

Supervision resources for supervisors of NQSWs

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Introduction

Supervision is a key part of professional support and development for social workers and is embedded within the NQSW Supported Year. In this document you will find thirteen supervision resources which were commissioned by SSSC in 2020 to provide guidance and promote understanding of supervision for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). The resources in this document are written for and aimed at supervisors of NQSWs, there is a separate publication for NQSWs.

These resources introduce the concept of supervision in social work practice and ask you to reflect on your expectations and experiences as a supervisor and consider the ways that you approach supervision with NQSWs in your organisation. If you are new to supervision, you can use the materials as structured self-directed learning. If you are an established or experienced supervisor, you can find out about the specific needs of NQSWs and explore the resources that contextualise current practice. The resources are split into several sections so you can work through these or choose the sections you feel will be most helpful to you.

This document does not contain links to external websites, as these can quickly become outdated, however, it will direct you to references and resources which you may find useful for further reading or research.

Supervisor resource 1

Defining supervision in social work

"Supervision is a forum for reflection and learning... an interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is a supervisor. This dialogue shapes a process of review, reflection, critique, and replenishment for professional practitioners... It is accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organisational policy and procedures". Davys and Beddoe (2020, p.22)

Other definitions and information on the development of supervision and learning theories are provided here. How we define supervision shapes our expectations of ourselves and others in supervision sessions and the expectations of our own development as supervisors and the support available for this. There are many other possible definitions for seeing supervision with slightly different lenses. All stress the goal of benefitting people who use services and their carers.

This definition highlights accountability and the link between supervision and performance review or appraisal processes:

"Supervision is a process which aims to support, assure and develop the knowledge skills and values of the person being supervised (supervisee), team or project group. It provides accountability for both the supervisor and supervisee in exploring practice and performance. It also enhances and provides evidence for annual performance review or appraisal; it sits alongside an organisation's performance management process with particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for people who use services and their carers."SSSC (2016)



This definition focuses on social worker support to strengthen ethics:

"Supervision is the systematic, reflective process which supports social workers to make ethical decisions. It also improves confidence, competence and morale, leading to a better service for those who use social work services." BASW (2011)

This definition focuses on relationships within the wider context:

"Supervision is a joint endeavour in which a practitioner, with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client-practitioner relationships and the wider systemic and ecological contexts, and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession." Hawkins and Shohet (2012)

The development of supervision in social work

In the late 19th century, volunteer social workers gathered around experienced leaders in an apprenticeship model and supervision was concerned with adherence to agency policy and the distribution of resources.

At the turn of the 20th century evaluation of the perceived worthiness of clients needing help turned to greater examination of the causes of poverty and social justice. From the 1920's onward social work supervision was strongly influenced by growing psychoanalytic thinking.

From the 1980's onward, in common with the rest of the public sector, supervision was increasingly concerned with ideas influenced by private sector concepts around performance and accountability.

Supervision has been described as "the most original and characteristic process that the field of social casework has developed." (Robinson, 1949, in Davys and Beddoe, 2021).

Kolb's experiential learning cycle

The learning cycle underpins much of the theory of supervision and professional development in social work. It involves four stages, namely: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. (Kolb, 1984).

From the 1980s, building on this, various writers developed these ideas to inform social work supervision, notably by Morrison (2001). Models were set out to help social workers and the wider helping professions improve supervision practice, naming the different processes and roles involved.

Familiar to many readers will be the popular Honey and Mumford (2005) learning styles set out in the overview for supervisors. Various 40 and 80 item questionnaires are available online which can be used with new workers. This may be helpful when the supervisor is familiar with these learning styles.



In an earlier stage of career development, we might exhibit a stronger style which may soften over time to inhabit a balance of styles. No style is more desirable, but we all need to be aware of areas where we would benefit from the relative strengths of supervisors, colleagues and mentors who may widen our perspective.

The four styles relate to preferences for the above parts of the supervision cycle:

Experience – Activist style

Reflection – Reflector style

Analysis – Theorist style

Action Plans – Pragmatist style

Time to Reflect

Think about one or more of your current/past supervisors who represent a mix of different strengths and styles. For each supervisor note down your response to these questions:

- What stage you were at in your own professional development?
- What was good/not so good about this person's style for you?
- How did you fit together in terms of individual characteristics?
- How might your experiences impact your style of supervision with NQSWs now?

References

BASW (2011) UK Supervision Policy. On BASW website.

Davys, A., & Beddoe, L. (2021). *Best practice in professional supervision: A guide for the helping professions (2nd ed.)*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Grace (2001) Continuing professional development: Learning styles. British dental journal. Official journal of the British Dental Association.

Hawkins, P. & Shohet, R. (2012) *Supervision in the helping professions (4th ed.)*. London: Open University Press.

Honey, P., Mumford, A. (2006) The Learning Styles Questionnaire. 80-item version (Revised edition, July 2006), Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications Limited.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Morrison, T. (2001). *Staff Supervision in Social Care*. Brighton: Pavilion.

SSSC (2016) Supervision Learning Resource.



Supervisor resource 2

The NQSW supported year pilots

Evidence from the 5-year NQSW longitudinal study (Grant et al, 2019) together with evaluation of the NQSW supported year pilot (Gordon et al, 2020) provided insight into the experiences of NQSWs in Scotland. These identified that reflective, structured supervision and mentoring was core to the NQSW supported year. Supervision helped those involved understand the NQSW's practice and overall wellbeing.

In addition to the traditional supervision style of a 1:1 session with a line manager, informal support was found to be an important element. However, it was felt that the development of frameworks for peer supervision or mentoring approaches would be helpful.

Supervision practices

While it is acknowledged that there are areas of very strong practice across the sector, some supervisors of NQSW involved in the pilot indicated they felt they could benefit from further training in supervision and giving and receiving developmental feedback.

Grant et al. (2019), observed wide variation in practice and that professional development took a backseat to caseload concerns finding:

"... a privileging of case-management over professional development in supervision" with only 65% of NQSW getting monthly supervision and 76% of respondents reporting a focus on caseload management."

