

# Reflective supervision policy



## Document Control

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# 1. Introduction

At ATLP we are committed to the development and wellbeing of our staff. Our vision for flourishing staff includes ensuring that all staff are cared for, developed, and rewarded. We are committed to providing a positive working environment that supports positive physical and mental wellbeing. **Flourishing staff means flourishing children.**

**Reflective supervision** contributes to a positive working environment that enables staff to flourish. Effective supervision provides staff with a safe space to reflect on their practice, explore any worries or concerns they have about the welfare and development of children. It therefore promotes continuous improvement of practice, which supports the development of a safe setting where children are safeguarded from harm. In addition, good supervision leads to increased staff confidence to carry out their roles effectively and supports staff wellbeing.

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-safeguard-children), states that:

Effective supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare and support practitioners to reflect critically on their decisions (para 158)

The [School inspection handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook) states that a positive and open safeguarding culture means that leaders:

are receptive to challenge and reflective of their own practices to ensure that safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continuous review (para 377).

This policy sets out a framework for senior leaders and trustees to understand the requirements and processes of supervision. It sets out the expectations of which staff should be offered supervision, and how this supervision should take place. It outlines the principles to ensure that this is carried out effectively.

# 2. Definitions

**Supervision** is a formalised discussion between two or more colleagues, where the purpose is to enhance staff performance and effectiveness in carrying out the requirements of their role, reflecting on their practices and meeting the aims of the school. Supervision therefore provides an opportunity for reflection.

**Reflection** is the intentional process of critically examining experiences, actions, and decisions within the supervisory relationship. This involves:

- self-awareness: developing an understanding of how our thoughts, feelings, biases, and behaviours affect our interactions with others;
- insight: gaining deeper insights into our professional practice; our strengths and weaknesses, and areas for further growth;
- learning: identifying lessons from past experiences to inform future practice and decision-making;
- improvement: identifying opportunities for continuous improvement;
- acting on feedback: acknowledging and acting on feedback to improve practice.

Supervision is therefore focused on enabling employees to carry out their work more effectively to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives. It allows opportunities to evaluate and review the performance of staff, including aspects such as workload.

Supervision does not replace performance management appraisals, which focus on a longer-term view of performance.

In our partnership, supervision may take the form of:

- a two-way formal discussion between two colleagues. This may be between a member of staff and their line manager, for example. These discussions provide an opportunity for discussion of individual cases, to share concerns and successes and to consider future practice. To be effective each person must take equal responsibility for ensuring effective communication and be equally supportive and committed.
- peer supervision, which involves peers such as DSLs working together, either in a 1-1 or group situation. A model for peer supervision is set out in Appendix 2.

Supervision is not therapy, although it has a therapeutic element. It is not intended as a replacement for counselling. Counselling is available to all ATLP staff, confidentially, through [EAP-Proactive-Mental-Health-Support.pdf \(medicash.org\)](#).

Supervision can take place on a formal or informal basis. This policy sets out the framework for formal supervision. Informal supervision is often ongoing in effective teams, as staff seek advice and help in situations they deal with on an ongoing basis. This is good practice, but it should not replace a formal supervision session.

Supervision may take place on a 1-1 basis, or in a group setting. The requirements for each are set out below. Supervision meetings are not compulsory. However, they can support good practice and are recommended for specific staff in certain roles. These roles are set out below.

### 3. Who should have access to supervision?

**It is for schools to decide who accesses supervision and what is manageable in their setting.** The ATLP strongly encourages every member of staff who holds a child protection caseload to access supervision. It is committed to ensuring that any other staff who may benefit from supervision should be able to access it.

It is strongly recommended that headteachers and heads of school, whether or not they fulfil the role of LDSL, also access regular supervision. Leading a school is complex and demanding role which sometimes requires managing competing tensions and making difficult decisions, often under time pressure. Reflective supervision can provide a supportive space to reflect on those decisions and pressures. Accessing supervision can therefore support leaders to be even more effective in their roles. In addition, having a whole-school approach to supporting staff wellbeing begins with the headteacher/head of school modelling the approach, and demonstrating the importance of attending to their own wellbeing.

Headteachers and heads of school can also access external supervision through [Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff](#), who offer six online sessions of professional supervision (one hour per session, approximately once every three to four weeks) during the working day.

