Technique
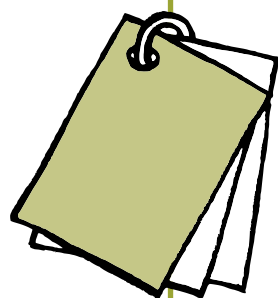
### A person-centred approach to supervision

Person-centred supervision is a partnership process that creates a respectful and supportive climate enabling people to understand and support each other well. [Sanderson, Livesley, Gormon and Allen]

Supervision is an opportunity for structured one-to-one time between a manager or supervisor and a member of their team. Using a person-centred approach to staff supervision will support you to further embed a person-centred approach within your organisation. It provides employees with simple but effective tools that ensure supervision is not only positive and productive for everyone involved, but also reflects shared power and ownership. Effective supervision will assist managers or supervisors and staff members to keep their performance on track.

It may not be feasible to hold supervision in an office environment, so each staff member and their manager or supervisor should explore alternative options that will support an effective supervision session.

This may involve meeting in a café, talking on the phone or using a computer application offering visual contact, such as FaceTime, Skype, or GoToMeeting. To strike a balance, you might agree to use the phone or other technology monthly, but at least once a quarter you would meet with the staff member face-to-face.

If the staff member is in a direct service role, you might agree with an individual they support to allow you to accompany them as a buddy on a shift. This of course will depend on how they are spending their time together and if this is something the individual in question is comfortable with.
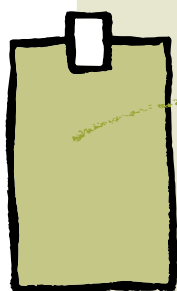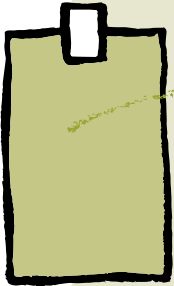
Tips

Before the supervision meeting

Develop a clear agenda that the staff member and manager or supervisor have both contributed to. Well-planned supervision ensures that both parties begin the process with shared expectations, a clear purpose to their time together and enough information to contribute fully to the meeting.

Tips

Agree a time and place that is conducive to a productive conversation, and that creates a 'thinking' environment where both parties are equal and present. This applies whether the supervision session is face-to-face, over the phone or using other technology. It is important that space is created so that neither party is distracted and can give each other their full attention.

Wherever possible, look at factors that might affect productivity, such as:

* Is there a time of day or week when you are both better able to focus?
* Are there times to avoid supervision, e.g. when reports are due, rosters need to be finished or when you both know your focus will be elsewhere?

Pay attention to the environment where you conduct supervision. Consider:

* Whether each party is able to give the other their uninterrupted attention.
* If meeting face-to-face, whether the way you are seated creates a sense of ease and equality.
* Whether you are both able to speak freely and openly.

During the supervision meeting

Begin with a positive. Start a supervision meeting by sharing something that is working well for both of you. This not only starts on a positive note, it also contributes to developing a workplace culture of appreciation.

Allocate time to each agenda item and stick to it. Spending a couple of minutes at the beginning of supervision to agree on timings and to finalise the agenda will help keep you on track and get through everything within the agreed time. If you do not already have an agenda, ensure you spend a short time putting together one at the start.
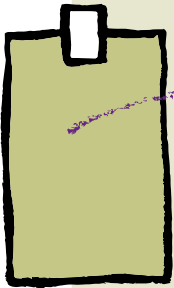
Tips

Balance the content to ensure that supervision is neither just a debrief session for the staff member nor one that purely focuses on '**what's not working**'. A well-rounded session should look at how the staff member is feeling about, and performing in relation to, their responsibilities, what supports they want or need from their manager, supervisor or others, what they've learnt since the last supervision, and any upcoming training and development opportunities they want or need.

After the supervision meeting

Follow up. This may entail sending an action plan via email and following up progress with a phone call or another email, or checking in with one another by an agreed date. Have a standing agenda item to follow up on previous actions.

