

Management Support, Supervision and Oversight Policy Including Supervision Practice Quality Standards and Guidance

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1. Overview - Why this is important for children?

- 1.1 This document aims to reduce harm and risk of harm to children and to support the contribution of Cafcass to achieving good outcomes for children, it does this by setting out the policy in relation to management support, supervision and oversight. We know that effective supervision and oversight is correlated with good quality or practice for children.
- 1.2 As well as the policy, this document includes information on the Cafcass approach to supervision and practice quality standards for Family Court Advisers (FCA) and Children's Guardians (CG). This policy and guidance has been separated from the policy and guidance relating to [performance and learning reviews](#) (PLRs).
- 1.3 Professional supervision for registered social workers at Cafcass is a requirement aimed at maintaining and improving the quality and impact of practice. This requirement is for all registered social workers regardless of experience or employment status. Effective supervision helps to prevent the shortfalls in professional practice and judgement that can have devastating consequences for a child and for the social worker.
- 1.4 FCAs and CGs at Cafcass have access to high quality supervision with a manager who is suitably qualified and competent to provide professional supervision. They understand what good supervision looks like and what they can expect of their manager. Both supervisors and supervisees are responsible for creating a relationship based on mutual respect and trust as the basis for achieving the right balance in support and challenge. Cafcass has adopted the 4x4x4 model of supervision to promote this balance.
- 1.5 While there is a place for monitoring compliance with policy and practice, the balance of supervision at Cafcass is towards reflection and learning. This reflects the high level of professional independence accorded in law to FCAs and CGs in individual proceedings. Supervision for new social workers to Cafcass and those on practice improvement plans is regular and scheduled. While supervision is voluntary for experienced social workers who achieve practice quality standards and performance consistently, there are a small number of mandatory 'triggers' for seeking supervision where children are in particular circumstances that we know amplify risk of harm.

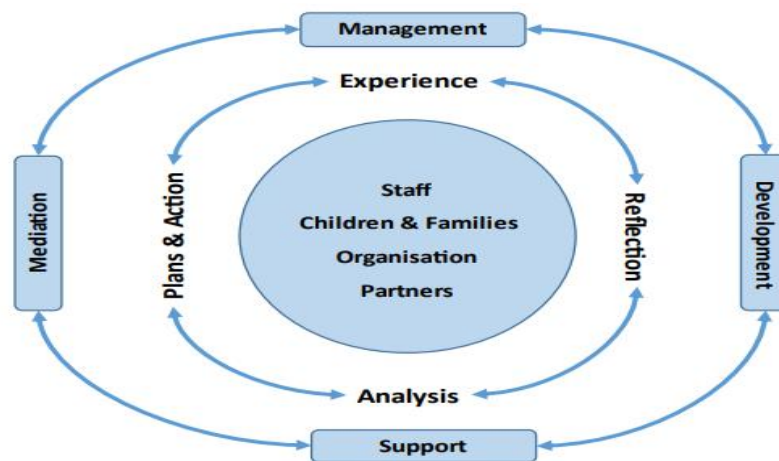
- 1.6 Management oversight in Cafcass is described in the management oversight framework, within the Performance and Accountability Cycle (see Appendix 1). Management oversight includes:
- oversight of elements of the ChildFirst record, including seeing and engaging with children,
 - reviews of the Assessment and Child's Plan, including those where the child's proceedings have been delayed,
 - oversight of key decisions such as advice to court for a s.7 assessment or a 16A risk assessment,
 - audits and moderation of audits,
 - management oversight element of the practice and learning review (PLR)
- 1.7 While supervision is different to management oversight, with a) supervision focused on reflective professional discussion aimed at learning and achieving consensus about the best interests of a child and with b) management oversight focused on monitoring the consistent achievement of practice quality standards and key performance measures (proxies for the quality of practice) they are connected and inter-dependent. Oversight can lead to supervision and supervision can lead to management oversight.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The policy and standards apply to the supervision of all registered social workers in Cafcass, including Cafcass Associates. They apply to all regardless of length of time in post or type of work being undertaken.
- 2.2 The guidance and standards are aligned with the core standards for the supervision of qualified and registered social workers set out by Social Work England (see Appendix 2), Ofsted, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and the long-standing approach to the support and supervision of social work qualified FCAs and CGs employed by Cafcass.
- 2.3 Effective supervision sustains the high level of professional independence and discretion of FCAs and CGs in individual proceedings through professional accountability for the consistent achievement of practice quality standards.
- 2.4 This policy, guidance and standards are aligned to the values of our unified model of social work, 'Together with Children and Families.' Adult-to-adult relationship-based supervision is key to effective supervision that is focused on reflection and learning.
- 2.5 Effective supervision is built on mutual respect and trust, which enables the balance between support and challenge. It encourages practice reflection and creative solutions to complex and emotionally challenging situations that arise in working with children and families.
- 2.6 Critical reflection attends to the impact of the work or issues on the practitioner and how this, in turn, impacts on their approach, practice and professional judgement.
- 2.7 Factors of equality, diversity, and inclusion relevant to both the supervisory relationship and the social worker's relationships with children and families are explored in