The DfE Employee Wellbeing Charter (2021) refers to the need to ‘channel support to individuals whose role is known to have a significant emotional component. This might take the form of peer support, supervision, and/or counselling’.

Many if not all roles in education have a significant emotional component. This is especially true of staff who have a safeguarding caseload, those who deal most often with dysregulated students, or who have a role in leading and managing behaviour.

The following is a suggested list of staff would benefit from supervision:

- headteachers and heads of school
- senior leaders, including LDSs
- DSLs
- SENDCos
- pastoral/inclusion/behaviour roles
- early years practitioners \*
- teaching staff, including teaching assistants.

There are other staff who form trusting bonds with children, such as reception staff, site staff, librarians and midday supervisors. A child may choose to make a disclosure to a member of staff not listed above. When this is the case, schools should consider whether the member of staff would benefit from supervision.

\*Supervision forms part of the **Early Years Foundation Stage** statutory framework, which states that:

- 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.

It would not be practical to offer 1-1 supervision to all staff whose roles fall into these categories. Different models of supervision are provided in Appendix 1.

Supervision is available upon request to Advocates and Trustees due to their support in complaints, suspension and exclusion processes.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

**Strategic leads** are responsible for establishing a culture of reflective practice within their hub of schools. They should ensure that they carry out supervision for headteachers/heads of school on at least a half-termly basis, or that headteachers and heads of school access a form of supervision from another source (for example, education support, or peer supervision).

**Headteachers and heads of school** are responsible for establishing a culture of reflective practice in their schools. They should model positive wellbeing by accessing supervision themselves and ensuring that at least some line management time is protected for reflective supervision – see the suggested frequency in Appendix 1.

**Lead DSLs** are responsible for ensuring that they access supervision and facilitate supervision for others.

**Trust safeguarding leads** should ensure that there is an adequate programme of training in place for those who are carrying out supervision.

**The supervisor** is responsible for:

- sharing the responsibility for making the supervisory relationship work
- ensuring confidentiality, except when to do so would place others at risk of harm
- creating an effective, sensitive and supportive supervision environment
- providing suitable protected time and location
- agree the timescales within which supervision takes place and eliminating interruptions
- maintaining accurate and clear records
- sharing a record of what was discussed with the supervisee
- ensuring the organisation's professional standards are met
- ensuring that where a change in line management occurs, a handover process is arranged between all parties concerned
- ensuring that issues relating to diversity are addressed constructively and positively and provide opportunity for staff to raise issues about their experience and diversity.

**The supervisee is responsible for:**

- sharing the responsibility for making the supervisory relationship work
- attending regularly and on time, participating actively and bringing concrete issues to discuss
- being accountable for any actions
- preparing appropriately for supervision sessions
- ensuring the recording of supervision is reflective of the meeting
- actively participating in an effective sensitive and supportive supervision
- aiming to meet the organisation's professional standards.

Detailed procedures for the supervision of LDSLs is set out in Appendix 2.

## 5. Confidentiality

Supervision is confidential unless:

- there is a disclosure of imminent or significant harm;
- dangerous & unlawful practice is suspected or evidenced;
- there are concerns for the wellbeing of the supervisee., or the supervisor.

## 6. Record keeping

- Supervisors will keep brief notes about what was discussed in their sessions and any actions that were agreed between the supervisor and supervisee to discuss in their next session. A template for record keeping is provided in Appendix 4 which provides examples of the brief notes that should be recorded. It is for the supervisor and supervisee to agree how these notes should be recorded and stored; whether on Word, Teams, OneNote, etc.

- Ordinarily, this document will not be shared with any other party. However, it may be used in contexts such as (but not limited to) legal proceedings, investigations, local child safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs, previously known as SCR's) or child death reviews. These notes will be stored securely in line with UK Data Protection Law (formerly GDPR).
- Supervision notes will **not** be shared with line managers unless concerns about the supervisee's welfare would trigger the duty of care as set out below.
- When there is a change in supervisor, notes will be shared with the new supervisor. This will ensure consistency for the supervisee and avoid any verbal discussion between colleagues about any supervision session. This will be discussed with the supervisee in advance.
- The ATLP Trust Safeguarding Leads will keep an overview of the supervision in place for LDSLs. This information will include who was involved, when the supervision took place, and a brief summary of the topics discussed. This information may be used to identify training needs.

