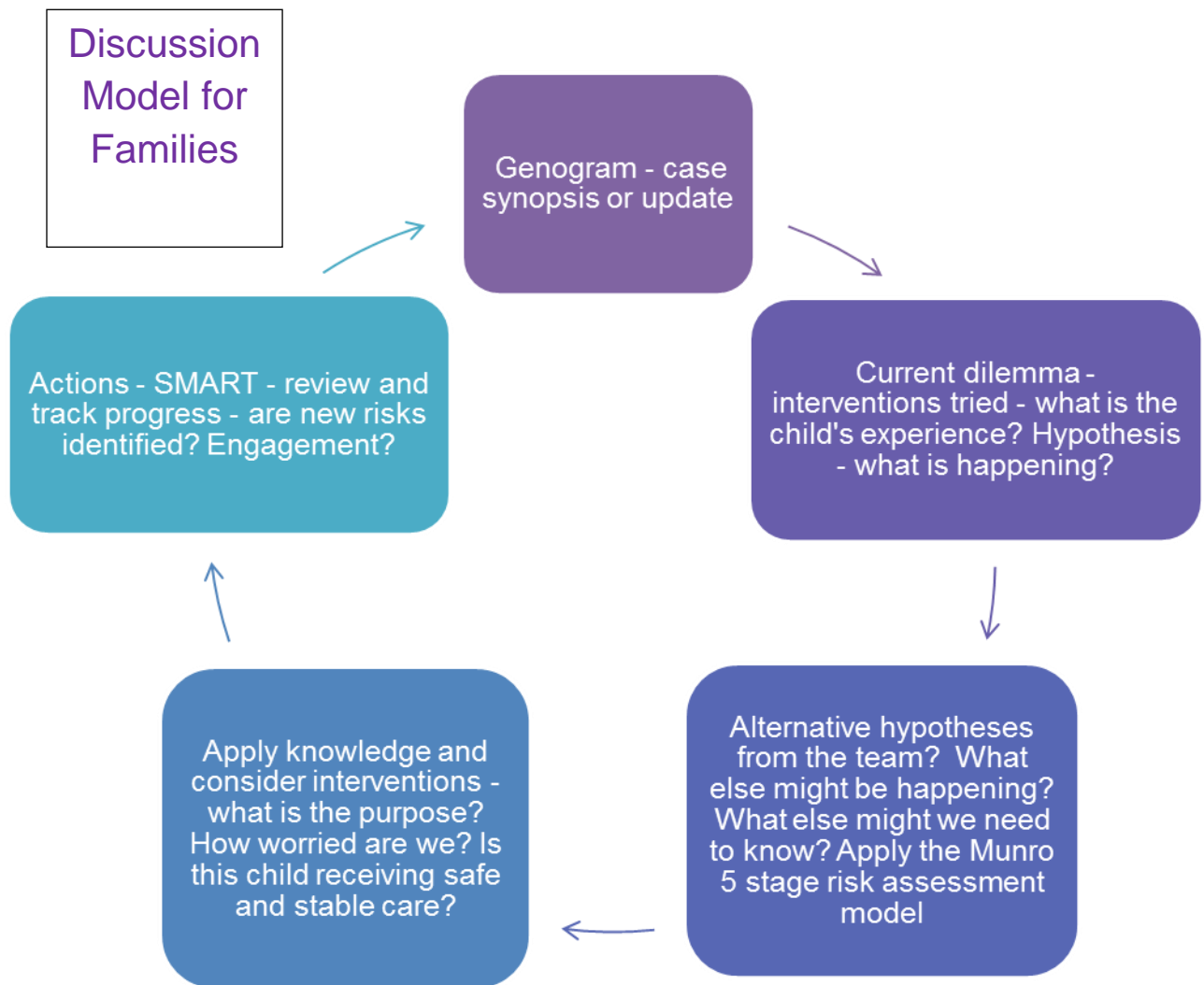
* Managers Group Supervision will also include performance, improvement and QA

7.2 **Group supervision** is central to the Team Around the Relationship model and provides social workers with containment and the opportunity to critically reflect on their work with others. Group supervision is the key to reflective decision-making in teams and should promote collaborative working and shared learning. However, it should be complemented by one to one supervision as it does not allow for reflective discussion of all work on a frequent enough basis or sufficient attention to be paid to individual learning needs.

