

6. Employing and managing people

6.8 Supervision and appraisal

There are many reasons why organisations or individuals within organisations don't value or give supervision and appraisals a high enough place on the agenda. Not least, they are often viewed as taking vital time and resources away from valuable frontline work.

However, effective supervision and appraisal are fundamental to the delivery of quality services. The benefits that the right support can bring are manifest, from raised morale and standards of work, to improved internal communications and working environments, and a greater sense of cohesion and teamwork.

What is supervision?

Supervision is an allocated time held regularly between the worker and supervisor, which may be a line manager or an experienced staff member who has been trained in giving supervision. It is an opportunity to discuss, in confidence and in a one-to-one situation, how the worker is getting on with their work and what issues are arising for them. Supervision should identify the worker's needs, and support and develop the skills and abilities they require to carry out their functions effectively. It is a good opportunity for the supervisor to raise any concerns or irregularities in the worker's practice, and similarly, it provides the worker with a supportive and confidential opportunity to discuss any concerns or issues. If supervision is working well, it should enable problems to be shared and dealt with at the earliest possible opportunity.

When working with volunteers, supervision and appraisals may be given a different name, such as reviews, but the content, aims and objectives should remain the same.

Supervision

Supervisions are the responsibility of the worker's line manager, or someone else within the organisation that has awareness of their work. Within a smaller organisation, this might be a committee member. However, whoever takes on the role should be clear about the purpose of supervision, what is required and receive appropriate training in supervision.

For supervision to be of value, it must be provided regularly (at least once a quarter), and within a space that's free from interruption, such as phone calls. It is essential that the worker be provided with a safe and confidential space within

which they can explore any dilemmas they have with their work.

The aims of supervision are to:

- monitor work and performance
- clarify priorities, responsibilities and role
- share information about work
- identify areas within the work where additional support and/or training may be needed
- provide an opportunity to discuss how the worker and supervisor feel about the work
- recognise and deal with existing or potential problems
- discuss how outside factors are affecting work, and
- provide a framework for discussing and agreeing change

Whilst supervision may provide a space for less structured reflection, it is imperative that it still operates within a framework. So, for example, meeting dates should be set up well in advance and a standard agenda could be used. An example agenda could include:

- report on work since previous supervision
- plans for the next period of work
- identification of training requirements
- details of any concerns or problems and suggested solutions; and
- perceived positive and negative factors that impact on progress

It should be made clear to workers when they start work with the organisation that they will have to commit to attending supervision meetings and that they are not optional. Notes should be taken of supervision meetings, they do not have to be detailed, but at the very least they should include action to be taken. Copies should be agreed and kept by both the supervisor and supervisee.

What is appraisal?

Supervision primarily deals with day-to-day or week-to-week issues or problems, whereas appraisals take place at least once a year, or in some cases once every 18 months. Appraisals take a longer-term view; therefore they provide a more formal structure to discuss with the worker how they feel about their job, responsibilities, career development and the organisation as a whole.

Appraisals should also require the worker to consider their role, within the team they work in and within the organisation as a whole. Appraisals can provide an opportunity to check that the worker is confident about using policies and procedures, and to identify any long-term training needs they may have.

Appraisals

Appraisals are an integral aspect of effective management. Many organisations have formal appraisal systems but some, particularly those that are small or volunteer-run, will work out their own system for evaluating performance and giving and receiving feedback. The aims of appraisals are to:

- agree the worker's goals and objectives
- evaluate and monitor what has been achieved and worker's individual performance
- provide feedback
- listen to any issues or concerns raised by the worker, and
- identify any training needs

Other areas for discussion could be:

- Job description and job specification, levels of responsibility, and clarity about their role - does it need alteration?
- Policies and procedures – understanding of policies and procedures, are there any problems with the way they work in practice?
- Team working – does the worker feel that they are working successfully with other members of staff? Is anything standing in the way of this? What could be improved?
- Supervision and line management – are there any concerns about their line manager – is this relationship working successfully?

Aside from the advantages to the organisation of improved lines of communication, quality of work and team relations, there a number of key benefits to individual workers from regular supervision and appraisal:

- Workers are made to feel like a valued member of the team, and receive acknowledgement for their work.
- Workers feel listened to and have an opportunity to raise any concerns at an early stage.
- Workers feel more supported in their work.
- Workers feel more empowered about their work and responsibilities.

This is particularly important when working with volunteers; giving volunteers the same access to supervision and appraisals as paid staff will demonstrate that they are of equal status and importance to the work of the organisation as paid staff.

Further information

CIPD

www.cipd.co.uk

Businessballs

www.businessballs.com

Skills – Third Sector

www.skills-thirdsector.org.uk

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