## 7. Duty of care

- Alongside the importance of confidentiality, we have a duty of care to all colleagues as well as children. If a disclosure is made by a supervisee or supervisor in any session that leads to a concern about immediate or significant harm of a child, or that the LADO harm threshold has been reached, an appropriate referral will be made immediately. Colleagues should consult a Trust Safeguarding Lead if possible before making this decision.
- Where a supervisor becomes concerned about the wellbeing or mental health of a supervisee, they must signpost the supervisee to support.
- Concerns about LDSLs and DSLs should be referred to appropriate line managers, hub DSLs, or Trust Safeguarding Leads.
- Colleagues should contact HR if they are concerned that a member of staff's mental health and wellbeing are affecting their ability to carry out their roles effectively.

## 8. One-to-one and group supervision

**One-to-one supervision** is offered to all LDLs, headteachers and heads of school. It is for schools to decide who else should have 1-1 supervision.

**Group supervision** may involve a group of staff all with the same or similar tasks, meeting with a manager/leader to discuss issues about their work. This may be done in the context of a regular team meeting or a separate session to look at specific issues. Group supervision should be considered for all levels of experience as an additional method of reflection on practice to the benefit of the team.

## 9. Training

Colleagues who supervise LDSLs and DSLs should undertake the ATLP Supervision Skills Training. Details of how to access this training are provided by Trust Safeguarding Leads. A pre-recorded, shorter training course will be made available for all others who undertake supervision.

## 10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the ATLP Trust board.



## Appendix 1: Models of supervision

This is a suggested model. It is for schools to decide who should be offered supervision and the form it should take. It does not include all possible examples.

Who?	1-1/Group?	Supervision offered by:	How often?
Strategic lead	1-1	DoE /external	Once/half term, calendared
Trust safeguarding leads and vulnerable children's lead	1-1	Line manager	Once/half term, calendared
Primary Strategic safeguarding leads	1-1	Trust safeguarding leads	Once/half term, calendared
Headteacher/head of school	1-1	Strategic lead	Once/half term, calendared
	1-1	Externally through: <a href="#">Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff</a>	
LDSL	1-1	Peer supervision model – see below	See below
DSL	1-1	LDSL /peer supervision model below as decided by school	
Behaviour lead	1-1	Line manager	Once/half term
	Group	Through Behaviour Quality Circle	
SENDCo	1-1	Line manager	Once/half term
	Group	Through hub SENDCo meetings	
Pastoral/phase leads (as relevant in different schools)	1-1	Line manager	Once/half term
	Group	Through team meetings	
Teaching staff	Group	Team meeting	
Early years practitioners	1-1	Line manager	Once/half term

## Appendix 2: Peer supervision model for (L)DSLs

**Trust Safeguarding Leads** will coordinate the supervision model for LDSLs and DSLs to ensure that:

- everyone in the cycle is aware of whom they offer supervision to and whom they receive it from through individual contact
- supervision is not delivered and received between the same two people
- supervision is delivered by an appropriate person every term.

### **Principles:**

- Each session will last 60 minutes.
- Once the supervision session is complete the supervisor will send a short synopsis of the topics covered to ATLP Safeguarding email, confirming that the session took place and raising any welfare concerns.
- Only colleagues who have undertaken the ATLP Supervision Skills Training can deliver supervision under this Trust Peer Supervision model.
- Anyone within the supervision cycle can receive additional supervision sessions as required by contacting their associated Trust Safeguarding Lead.
- These sessions will be delivered as soon as possible, ideally the same day, by the Trust Safeguarding Lead or Hub Strategic Lead depending on context and capacity.
- It is expected that everyone in this cycle will both offer and receive supervision, though it is understood that there may be times when colleagues may feel unable to offer supervision or would only feel comfortable to receive it from a Trust Safeguarding Lead or an alternative nominated leader, depending on upon what they may be coping with personally. When this is the case, they should speak with their associated Trust Safeguarding Lead to discuss further so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Should a colleague in this cycle be unable to deliver supervision due to prolonged absence, the Trust Safeguarding Leads will ensure that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Agreeing the time for a supervision session per term is the responsibility of the supervisor and supervisee jointly. It must be within both people's working hours and both people must give 100% of their attention to that session during the hour.
- Sessions are conducted via Teams and offered by a DSL/DDSL from another school. The Trust Safeguarding Leads will arrange pairings accordingly and share them.
- Attendance is required once per half-term for two sessions (one to deliver and one to receive).
- If a supervisee feels that they need additional supervision, they should submit a request (email) to the ATLP Safeguarding email rather than asking the supervisor directly to avoid any unnecessary pressure.