Group supervision should take place in all teams, in the social work pods these meetings will be weekly, and discussions should be recorded on the supervision record. The pod manager should take responsibility for ensuring that a rota is developed to ensure that all children are discussed regularly in group supervision. This should include agreement in advance as to work to be discussed and the capacity for 'duty slots' to discuss issues for families as they arise. Consideration should be given to discussing a variety of work, some in more detail than others, and not just families that are considered to be 'high risk'. All children should have a supervision record completed regularly, at a minimum of 3 monthly and 6 weekly for children subject to a child protection plan. It is recognised that at times families will require more frequent discussion or urgent decision-making. Supervisors should use one to one and ad hoc supervision to ensure adequate management oversight of work and these discussions should be recorded on the child's record using a supervision record or a management decision record respectively.

There should be flexibility as to the most productive way of discussing individual children but this should always be based on critical reflection which challenges workers' thinking, including discussion of factors such as race, gender, sexuality, disability and poverty that may be impacting on the family, and maintains a focus on outcomes for the child and family. A framework for the discussion is provided by the supervision record, see Appendix 2. Social workers should begin by presenting a genogram, including the family's race and other social factors that impact on the family's situation, and an update from the last time the family were discussed in supervision. There are several different models as to how critical discussion can be facilitated, including one developed by one of our managers based on systemic thinking and risk assessment, which is summarised below. These discussions should be informed by the 4x4x4 model described above and should always focus on: the emotional impact of the work for social workers; the impact of socio-environmental factors, including the family's race, and any biases or assumptions that may be present for the worker; critical analysis of the family's circumstances – what is going on and why might this be happening; support to improve outcomes for children and families; and plans as to what should happen next to support the family.

The discussions in group supervision should promote relationship-based practice and the use of the relationships between social workers and families to improve outcomes for children and families. It may be effective to involve other workers from across the service in group supervision and therefore, for instance, it may be that a pod will invite a worker from the Partners in Change Hub or from Fostering, Placement and Permanence to discuss a family or families in a group supervision session.



- 7.3 **One to One supervision** is at the heart of the professional development process and all staff should receive regular one to one supervision which focuses on their learning needs. As well as fulfilling elements of the management function of supervision, one to one supervision should also provide an opportunity for professional support and learning, which is a key part of clinical supervision, see paragraph 3.2. One to one supervision also allows managers to ensure adequate management oversight for children and should be used to augment reflective decisions regarding support for children provided by group supervision. Discussions regarding support for children in one to one supervision should also be recorded on a supervision record.
- 7.4 **Ad hoc supervision** is the dialogue that takes place between a supervisor and supervisee as the need arises. This should be available to all staff but is not a substitute for formal supervision. The value of ad hoc supervision is that it is an important way of supporting staff, improving performance, keeping pace with change and ensuring that organisational requirements are met. Ad hoc supervision discussions should be recorded within the individual supervision record or a management decision record.
- 7.5 **Coaching and mentoring** encourages critical reflection and the development of more insightful, confident and autonomous workers. It is an approach that explores blocks, resistance and anxiety that might get in the way of effective work with families. It can be used in supervision to facilitate improved practice and decision making and enable social workers to manage complexity and work with uncertainty within their role. It can also be used by managers outside of supervision to support individual workers and is a key support offered by the Lead Practitioners and Principal Social Worker to develop good practice across the service. Coaching and mentoring is central to our model of support as it

provides both containment and skills development which are essential to effective social work practice.

7.6 **Reflective Practice Groups** are provided for all social workers and managers to provide opportunity for emotional containment and sharing good practice across the whole social work system. Both coaching and mentoring and Reflective Practice Groups also play a key role in social workers developing their practice and, therefore, support the functions of clinical supervision.

8. The interface between the supervision process and other management activity

8.1 Managers should routinely use management information to update themselves on the work being carried out by their supervisees. Where they are supervising staff working directly with children and families this should include reading recording, scrutinising the quality of assessments, planning and the support being provided to families.

8.2 Supervision should be a space to stop and reflect critically both on the quality of work and individual support and development needs. It is not appropriate to use supervision for management activity that can be achieved outside the supervision process. For instance, task completion and timescales should be monitored by workers and supervisors via the Client Overview Report not in supervision. This should result in supervision discussions focusing on those situations which can most benefit from reflective discussion.