This report also identified the importance of informal supports which:

"... continue to emerge as a critical if underutilised mechanism for supporting professional confidence, competence and development." Grant et al. (2019)

Several issues were highlighted in the report on the supported year pilots including giving and receiving developmental feedback. There is more information on this in the resource about supervision models and the resource on managing boundaries.

Peer learning for NQSWs

One of the significant findings was the benefits for NQSWs of available frameworks for peer supervision. This is covered in more detail in the resources for NQSWs. Peer groups will have clear boundaries of confidentiality and avoid any advice-giving. This helps NQSW's process thoughts and feelings arising from practice with less potential power imbalance or performance pressure than supervision with a line manager.



The model also lends itself to a clear structure which aims to avoid participants speaking over each other. NQSW supervisors may play a key role in encouraging and enabling NQSWs to set up their own groups and helping organisations to facilitate and encourage this including:

- Understanding the model is complementary to individual supervision.
- Organisational 'buy-in' including access to appropriate resources.
- Helping NQSW's decide who to include depending on local arrangements.
- Supporting NQSW's with maintaining the contract and any problems.
- Viewing this as a valuable learning opportunity.

Groups are also valuable for supervisors and Patterson (2019), argues that small groups incorporating 'thinking aloud' can be used effectively to support first-line supervisors to deepen participants supervisory skills and competence.

Time for Reflection

- Review the NQSW training resource session including the model on peer reflection.
- Have a discussion with your own manager about whether this might compliment other local provision.
- Encourage NQSWs you are supervising to access the resources or run a session for them at a local level using these outlines.

References and Resources

Gordon, J., Gracie, C. & Robertson, L. (2020) Evaluation of a pilot project for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in Scotland: executive summary. Craigforth, SSSC.

Grant, S., McCulloch, T., Daly, M. & Kettle, M. (2019) Newly qualified social workers in Scotland: A five-year longitudinal study. Interim Report 3. Dundee: SSSC.

Hawkins, P., McMahon, A., Ryde, J., Shohet, R., & Wilmot, J. (2020) Supervision in the helping professions (5th ed.). London: Open University Press.

Patterson, F. (2019) Supervising the supervisors: What support do first-line supervisors need to be more effective in their supervisory role? *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* 31(3), 46–57.



Supervisor resource 3

Professional identity and social work values

The development of a professional identity based on social work values is important for NQSWs and closely linked to job satisfaction (CORU, 2020). Supervision can also play an important part in supporting the professional development of values and identity.

Recognition of the need from protected time and space for focused reflection, particularly for supervisors, needs to be embedded in social services including both experiential training for supervisors as well as further [recognition](#) of the value of team and group supervision. (Hawkins et al., 2020).

Changes in the organisational context for practice

Increasing specialisation of social work roles, health and social care integration and alignment of children and families social work with education departments have all raised awareness of professional identity issues particularly regarding post-qualifying learning with a SSSC report citing that "predominance of shared learning can contribute to a loss of professional identity and a dilution of learning specific to the social work role" (SSSC, 2019).

NQSW's should be supported to maintain the contribution of their professional training, values, and ethics even when practising in generic assessment or intervention roles in integrated multidisciplinary teams. This includes having access to supervision with a social work supervisor where the line manager is not a registered social worker. Insight 57 from the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS, 2020), offers a critique of whether continued organisational change has minimised community social work values that most benefitted those who use services.

Social work has been evolving for over a century and an important part of developing a professional identity is connecting with the development and wider state of the profession beyond individual localities and roles. This may include connections with local, national, or global social work organisations and awareness of what their stance on supervision is.

The employer's role

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) highlights the responsibilities of employers which includes a framework for supporting good practice that takes account of ethical principles and ensures "effective induction, supervision, workload management and continuing professional development" (IFSW, 2012).

Unison Scotland's Social Work Interest Group developed a position statement for professional supervision in social work in 2006, which states that professional supervision involves:



- Quality Assurance, including accountable and evidence-based practice.
- Learning and Development, including developing individuals personally and professionally and ensuring that the Social Worker and agency maintain up to date knowledge about research, evidence, and practice.
- Support, including identifying resources to respond to stressful situations and constructive challenge in the interests of client, worker, and agency.
- Shared decision-making, including ensuring peer and management review of professional decisions and mutual learning and development.

The supervision policy of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), suggests these key needs of social workers:

- Receiving regular, planned, 1:1 professional supervision from registered and appropriately experienced social workers.
- Having routine opportunities for peer learning and discussion in the workplace and through professional networks.
- Developing and maintaining relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to do their job through continuing professional development.

Time to Reflect

- What do you think about quality being measured by whether the NQSW feels they are making progress?
- How does the NQSW influence the agenda to use the time in the best possible way for them?
- How does the NQSW behave differently afterwards?
- What might you do differently as a result of reflecting on these ideas?

References:

CORU (2020) Shaping Social Workers Identity: An All-Ireland Study.

Hawkins, P., McMahon, A., Ryde, J., Shohet, R., & Wilmot, J. (2020) Supervision in the helping professions (5th ed.). London: Open University Press.

IFSW (2012) Effective and ethical working environments for social work: the responsibilities of employers of social workers. IFSW website.

IRISS (2020) Rediscovering and mainstreaming community social work in Scotland. Insight 57 IRISS website.

SSSC (2015) Report into a post-qualifying learning and development framework and career pathway for social workers in Scotland.

SSSC (2019) Post Qualifying Learning in Social Work in Scotland: a research study

Turbett, C. (2018) Community Social Work in Scotland, a critical history, fifty years after the Social Work Scotland) Act 1968

UNISON Scotland (2006) 'Professional Supervision in Social Work' on Unison Scotland website.



Supervisor resource 4

Learning Reviews (significant case reviews)

Following the death of Victoria Climbié, a serious case review (known as significant case reviews or learning reviews in Scotland) was conducted by Lord Laming (2009) who focused on social worker wellbeing and emotional costs of the work as well as supervision practices.

"There is concern that the tradition of deliberate, reflective social work practice is being put in danger because of an overemphasis on process and targets, resulting in a loss of confidence amongst social workers."

