

## Supervision Activity: Defining Supervision.

This activity encourages us to think about our own definition of supervision before reflecting on a selection of descriptions and definitions of supervision published across the last 20 or so years.

You can use this activity to support:

- Personal critical reflection – for supervisors and/or supervisees
- One-to-one supervision
- Group work for teams or in supervision training

### As a group activity

When working with a group, this activity could be a live workshop where you have the definitions available on cards without any indication of the author or date, if you have less time available, you could ask participants to work through parts 1 and 2 ahead of the group session so that you can then maximise the time for discussion.

### In one-to-one supervision

In one-to-one supervision you can prompt the supervisee to do this for personal critical reflection or may use it to support discussion between you and the supervisee. In this second instance, it's helpful to have worked through the first two sections ahead of your time together so that you can get the most out of your discussion time.

You'll find the dates and references for the descriptions and definitions used in this activity in the appendix at the end of this document. You don't have to stick with my suggested definitions – new ones are coming out all the time – so you may wish to replace or augment the list in this worksheet with definitions or descriptions which are more relevant for you and the practitioners you work with.

### 1. Thinking first about your own definition of supervision:

Have a go at writing your own definition before you take a look at the descriptions, definitions and questions below.

### 2. Thinking about how supervision is described and defined in the literature:

Consider these descriptions and definitions of supervision and then look at the questions:

*An enabling process that allows the individual being supervised to experience professional and personal growth without penalty.*

*A formal process of support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop their knowledge and competence. It enables them to consider accountability for their own practice and supports the protection of consumers in receipt of care in complex clinical situations.*

*There are several types of supervision – the three most commonly referred to are: clinical, managerial and professional supervision. The terms used in this area may*

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*sometimes overlap and in practical terms, it may sometimes be difficult to separate them from each other*

*brings skilled supervisors and practitioners together in order to reflect upon their practice. Supervision aims to identify solutions to problems, improve practice and increase understanding of professional issues.*

*a professional development activity where the less experienced clinician can utilise the knowledge and experience of their supervisor, to address any gaps in knowledge or skill set and thereby improve their own clinical performance and patient quality of care*

*This relationship is evaluative, extends over time and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person and monitoring the quality of the professional services*

These are all descriptions and definitions from the last 20-30 years of supervision literature:

- Which one do you think is the oldest and which is the most recent?
- Are any of these descriptions/definitions similar to the definition you constructed?
- What sorts of things do you notice about these descriptions and definitions?
- Are there any descriptions or definitions here which you particularly like? If so, what is it that you like about them?
- If there are any you dislike, what is it you dislike about them?
- Is there anything you would change about the definition you constructed now?
- Do you have a preferred definition of supervision which is not included in this list? What is it you like about your preferred definition?

You will find the dates and references for these descriptions and definitions on the final page of this worksheet – try not to peek until you have worked through the questions.

### ***3. Sharing thoughts about how supervision is described and defined in the literature:***

Unless you are using this activity for your own, private critical reflection, you can now compare and discuss your answers to the questions. How similar or different are the views across the group or between you and your supervisor/supervisee? What sorts of factors might influence how a description or definition is worded? How surprised are you/your colleague(s) about the variation in descriptions and definitions? What does this prompt us to pay attention to in our own supervision practice?

*(See hints – not answers! - at the end of this worksheet about the sorts of things you might be thinking about in your discussion about the definitions)*

### ***4. How to use your discussion about definitions and descriptions of supervision:***

Encourage your colleague(s) to capture what you discovered through this activity and your conversation about definitions and descriptions of supervision. Use this for future reference

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in supervision and to add to a continuing professional development portfolio, perhaps as a critical reflection on your learning.

How might this discussion inform a supervision agreement or contract? Don't forget to revisit any contract you have from time-to-time in supervision to check you are doing what you agreed to and that is meeting the supervision needs.

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### Worksheet appendix

Hints for your discussions about supervision descriptions and definitions:

How similar or different are the views across the group or between you and your supervisor/supervisee?

*Remember there are no right or wrong answers. We might expect various perspectives from the group depending on things such as the models and definitions of supervision they have encountered during training and individual experiences of supervision both and supervisors and supervisees.*

Factors which might influence how a description or definition is worded may include:

*who the authors are, whether they are clinicians or academics or what health profession they belong to;*

*the purpose of the definition: policy document, standards, guidance, research;*

*who the audience are; policy makers, students, health professionals, employers;*

*influences at the time of writing: health policy, a response to untoward events.*

How surprised are you/your colleague(s) about the variation in descriptions and definitions?

What does this prompt us to pay attention to in our own supervision practice?

*We perhaps should not assume we all have the same starting point for a definition of supervision so should check out with one another as we commence a supervision relationship, what each party understands, assumes, expects and finds useful.*

### Descriptions, Definitions, Dates and References:

An enabling process that allows the individual being supervised to experience professional and personal growth without penalty.

Butterworth, A. and Faugier, J. (eds) (1992) *Clinical Supervision and Mentorship in Nursing*. London: Chapman and Hall

A formal process of support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop their knowledge and competence. It enables them to consider accountability for their own practice and supports the protection of consumers in receipt of care in complex clinical situations.

*Department of Health (1993) A vision for the future: The Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Contribution to Health and Health Care. London: HMSO*

There are several types of supervision – the three most commonly referred to are: clinical, managerial and professional supervision. The terms used in this area may sometimes overlap and in practical terms, it may sometimes be difficult to separate them from each other.

*CQC, (2013) Supporting information and guidance: Supporting effective clinical supervision.*

brings skilled supervisors and practitioners together in order to reflect upon their practice. Supervision aims to identify solutions to problems, improve practice and increase understanding of professional issues.

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UKCC (1996) Position Statement on Clinical Supervision for Nursing and Health Visiting. UKCC, London

a professional development activity where the less experienced clinician can utilise the knowledge and experience of their supervisor, to address any gaps in knowledge or skill set and thereby improve their own clinical performance and patient quality of care.

Snowdon, D.A., Leggat, S.G. & Taylor, N.F. Does clinical supervision of healthcare professionals improve effectiveness of care and patient experience? A systematic review. *BMC Health Serv Res* 17, 786 (2017)

This relationship is evaluative, extends over time and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person and monitoring the quality of the professional services

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (1992). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision*. Allyn & Bacon