

# **Introduction to supervision in education - how safeguarding supervision can promote staff mental health and wellbeing.**

Sharon Hand



# Emotional Health...

***“...is about how we think and feel. It is about our sense of wellbeing, our ability to cope with life events and how we acknowledge our own emotions as well as those of others”***

Samaritans, DEAL resources

The Centre for Mental Health and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition published **'Making the Grade – How education shapes young people's mental health'** in November 2019 and noted that:

***“There is often little support and supervision offered to teachers for their own wellbeing and mental health. Approaches to improving mental health and wellbeing in educational settings must urgently consider support for professionals”.***

# Vicarious trauma

*"Safeguarding children is an important responsibility and holding this responsibility every day can have a personal impact.*

*Education staff who manage the welfare needs of students should be aware of the emotional burden and stress that this task can cause in the form of 'vicarious trauma'.*

*Staff taking on this responsibility also need support to remain resilient to the difficult or upsetting situations that they are exposed to, such as incidents involving violence, neglect or abuse"*

CPOMS Nov 2023

# Compassion fatigue

Secondary/vicarious trauma

Reduction in capacity to bear any more suffering

Element of burnout – emotional exhaustion

Sadness/depression/anxiety

Difficulty sleeping

Overload

Lose objectivity and ability to help

Can become isolated from support



# Impact on children and families

- Decreasing ability to provide quality support and increase in 'professional dangerousness'
- Minimising or trivialising distress/not acknowledging things said
- Avoiding asking further questions/following up on concerns
- Over-identifying with others' experiences
- Missing appointments
- Depersonalising/objectifying others
- Reduction in empathy and increased emotional detachment
- Increased poor assessments, minimisation of risk and dangerous decisions

***“Staff and other adults receive regular supervision and support if they are working directly and regularly with children and learners whose safety and welfare are at risk”***

Ofsted (2019)

***“Lead practitioners should have access to high quality supervision.”***

Working Together to Safeguard Children

# Staff wellbeing surveys



## Supervision in Education – Healthier Schools For All

Barnardo's Scotland report on the use of Professional or Reflective Supervision in Education

Trauma-informed schools – Paper #2  
Nicki Lawrence  
February 2020

Believe in children  
Barnardo's  
Scotland



## Recommendations



Supervision structures should be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency for all practitioners involved in child protection within Education in line with the National Guidance for Child Protection for Scotland 2014.

Consideration should be given to the development of a National Framework for Supervision in Education. Any framework should set out key principles but allow for local flexibility in terms of implementation so individual schools, clusters, or Local Authorities can allow their structures to develop based on local need and context.



Local and National Government and Education bodies should consider the development of Supervision structures for Education staff as part of the wider commitment within the recent Pay Deal to support and improve teacher health and wellbeing.

*“There is often little support and supervision offered to teachers for their own wellbeing and mental health. Approaches to improving mental health and wellbeing in educational settings must urgently consider support for professionals”*

*“Leaders in education must prioritise and promote the wellbeing and development of staff by having clear and dedicated strategies in place. This should be developed in partnership with staff and regularly reviewed. For example, a robust approach to staff supervision and reflective practice as recommended by Barnardo’s Scotland”*

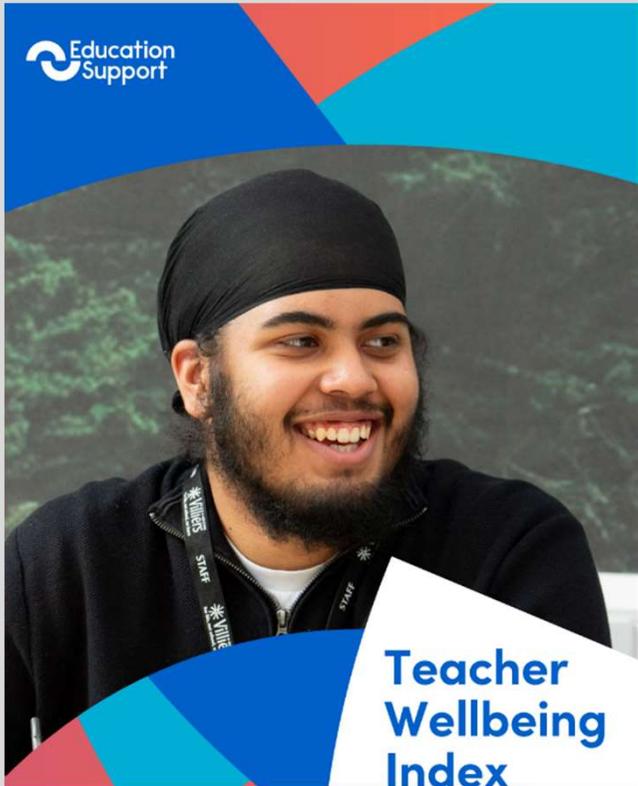
*“Excellent opportunity to have a safe, confidential space to share concerns and successes and to be challenged and supported to understand my role in making progress and also how I can take next steps to success when things are confusing if less positive. This monthly Supervision has been a really essential part of my professional life and I now insist on all the people I manage having Supervision from others trained to do this effectively”*

*“I found it beneficial having someone from another sector who has a different knowledge-base to provide alternative thoughts and ways of thinking to the reflection and advice. The occasional difficulty would be around my supervisor not being knowledgeable of the policies and procedures within education so either they couldn’t comment or I would spend a lot of the supervision time explaining the processes to them”*



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# Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024



## Demographic summary

The survey was completed by 11,754 members of NASUWT.