The Care Inspectorate (2019) regularly consider aggregated learning from learning reviews, workers require sufficient support to be confident and competent. This includes:

"...robust and regular supervision that enables constructive challenge and time to reflect on practice and develop skills."

The most comprehensive reviews occur when there have been extremely serious harms to vulnerable children or adults. In the case of social work these have often identified a break down in procedures (including appropriate supervision), meaning opportunities for intervention to prevent serious harms were missed.

The National Child Protection Leadership Group provides strategic oversight and mechanisms for improvement regarding child protection across Scotland and have addressed reoccurring issues. These include organisational support and compliance with good quality supervision and support that addresses the scope of professional discretion and identifies training and development needs of practitioners.

Indirectly related to social work but useful for reflecting on professional development issues was the prolonged and serious failure of care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust. The UK government review had findings for supervision for allied health professions. Putting people on a centrally held register does not guarantee public protection.

"Regulation is no substitute for a culture of compassion, safe delegation and effective supervision" ... "Rather it is about employers, commissioners and providers ensuring they have the right processes in place to ensure they have the right staff with the right skills to deliver the right care in the right way". (Department of Health 2013, s5.22).

Several reviews have commented that social work needs to maintain core values and practices which may have been diluted through reorganisation of services as the public sector has tried to do more with less in recent decades.

An example of such culture change was observed when students on a UK social work leadership course exhibited resistance to engaging in an experiential module focusing on reflective practice. This was felt to be connected to a stronger identification with wider public sector management approaches rather than core social work reflective supervision practices, (Ruch, 2012).



Time for Reflection

- Identify your own examples, where good supervision supported positive outcomes for people who use services and where something went wrong or opportunities for improvement were missed.
- Consider supervision factors which might have impacted these.

References

Care Inspectorate (2019) Learning from significant case reviews – March 2015 – April 2018.

Department of Health (2013) Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Enquiry: executive summary, London, HMSO.

Laming, H. (2009) The Protection of Children in England HMSO.

Ruch, G. (2012) Where Have All the Feelings Gone? Developing Reflective and Relationship-Based Management in Child-Care Social Work, The British Journal of Social Work, Volume 42, Issue 7, October 2012, p1315–1332.



Supervisor resource 5

Professional knowledge and continuous professional learning

Supervision is an important component of shaping professional knowledge and development as an NQSW's practice develops. Professional knowledge is drawn from theories, research findings and practice experience (Hudson, 1997). These forms of knowledge include theoretical knowledge, personal knowledge, practice wisdom, procedural knowledge, and empirical knowledge.

Using knowledge for practice

Collins and Daly (2011) argue that practice wisdom integrates a wide range of knowledge. This will include theories and relevant research as well as thoughts and feelings in response to casework. Study participants reported that evidence was relevant information from case histories, notes, observations, and reports from other professionals but less from theoretical or research sources.

NQSW's can benefit from support to maintain their awareness of research knowledge and to become skilled at making connections between casework activities and the human factors that inform their decision making.

Supervision is not the only way for workers to develop their professional knowledge. Other methods are often used to complement staff development. Tsui et al (2005) consider the benefits of mentoring, coaching and consultation. Research by Ferguson (2021) additionally explores how social workers learn and the benefits of workplace learning for social workers.

Time for Reflection

- Consider how your supervision can help NQSW's strengthen their own learning from practice.
- You may also consider how can you support NQSW to access new knowledge and how the organisation can benefit from NQSW's experiences.

Resource

Department of Health (2020) Practice Supervisor Development Programme - Resources and Tools: The role and functions of supervision

References

Collins, E & Daly, E (2011) Decision making and social work in Scotland: the role of evidence and practice wisdom. IRISS.



Ferguson, G (2021) 'When David Bowie created Ziggy Stardust' The lived experiences of social workers learning through work. EdD Thesis. Open University.

Hudson, JD (1997) A model of professional knowledge for social work practice, Australian Social Work, 50:3, 35-44, DOI:10.1080/03124079708414096.

IRISS (2020) Navigating Evidence

Tsui M-S (2005) 'Functions of social work supervision in Hong Kong'. International Social Work 48 (4) 485-493.



Supervisor resource 6

Wellbeing and resilience needs of NQSWs

Key findings from BASW research (BASW, 2020) advocates that social workers need

- Positive working conditions to provide good services.
- Professional development time for reflective supervision.
- Manageable caseloads and a consistent approach to allocation.
- Support to reduce stress and improve wellbeing.

You will also find specific links to national resources on wellbeing and resilience at the bottom of this page.

Supervision can support social workers' resilience

The people who use our services may benefit from a more resilient and stable workforce. Effective supervision has a clear role in supporting worker resilience. Child protection workers were less likely to leave their roles and community workers got significant protection from stress and burnout when given supportive supervision within an organisational culture positive about good supervision practice (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

(Kettle, 2015) identifies that good supervision happens when part of a broader learning culture with the following features:

- Regular reviews of problems provide learning opportunities.
- Organisational commitment to continuing professional learning.
- Space is made for professional autonomy and discretion.
- The emotional impact of social work practice is recognised.

There is increased awareness of the impact of secondary trauma from supporting traumatised people who use our services and the impact that this has on workers.

Approaches need to ensure that supervision covers the spectrum of worker needs whether in the 1:1 relationship or a mixture of approaches including mentoring and structured peer groups. In balance with this 'compassion satisfaction' (Alkema et al, 2008), is a complementary concept to that of compassion fatigue, which energises us in our role by seeing positive changes for people who use services.

Wellbeing and resilience

The transition from university into practice may be empowering for some but others may experience challenges in adjusting to new responsibilities and increased workload. Supporting NQSW's to manage this transition with feelings of growing capacity and competence is an important task for supervisors.

Adamson et al (2014), argue that coping behaviours and work life balance are essential parts of maintaining wellbeing in a profession where the use of self is our core resource.



Researchers identified several burnout factors in social workers including vicarious traumatisation and compassion fatigue. This could lead to high worker turnover which negatively impacts the whole workplace and perpetuates a cycle of adversity, (Alkema et al 2008). The research supports the view that, despite working in adverse conditions, social workers also experience high levels of job satisfaction, a phenomenon they term as compassion satisfaction.

