SSW Mentor and Therapeutic Support Procedures

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/ssw-mentor-and-therapeutic-support-procedures/

Supervising Social Workers (SSWs) can access support from the Mentor and Therapeutic Lead (MTL) in relation to specific Foster Carers, behavioural management issues, or any other situation within a fostering household that has continued or become more complex despite intervention and support from the SSW. The approach of the MTL is fully **Trauma-Informed**, emphasising safety, trust, empowerment, and collaboration for both carers and professionals.

Support provided by the MTL primarily aims to **develop the reflective capacity, knowledge, and trauma-informed skills of the SSW**, strengthening their ability to respond therapeutically to Foster Carers and children. In exceptional situations, where the needs of the Foster Carer or child require specialist input, the MTL may provide **direct support** to the Foster Carer with appropriate authorisation.

Procedure

SSWs will routinely discuss each Foster Carer or fostering household with their Team Manager during supervision, including any emerging or ongoing concerns. Support from the MTL is **supplementary** and designed to enhance reflective practice; it does not replace Team Manager guidance, advice, or decision-making responsibilities. The MTL is not a case manager.

SSWs are encouraged to **seek reflective consultation** with the MTL regarding situations that feel complex, emotionally demanding, or where progress has been limited. This may occur during scheduled Mentor sessions or through direct contact (email or phone) at any other time. Seeking support is regarded as a **strength-based and proactive action** that promotes professional resilience and reflective practice.

During the initial discussion, the SSW and MTL will engage in **joint reflection** on the situation, sharing knowledge, experience, and ideas. This process focuses on understanding the underlying needs, behaviours, and emotional triggers of everyone involved, considering trauma histories and environmental factors. The aim is to co-create possible approaches that promote safety, connection, and stability for the child and household.

Resources, reading materials, or trauma-informed tools may be shared to expand understanding and support SSWs in their ongoing work. Both the MTL and SSW may continue reflective exploration between sessions before identifying potential options or next steps.

Subsequent reflective discussions will focus on **impact, progress, barriers**, and further adjustments to the approach, maintaining a focus on learning and growth rather than performance.

The MTL does not provide reports or evaluative feedback to the Team Manager; discussions remain **reflective, confidential, and developmental**, unless safeguarding concerns arise.

Direct Support

If the SSW identifies that a Foster Carer would benefit from direct, trauma-informed support from the MTL, this must first be discussed with their Team Manager. If the Team Manager agrees, they will consult with the Registered Manager for approval. Direct therapeutic support may only proceed with the **Registered Manager's approval**.

Once approval is granted, the SSW will seek **informed consent** from the Foster Carer. The process should ensure that the Foster Carer understands the purpose of the intervention, what to expect, and how information will be shared.

The SSW and MTL will then agree a **time-limited, clearly defined intervention plan** with specific aims and objectives that prioritise emotional safety, learning, and practical outcomes.

The MTL will initiate contact with the Foster Carer and schedule all sessions directly with them. Sessions will be conducted remotely via **Zoom**, ensuring accessibility and comfort.

A **reflective record** of each session will be sent to the SSW and stored securely on Base. This record will summarise themes and actions, not personal or confidential disclosures, in line with data protection and trauma-informed principles.

A **review meeting** will take place mid-way through and at the end of the intervention, involving the SSW, MTL, and, if appropriate, the Foster Carer. The review will focus on outcomes, progress, and future support needs. A written summary will be produced.

The SSW will keep the Team Manager updated throughout the process.

Any direct MTL interventions and outcomes should be **included in the SSW's report for the Foster Carer's Annual Review**, highlighting development, learning, and impact on fostering practice.