reflective supervision. This includes the exploration of prejudice and discrimination in practice and the wider system.

- 2.8 Effective supervision helps to prevent the extremes of over-optimism and risk-averse practice, thereby reducing the harmful effect of both approaches on children and families.
- 2.9 The 4x4x4 model of supervision (Morrison, 2005) integrates the four functions of supervision with the four partners and the four stages of the supervision cycle (see Section 3).
- 2.10 Case supervision is available at a) the point of need, requested by the supervisor or supervisee and b) required when certain circumstances for a child arise where we know they are at greater risk of harm. We call this 'situational supervision.'
- 2.11 The practice quality standards relating to case supervision set out the circumstances when the child's FCA or CG and their manager are required to request situational supervision, how it should be recorded, how it should be followed up and how we will know what difference it has made.



3. The 4x4x4 model of supervision

3.1 The four functions of supervision and how these take place in Cafcass:

1. **The management function** is about competence and accountable performance. The Cafcass management oversight framework (**see appendix 1**) is integrated within this document. Situational supervision can arise from any of the components of the framework.
2. **The development function** is about supporting continuing professional development. Every conversation in supervision is an opportunity for learning and improving key skills. Everyone at Cafcass has a personal learning and development plan, agreed in their Practice and learning review (PLR). Three learning priorities are selected from a) our whole service-learning plan, b) your personal practice/professional reflections and c) a priority drawn from the collaborative audit self-assessment. Learning and demonstrating learning in practice is at the heart of our career and qualification pathway for Cafcass social work practitioners. Please

see the [Performance and Learning Review \(PLR\) Policy](#) for detailed information on carrying out a PLR.

3. **The support function** is about identifying and providing personal support. This support can be accessed at any time, at the point of need, and is an important discussion during the PLR, which occurs at a minimum three times per year for social work practitioners. The focus should be on helping the individual to understand their emotional experience with the aim of learning and using that understanding to develop their self-awareness and professional practice.
 4. **The mediation function** is about supporting the individual to engage positively and constructively with the organisation, including encouraging the individual to bring challenge and solutions to organisational challenges. The Together framework unites us through a common set of values and ways of working. The application of these values and ways of working through supervision is a vital element of demonstrating the values in professional relationships.
- 3.2 The four stages of the supervision cycle:
1. Experience – engaging and observing – the story of what happened?
 2. Reflection – investigating and experience – what was it like?
 3. Analysis – seeking to understand – what does this mean for the child?
 4. Action plans – preparing for action – what next?
- 3.3 The four groups who are impacted by supervision (partners or stakeholders):
1. Cafcass social workers (FCAs, CGs, and managers)
 2. Children and families
 3. The organisation
 4. Our partners (judiciary, local authorities, HMCTS and other partner organisations)
4. **Case supervision and recording**
- 4.1 Situational case supervision is responsive and voluntary in nature, for practitioners to have a professional discussion with a trusted manager about their analysis and recommendation or to seek advice about legal, professional, or ethical dilemmas related to a case. Scheduled supervision only takes place for social workers who are new to the role of FCA and/or CG, those returning to work following prolonged absence and those subject to practice improvement plans.
- 4.2 Self-reflection and supervision, along with self-assessment is a process undertaken by experienced and competent social workers who have a proven track record in achieving the practice quality standards and performance measures consistently. These social workers know what is expected of them and are committed to testing themselves against the practice quality standards and the values of Together. They do not need to wait for a manager or auditor to ‘tell them’ about their strengths and areas for development. The self-assessment in advance of a PLR is an opportunity for self-reflection. FCAs and CGs are supported to do this by the inclusion of a PowerBI dashboard tailored to them, accessible on Connect.

