



Practice Tool

An audit of your supervision role

Introduction

This tool is based on the integrated model of supervision (also known as the 4x4x4 model) developed by Tony Morrison (2005) as well as more recent developments of the model (Wonnacott, 2014).

This model brings together three distinct elements, each of which has four interdependent components:

- > the four functions of supervision
- > the four key stakeholders in supervision
- > the four elements of reflection about practice.

The integrated model of supervision

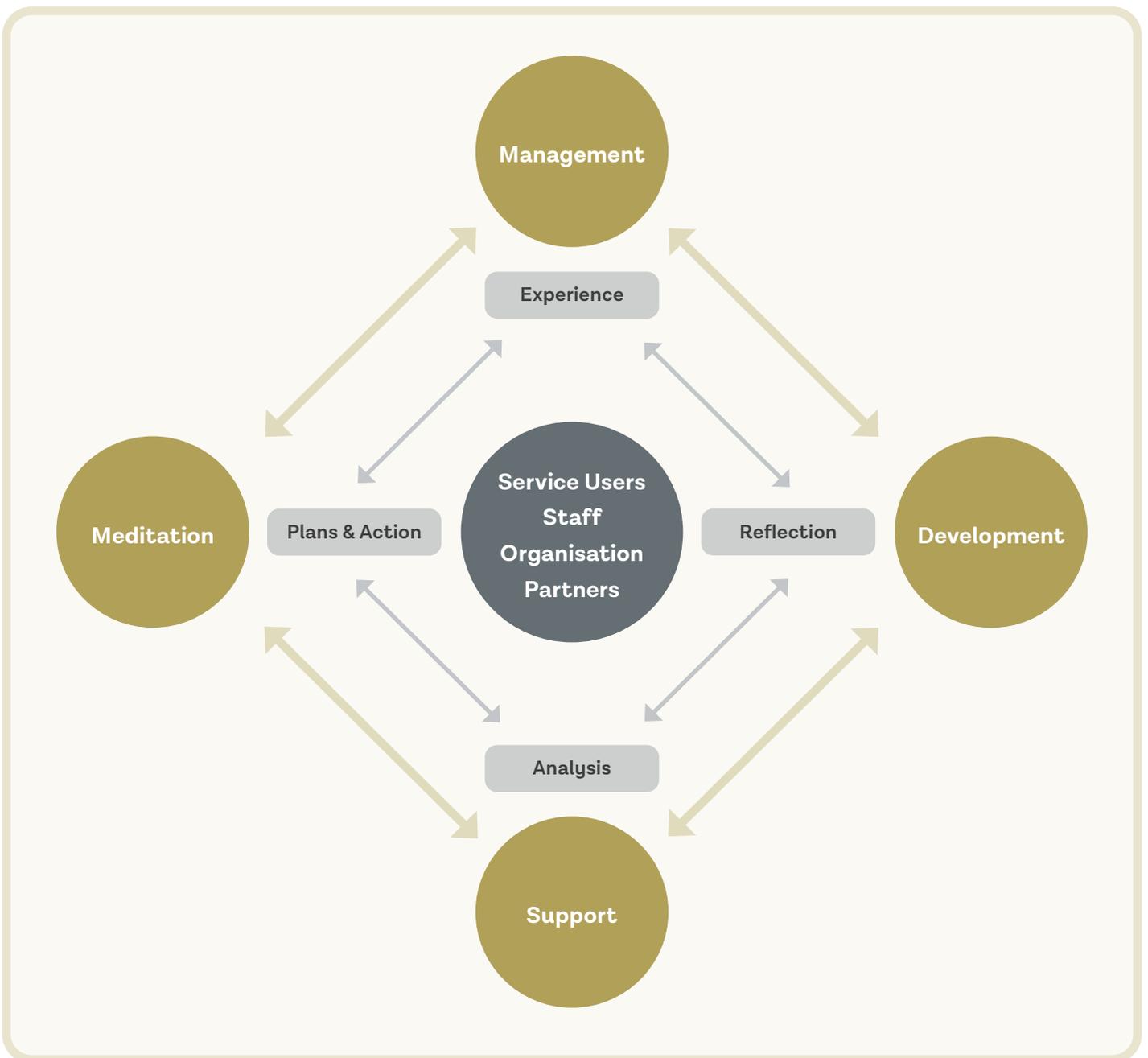


Figure 1: *The integrated model of supervision*

This tool has been developed to support practice supervisors to consider how they can work effectively across all four functions of supervision.

The four functions of supervision

The exercises that follow focus on the ‘outer layer’ of this model.

The four key functions are all needed to give a balanced approach to the supervision process. You cannot perform one element effectively without the others, they rely on each other.

This does not mean that they will all be given equal time and importance in every session but, over time, all should be visited, and none should dominate.

You can read more information about what practice supervisors might be doing in relation to each of the four functions in the table below.

Within the management function the supervisor should address:

Overall management of the quality of the practitioner’s work.	Overall management of workload and priorities.	Provision of resources.
Provision of a safe working environment.	Professional discussion of practitioner’s performance against individual, service and organisational objectives and national standards.	The duty of the supervisor to ensure responsibilities of the organisation to the worker under the <i>Equality Act 2010</i> , including provision of reasonable adjustments for disabled practitioners.

Within the development function the supervisor should:

Support career progression (This also includes supporting practitioners who have experienced discrimination to progress. For example: Black and Global Majority practitioners).	Identify the practitioner’s individual strengths.	Identify areas for development for the practitioner to carry out the job to the required standard.
Identify opportunities to meet any development needs.	Plan how development needs could be met.	Ensure the practitioner has received all mandatory and necessary training required to fulfil the job function.
Log training and development activities for the organisation.	Evaluate the impact of development opportunities undertaken.	

