

Assessing a supervisee's fitness to practise

- BACP Supervisor's Event
- 14 June 2022
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We'll consider together ...

- ethical responsibilities
- 3 components of FTP
- raising concerns
- options when our supervisee's FTP is compromised
- supervisee and supervisor disagreement
- wellbeing and self-care

Discussing experiences/material

- Please take care to ensure complete anonymity if you share experiences/material of other people and organisations
- Be mindful of what you share about yourself
- Take care of each other

What does EF say about FTP?

- not explicitly mentioned
- but by agreeing to abide by the commitments, values, principles, personal moral qualities and good practice described within it, we make a promise to attend to the 3 elements of FTP (wellbeing, competence, conduct)

‘We share a responsibility with all other members of our profession for the safety and wellbeing of all clients and their protection from exploitation or unsafe practice. We will take action to prevent harm caused by practitioners to any client’

(Good Practice, point 11)

Supervision competence framework



2.4 Ethical challenges

- i. Knowledge and understanding of the ethical challenges which can occur in the supervisory relationship
 - ii. Ability to work openly, respectfully and in partnership with supervisees to manage the ethical challenges of the supervision relationship
 - iii. Ability to monitor and address supervisee behaviours which may constitute potential ethical non-compliance or infringements
 - iv. Ability to identify, discuss and support the supervisee in resolving any emerging ethical dilemmas
 - v. Ability to apply ethical decision-making in situations where the supervisee's fitness to practise is a concern.
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Elements of FTP

- Wellbeing
- Competence
- Conduct



Elements of FTP

- *Wellbeing* - living in a good state of emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual health - feeling healthy and happy
- *Competence* - ability to do something well with sufficient knowledge and skills to satisfy the fundamental professional standard of quality and safety for the service being provided
- *Conduct* – standard way of behaviour in a particular place or situation based on particular rules, moral principles or accepted ways

Good Practice, point 72

Supervisee's responsibility

To be honest, open and draw attention to significant difficulties and challenges that they may face in their work.

Supervisor's responsibility

To provide opportunities for supervisees to do so without blame or unjustified criticism and when appropriate, support them in taking positive actions to resolve difficulties.

For this to happen, it's important we ...

- build
- look after
- monitor the supervisory relationship

3.1 The ability to establish and maintain effective supervisory relationships

- i. Knowledge and understanding of the components of an effective supervisory relationship that is experienced by the supervisee as being:
 - non-judgmental
 - trustworthy
 - both supportive and appropriately challenging
 - educative and promoting of their professional development
 - collaborative and egalitarian
- ii. Ability and commitment to build and maintain a respectful and supportive supervisory relationship on the basis of such qualities as supervisor warmth, humility, acceptance, empathy and genuineness
- iii. Ability to foster and maintain the safety of the supervisory relationship so as to:
 - promote the supervisee's openness and the willingness to disclose difficulties and risks
 - facilitate the supervisee's engagement by negotiating the tension between comfort and challenge and 'knowing versus not knowing'
 - engender awareness, learning and growth
- iv. Ability to communicate commitment to the supervisory relationship, for example by:
 - being attentive and understanding towards the supervisee
 - making an effort to get to know the supervisee within the boundaries of the professional framework
 - being open to sharing own skills, shortcomings, doubts and questions.



Raising an issue with a supervisee

There can be ...

'long-term benefits if the incident can be addressed openly, or it can be the start of a negative spiral if avoided'

(Henderson, 2009)

‘The push of normative tasks is to confront the issue as sensitively and skilfully as possible, but not to duck the responsibility to do so’

(Henderson, 2009)

Courage



... capacity to act in spite of
known fears, risks and uncertainty

Wisdom



... possession of sound
judgement that informs practice

Talking and thinking 'the thing' through ...

- What might be the impact of 'the thing' on the client, supervisee, you, the supervisory relationship?
- How likely is it that 'the thing' will ever happen/reoccur again?
- How often might it occur?
- How long might it occur for?
- Can the risk of 'the thing' happening be mitigated?
- What does the Ethical Framework say?
- Can contracts be maintained (given 'the thing')?
- Self-respect (can all other ethical principles be applied to self)?

Decision making for ethical practice

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Good Practice in Action 084
Fact Sheet

Ethical decision making in the context of the counselling professions

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Good Practice in Action 084
Clinical Reflection for Practice

Ethical mindfulness within supervision and training

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Good Practice in Action 078
Fact Sheet

Fitness to practise in the counselling professions

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Good Practice in Action 094
Clinical Reflections for Practice

Fitness to practise within the counselling professions

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Good Practice in Action 088
Fact Sheet

Self-care for the counselling professions

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Good Practice in Action 010
Fact Sheet

Monitoring the supervisory relationship from the supervisor's perspective

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Good Practice in Action 011
Commonly Asked Questions

Monitoring the supervisory relationship from a supervisee's perspective

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Good Practice in Action 114
Fact Sheet

Four-way contracting between training providers, placements, trainees and supervisors within the counselling professions

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Good Practice in Action 032
Legal Resource

Supervision in the counselling professions in England, Northern Ireland and Wales

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What options might exist?

- stop seeing clients for an agreed period
- modify work patterns
- limit client numbers
- consider whether particular issues presented by clients compound a supervisee's difficulties
- engage in supportive CPD
- increase supervision
- seek specialist or increased levels of supervision/consultation
- personal therapy
- something else

Can't see eye to eye?