In practice we do have to put in boundaries from time to time when something exceeds either our mandate, our skills or an aspect of the relationship makes offering extended support a less than ideal fit.

This may include knowing about local resources for workers including Employee Assistance Schemes and access to de-briefing support, telephone, and face to face counselling options. In the case of anonymous referral options to employee support services, it would be useful to include this in any contract at the outset of a supervision relationship. If assistance options are contained in the organisational policy, you might provide a copy ensuring the support information is accessible and clear.

Following a few years of research, BASW (2020) has also produced a good practice toolkit for wellbeing and working conditions. This helpfully separates responsibilities for:

- Social workers in direct practice
- Social work supervisors and practice leaders
- Teams, team leaders and managers
- Senior managers and organisational leaders
- Professional organisations & Trade unions

Time to Reflect

- Think about a time in your professional development journey where you may have felt extremely stressed or struggled to cope with demands.
- Write down what protective factors helped you to recover from that.
- Consider how you might encourage supervisees to create their own list of what supports they could benefit from to prevent acute stress or burnout.

Further information

- There is a National Wellbeing Hub for all frontline social services workers in health and care.
- BASW's Social Work Professional Support Service offers peer to peer support for personal or professional issues and is available to all registered social workers and social work students in Scotland.
- OpenLearn Supporting and developing resilience in social work.
- The IRISS website has a helpful set of resilience resources for social work and social care workers collected by IRISS, Social Work Scotland and SSSC with examples from practice.



References

Adamson, C., Beddoe, L., & Davys, A. (2014). Building Resilient Practitioners: Definitions and Practitioner Understandings, *British Journal of Social Work*, 44 (3), 522-541.

Alkema, K., Linton, J.M. & Davies, R. (2008). Self-Care, Compassion Satisfaction, Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout Among Hospice Professionals. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care*, Vol. 4(2) 2008.

BASW (2020) Social Worker Wellbeing and Working Conditions: Good Practice Toolkit.

Hawkins & McMahon (2020) Supervision in the Helping Professions (Fifth Edition) London: Open University Press.

Kettle, M. (2015). Achieving effective supervision. *Insight 30: IRISS*.



Supervisor resource 7

Learning and development for supervisors

First-line supervisors have identified a lack of training availability often meaning reliance on a variety of personal experiences when starting to supervise, (Patterson 2019).

In the absence of development opportunities and defaulting to experiences that supervisors found helpful, risks a mismatch with the learning style of each supervisee. Initially, the need to be helpful and provide answers is a strong driver which may partly align with the developmental stage of some NQSWs.

Learning styles and developmental supervision models are further explored through these resources. Patterson (2019) reflected that further practice often led to more awareness of the skills of containment and resisting the tendency to move too swiftly into problem-solving.

In pilot training for these resources, it was found that having a variety of models to draw on and discussing this at the beginning of a relationship can help both parties negotiate. Such negotiation or contracting helps regularly prioritise tasks, such as giving appropriate advice and guidance, worker development strategies or support to restore from the regular emotional and ethical challenges of the role.

As social workers we are already attuned to concepts of development which can be useful for NQSW's and supervisors alike. A model specific to supervisors (Davys & Beddoe 2020), sets out three phases of becoming a supervisor, making connections and integrating theory and style.

Becoming a supervisor involves issues such as a focus on the role and concerns about appropriate skills can lead to authoritative or problem-solving styles with difficult situations. Supervisors are however often motivated to learn new skills.

Making connections involves being more embracing of the supervisor's own style, recognition of individual differences and a focus on the supervisee's skills with a range of interventions and balanced use of authority.

Integrating theory and style where the focus becomes greater trust in one's own practice wisdom, self-monitoring, and reflection on supervision practice with greater ability to focus on process and contain distress.

There is also a caveat that it is impossible to meet the needs of all supervisees and it is important to have a range of options available. This can include those set out in other sections including consultation, mentoring, and coaching.



Time To Reflect

Read the above paying particular attention to concepts such as:

- Time pressure leading to problem-solving rather than developmental supervision.
- Skills of containment to explore below the surface dynamics.
- Risks of splitting line management from reflective supervision.
- Challenges of paying attention to process in addition to content.

Reflect on your own experience of these issues and what you might do going forward in response.

Note ways in which you think you need support and development for your supervisory role and bring this to the next meeting with your own manager.

Reading and References

Boahen, G. et al (2021) Developing reflective models of supervision: the role of the United Kingdom professional association, in O'Donoghue, K. and Engelbrecht, L. (2021) *The Routledge International Handbook of Social Work Supervision*, Oxon, Routledge.

Davys, A., & Beddoe, L. (2021) *Best practice in professional supervision: A guide for the helping professions* (2nd ed.), London, Jessica Kingsley.

Patterson, F. (2019) Supervising the supervisors: What support do first-line supervisors need to be more effective in their supervisory role? *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* 31(3), 46–57.



Supervisor resource 8

Boundaries

A variety of models have commonly been discussed that help explain the interaction at play between stakeholders and pay attention to the different functions of supervision. Some key theories inform current practice in supervision that you may wish to explore or revisit.

Supervision policies often refer to a three or four-function model of supervision. Morrison (2001) identified management, professional, and developmental aspects and added the role of mediation in recognition of the role of supervisors. He saw supervisors as the main link between frontline workers and management structures.

These multiple dynamics of supervision are set out by Kettle (2015), who highlights that a "task-focused approach fails to take account of the interaction between these functions," or to "situate the dynamics of the supervisory process within the wider organisational or inter-agency context".

Proctor (2008) advocates a three-part supervision model:

Normative Ensures that staff work within a safe framework for practice. Maintain trust and professional standards Exploring options within the supervision session.

Formative The learning function. Sharing knowledge and skills and experiences Problem solving and skills development Assist with understanding the people who use services better Explore alternative ways of working.

Restorative Support for personal/professional development. Building morale and confidence Ensure staff function within a safe framework for practice Maintaining their professional standards.