Within the support function the supervisor should:

Support the practitioner (both as a professional and as an individual person in their own right).

Support the practitioner's wellbeing at work.

Provide opportunities to reflect on how social GRRRAACCEEESSS (aspects of personal and social identity that include gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, education, ethnicity, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality - Burnham, 2013) relate to the supervisory relationship.

Within the mediation function supervisors should:

Help the practitioner contribute to organisational life

Support the practitioner to implement organisational policies and procedures including issues of diversity and equality that arise in the context of service provision or in employment practices

Mediate in any conflicts between the practitioner and the organisation

Act as a conduit for any information that needs to be shared between the practitioner and the organisation

Deal sensitively but clearly with complaints about practitioners

The four functions of supervision: self-assessment exercises

It is important to have a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities in relation to the four functions of supervision as a practice supervisor.

The following four exercises (adapted from In-Trac Training and Consultancy Ltd - 2012) have been designed to prompt practice supervisors to consider how far their supervisory practice delivers across all four functions of supervision.

They also provide examples of the types of responsibilities that you have in your role as a supervisor.

Exercise one

Please read the information which provides examples about what practice supervisors might focus on in relation to each of the four functions of supervision.

Either print these out and complete the task using three marker pens of different colours, or you can use highlight colour (or the equivalent function) to complete this task on a screen:

Use your first colour to mark off the statements in each list that are your sole responsibility as a supervisor.

Use the second to indicate responsibilities you share with someone else.

Use the third to indicate tasks for which you hold no direct responsibility

1. The **management** function:

- > the practitioner understands their role and responsibilities
- > agency policies and procedures are understood and appropriately acted on / followed
- > the practitioner is clear as to the limits and use of their personal agency and authority
- > the purpose of supervision is clear
- > the overall quality of performance is assessed
- > work is reviewed regularly in accordance with agency and any legal requirements
- > action plans are formulated and carried out within the context of agency functions and responsibilities
- > the basis of decisions and professional judgments are clear to you and the practitioner, and made explicit in agency records
- > records are maintained according to agency policies
- > the practitioner knows when the supervisor expects to be consulted
- > the practitioner is given an appropriate workload
- > time management expectations of the practitioner are clear
- > the practitioner understands the functions of partner agencies, and their role and responsibilities when working with partner agencies.

2. The **development** function:

- > develop the practitioner's professional competence, skills, knowledge and understanding
- > understand the practitioner's value base in relation to social GRRRAACCEEESSS and how these impact on their work
- > understand the practitioner's preferred learning style and blocks to learning
- > assess the practitioner's learning and development needs and how these can be met
- > facilitate the practitioner's capacity to set professional goals and engage in professional development
- > facilitate the practitioner's ability to reflect on their work, and interaction with people who draw on care and support, colleagues, and partner agencies
- > provide regular and constructive feedback to the practitioner on all aspects of their performance
- > promote the practitioner's capacity for self-appraisal and enable them to learn constructively from significant experiences or difficulties
- > offer a relationship in which the practitioner provides constructive feedback to the supervisor, and both can learn from each other.

3. The **mediation** function:

- > brief practice leaders about frontline practice issues and implications
- > allocate resources in the most efficient way
- > represent practitioner needs to practice leaders
- > negotiate and clarify the team's role and responsibilities
- > initiate, clarify or contribute to policy formulation
- > consult and brief practitioners about organisational developments or information
- > advocate between practitioner, or team, and other parts of the agency or with outside agencies
- > help the practitioner resolve difficulties in workplace or partner relationships
- > represent or accompany staff in work with other agencies
- > involve staff in decision-making
- > deal sensitively, but clearly, with complaints about practitioners
- > assist and coach practitioners, where appropriate, through complaints procedures.

3. The **support** function:

- > create a safe climate for the practitioner to look at their practice and its impact on them
- > clarify the boundaries between support, counselling, and consultation
- > debrief the practitioner and give them permission to talk about feelings
- > help the practitioner to explore emotional blocks to their work
- > support practitioners who are subject to any form of abuse either from people who draw on care and support or from colleagues (whether this be physical, psychological, or discriminatory)
- > monitor the overall health and emotional functioning of the practitioner, especially about the effects of stress
- > clarify when the practitioner should be advised to seek external counselling.

Exercise two

Having reviewed your role and responsibilities relating to these four functions, you can probably see why the role of supervisor sometimes feels like a big challenge! Have a look at the questions below. We have provided space at the end of the questions for you to record your thoughts. You can type directly into this.

Consider these questions:

Do you have a strong preference for one or more aspects of the role?

Do you feel uncomfortable about some of your responsibilities?

Do all your supervisees allow you to fulfil all four functions?

Does your organisation allow you to fulfil all four functions?

How does your own line manager support you in these four aspects of your role?

Exercise three

If you have found that some (or all) of these functions or specific tasks are split, you should identify:

How best to co-ordinate the roles of supervisor, mentor, and line manager for the practitioner.

Whose responsibility it is to determine, monitor and record how information will be shared.

How decisions will be reached where there is disagreement.

Exercise four

Consider how some of these functions might be complemented by activities undertaken outside of one-to-one supervision.

For example:

Could action learning sets support practitioners who are interested in developing skills in a specific practice area (support function)?

Could a buddying system complement the supervisor's role in helping a new colleague to negotiate and clarify the team's role and responsibilities (management function)?

Could group supervision help practitioners to understand any blocks to their own learning (development function)?

Please record your thoughts here

References

Morrison, T. (2005). *Staff Supervision in Social Care*. Pavilion.

Wonnacott, J. (2014). *Developing and Supporting Effective Staff Supervision*. Pavilion.

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