



University Mental Health Advisers Network  
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## Supervision Guidance

For supervisors and supervisees





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## Introduction

UMHAN believes that supervision, alongside continuing professional development (CPD) and life-long learning is fundamental to ensure safe and accountable practice and high quality clinical and professional services.

UMHAN also agrees with the Department of Health (1993) that defines supervision as, 'A formal process for professional support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop knowledge and competence, assume responsibility for their own practice and enhance consumer protection and safety in complex situations. It is central to the process of learning and scope of the expansion of practice and should be seen as a means of encouraging self-assessment, analytical and reflective skill.'

UMHAN is aware that the role of a specialist mentor and a mental health advisor can be highly demanding, and at times also emotionally complex. Supervision helps the professional deal with such demands, and improves emotional resilience, as well as one's professional services and personal development.

## FOR SUPERVISEES

### Evidence for the benefits of supervision

Supervision is a necessity in order to ensure an excellent service to clients, accountability to organisations, monitoring and gate keeping of professional standards, and support and professional and personal development for the practitioner.

Research has shown that supervision benefits the employer, the employee and the service users on a variety of levels. First of all employees have some time away from their work in a confidential one-to-one or group supportive setting, where reflection and open discussion take place due to the safe relationship of supporting learning, without fear of possible performance consequences. Working with psychological distress and mental ill health inevitably involves working with issues of risk at times and is associated with higher levels of staff burnout. Quality supervision helps employees to manage these factors, reducing risk of stress and burnout. It

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also provides opportunities for employees employees to receive feedback about their work, so encouraging high work performance and a positive environment.

Second, research consistently supports the correlation between employer-provided supervision and increased staff retention. Being supported through quality supervision can result in workplace contentment and commitment. Additionally, effective supervision produces motivated, confident employees who can be mentors and better peers to others in the organization.

Third, students who will use the university's mental health services will receive effective service, superior quality ethical care. Supervision also decreases complaints and concerns about the service and general performance through the identification of an employee's training and development needs, and results in increased staff retention which ensures continuity of care for students with mental health difficulties.

## Types of supervision

### Clinical

Clinical Supervision ultimate goals are to ensure that the supervisee is using skills appropriately and properly handling a client caseload, all while being mentored by a seasoned professional. This leads to an increased skill set as well as improved outcomes of client care.

There is no one way to conduct clinical supervision, but there are a few principles:

- clinical supervision allows a person to focus on a particular aspect of their clinical practice in a way that they would not normally do
- it is characterized by reflection on previous action and its implications for future action a clinical supervisor will often challenge the mentee to think outside of their current ways of working
- the clinical supervisor will offer support and advice the supervisee tends to learn alternative ways of working and specific skills
- the clinical supervisor will be interested in the quality of the supervisees performance and will offer constructive feedback

(Flying Start NHS, 2018)

### Managerial

Managerial supervision is carried out by a supervisor with authority and accountability for the supervisee. It provides the opportunity for staff to:

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- Review their performance.
- Set priorities/objectives in line with the organisation's objectives and service needs.
- Identify training and continuing development needs.

(CareQuality Commission, 2013)

### **Peer Supervision**

Peer supervision differs from more traditional forms of supervision in that it doesn't require the presence of a supervisor. Peer supervision usually refers to reciprocal arrangements in which colleagues work together for mutual benefit where developmental feedback is emphasised and self directed learning and evaluation is encouraged (Coach Mentoring, 2008).

### **Professional Supervision**

Professional supervision is a positive and enabling process that offers the opportunity to bring an employee and a skilled supervisor together to reflect on work practice. It is the process by which a worker can review and evaluate their work through discussion, report and observation with another worker. Supervision aims to identify solutions to problems, improve practice and increase understanding of professional and clinical issues.

## **Fundamentals of supervision**

### **Generic supervision skills**

- Supervision acts as a container, enabling employees to process and let go of the distress that they absorb from those with whom they work
- Knowledge of educational principles which influence learning and skill development and knowledge of educational principles which can be applied in supervision
- Knowledge of the context within which supervision is provided (including relevant professional, ethical and legal frameworks).
- Understanding of the ways in which professional and ethical issues are represented in supervision (e.g. managing boundaries, confidentiality, managing power differentials)
- Understanding of issues of difference and diversity in supervision and how these relate both to supervision itself and to the discussion of casework
- Developing and maintaining a working partnership Understanding of the importance of a safe environment for facilitating learning and of the factors that affect the development and maintenance of a good supervisory relationship
- Conducting supervision in group formats Knowledge and skills to structure group supervision and to manage group process appropriately

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- Knowledge of procedures relevant to the assessment of poor performance and failure, and skills in implementing these
- Knowledge and skills to identify supervisee's training needs
- Knowledge of supervision models and how and when to apply these in practice

## FOR SUPERVISORS

### Skills in giving constructive but accurate feedback

- Skills in using a range of methods to gain information and give feedback (e.g. self report, audio and video tapes, colleague and client reports)
- Knowledge of potential sources of bias in evaluation
- Knowledge of relevant criteria/ standards set by professional bodies, including assessment procedures relevant to different levels of qualification
- Awareness of any limitations in their own training and experience, in the development of supervisory skills and the implications of these for further training

### Ethical Framework

The overarching ethical framework for the activity of supervision can be summarised in the following way. Supervisors and supervisees should:

- Conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with the dignity, status, values and principles of their profession.
- Seek to establish the highest ethical standards and hold the interests of the students
- Be responsible for maintaining and developing their skills through appropriate continuing professional development.
- Be responsible for monitoring and maintaining their physical, mental and emotional health in relation to their capacity to practise safely and effectively.
- Recognise and work in ways that respect the value and dignity of each other, the students and the context of the work.

Supervisors should:



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- Not exploit the dependence of the supervisee in the supervisory relationship sexually, financially or in any other manner.
- Reflect with the supervisee upon the differences apparent in the supervisory relationship including issues of power and do their best to create a safe space in order to facilitate these discussions.
- Hold in mind the wider system and consider aspects of risk and vulnerability present for clients by virtue of their age, physical or mental health, abilities, relationships or any other circumstance.
- Have discussed confidentiality and when to break confidentiality
- Have an awareness of data protection principles in relation to recording supervision notes.

### **Complaints/Concerns**

- UMHAN has a responsibility to its members, other professionals and the public to ensure that the standard of supervision practice of its members is maintained.
- Where there are concerns about supervisory practice it is important that these are resolved as quickly as possible. To this end it is important for supervisees to bring any concerns they have to the attention of their supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity.
- UMHAN is available to offer support and advice but does not offer a formal complaints process for supervisory practice.
- UMHAN is the professional body responsible for complaints against specialist mental health mentors holding registration through them. This relates only to direct clinical work.
- Currently UMHAN is able to make a judgement as to whether one of its members has failed to uphold its Code of Ethics and Practice and take appropriate action

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