

## **DEVELOPING SUPERVISION SKILLS TO ENHANCE RELATIONSHIP BASED PRACTICE**

### **Building a Confident Social Work Profession**

In the final report A Child Centered System by Eileen Munro she places great emphasis on the importance of the relationship that professionals create with children and families who are receiving help. She argues that it is professionals who are able to create a positive working relationship with troubled families and children that have good outcomes for children. .

Social work has had a long commitment to relationship based practice. But much of these practice skills have been undermined by the audit and target driven culture that social work has had to operate in. With the Munro review we have an opportunity to regain some of these practices and skills.

#### **But what is relationship based practice?**

Relationship based practice may have the following key features<sup>1</sup>:

- Recognition that past experiences affect current attitudes and behaviour
- Understanding that we do not always consciously realise how our experiences affect our behaviour
- Realisation that professional relationships and the feelings they evoke can be associated with other, often unconnected and not always conscious, earlier experience.
- being critically aware of what we are being asked to do (by our agency and by government policy)
- being critically aware of the social context within which people live their lives – and how lives are constrained or encouraged by that context
- being curious and analytical about what the behaviours and actions of the people that we are providing a service to
- being analytical and ethical about the ways in which we provide services/interventions in order to ensure they are of maximum effectiveness (using ethical measures)

This requires social workers to be able to take up a reflective stance.

Reflectivity is a crucial attribute for social workers whether they are working in complex child protection situations, helping an older person manage the transition into residential accommodation, carrying out an assessment for

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<sup>1</sup> Relationship-Based Social Work ed Ruch, Turney and Ward 2010, Jessica Kingsley

compulsory admission to psychiatric hospital or offering bereavement counselling to a learning disabled adult.

## **Course Aims**

### **What is Supervision?**

Supervision is the process of reflecting on the practice issues that arise in the course of everyday work. It can help practitioners do their job more effectively by developing their capacity to use their experiences to rethink their practice and take action.

A good supervisor will enable the practitioner to reflect on their practice, to support and challenge it as appropriate, to discuss skills, needs and to help work through situations where there is resistance, uncertainty and/or anxiety.

This course aims to equip supervisors with knowledge and skills in reflective supervision, in order to increase their confidence in engaging effectively with their social workers who are working with complex families. Supervision is essential to being able to work as a social worker. If we believe that the core of social work practice is the relationship formed by the worker with the service user then the supporting framework for this has to be a relationship based supervision process. Relationships and relating is core to effective supervision. This may result in the social worker feeling understood and supported, and improve the quality of the social workers practice.

## **Course Content**

### **The course will cover**

- Understanding the purpose and function of supervision
- Recognising the impact of power and authority in the supervisory role
- Developing skills in building rapport and constructing a professional relationship with supervisees
- To study the issues around the use of supervision contracts
- To focus on supervisory styles and stages
- Supervisory interventions
- Appreciating and containing stress and anxiety in the supervisory relationship and on decision making
- Awareness of different adult learning styles and blocks to learning
- Giving and receiving feedback and challenging practice
- how to make arrangements for practitioners to have frequent case consultations to explore and reflect on their direct work and plans for children and families, which is separate from on-going case supervision arrangements;

- how to make arrangements for frequent case supervision for practitioners to reflect on service effectiveness and case decision-making, separate from arrangements for individual pastoral care and professional development;
- how to make arrangements for managers to observe practitioners' direct work with children and families in both family and multi-disciplinary contexts;

The task will be pursued through the examination of the current practice of supervision. Learning is based on participant's own practice as a manager/supervisor.

### **Course Structure**

The course can be delivered in a variety of ways. This can be negotiated and agreed with the agency.

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