### **Training:**

All DSLs are expected to attend the ATLP Supervision Skills Training (1 day course) to ensure that all supervisors and supervisees share the same expectations of the sessions.

### **Change requests:**

The purpose of reflective supervision is to provide a psychologically safe space to allow staff to reflect on their practice. Therefore, it is important that both those offering and receiving supervision feel comfortable with each other. Should this not be the case, or should it cease to be the case, it should

be raised via the ATLP Safeguarding email with a 'change request'. Trust safeguarding leads can then consider alternative arrangements.

### **Acknowledging Barriers:**

#### **Hierarchy**

When allocating supervisors, the Trust Safeguarding Leads will take account of individuals' roles, school, and circumstances, but ultimately there is no hierarchy - it is peer supervision. There is no suggestion that the supervisor is more senior, knows more or is better at their job than the supervisee – the supervisor and the supervisee are on equal terms regardless of job title or alternative roles within their academy and Trust.

Supervision will not be delivered by someone within the same school and therefore no line management conflicts should occur.

#### **Time constraints**

We believe that supervision is worth the required time investment that is required to make it meaningful for all colleagues.

It is possible that supervision might be disrupted due to emergency meetings that cannot be moved, however this should be avoided as far as possible, to avoid anyone inferring a lack of commitment to the process.

If either party cannot attend the supervision session that has been arranged for that term, they must contact the other party immediately. A new date (within 5 working days) must be agreed upon and the person who required the change must update the ATLP Safeguarding email when the new date is arranged for if the session sits outside of the half term deadline.

## Appendix 3 Supervision Agreement

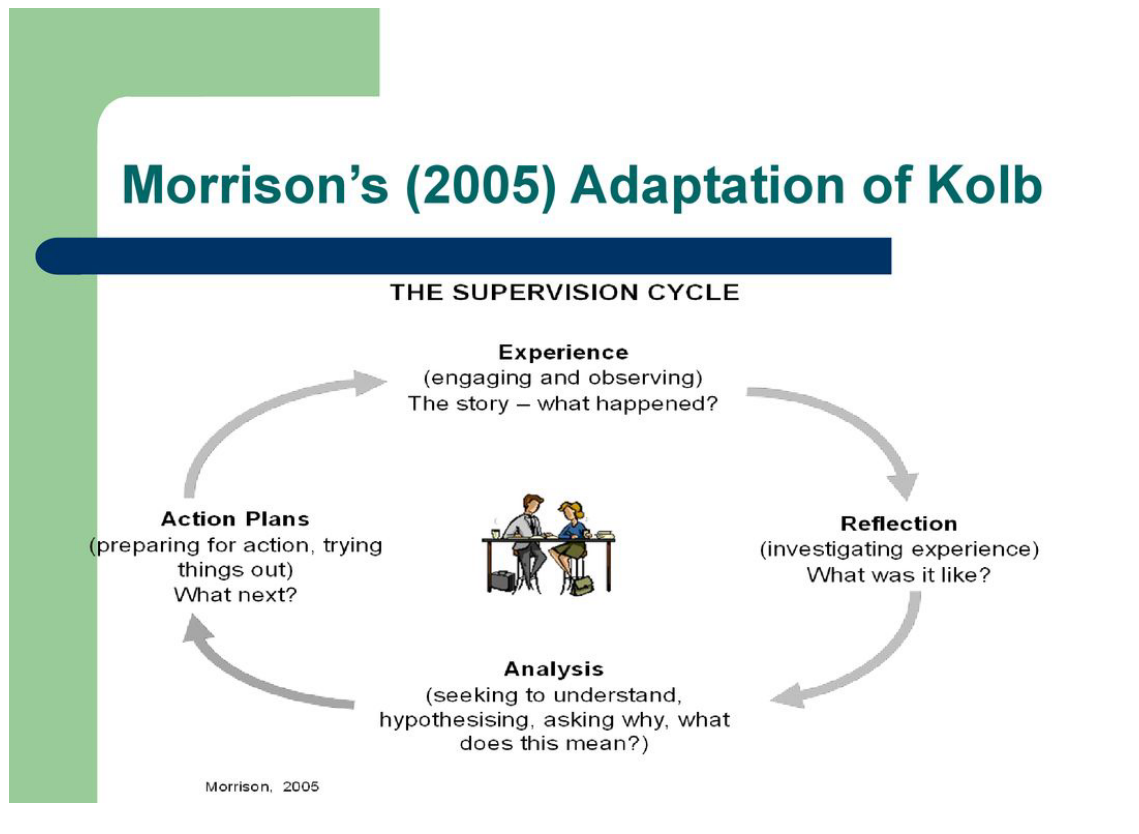
Name of supervisee	Role
Name of supervisor	Role

