



Peer supervision

Peer supervision can be a very helpful tool to enable your team to provide support to each other, encouraging an organisational ethos that prioritises team wellbeing.

What is it?

A space for team members to come together and acknowledge that our work impacts us.

A space for team members to share how their work may be impacting them.

For example, listening to the struggles of a young person dealing with a transphobic family may bring up difficult memories and feelings for a team member.

A safe space (team members should not feel anxious that bringing their thoughts and feelings to peer supervision will be interpreted that they cannot do their job).

A space for team members to share ideas to help each other manage the issues they bring to the session.

What is it not?

Peer supervision is NOT the same as clinical supervision (which is led by a qualified therapist).

Peer supervision is NOT a space to talk through service-user issues – the focus is on the impact on team members.

Peer supervision is NOT a space to judge or criticise (the space needs to be supportive and nurturing).

Developing ground rules for effective peer supervision

It is good practice to co-create ground rules and a group agreement to ensure everyone understands the purpose and boundaries of the space.

Factors to consider when developing the agreement:

- Ensure whatever is agreed is proportionate and appropriate to your group's function, size, and capacity.
- Consider how often to run peer supervision and find a frequency / day and time that suits.
- Consider whether to offer in person, online or a hybrid.
- Consider how the group will manage time to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak? If it is a large team, you could consider asking people to submit information in advance and explore if there are 'themes' that can be covered in the session rather than each individual situation?

- Consider the structure the group sessions will take. For example, will you have a set agenda or ask people to bring ideas and thoughts on the day? Will you take notes from the session such as key themes raised so they can be returned to at the next session – and if so, who will take the notes, what will be recorded and where will it be stored?
- If there are sessions when no one has a specific topic they wish to discuss, how will the time be used? This is important to consider preventing the peer supervision becoming a social space with no focus.
- Consider whether team managers will attend. Sometimes this can result in team members not feeling able to contribute. A possible solution is to make explicit in the agreement that during peer supervision everyone present is there as a participant and not in their formal roles.
- Consider the matter of boundaries – for example being clear whether discussions can / or should not continue outside of peer supervision sessions (this may depend on your team structure, appropriate channels of communication and so on.)
- Consider the matter of confidentiality – whilst such groups often agree that topics discussed will remain confidential, this can not be guaranteed if the topic flags a safeguarding concern. For further information around safeguarding, please use this [link](#) to order our Safeguarding toolkit, or get in touch with the Consortium engagement team: admin@consortium.lgbt
- Consider how best to support team members if their input is beyond the scope of the session (for example they become extremely upset or distressed). It is important to ensure team members are guided to a more appropriate outlet in such instances (for example a 1:1 supervision with their line manager, or external support) and it is also important to ensure this is navigated sensitively to avoid causing further distress. When creating the group agreement it may help to agree some common language to use in such situations
“This feels like something that would be helpful to discuss in a 1:1...”
“This feels really important...lets following this up with [manager] after the group session...”
- Consider providing contact information to all participants for relevant helplines. Some key helplines and online support links have been provided below and you may have some local contacts that would be helpful to include.

Helplines and Online Support

[Switchboard LGBT+ helpline](#) - 0300 330 0630

[LGBT Foundation](#) - 0345 3 30 30 30

[Galop](#) - 0800 999 5428 - Hate crime, domestic and sexual violence helpline

[Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard](#) - 01273 204050

[MindOut](#) - Online Support and Counselling

How to facilitate peer supervision

Depending on the size of the team you may want to allocate a facilitator and another person to help keep time throughout the session / or this could be an agreed role for one person.

Be clear that the facilitator is there to ensure the ground rules are followed and to ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute (and keep time if there isn't a separate person managing this). They are not there to 'solve' the issues raised as it is a collective space for peer support.

To help with this concept, it may be useful for team members to take it in turn to be the facilitator.

Due to the nature of support and wellbeing work there is often a tendency for team members to start thinking of 'solutions' to address the service-user issues raised.

In the example given above, they may start to think how to support the young person living in a transphobic household / exploring housing options etc,

Ensure the facilitator looks out for this and reminds everyone if this happens, that the focus is on how the staff members has been impacted and what may support their wellbeing.

Consider starting each session with a wellbeing check-in and closing with a check-out. Below are some few examples of easy-to-use check-in and check-outs and you can search online for more ideas.



What 'colour' best sums up how you are doing today and why

This type of question can be used with many options such as:

What colour

What animal

What shape

If managing a peer supervision model in your organisation feels like it may be beyond the scope and capacity of the team, you may like to explore the option of an external facilitator.

For example, you could contact a local university with therapy students who need to deliver groups as part of their course requirements. You could also consider advertising for a volunteer role, for example seeking a person with therapeutic, wellbeing, or group facilitation skills.