Regularly look at '**what's working and not working**' with supervision and the process you are using to make sure it stays relevant and useful to both parties.

Using person-centred tools during supervision meetings

Use the '**4+1 questions**' tool to support the staff member to reflect on any ongoing issues they have been trying to work though or action. For example, if someone has been struggling with time management, you could use this tool to reflect on past efforts before generating new ideas and options.

The '**what's working/what's not working**' is a good tool to structure conversations about performance and work in general. While supervision is an opportunity to touch base and keep performance on track, it is also important to gain a sense of what's happening for the staff member generally in the workplace, as this often affects performance. If supervision just looks at performance, you risk not getting a sense of the staff member's general wellbeing in the workplace.

Use the '**stress and support**' tool as a framework for discussion when stress has been an issue in the workplace.
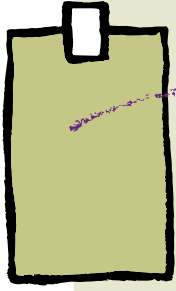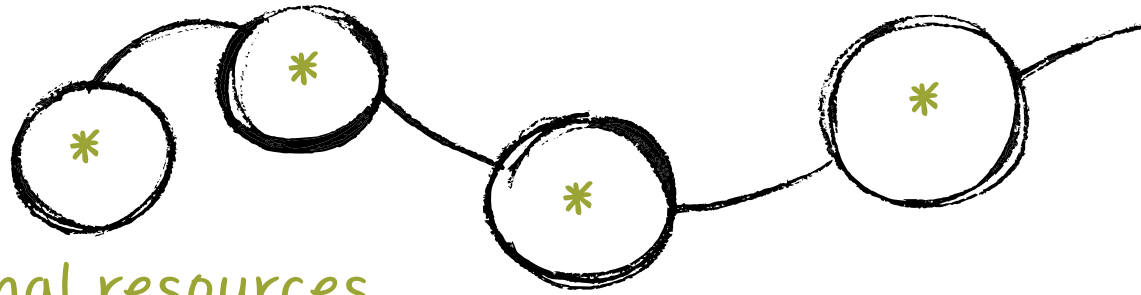
Tips

Use the '**praise and trouble**' tool to learn more about how to provide feedback to the staff member and what they value about this. This is also a good way of checking on the balance of criticism to appreciation.

Use the '**good day and bad day**' tool to get a sense of what is happening currently in the workplace for the staff member.
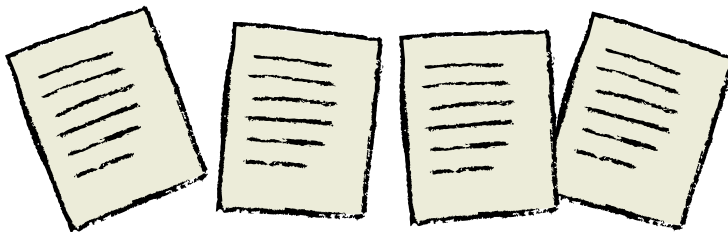
Additional resources

* The Workforce Capability Framework

* The disability career planner and capability framework implementation guide

* Technique – using 'what's working/not working' in performance planning, support and supervision http://www.idfnsw.org.au/hrm/Supervision_Using_what's_working_not_working.pdf

* Technique and template – using the 'praise and trouble' tool in supervision. http://www.idfnsw.org.au/hrm/Supervision_Using_the_praise_and_trouble_tool.pdf

* Tips – using the 'stress and support' tool in supervision http://www.idfnsw.org.au/hrm/Supervision_Using_the_stress_and_support_tool.pdf

* Tips – keeping performance on track http://www.idfnsw.org.au/hrm/Performance_Keeping_performance_on_track.pdf

Definitions

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The terms **staff/employee(s)** refer to paid or unpaid members of the workforce regardless of their employment relationship with their employer i.e. permanent, casual, full-time, volunteer, etc.