# Findings...



68% report that their job has adversely impacted their physical health in the last 12 months (up 4% from 2022). say that workload (up 2% from 2022) has been the main factor for increased work-related stress, followed by pupil behaviour (36%, up from 12%), monitoring and accountability measures (26%), pupil academic performance (19%, down



from 3%) and financial worries (19%, up from 8%).

We asked teachers what the impact of stress was on their lives. Key findings include: • 84% have experienced an increase in anxiousness (down 3% from 2022):



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have suffered loss of sleep (up 5% from 2022);



said low energy levels (up 6% from 2022);



have experienced a loss of appetite (up 10% from 2022);

## School responses to wellbeing issues

Teachers were asked how they felt their school responded to issues around wellbeing and mental health. The results are concerning:



- 73% say their school does not provide staff with workspaces that promote wellbeing (down 5% from 2022):
- 64% say their school does not have measures in place to monitor and manage stress and burnout (down 2% from 2022):
  - 63% say their school/college does not have a school-based counsellor who is accessible to both staff and students/pupils (down 3% from 2022):



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disagree/strongly disagree that their school provides clear policies on their right to switch off and guidelines as to when they should reply to emails at weekends and evenings, with only 12% agreeing/strongly agreeing (new question this year):

- 45% say their school does not have staff wellbeing/mental health training in place (down 3% from 2022):
- 44% disagree/strongly disagree (down 7% from 2022) that their school/college gives the same consideration and support to mental health as physical health, including in the management of staff absence:



# What is supervision?

*“an accountable process which supports, assures and develops the knowledge, skills and values of an individual, group or team. The purpose is to improve the quality of their work to achieve agreed outcomes.”*

Safeguarding Supervision Framework from CWDC (2007)

*“Supervision: is a process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organisation to work with another worker in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users”*

Morrison T. (2005)

*“Supervision ensures work with young people is effective, safe and follows procedures. It helps staff manage the complicated feelings that arise and sometimes distort the way in which we respond to incidents and concerns”*

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# Supervision in education

Supervision in education provides numerous benefits for staff mental health, including reducing burnout, improving professional practice, and fostering a sense of community.

It helps staff process complex emotions, build resilience, and navigate challenging situations, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more supportive school environment for both staff and students.



# Anxiety and Confidence

*"Working in safeguarding can create levels of anxiety in professionals"*

Morrison, 2008

*Supervision is a cornerstone in leading a strong safeguarding culture, and “when functioning well it is seen as a positive and empowering system by practitioners and managers alike; it facilitates reflective practice and continuous improvement, along with a more proactive approach to case management.”*

Sidebotham et al, 2016

# Increasing pressures compound risk...

The pressure on safeguarding leads has grown due to increasing demands in Keeping Children Safe in Education and inspection.

*“Staff... worked under considerable pressure, dealing not only with their case load but the challenge of reducing resources. Professionals can develop an over committed approach to their work and it is at these times that effective supervision to maintain safe practice is even more important. If managers have to adopt the same over committed approach systems can become stretched, unreliable and potentially unsafe.”*

Triennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews, 2011-14

supervision *“can buffer against anxiety, stress and high workloads. Emotional support from supervisors may directly improve staff retention and build perceptions of organisational support”*

SCIE, 2013

## What Does the Research Tell us About the Benefits of Supervision for Schools?

Supervision has been identified as a key part of career-long continuing personal and professional development for professionals working in the helping professions.

Recent research that has specifically explored the impact of supervision within the school context has identified a range of benefits that supervision can provide for staff working in schools.

*“Research into what happens within supervision suggests that effective supervision generates good outcomes for workers while experience suggests that the consequences of absent, inadequate or negative forms of supervision may pose a threat to workforce stability, capacity, confidence, competence and morale.”*

SCIE, 2013

# Benefits of supervision

Emotional Support  
and Well-being

Reduces burnout  
and stress

Promotes  
emotional  
resilience

Improves job  
satisfaction

Alleviates  
workplace  
pressures

Professional  
development and  
skill enhancement

Deepens  
knowledge and  
skills

Supports  
professional  
identity  
development

Enhances critical  
analysis and  
planning

Boosts confidence

Quality of care and  
client outcomes

Improves quality of  
care

# Reflective supervision

Supervision that gives space to think , be still , process feelings , get to know your experiences

Becoming aware of & working through feelings, attitudes and systems that can create distance from children and their families

Listens, engages and feeds back

# Morrison's 4 x 4 x 4 model



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# Emotional holding

*“It is supervision more than any other single factor, that will enable us as individuals and the organisations in which we work, to contain and sustain our emotional responsiveness, both to our clients and each other, without which there can be no helping encounter.”*

Tony Morrison (2005)

# Supervision with SGN

## Supervision Package

With a bespoke approach to suit any circumstance, our tailored packages provide essential support and supervision for DSLs and wider safeguarding teams.