- 4.3 In addition to responsive and voluntary case supervision, there are circumstances and occasions where an FCA or CG is required to request situational supervision with a manager. These supervision 'triggers' are as follows:
1. Prior to unifying/reunifying children or if they remain with parents or family or friends in public law proceedings.
 2. A case where it is proving difficult to decide what is in the best interests of the child including in the early stages of private law proceedings and depriving them of their liberty
 3. Evidence of harm or risk of harm and a 16a risk assessment is required and/or referral to a local authority, and/or the police and /or a change of arrangements in public or private law may be appropriate
 4. A decision not to see a child in person or in the agreed timescales set out in policy and the Child's Plan.
 5. A case outcome in court that does not accept the FCA assessment of risk to the child and or may be considered unsafe for the child
 - 6 significant shortfall identified initially in a QAI, significant incident notification or an associated case and/or learning review
 - 7 Review of long running or delayed proceedings and the impact of this on the child following a review of the Child's Plan at 26 weeks
- 4.4 Recording situational case supervision:
- Case supervision is recorded by the manager on the dedicated supervision record in ChildFirst. The form provides for the four stages of the supervision cycle (experience, reflection, analysis, and action) to be reflected in the record.
 - Since case supervision can cover more than one topic, indicate this by ticking all relevant topics in the drop-down list. It's important to capture all aspects that were considered.
 - Actions are agreed between the supervisor and the supervisee, clearly noting what will be done, by whom, and by when.
 - Reflective supervision (which is centred on issues personal to the worker or broader themes which do not relate to a specific child or case supervision) are recorded on the PLR system as a general meeting record – not in the child's record.
 - A reflective supervision tool can be found in the [Together for children and family's workbook](#) on Connect.

5 The quality and impact of supervision

- 5.1 The impact of supervision is tested through the quality assurance and impact audits, which include feedback from children and families in a proportion of audits.
- 5.2 The frequency of practitioners accessing supervision in line with this policy is monitored as part of the spotlight report and via managers' and FCA dashboards.
- 5.3 Any themes or concerns arising regarding FCAs not accessing supervision as required are explored through reflective supervision requested by the manager/supervisor and followed up with a support plan if appropriate.
- 5.4 While the supervision cycle concludes with actions being agreed, it should not be undertaken or seen as a 'directive' activity. At its best it:
- explores intuitive responses and uses these appropriately to understand the child's situation;

- identifies discrepancies and actively considers alternative perspectives;
- explores assumptions and identifies biases that could affect reasoning about the family;
- supports the potential meaning of the information to be fully explored and that analysis is informed by evidence from research and practice.