These terms are often discussed in wider literature including the SSSC Supervision Learning Resource (SSSC, 2016). Knowledge of different supervision models can provide breadth to your supervision journey and will inform models in further sections that you might want to adopt partially or wholly in your practice and organisation.

Heron (2001) sets out a model which helps us think more about the variety of interventions that might happen in supervision. Both authoritative and facilitative interventions are needed but some of the facilitative needs may also be achieved in peer-group work (particularly cathartic and catalytic interventions).

Authoritative interventions

Prescriptive - Explicitly direct the NQSW by giving advice and direction.

Informative - Provide information to instruct and guide the NQSW.

Confronting - Challenge the NQSW's behaviour or attitude.



Facilitative interventions

Cathartic - Helping the NQSW to express/overcome thoughts or emotions that they have not previously confronted.

Catalytic - Help the NQSW reflect, discover and learn for themselves. Move toward self-reflection, self-direction and self-awareness.

Supportive - Build up the confidence of the NQSW by focusing on their competence, qualities and achievements.

Developmental models

There are several developmental models which are helpful when thinking about the domains of motivation, autonomy, and awareness in supervision.

As with all models they aid our thinking rather than having a linear or universal application. Factors including career history, such as a prior experience of the care sector, may impact our developmental journey.

The categories set out below are adapted from a model advanced by Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010).

Level 1 self-centred (Can I make it in this work?)

- We may be focused on getting it right and the feeling of ongoing assessment or may be frustrated by not being able to get on with it after intense assessments and scrutiny in successive placements.
- We may be feeling overwhelmed at times by greater caseloads and conflicted about doing a 'good enough job' rather than a comprehensive one.
- The supervisor provides a safe and structured container with regular positive feedback.

Level 2 Client-centred (Can I help this client make it?)

- The supervisor may be less structured and reduce direct advice, legislation and policy guidance.
- Support is offered for occasional swings between feeling skilled and not able to cope with the role and needing to negotiate or ask for help.
- As the supervisory alliance grows it is seen more as support for practice than continuous assessment by the organisation

Level 3 Process-centred (How are we relating together?)

- Supervision becomes a joint task, more co-productive and with more power balance.



- Supervisees are less likely to use individual theory or prescribed forms of assessment and intervention as they become more comfortable with using their strengths and different range of styles in client work.
- They become more self-supervising of casework and their overall development.

Level 4 Process-in-context centred (How do processes interpenetrate?)

- As a supervisee's skills become more refined, they become integrated with the worker's effective use of self.
- They come knowing how they want to use the session and the supervisor's strengths.
- The supervisee may be a supervisor or practice teacher themselves by this point.

Time to Reflect

- Think about how the developmental model set out above also applies to you as a supervisor.
- Identify which stage you think you are at in your supervisory journey and what supports you might need to develop further.

References

Heron, J (2001) *Helping the client: a creative practical guide*. London, Sage.

Kettle, M. (2015). *Achieving effective supervision*. Insight 30: IRISS.

Morrison (2010) Morrison, T. (2001). *Staff Supervision in Social Care*. Brighton: Pavilion.

Proctor, B (2008) *Group supervision: a guide to creative practice*. London, Sage

Stoltenberg, C. D., & McNeill, B. W. (2010). *IDM supervision: An integrative developmental model for supervising counselors and therapists* (3rd ed.), Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

SSSC (2016) *Supervision Learning Resource*.



Supervisor resource 9

Diversity

Welcoming diversity and creating a space for individual learning needs and development of new staff in a complex field of practice take deliberate effort. Balancing this with the use of a supervisor's professional role and line manager authority are the challenges of professional leadership.

Acknowledging protected characteristics and assumed cultural norms and values with supervisees supports core values of anti-oppressive practice in social work. This would be no different with people, families and carers who access social work services.

You need to ask about and understand subjective experience. Individual characteristics should be acknowledged even when they seem self-evident. For example, there is still a disproportionate number of male managers when 80% of social workers are women and either ignoring or overcompensating for such dynamics can impact confidence and trust.

Supervisors create a space that welcomes the use of self in our work and issues arising with people using services. Negotiation and contracting also helps when exercising multiple roles. For example, the need to offer restorative supervisory support around dynamics that arise in the role if raised by supervisees and to offer a clear process for any necessary employee adjustments.

"We have started using individual contracts and reflecting on supervision histories. That has allowed deeper conversations to talk about what people feel they need and the signs if they are not doing well but to the case-discussion focus is a difficult default to shift". Local Authority Manager

Continued commitment to challenging discrimination and removing barriers to training and professional roles, means there are more people in the workforce with lived experience of care services and from different minority groups. The Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW, 2021) found that social workers from black and ethnic minority backgrounds were experiencing racism in workplaces and when working with people in communities, therefore additional consideration requires to be given to how to challenge racism and deal with issues satisfactorily.

The Promise Scotland recognises that the workforce is also made up of survivors of trauma. Those with lived experience must be supported to be part of the workforce and nurture their instinct to give back, but there must be recognition of the pain that may accompany that involvement.

Cultural issues are significant factors in supervisory relationships. Responsibility for working with that difference is shared by both parties, whether these are diversities of major cultural or faith communities, experiences of first-generation Scots or workers from Scottish traveller backgrounds. Cultural diversity should be welcomed rather than subsumed by professional or role expectations.



Using our power in facilitating learning and development

The container for development is primarily the relationship rather than the content according to Lakey (2020). To facilitate rapport and trust Lakey urges that we can make even obvious diversity issues explicit including gender, class, age and minority issues.

He suggests that rather than assuming a shared understanding due to professional identity we must acknowledge organisational power and how, for different people, that may have a greater or lesser impact on their engagement. His approach applied to supervision and professional development suggests that unpacking the NQSW's stance toward supervision and previous experiences along with emotional and learning styles are essential to building a strong container that allows for real development.

Acknowledging and working with those issues might give rise to resistance but going towards this can allow for real change rather than performing a role.

How do good leaders engage?

- They value diversity.
- They validate the importance of relationships.
- They are approachable and responsive.
- They model good practice.
- They support, coach and mentor.
- They are active and purposeful.

