



# Post Qualifying Practice Standards (Knowledge and Skills Statements)



A Guide for Supervisors

# What are the Knowledge and Skills Statements?

- The KSS are a set of statements that provide the national assessment and accreditation criteria for social workers and supervisors supporting vulnerable children and families. It is crucial for social work education, recruitment, career development and performance appraisal
- The knowledge and skills statements are the foundation for the introduction of a post-qualification specialist career pathway for child and family social workers
- For frontline practitioners and practice supervisors, these statements have been determined as the post-qualifying improvement standards as set out under Section 42 of the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*, which means a professional standard, the attainment of which demonstrates particular expertise or specialisation

# KSS 1 - Promote and Govern Excellent Practice

- Be recognised for having extensive knowledge and skill in Social Work
- Shape, influence, set high standards and motivate others
- Lead by example, showing integrity, creativity and resilience
- Be visible and accessible to staff
- Design and implement measures to assure quality practice and throughput of work
- Challenge decisions and ensure they are underpinned by evidence and theory
- Monitor the well-being of children in care, ensuring they are happy and have ambitions for their futures

Department of Education (2018)



# Being a Good Leader

- ‘A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way’ (The Open University, 2013)
- There is evidence that managers’ characteristics such as leadership style, support, consideration and empowerment strongly influence the wellbeing and performance of their staff and impact on absenteeism and retention (Community Care, 2015)
- It is useful for Practice Supervisors to reflect on their Leadership Style, taking into account their strengths and the impact their style has had on practitioners, children and families, as well as considering if there are areas for further development, i.e. encouraging reflective practice or time management

# What makes a Good Leader by the KSS Standards?

- They are visible at work and staff can approach them
- They have a sound knowledge of Social Work practice and skills in their practice
- They demonstrate a high standard of practice and help to motivate others
- They are able to support practitioners, but also offer challenge, where appropriate, to help achieve the best outcomes for children and families
- Are aware of and know how to best make use of the skills of their work force and resources
- Ensure that written reports, plans and decisions are child focussed, rationalised and clear

# How does being a 'Good Leader' benefit staff?

- Staff feel able to approach their supervisor for case discussions, informal supervision, to discuss learning, development and training opportunities and at times, discuss personal or family issues that may/be impacting on their practice
- Staff feel happier and well supported at work, therefore potentially reducing absenteeism due to sickness or stress
- Practitioners are able to practice in a positive, reflective and restorative environment and this may increase the quality of their practice with children and families
- Supervision offered to staff is of a higher quality

# KSS 2 - Developing excellent practitioners

- Recognise and value the expertise of practitioners
- Explain and champion a practice framework and set an expectation for this to be used in practice
- Understand different patterns of family functioning and pair it with the service response most likely to effect change
- Recognise the strengths and development needs of practitioners, using observation, reflection and feedback (including from children and families)
- Acknowledge that there are different learning styles and decide when is best to teach or draw on the practitioners own knowledge
- Invest available resources into staff and service development

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# Learning Styles

- It is of use to Practice Supervisors to know and understand not only their own, but Practitioners styles of learning
- This enables a Supervisor to support and challenge practitioners to develop into increasingly effective children and family workers
- Practice Supervisors can utilise several tools to help assess their own and others learning styles and to support the learning and development of practitioners
- It is useful to consider that practitioners will benefit from adapting more than one learning style and that not all scenarios in practice will allow for the practitioner to use the style they are familiar with

# Honey and Mumford's Learning Style Questionnaire

This theory proposes that there are four learning styles which individuals typically associate with:

**Activists** - Those who learn by doing and enjoy role plays, brainstorming and problem solving

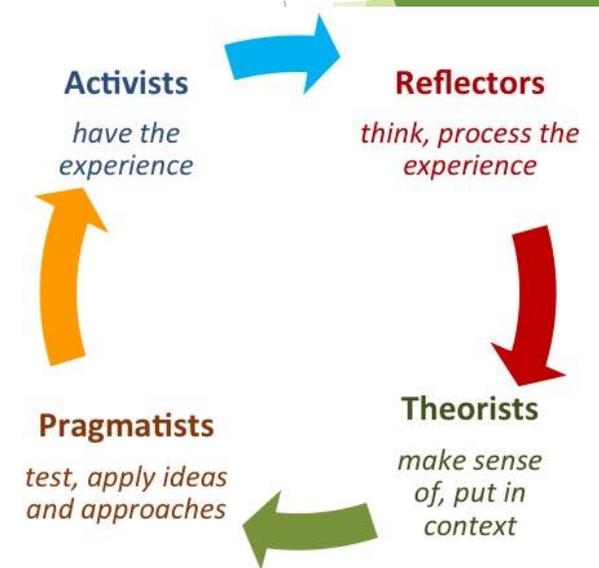
**Theorists** - Those who like to understand the theory behind practice, and enjoy using models, theories and finding out background information

**Pragmatists** - Those who like to try new ideas in practice and enjoy being shown new techniques and imitating good practice