9. The Supervision Agreement

9.1 The development of a productive supervisory relationship starts with:

- Clarity about roles and responsibilities and organisational requirements;
- Building rapport, understanding each other's perspective and any factors that might affect the process;
- Acknowledging that effective supervision may not always be comfortable and exploring how power, authority and differences of opinion may be negotiated.

9.2 This process should be captured within the written agreement and it is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that an agreement is in place for every supervisee and each team using the template below.

9.3 The written agreement is a working tool and should be reviewed at least once a year.

10. Recording Supervision

10.1 This guidance takes account of the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and in particular the need to ensure that any personal information held on an individual is accurate,

adequate, relevant, not excessive, and available to the subject and kept no longer than is necessary. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and the supervisee to comply with these principles at all times.

10.2 There are three types of supervision records:

1. The non casework supervision record which is used to record supervision discussions that do not relate directly to a particular child;
2. The supervision record on the child's electronic file, completed by the BSO after group supervision or a manager after one to one supervision;
3. Management Decisions completed by a manager following ad hoc supervision or discussions in one to one supervision.

10.3 It is very important that relevant records are kept of both one to one supervision discussions and ad hoc meetings.

10.4 The supervisor is responsible for making sure that a record is made of one to one supervision meetings using the non casework supervision record. Where this record contains information about service users, initials only should be used. This record must be signed by both parties. A confirmation email from the supervisee can be used to confirm that the supervision record is accurate in place of a signature. Where there is a disagreement about the content of the record a note should be made on the record of the different views and signed by both the supervisor and supervisee.

10.5 The supervisor will keep an electronic copy of the supervision record. If there is a change of supervisor within the service the files should be transferred to the new supervisor. If the supervisee leaves the organisation the supervision records should be stored by Human Resources for a period of at least 7 years.

10.6 The supervisee will keep a copy of the supervision record for their own use which they will need to store responsibly. They are not required to keep the copy and may destroy them when they no longer have a use for them.

10.7 Managers within the Service are responsible for monitoring the quantity and quality of supervision and for this purpose may need access to supervision records. There are also some circumstances where the records may be made available to third parties for the purposes of serious case reviews, legal proceedings, issues of professional conduct or HR processes.

10.8 Discussions relating to work with children and their families should be recorded by the BSO if this is part of group supervision, and otherwise by the supervisor, on the child's electronic record. The detail on this record will depend on the depth of discussion, but even ad hoc discussions should evidence the reflection and analysis that has informed any decisions made.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 Reviewing the process of supervision should be an ongoing aspect of the supervisory relationship. The supervisee feedback form should be completed at the point that the agreement is reviewed and used as a basis for thinking about how both the supervisor and

supervisees can contribute towards continual improvement of the supervisory process.

- 11.2 The supervision of supervisors must include reflection on their role as a supervisor and how they are achieving the expectations set out in this policy. Those facilitating group supervision should also be offered this support themselves to promote their learning and share good practice.
- 11.3 Both one to one and group supervision sessions should also be subject to observation at least once a year. This should be undertaken by the supervisor's manager or another senior manager within the organisation. A discussion should be facilitated by the reviewer as to the extent to which the process is positively contributing to practice outcomes.
- 11.4 Supervision is also embedded in the Quality Assurance Framework and social work audits include consideration of the effectiveness of supervision. As well as completing feedback on supervision, all social workers are encouraged to complete the Social Work Health Check and the BHCC Staff Survey each year. The findings from these surveys will be carefully considered by the department and any issues or concerns arising are addressed by the Principal Social Worker working with Heads of Services, managers and social workers. The engagement and involvement of front line staff in the development of the service is also achieved through the Reflective Practice Groups which meet monthly and the Principal Social Worker and Lead Practitioners will ensure that any practice development themes from these groups, including supervision, will be taken forward with the Senior Leadership Team.

Supervision Agreement

Agreement between **and**

This agreement is designed to be a working tool to underpin the development and maintenance of an effective supervisory relationship. The agreement should be:

- Completed within the first two months of a new supervisory relationship being established;
- Reviewed at least once a year.

The expectations of the organisation regarding supervision are set out within the Supervision Policy, are non-negotiable and provide the framework for this agreement.