Enablers of leadership

- People feel supported, valued and respected.
- Work and achievements are acknowledged.
- People have a voice and are treated fairly.
- There is a culture of reflection, learning and development (SSSC, 2016)

Personality styles are another factor of diversity pertinent to the learning and development task of supervision. Models often identify where we might be on a continuum informed by our ongoing trait, development, or even attachment styles.

Some traits sound like they would be more desirable however our relationships and organisations need variety. One of the most widely applied models of describing personality is the five-factor (Goldberg, 1990) or OCEAN model.

- **Openness** to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious)
- **Conscientiousness** (efficient/organized vs. extravagant/careless)
- **Extraversion** (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved)
- **Agreeableness** (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/callous)
- **Neuroticism** (sensitive/nervous vs. resilient/confident).



In working with and leading others we become vulnerable and at times may feel de-skilled given our perceived experience or seniority. A social worker who has been has applied vulnerability research to leadership roles is Brene Brown. Her work became widely known following her 2010 TEDx Houston talk, The Power of Vulnerability. In 2019 she filmed a longer talk for Netflix which you can search for titled 'A Call to Courage'. Brown argues that we need to work with vulnerability in all our relationships using simple self-talk such as 'the story I'm telling myself is'... This acknowledges the way we use explanatory stories to understand our relationships, but these stories may trigger our threat-protection system.

This can be highly relevant to issues for supervisors feeling they must present as confident to reassure supervisees or have authority to lead teams. In 'Call to Courage' Brown says without vulnerability and tolerance of failure it's impossible to have creativity and innovation in an organisation.

Time to Reflect

Consider this scenario. The NQSW you are supporting presents an ethical dilemma to you in a case they are working with where someone's rights are being restricted.

- What types of techniques could be used to support the NQSW to unpick the situation and elicit their own views about the standard of ethical values, rights-based practice and the ethics of self-determination?
- How could you help them to plan interventions with the people they are working with that will build their confidence in working in a rights based way?
- How do you reflect with a NQSW on their own experiences which may affect their reaction to restriction of rights or discrimination?

References

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Independent Care Review (2020) The Promise

Lakey (2020) Facilitating Group Learning: Strategies for Success with Diverse Learners

SASW (2021) Racism in Scottish Social Work: a 2021 snapshot, SASW.

SSSC (2016) Enabling Leadership. On SSSC website.



Supervisor resource 10

Good online supervision

Research with supervisees has highlighted the importance of supervisors being trustworthy, supportive, caring, available but bounded, sensitive to supervisee's needs, and able to create a safe atmosphere where perceived errors can be disclosed and learned from (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020)

Creating a safe and positive atmosphere may include considering:

- Where supervision happens including presence of phones, noise, and interruption.
- Being away from usual workspaces to switch from reactive modes.
- Responsibility for timing and agenda of the session.
- Intervening when initial chat leads to avoiding the agenda.

A supervisor facilitates learning and just like another kind of educator in a class setting would consider, many of these aspects relate to the open and receptive emotional and mental state required for true reflection and development.

For a supervisee who uses a lot of time superficially describing case activities in sessions it might mean allowing that within an agreed boundary. The supervisor might then be gently curious about whether the detail of tasks shows a desire to win approval for hard work or discomfort with the reflective analysis. Conversely someone feeling distressed about an aspect of casework is unlikely to focus on an agenda until that issue has been discussed.

Contracting for each supervision relationship sometimes gives way to carefully developed organisational policies to which staff must adhere. However, if that does not cover negotiation around responsibilities and roles, session formats, regulatory and accountability issues, and the supervisory relationship those things still require individual attention.

Such areas for discussion might include:

- Issues with colleagues, managers & organisation.
- Themes arising in a supervisees work.
- Strong feelings e.g., supervisees have felt anger or embarrassment.
- Professional goals and individual learning plans.
- Self-care, stress levels, time-management, workload.
- Personal issues that impact work or vice versa.
- When a supervisee feels awkward about a piece of work.
- Potential ethical issues e.g attachment & possible loss of objectivity.

There are several practical concerns as well as professional issues related to online working. While familiar to many people in remote and rural locations in Scotland online working has become more commonplace in recent years.



If most of your interactions with your supervisee take place online there are various things worth considering. Research in Practice (2020) have explored remote supervision research evidence including remote locations in Australia showing that virtual supervision can lead to effective outcomes in the same way as face-to-face delivery. The resource also highlights the potential for additional conflicts being experienced by supervisees who cannot deliver services as well as they are used to and are struggling with the ongoing personal pressures of necessary public health restrictions.

This resource also has some useful ideas about improving the quality of online supervision. These may also mirror NQSW online contacts with people using services and including practical considerations such as:

- Strong internet connections (wired connection to broadband routers)
- Having a backup plan for failed connection (retries followed by phone call)
- Consider use of headphones to improve audio quality and increasing confidentiality.
- Having the camera level with your face improves eye contact and sense of listening.
- Be about an arm's length from the camera, as this will offer the best quality image.
- Discussions about environment including use of virtual backgrounds for additional privacy.
- Making sure your face is well lit, with no strong light behind you eliminates a silhouette.
- Try to look at the webcam at least some of the time, particularly at emotive moments.
- Once image is clear, well lit and framed consider turning off self-view to reduce distraction.
- Reduce intensity when appropriate by screen sharing useful tools from your web browser.

There are also several useful reflections on managing the session and the content and transfer of interpersonal skills to online sessions. This includes beginnings and endings and more time for 'checking in' so participants are in the right state for reflection. It's important to talk about how the online medium assists or hinders your own communication style and how it impacts working with any strong emotions.

We may as supervisors have learned to withhold too many non-verbal cues of approval or concern to give space to the supervisees process. However online practice may require more expression of empathy and connection in non-verbal cues particularly at beginnings and endings.

Time to Reflect

- Consider the way you currently negotiate and review supervision including how both parties prepare.
- How does this help avoid describing casework activities and enable reflective, meaningful, and difficult conversations.



References

Hawkins & McMahon (2020) Supervision in the Helping Professions (Fifth Edition)
London: Open University Press.