6. Management Oversight of the Assessment and Child's Plan

- 6.1 Management oversight recorded in the Assessment and Child's Plan is required to take place at 15 working days from allocation in public and private law children's cases. It is also required in relation to:
- children being seen and engaged
 - review of delayed proceedings, specifically planning to achieve 26 weeks and review of delayed proceedings
 - approval of advice for a s.7 recommendation

7. Group supervision and recording

- 7.1 Together group supervision should take place every month, all staff should attend at least one per quarter and a brief record of the session should be added to the PLR system via a general meeting record.
- 7.2 When recording information in relation to children this should be done as a follow-up discussion as one to one supervision, recorded on the supervision form in ChildFirst.
- 7.3 Teams will need at least two facilitators for group supervision. Larger teams may need to split sessions.
- 7.4 A model of group supervision, including case mapping can be found in the [Together workbook](#) on Connect.
- 7.5 The model reflects all the elements of Together, by asking questions around how casework has made a difference to a child (strengths), and in complex case work, how interventions or expert assessments have made (or will make) a difference to a child (impact).
- 7.6 Group supervision can also be used as a method of discussing a particular practice issue or new information, for example relating to domestic abuse or learning from Significant Incidents.

8. Practice observations and recording

- 8.1 Practice observations take place once in every 6-month period for all FCAs. The quality assurance and impact framework contain the forms for preparing and recording a practice observation.
- 8.2 Practice observations are selected based on being linked to the practice improvement priorities and can provide the basis for case and/or reflective supervision with appropriate recording.

- 8.3 Any agreed actions should be recorded on the practice observation form and learning should be discussed in the subsequent PLR.

9. Supervision practice quality standards:

- Supervision is seen as a priority (SWE)
- Supervision is given dedicated space and time (Ofsted)
- Supervision is one-to-one, regular, and planned (BASW)
- Supervision is regular and structured (SCIE)
- Supervision gives the supervisee a safe and confidential space (SCIE)
- Supervision is provided by suitably experienced and trained supervisors (SCIE)

	Standard
1	Situational case supervision is held as required by the FCA/CG or manager and is uninterrupted.
2	Reflective situational case supervision is triggered by the circumstances for the child set out in this guidance.
3	Management oversight takes place through reviews of Child's Plan, of reports filed at court, of cases at closure, QA&I practice quality audits, practice observations, audit moderations and through PLRs. Any of these can result in reflective supervision.
4	Group supervision facilitated by a confident practitioner or manager with sound understanding of the model should be attended at least once per quarter. It is a further opportunity for continuing professional development by exploring practice issues and problem solving with colleagues, utilising the expertise of peer practice specialists.
5	Following case supervision there is a section available to both parties on the child's file, which is recorded in a timely manner by the manager.
6	Practice observations take place twice per year and provide the opportunity for both case and reflective supervision.
7	Reflective supervision relating to the FCA/CG and their practice is recorded on the PLR system as a general meeting record – not in the child's record.
8.	PLRs (Learning & Leadership Reviews – LLRs for managers) are held at a minimum of three times per year. They provide the focus for conversations about the quality of practice, performance, professional development, and achievements.

Owned by	Deputy Director for Improvement
Approved by	Corporate Management Team
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Amended	<p>Reviewed June 2022 and updated in line with the changes to the PLR system and updated Quality Assurance Framework.</p> <p>'A change of care plan or placement in public law proceedings' removed from triggers of supervision as previously agreed. Nikki Gardner.</p> <p>3.10 - 7.1 updated from twice a year to once in every 6 months to reflect learning from practice audits, case reviews and feedback</p>
Next review	June 2025

Appendix 1: Management oversight framework, located within the Performance and Accountability Framework



Appendix 2: The standards for employers of social workers in England

Standard 5 – Supervision standards

The purpose of the supervision standard is to ensure that students, newly qualified and experienced social workers receive quality and regular supervision. Supervision should adhere to the post qualifying standard of the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS). The standards say all employers should:

1. Ensure that supervision takes place regularly and consistently and lasts for an uninterrupted duration of at least an hour and a half.
2. Make sure that supervision takes place:
 - for students on placement - as agreed with students and programme providers;
 - for newly qualified social workers – at least weekly for the first six weeks of employment of a newly qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the duration of the first six months, and a minimum of monthly supervision thereafter;
 - for social workers who have demonstrated capability at ASYE level and above - in line with identified needs, and at least monthly.
 - Ensure that they have a policy in place which governs supervision, and which:
 - locates responsibility for that policy with the principal social worker or other appropriate senior manager.
 - requires the actual frequency and quality of supervision to be monitored against clear expectations.