‘Challengingly, it is on these occasions when the supervisee disagrees with the [supervisor’s] view, that the taking of supervisory authority is most complex’

(Henderson, 2009)

*‘The value of observation, description,
and the clarity about behaviour or
needs is crucial ...’*

... so is a genuine compassion, and a willingness to spell out the supervisor's concerns either for the wellbeing and resilience of the supervisee or to protect clients.'

3.5 Conflict, challenges and ruptures in the supervisory relationship

Knowledge and understanding

- i. Knowledge and understanding that strains in the relationship are common, that failure to address these may bring lasting consequences, and that timely processing can facilitate growth in the supervisee and in the relationship.
- ii. Ability to acknowledge that tensions or challenges are a normal part of the developmental process
- iii. Ability to acknowledge and accept their (the supervisor's) responsibility for their contribution to any strains in the relationship
- iv. Ability to recognise and acknowledge strains in the supervisory relationship and to process these collaboratively and non-defensively
- v. Ability to communicate support and respect towards the supervisee in processing a rupture in the supervisory relationship
- vi. Ability to recognise and take appropriate remedial action when the relationship has broken down irretrievably.

*Supervision of supervision is also
essential at this point'*

(Henderson, 2009)

What steps can a supervisor consider?

- Supervisor states their concerns and a record made
- If an ethical way forward can't be agreed, the opinion of a mutually acceptable third person is sought to make their assessment
- If the situation remains unresolved, the supervisor may withdraw from that role, giving their reasons for doing so (usually in writing or other accessible method)
- Supervisor may also consider (within the contract) contacting other organisations including agencies and training colleges

Bond, 2015



BACP can also help ...

Supervisors may seek guidance by speaking with ...

- an Ethics Officer
- Ethics Consultant (supervision)
- CYP support service

In some circumstances a supervisor may consider raising a complaint under the Professional Conduct Procedure

Discussing experiences/material



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Desa

Desa has telephone supervision with you and always seems to have lots of clients, most of whom she has been working with for several years. You are beginning to wonder whether Desa might be 'hanging on' to them because none ever seem to end. Having previously raised this with her there always seems some reason why the client says they "need to keep coming to therapy". During your supervision session with Desa you decide to explore this more deeply but begin to hear her cry. You are shocked to learn that she has not left her home since Covid lockdown, has hardly any form of social contact (apart from that attached to her work) and describes herself as feeling "excruciatingly lonely".

Syed

Syed, a newly qualified counsellor, has brought his work with Mandy to supervision several times. Mandy has recently disclosed to him that she isn't happy in her marriage to Sally, and they are considering couples counselling. Syed tells you he has suggested to Mandy that she invite Sally to her session next week - Mandy thinks this is "a brilliant idea". You lay out your concerns to Syed who brushes them aside saying "It'll be fine. Mandy says that I know a lot of stuff about them already so that'll really help". You try a different angle, raising the idea of specialist training in couple's therapy. Syed thinks for a moment and says "It probably would help, but I can't afford it until next year. Anyway, I'll see how I get on with them. I might not need it".

Julia

You have just joined a weight loss group. Each week, members are weighed and going round the group the leader facilitates a discussion around what has helped or hindered everyone's weight loss. A member sat several rows behind you says, "I haven't got on very well again this week". The leader asks why they think that is and a hesitant voice replies "I suppose I might as well say ... it's probably down to lunchtime meet-ups with friends at the pub. We see each other most days and get through quite a lot of wine. To be quite honest, it's helped me get through work over the last few months". Shocked to realise the person speaking is your supervisee, Julia, you decide to raise it with her at this afternoon's supervision.

Food for thought

- How might the supervisee and you have each felt when the issue was discussed?
- How easy/difficult/complex/challenging was it to assess the supervisee's FTP?
- Which element(s) of FTP might have been compromised?
- Could something present/absent within the supervisory relationship have potentially contributed to the situation arising?
- What might the supervisee most need from you (and what might you need from yourself)?
- Based on your supervisor responsibilities, what interventions/suggestions might you make?
- What impact might there be on the supervisory relationship of taking such action (or inaction)?
- What if the supervisee refused to accept your point of view?
- What supervision/consultative/other support might be helpful to you as the supervisor?

Self-care

Supervisee wellbeing and self-care

5.4 Attending to the supervisee's wellbeing

- i. Knowledge and understanding of the importance of consistently attending to the supervisee's wellbeing and self-care for the development and maintenance of practitioner efficacy
- ii. Knowledge and awareness of the symptoms of stress and burnout and of potentially constructive interventions
- iii. Ability to discuss, model and support the development and maintenance of self-care strategies
- iv. Ability to support and challenge supervisees to manage the psychological impact of client material on their personal well-being and professional functioning
- v. Ability to support and challenge supervisees to access personal therapy when needed
- vi. Ability to respond appropriately to and support supervisees experiencing symptoms of stress or burnout.

But what about us...?



- What about our wellbeing and self-care as supervisors?
- What do you do to support yourself?
- What might you want to start doing more/less of?

Bringing it all together ...

- Share responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of all clients to protect from exploitation or unsafe practice
- Help our supervisee maintain and enhance their FTP, contributing to the provision of safe and ethical services
- If we don't, we put at risk clients, supervisees, colleagues, trainees, the counselling professions and ourselves
- An ethical decision-making process, views of other professionals and reliable sources of information can all help us find a way through what might feel like a complex situation
- Our humanity makes us vulnerable to life's stresses and strains and our work can be very demanding
- Self-care is important for all

Winnicott's thoughts on his own FTP

'Keep alive and well, stay awake, be myself and behave myself'