Research in Practice (2020) Supervision conversations using remote-working
technology. Research in Practice PQS Developing Supervision Programme.



Supervisor resource 11

Supervision models

A variety of models have commonly been discussed that help explain the interaction at play between stakeholders and pay attention to the different functions of supervision. Some key theories inform current practice in supervision that you may wish to explore or revisit.

Supervision policies often refer to a three or four-function model of supervision. Morrison (2010) identified management, professional, and developmental aspects and added the role of mediation in recognition of the role of supervisors. He saw supervisors as the main link between frontline workers and management structures.

These multiple dynamics of supervision are set out by Kettle (2015), who highlights that a “task-focused approach fails to take account of the interaction between these functions,” or to “situate the dynamics of the supervisory process within the wider organisational or inter-agency context”.

Proctor (2008) advocates a three-part supervision model that has been influential, and these terms are often discussed in wider literature including the S The key domains are:

Normative: Ensures that staff work within a safe framework for practice. Maintains trust and professional standards. Explores options within the supervision session.

Formative: The learning function. Sharing knowledge and skills and experiences. Problem solving and skills development. Assists with understanding the people who use services better. Explores alternative ways of working.

Restorative: Support for personal/professional development. Building morale and confidence. Ensures staff function within a safe framework for practice. Maintaining their professional standards. SSSC Supervision Learning Resource (SSSC, 2016).

Increasingly we are seeing that a learning organisation will use multiple methods to achieve staff development rather than expecting everything to be provided by a line manager in 1:1 supervision (Tsui, 2005). This may incorporate peer and group approaches, mentorship as well as consultation and coaching. Peer group work is explored in the training outline for NQSWs.

There is more information on supervision models and a suggested learning exercise below.

We will explore a few more that might give breadth to your supervision journey and will inform models in further sections that you might want to adopt partially or wholly in your practice and organisation.

Heron (2001) set out a model which helps us think more about the variety of interventions that might happen in supervision. Both authoritative and facilitative



interventions are needed but some of the facilitative needs may also be achieved in peer-group work (particularly cathartic and catalytic interventions).

Authoritative interventions

Prescriptive: explicitly direct the NQSW by giving advice and direction.

Informative: provide information to instruct and guide the NQSW.

Confronting: challenge the NQSWs behaviour or attitude.

Facilitative interventions

Cathartic: helping the NQSW to express/overcome thoughts or emotions that they have not previously confronted

Catalytic: help the NQSW reflect, discover and learn for themselves. Move toward self-reflection, self-direction, and self-awareness.

Supportive: Build up the confidence of the NQSW by focusing on their competence, qualities, and achievements. (Heron, 2001)

Developmental models

There are several developmental models which are helpful when thinking about the domains of motivation, autonomy, and awareness in supervision.

As with all models it aids our thinking rather than having a linear or universal application. Factors including career history, such as a prior experience of the care sector, may impact our developmental journey.

The categories set out below are adapted from a model advanced by Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010).

Level 1 self-centred (Can I make it in this work?)

We may be focused on getting it right and the feeling of ongoing assessment or may be frustrated by not being able to get on with it after intense assessments and scrutiny in successive placements.

We may be feeling overwhelmed at times by greater caseloads and conflicted about doing a 'good enough job' rather than a comprehensive one.

The supervisor provides a safe and structured container with regular positive feedback.



Level 2 Client-centred (Can I help this client make it?)

The supervisor may be less structured and reduce direct advice, legislation and policy guidance.

Support is offered for occasional swings between feeling skilled and not able to cope with the role and needing to negotiate or ask for help.

As the supervisory alliance grows it is seen more as support for practice than continuous assessment by the organisation.

Level 3 Process-centred (How are we relating together?)

Supervision becomes a joint task, more co-productive and with more power balance.

Supervisees are less likely to use individual theory or prescribed forms of assessment and intervention as they become more comfortable with using their strengths and different range of styles in client work.

They become more self-supervising of casework and their overall development.

Level 4 Process-in-context centred (How do processes interpenetrate?)

As a supervisee's skills become more refined they become integrated with the worker's effective use of self.

They come knowing how they want to use the session and the supervisor's strengths.

The supervisee may be a supervisor or practice teacher themselves by this point.

Time to Reflect

- Think about how the developmental model set out above also applies to you a supervisor.
- Identify which stage you think you are at in your supervisory journey and what supports you might need to develop further.

References

Heron, J (2001) *Helping the client: a creative practical guide*. London, Sage.

Kettle, M. (2015). *Achieving effective supervision*. Insight 30: IRISS. Morrison, T. (2001). *Staff Supervision in Social Care*. Brighton: Pavilion.

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Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010).

SSSC (2016) *Enabling Leadership*. On SSSC website.

Stoltenberg, C. D., & McNeill, B. W. (2010). *IDM supervision: An integrative developmental model for supervising counselors and therapists* (3rd ed.), Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Tsui M-S (2005) 'Functions of social work supervision in Hong Kong'. *International Social Work* 48 (4) 485-493.



Supervisor resource 12

The seven eyed model of supervision

This widely used model developed over 35 years (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020) covers various modes that may be used in one-to-one supervision and supports enhanced relational practice.

It is not necessarily intended that the modes below are all used in each session, but it allows supervisors to monitor supervision to make this more comprehensive. For example, modes two and six of focusing on the NQSW's strategies and interventions and the supervisor offering support and advice, may tend to dominate in a casework approach.

The following modes and linked NQSW characteristics will help prompt the conversations and approaches needed to help the NQSW to meet supported year practice expectations, ensuring a real focus on the person we work with and keep attention to the wellbeing of the NQSW.

Supervision focus and NQSW Characteristics:

1. Focus on the people using services and what and how they present.

Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making.
Communication and engagement and relationship-based professional practice.

2. Focus on the NQSW's strategies and interventions.

Promoting wellbeing, support and protection.
Use of knowledge, research and evidence in practice.

3. Focus on the relationship between the NQSW and people using services.

Communication, engagement and relationship-based professional practice.
Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts.

4. Focus on the NQSW's skills and wellbeing in relation to their role.

Self-awareness and reflexivity.
Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making.