### Introduction

For supervision to be effective, it is important that we build a strong foundation for the supervisory relationship and have clear expectations from the beginning. It will be helpful to discuss previous experiences of supervision and what works for each party.

The purpose of supervision is to ensure professional standards are being met, offer high levels of support and through professional curiosity and challenge, ensure continued development.

The below model of supervision will be used as a guideline.



### Arrangements for meetings

Supervision will be held at least ... *(monthly/half termly/ termly/etc)*.

The dates for supervision will be set in advance by ... *the supervisor/the supervisee*.

Each meeting will last approximately ... *1 hour*.

Supervision sessions will be protected and will take place in a private room/office, without interruptions (except in an emergency).

The only agreed reason for cancelling will be sickness or crisis. The other party will be informed as soon as possible, and a new date agreed within 3 working days.

The supervisor is responsible for securing an effective, sensitive, and supportive environment.

Both parties are expected to prepare for supervision. A standard agenda will be shared, and any additions to the agenda should be agreed at the start of supervision.

#### Proposed standard agenda items

We agree that we would like to include the following items in each of our supervision sessions:

Wellbeing of the supervisee.

What is going well?

What are you worried about?

Review previous actions.

Experience and reflection on specific area of work/situation.

Analysis and actions agreed.

Personal development: Discussion about development opportunities and needs such as training, skills, knowledge, experience, development, and training.

Anything else supervisee wishes to discuss.

Ending: how supervisee feels, feedback on effectiveness of supervision; review agenda and agree any actions for next session, confirm time and date of next supervision.

#### Recording of meetings

The supervisor is responsible for recording supervision meetings. The notes should reflect the nature of discussions at the meeting and contain all action points.

Notes of the meeting will be taken ... (*electronically during the meeting/e.g. on OneNote/on paper during the meeting/retrospectively/action only/other*).

A copy of the notes will be provided to the supervisee within 5 working days of the meeting (or available on one note/Teams as agreed).

The supervisee will let the supervisor know of any changes that need to be made. The notes should be an accurate record of the session.

A copy of the supervision session will be stored as agreed between participants.

#### Confidentiality

Ordinarily the content of the supervision meeting will be confidential to the two people concerned, except for in certain circumstances including, but not limited to:

agreed follow up by either party, for example when training needs are identified

disclosure of imminent or significant harm

dangerous and unlawful practice is suspected or evidenced

significant concerns of wellbeing for either party

legal proceedings

investigations

local child safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs, previously known as SCRs)

child death reviews

In exceptional circumstances supervisors may need to share disclosures with their own supervisor when they need advice or support.

A discussion about confidentiality should be part of this agreement, and if either party is not clear further advice should be sought.

If the supervisor should change, the supervision notes would usually be shared with the new supervisor to assist in understanding and ensure the supervisee does not have to repeat information already shared. However, this should be done in agreement with the supervisee as there may be parts of the supervision notes that they ask to be redacted.

In the event of a dispute

If either party would like to raise concerns, they should do this by contacting .....

Signed	Signed
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Date	Date
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## Appendix 4

### Supervision Record Template

Name of supervisee	
Name of supervisor	
Date of meeting	

#### Health and wellbeing

#### What is going well?

#### What are you worried about?

#### Review previous actions:

Action	Update	Outstanding elements

#### Experience and reflection on specific area of work/situation:

#### Analysis (professional curiosity/seeking to understand/including hypothesising):

#### Actions agreed:

Actions	Date to complete by	Who is responsible

**Development needs and opportunities (training attended/skills/knowledge/experience/development and training needs):**

**Additional agenda items:**

**Ending of supervision (how supervisee feels/feedback on effectiveness of supervision/any review of agreement or agenda/confirm time and date of next supervision):**

<b>Signed (supervisee)</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

<b>Signed (supervisor)</b>	
<b>Date</b>	