In terms of the quality of supervision, all employers should:

1. Ensure that social work supervision is not treated as an isolated activity by incorporating it into the organisation's **social work accountability framework**.
2. Promote continuous learning and knowledge sharing through which social workers are encouraged to draw out learning points by reflecting on their own practice in the light of experiences of their peers.
3. Promote the use of supervision as an opportunity for social workers to critically reflect on, and identify their learning needs, using evidence, research, and other social work frameworks where appropriate.
4. Actively use the regulator's professional standards as the basis for supervision, including evaluating capability and identifying development needs, ensuring that social workers are able to draw on and use additional resources such as the professional capabilities framework and knowledge and skills statements to develop their day-to-day practice and skills base.

Synopsis/Update

- Why are we involved with this child/children and their family?
- If this is not the first time there has been supervision about this family, update on the situation. Have we made any progress? If actions have been identified before, have these been completed?

Investigating the experience through reflection

- What's the event or issue that has prompted this discussion?
- How do you feel about the event or issue?
- Have you made any assumptions or hypotheses about the family or their situation? Where might these come from, what might have influenced your thinking?
- How do you think the child/children and/or their family are feeling about this event or issue? How do you know?

Understanding the experience through analysis

- Has an exploration of the event or issue helped us understand what's happening for the child/children and/or their family?
- What is your understanding of this child/children and/or their family now?
- Are there alternative explanations? Why is this the best explanation? What is your evidence?
- Can practice aides or theory help us understand better?
- What, if any, information is missing?
- If your understanding is right, what does this mean for this child/children and/or their family?

What next/Actions?

- What are we trying to achieve? What are the next steps to achieving this, including the timescales and who else may need to be contacted/involved in taking this forward?
- How will the actions progress the plan and improve outcomes?
- Is there new information or actions that need to be shared with the child/children and/or their family? Is there new information or actions that need to be shared other professionals?
- Does a further supervision discussion need to be scheduled?
- Are there any other children (not subject to the proceedings) or vulnerable adults that need to be safeguarded?

5. Ensure that supervision supports students and qualified social workers to meet the regulator's professional standards.
6. Provide regular supervision training for social work supervisors.
7. Assign explicit responsibility for the oversight of appropriate supervision and for issues that arise through supervision.
8. Provide additional professional supervision by a registered social worker for practitioners whose line manager is not a social worker.

Appendix 3: Questions to support Situational Supervision recording on ChildFirst

The questions below are not exhaustive and you will have many others. These will be a useful starting point in structuring the conversations and recording the discussion.

What did the child say?

- What did you observe?
- What did you find out? Where from?

Investigating the experience through reflection:

- What did you feel beforehand?
- What did you feel during the experience?
- What did you feel after the experience?
- How do you feel now?
- How did that emotional experience affect how you behaved? What you think?
- What assumptions did you make before you even went?
- What assumptions have you made now?
- What information can you see is missing?

- How do you think the child and/or their family feel? How do you know? What else might they be feeling?

Understanding the Experience through analysis:

- What is your understanding of the child's lived experience now having had the opportunity to stop and reflect?
- What is your hypothesis about why the family is experiencing the difficulties that have led to professional involvement?
- What is your evidence?
- What are the discrepancies that refute the hypothesis?
- What research backs or refutes this?
- What don't we know?
- What are the alternative explanations?
- If your understanding is accurate what does this mean for the child?

What next:

Agreed actions that lead from the reflection and analysis should be clear, SMART and recorded with an explanation of how outcomes for the child and family will be improved as a result

Appendix 4: Linked guidance

This policy is supported by the guidance document: Management support, oversight, and supervision of the assessment and child's plan.