Early Years, Care, Schools, Colleges

### Safeguarding Supervision

**£199+VAT** - Members

**£249+VAT** - Non Members

This highly popular 12-hour course helps structure and approach supervision using an established supervision model to enable supervisors to empower staff and focus on the experience and progress of children and young people in their care.

11th Sep, 2025 - 13:00

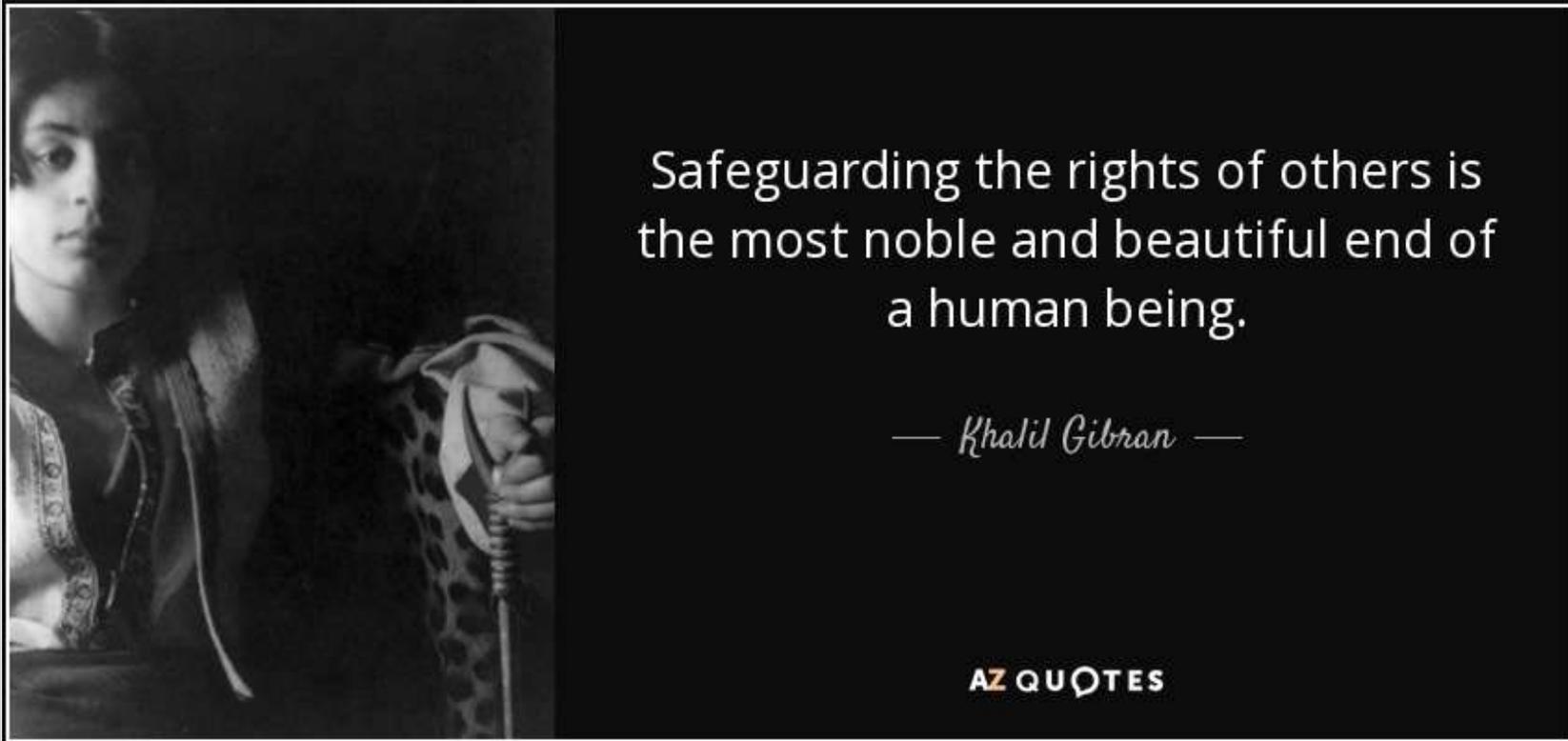
Online

Book

More info

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thank you

for more information visit

<https://safeguarding.network/>