5. Focus on the supervisory relationship.

Use of knowledge, research and evidence in practice.
Self-awareness and reflexivity.

6. Focus on the supervisor offering support from their own experience.

Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts.
Promoting wellbeing, support and protection.



7. Focus on the wider contexts in which the work happens.

NQSW characteristics.
Professional leadership.
Ethics, values and rights-based practice.

More about the model

This model can potentially be used as part of negotiating supervision in the context of evolving practice and policies. Using such a model could help us nudge supervision away from a case management focus that is too narrow and incorporate person-centred behaviours in line with national policy initiatives.

The seven-eyed model explicitly prompts a focus on the wider issues including embodying professional values at mode seven. This is central to the BASW Code of Ethics.

'Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to work with vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion'. (BASW, 2021)

The six ethical principles of the Standards in Social Work Education in Scotland are cross-referenced to this model. NQSWs will be familiar working with those throughout their training and they continue to support the journey through the NQSW supported year and beyond. They echo much of the above and are expressed as:

- Social justice and equality
- Respecting diversity
- Human rights and dignity
- Self-determination
- Partnership, participation and co-production
- Honesty and integrity.

References

BASW (2021) The BASW Code of Ethics for Social Work. Birmingham: BASW

Hawkins, P., & McMahon, A. (2020). Supervision in the Helping Professions. London: Open University Press.



Supervisor resource 13

Organisational learning cultures

Most social service organisations are running leaner than ever; however, an organisational learning culture and good implementation skills can go a long way to support effective supervision.

The Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS, 2023) point out that training or policy changes alone do not impact sufficiently. The use of data and collaboration with local and national stakeholders can help to develop capacity to guide, sustain and scale up. Structured improvement cycles can support local teams to identify barriers and generate potential solutions.

The application of standards and ethics to support the early career development of NQSW’s practice is well set out here against the background of supervision and professional development practice. These resources will not be of full value to people who use services through either improved practice or benefits for the workforce without local implementation activities. This must include supervisors and be situated in a wider commitment toward learning cultures.

Ongoing development and reflective practice for supervisors may perhaps feel exposing at first but also may become energising for both supervisors and NQSWs.

Innovation and change

The Active Implementation Research Network (AIRN), points out that innovation does not need to be a new practice but one that you are using for the first time. They define active implementation as being about “socially significant outcomes where populations benefit from high fidelity use of an innovation”.

Impact for service users can be seen when new practices are operationalised, so they are:

- **Teachable**
- **Learnable**
- **Doable**
- **Assessable**
- **Scalable in practice**

Time to Reflect

- Can you think of a culture change exercise that worked well in a social work setting you experienced? List some aspects that made it effective.
- How could these be applied to supervision and learning cultures in your organisation?



- What could you commit to working on over the next 6 months to improve your practice as a supervisor supporting NQSWs?

Try expressing these as SMART goals.

Specific – What new supervision practices will you adopt?

Measurable – How will you know if you've made changes e.g. feedback?

Achievable - What's a reasonable period to evidence this innovation?

Relevant – Aligned to development goals individually and locally.

Timeframe – Try a 3–6-month period to report on goals.

- Have a discussion with a colleague who is also using these materials or even your own manager, so you have a sense of accountability. You could work these into your own annual appraisal cycle and professional learning record.

Resources

- You can read about the AIRN approach in Active Implementation Research Network: Active Implementation Networks.
- SSSC website for more information and resources on supporting and leading change: SSSC Step into Leadership.

References

AIRN (2005) Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature

CELCIS (13 December 2023) - Children's Services Reform Research: Learning and Implications for Scotland





Appendix 1



NQSW supported year - supervision and professional development, 7-eyed supervision model template

This simple two-page template can be used and adapted to supplement organisational processes. It may help you prepare for supervision and also be used by supervisors to make sure sessions balance the various needs of NQSWs. It will also support the use of the NQSW standards and ethics to scaffold consolidation of learning during the supported year.

We suggest recording broad themes on the first part of the form to prompt and remind you to raise these issues during supervision. On the second part of the form you may record discussions and actions.

This form should be a development tool and is not intended to replace an NQSW's local procedures for recording supervision. Writing any data identifying others on this form, subjects it to all usual data compliance regulation and employer case recording and governance procedures.

1: The people using services – what and how they present

Standard: Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making

Related standard: Communication, engagement, and relationship-based professional practice

Ethics: Respecting Diversity, Honesty and Integrity

Goal: Helping NQSWs unpack and formulating the issues

2: The NQSW's strategies and interventions

Standard: Promoting wellbeing, support and protection

Related standard: Use of knowledge, research and evidence in practice

Ethics: Human Rights and Dignity, Social Justice

Goal: Increase the NQSW's options and addressing the reasoning and timing



3: The relationship between NQSW and the people using services

Standard: Communication, engagement and relationship-based professional practice

Related standard: Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts

Ethics: Participation and coproduction, Self-determination

Goal: Reflecting on and using an external perspective on interpersonal and professional dynamics

4: The NQSW's skills and wellbeing in relation to their role

Standard: Self-awareness and reflexivity

Related standard: Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making

Ethics: Respecting Diversity, Self-determination

Goal: Resilience and wellbeing issues for the NQSW as well as professional judgements



5: The supervisory relationship

Standard: Use of knowledge, research and evidence in practice

Related standard: Self-awareness and reflexivity

Ethics: Participation and coproduction

Goal: Regular review of the effectiveness of supervision and caseload dynamics

6: The supervisor offering support from their own experience/learning

Standard: Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts

Related standard: Promoting wellbeing, support and protection

Ethics: Honesty and Integrity

Goal: Responses to the NQSW and sharing the supervisor's own concerns or relevant experience



7: The wider contexts in which the work happens

Standard: Professional leadership

Related standard: Ethics, values and rights-based practice

Ethics: Social Justice, Partnership

Goal: Organisational, professional and societal issues including Codes of practice, Codes of ethics, local policies and inter-agency relationships



< Supervision resources for newly qualified social workers >

Modes	Bullet point summary of discussion	Decisions/next steps





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