



1. Introduction



This learning resource aims to promote good practice in supervision across social work and social care in Scotland. We have based the resource on current literature and research and it draws on examples of good practice. It offers you opportunities to explore your experiences and expectations of supervision and provides suggestions for further reading. It includes links to relevant resources to extend your thinking and support the development of good practice.

1.1 Who is this resource for?

This resource is for everyone who works in social services whether they are involved as supervisee, supervisor or both.

Social Services in Scotland: A Shared Vision and Strategy 2015-2020 (Scottish Government, 2015) describes the social service workforce as a:

'large and diverse sector which employs around 190,000 people – including social workers, people working in residential and day care services for adults and children, care at home and housing support staff, occupational therapy staff, mental health officers, people working in adult and child protection and in criminal justice services'.

If you are already confident about the theory and practice of supervision, this resource will complement your existing knowledge. If you are less familiar, it will introduce you to some models of supervision and direct you to additional resources. We have developed the materials to reflect the characteristics set out at level 9 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the learning outcomes of each section intentionally reflect this¹

1.2. Using the resource

Both supervisees and supervisors can use this learning resource. It may be useful to staff who are new to the supervisory role or anyone wishing to develop their skills and knowledge. It is relevant to those who have worked in agencies, sectors or professions where supervision is not so well embedded in professional practice as well as settings where supervision is well established.

Depending on your learning needs and how you like to approach learning you can dip in to relevant sections of the resource or go from beginning to end. If you prefer to choose the sections which interest you most, we suggest you start by reading section 3.1, definitions and functions of supervision. This is because people have different experiences of supervision and it may be helpful to spend time reading some of the definitions of supervision and thinking how these match or differ from your own experiences.

¹Scottish Government (2015) Social Services in Scotland: A Shared Vision and Strategy 2015–2020, Edinburgh, Scottish Government

Throughout the resource you will find exercises designed to help you think about your practice and make your learning and development clear. You might find it useful to share your thinking with peers in supervision or as part of a more formal assessment process if you are using the resource as a step towards an accredited qualification. If you want to take a structured approach we suggest you compile a portfolio to include the completed exercises and any relevant supporting evidence. This could be an eportfolio or hard copy folder which provides an overview of your learning and shows your knowledge, understanding and critical reflection on supervision in social services. Start by reflecting on and noting down your current experience and understanding of supervision.

Before we explore the different definitions of supervision in various professional settings, it is useful to spend some time reflecting on the broader question of why supervision is necessary and important.

Exercise 1

Imagine someone who has recently joined your team or organisation is spending a day with you to become familiar with the workplace and the job role. They have no previous experience of supervision and have asked you to explain what it is about.

During a coffee break tell them what supervision is and what your experience has been.

Once you have read the resource and completed the exercises and additional reading you may want to review your thoughts.