**Reflectors** - Those who learn by observation and thinking and enjoy learning from feedback and coaching

More information on these Learning Styles and how they learn best can be found here:

[https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/629607/mod\\_resource/content/1/t175\\_4\\_3.pdf](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/629607/mod_resource/content/1/t175_4_3.pdf)



# Kolb's Learning Style Inventory

This theory encourages individuals to complete a Learning Style Inventory that asks them to answer several questions

The individual then has to score their responses and plot the number on a 'Learning Style Profile' Chart so they can visually see which learning style they associate with the most

(CE) - This learner enjoys being part of experiences, are empathetic and like the use of theories

(RO) - This learner focusses on the meaning behind ideas/situations and like to reflect and understand

(AE) - This learner places an emphasis on doing, with a focus on influencing and changing situations

(AC) - This learner relies on logic and ideas and are more scientific in their approaches

Concrete Experience

Active Experimentation

Reflective Observation

Abstract Conceptualisation

# KSS 3 - Shaping and Influencing the Practice System

- Provide a safe and calm environment for staff
- Create an ethos where staff are motivated and ambitious
- Use resources to the best effect
- Encourage constant reflective thinking
- Build and develop influential and respectful partnerships between practitioners and partner agencies
- Pay attention to different structures and pressures which can shape the thinking of others
- Share practice knowledge and influence the wider organisation and national systems
- Offer constructive advice and creative, strengths-based solution to difficulties

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# Encouraging Reflective Thinking

- Practice Supervisors should not only be reflective thinkers themselves, but should be encouraging and embedding this practice amongst other practitioners
- Supervisors would benefit from incorporating reflective questions in supervision/informal discussions such as:
  - How do you feel that this went?
  - What do you feel went well/not well?
  - Was there anything that surprised you?
  - What would you do differently in then future?



# Encouraging Reflective Thinking

- Reflective Thinking is a skill that children and family practitioners and supervisor's can continue to develop throughout their careers. It encourages individuals to keep the child in mind and to reflect and think about their own skills and approaches to their work
- Using reflective thinking in practice allows practitioners and supervisors to feel 'safe' in their work environment where they can talk about their experiences
- A safe atmosphere at work will encourage practitioners to share their practice knowledge, be knowledgeable and be motivated

# Gibbs Reflective Cycle

- Supervisor's can use a variety of tools in practice to encourage themselves and practitioners to become more reflective
- Gibb's Reflective Cycle is one theory that can be used in practice and in supervision as a way of encouraging reflective thinking



Dudley CPP have designed some Reflective Theory Cards that can be used in practice. They can be found here:

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/dudley/childcare/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/Supervision%20Policy%202018.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/dudley/childcare/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Supervision%20Policy%202018.pdf)

# KSS 4 - Effective Use of Power and Authority

- Use an ethical approach to the exercise of authority
- Maximise opportunities for children and families to make informed choices
- Possess an up to date knowledge of legislation and case law
- Exercise statutory powers, ensuring that actions are proportionate to risk
- Encourage practitioners to be clear, honest and respectful when explaining plans to families
- Recognise the patterns of relationships between professionals and identify where these can compromise family welfare and safety of children
- Invite challenge and debate
- Consider diversity, discrimination and the impact of poverty

# Using the Restorative Approach with Practitioners

- The Restorative Approach is a key element of Dudley's ambition to become an authority that puts the child and family at the centre of what we do
- Practice Supervisors should strive to demonstrate and embed the Restorative Approach in their management style
- This approach should encourage Practice Supervisors to work WITH their staff; encouraging high quality work and achieving best outcomes for children and families, whilst also challenging their staff and supporting them to develop
- For practical ways of using this approach in practice, please see the Restorative Practice Handbook found here: <https://www.dudleycpp.org.uk/restorative-practice>



# What support is there for supervisors?



- Formal Supervision
- Peer Support
- Audit Feedback on Social Work cases
- Research in Practice - This link details further resources and research on all of the Knowledge and Skills Statements for Supervisors - <https://www.rip.org.uk/resources/kss-for-practice-leaders/>
- Dudley Centre for Professional Practice Website



# Resources and Reading Material



<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2015/06/24/good-social-work-managers-promote-staffs-wellbeing/> - Article on Managers Promoting Staff Well-Being

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/dudley/childcare/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/Restorative%20Practice%20Report.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/dudley/childcare/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Restorative%20Practice%20Report.pdf) - Restorative Practice Procedure

[https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/629607/mod\\_resource/content/1/t175\\_4\\_3.pdf](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/629607/mod_resource/content/1/t175_4_3.pdf) - Honey and Mumford's Learning Style Questionnaire

[http://med.fau.edu/students/md\\_m1\\_orientation/M1%20Kolb%20Learning%20Style%20Inventory.pdf](http://med.fau.edu/students/md_m1_orientation/M1%20Kolb%20Learning%20Style%20Inventory.pdf) - Kolb's Learning Style Inventory

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2012/08/03/how-reflective-practice-can-help-social-workers-feel-safe/> - Community Care Article on Reflective Practice