The effectiveness of the supervision agreement depends upon the quality of conversation between the supervisor and supervisee(s) and this document provides a foundation for discussion. It should be completed at the conclusion of an exploration of the issues and not become a form filling exercise.

Practical Arrangements

Type of supervision

Frequency of supervision

Duration

Venue

Arrangements if either party needs to cancel

.....

Availability of the supervisor for ad hoc discussions between sessions will be

Content

The process for agreeing the agenda will be

.....

Preparation for supervision will include

.....

Particular priority areas to be discussed regularly

.....

.....

Making Supervision Work

What does the supervisee(s) bring to this relationship (e.g. previous work experience, experience of being supervised, preferred learning style)?

.....

.....

What are the supervisee(s)'s expectations of the supervisor?

.....

.....

What are the supervisor's expectations of the supervisee(s)?

.....

.....

Are there any factors to acknowledge as relevant to the development of the supervisory relationship (e.g. race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, impairment)?

.....

Agreed "permissions" e.g. It is OK for the supervisor not to know all the answers/for the supervisee(s) to say they are stuck, etc.?

.....

.....

How will feedback be given to the supervisee (s) to be as effective as possible?

.....

.....

How will we recognise when the supervisory relationship is not working effectively?

.....

.....

Supervision Agreement

What methods will be used to resolve any difficulties in working together?

.....
.....

Recording

Responsibility for recording supervision in line with the requirements of the policy lies with:

.....
.....

Any other relevant issues for this agreement?

.....
.....
.....

Date Agreement due to be reviewed:

Signed:

Supervisor:

Supervisee(s):

Date:

Appendix 2: Supervision record

Supervision
The primary purpose of recording supervision is to help practitioners make sure work is progressing to support the family but this should be written in a way that is clear so that the family, including the child now or in the future, can see what support was offered and why.
Social worker's summary of the family's situation, including: race, culture, and identity; key updates; and current challenges:
Reflections and ideas about what is happening for the family:
What will be done to support the family next, who will do it and when:

Supervision Record – Non Case work Supervision	
Supervisee	Supervisor
Date	

Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Decisions / Actions	Responsible Person	Timescale
<p>Issues relating to staff development.</p> <p>e.g. Progress with PDP. Feedback from any training attended. Development Opportunities.</p> <p>Development in respect of any professional requirements (for social work staff PCF/KSS/SWE).</p>				

Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Decisions / Actions	Responsible Person	Timescale
<p>Issues relating to staff support</p> <p>e.g. sickness/annual leave. Impact of race or racism. Any current stressors or issues relating to staff wellbeing (including workload review). Reasonable adjustments under DDA if required.</p>				
<p>Issues relating to work performance and organisational requirements.</p> <p>e.g. Impact of any new policies/procedures/organisational expectations. Consideration of successes in the workplace. Any issues relating to quality of work /performance.</p>				

Brighton & Hove Children's Services Supervision Record Non Casework

Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Decisions / Actions	Responsible Person	Timescale
Initials of children discussed during this session if relevant (detail to be recorded on child's record).				
Any other Issues				
Signed Supervisor	Date	A copy to be given to supervise and a copy retained and filed securely by the supervisor.		
Signed Supervisee	Date			

Supervisee Feedback Questionnaire

Please rate your experience of supervision	1 Low	2	3	4 High
1. Is regular and uninterrupted.				
2. Is based on a negotiated agreement.				
3. Is child centred.				
4. Promotes positive approaches to diversity and explores race and racism.				
5. Promotes collaboration and helps me to reflect on my relationship with colleagues both within the Council and other agencies.				
6. Encourages creativity.				
7. Challenges my thinking.				
8. Helps me to reflect on my relationship with service users.				
9. Explores the use of power and authority in my work.				
10. Explores the emotional impact of social work practice.				
11. Encourages the use of research to assist analysis.				
12. Helps me to explain the reasons for my judgements and decisions.				
13. Reflects my preferred learning style.				
14. Encourages learning from good practice.				
15. Identifies skill and knowledge gaps.				
16. Encourages me to identify mistakes.				
17. Explores the reasons for poor performance.				
18. Identifies development opportunities.				
19. Makes a positive difference to my practice.				
20. Makes me enthusiastic about social work.				
Three ways I would like my supervision to improve are:				
The things I could contribute to achieving this are:				

