

on the job

This is the sixth in a series of briefings to assist managers of drug treatment services to develop effective management policies and procedures

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Supervision and appraisal

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Although there is no legal obligation on employers to introduce supervision or appraisal policies, there are other non-legal considerations that require supervision and appraisal to be provided. These include:

- Quality in Alcohol and Drug Services (QuADS) standards
- Drugs and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) (available at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk).
- Some professions (e.g. counselling)
- The NHS framework for lifelong learning (entitled *Working together, learning together*. Available at www.dh.gov.uk).
- Department of Health and Topss standards for care homes and their staff (available at www.dh.gov.uk and www.topss.org.uk respectively).
- Conditional pay systems (such as performance-related pay).

It is important to ensure that staff members are not discriminated against on any grounds during the supervision process. Discrimination on grounds of gender, sexuality, marital status, race, disability, or trade union membership or non-membership is illegal.

A drug treatment service may have a single policy or, ideally, two separate policies covering supervision and appraisal, which should:

- include the service's statement of intent (including the benefits of supervision and appraisal)
- set out step-by-step procedures for supervision and appraisal
- be adopted and understood at all levels of the service.

The Drug and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) can be used by drug services to identify individual employee development needs, and assist in appraisal and developing competence.

The NTA has produced two staff development toolkits, one for registered care homes and one for all other drug services, to provide straightforward practical guidance on staff development and human resource issues. These toolkits are available at www.nta.nhs.uk

SUPERVISION

Supervision provides an opportunity to monitor the extent to which an employee is meeting a service's aims and the tasks outlined in their job description, and is a useful management tool to ensure quality.

The three principal functions of supervision are:

1. Managerial supervision – involving issues related to an employee's job description or workplace, including:

- prioritising workloads
- monitoring work and work performance
- sharing information relevant to work
- clarifying task boundaries
- identifying training and development needs.

2. Personal or pastoral supervision – relates to personal issues raised through work and includes:

- discussing how outside factors are affecting work
- enabling people to deal with stress.

3. Clinical (or practice/specialist) supervision – used for workers such as counsellors, nurses and social workers to reflect on and develop their own practice.

Separate supervision sessions to address each function, may be appropriate.

Benefits of supervision

Effective supervision should benefit the service, manager, employee, and service user. Some of the benefits include:

- earlier identification of problems and issues
- clarification of employee objectives and achievements
- better communication
- increased staff awareness about issues in their own practice and ways to address them.

Supervision meeting

It should be made clear in the policy that it is the manager's responsibility to ensure that supervision happens regularly, between every two to eight weeks. New recruits, newly qualified staff and those for whom there is a performance issue may need more frequent supervision. Dates should be set in advance and both the employee and supervisor should

consider before the session what they want to discuss and to achieve from the meeting. Any relevant documents should be made available (e.g. recent appraisal records and the employee's training plan). Confidential records of meetings should be kept and retained on the staff member's file, and the staff member should receive a copy.

Group supervision

Group supervision can be useful in providing a range of different perspectives on clinical issues. It may, however, provoke anxiety for some people as they may feel vulnerable in front of colleagues. Clear group roles need to be established and reviewed at the start of each session, and there should be strong leadership from the supervisor.

Peer supervision

Peer supervision in pairs or groups must be formalised and regular. It should involve meeting with a colleague or group of colleagues with equal experience and sharing supervision tasks equally. There need to be firm boundaries or sessions could deteriorate into a non-structured conversation. There may also be deficits in knowledge, and competition among participants to get their needs met.

APPRAISAL

Basics

Appraisal is used to:

- provide feedback on past and current performance
- identify training and development needs
- set objectives/targets for the future.

The appraisal policy should state:

- that the appraisal process is annual, mandatory and covers all staff
- who does the appraising
- that employees can see their appraisal reports.

Senior managers should be fully committed to the appraisal process, which should be kept as simple as possible and should be monitored regularly. Some organisations will link appraisals to a salary review, however this may undermine the frank and open nature of the discussion that occurs during appraisal.

Benefits of appraisal

A clear and effective appraisal policy will benefit managers, staff, the service and the service user in the following ways:

- clarification of employees' and managers' expectations and objectives
- new ideas from the manager or employee can be explored
- problems and successes can be recognised
- areas for development in staff's work can be identified and possible solutions suggested, leading to better practice.

Meeting

Appraisal meetings should take place at least annually. The employee should:

- receive a copy of the appraisal policy and have time to prepare a self appraisal form.

The manager should:

- look at the previous appraisal form, job description and relevant national occupational standards (i.e. DANOS), noting any points for discussion
- record the appraisal, including any objectives set and any commitments made by the employee or manager
- ensure that the record is signed by both the appraiser and employee
- ensure that both appraiser and employee receive a copy of the appraisal record.

Setting objectives

The whole appraisal process should be a cycle of: setting, reviewing and then re-setting key objectives. Each objective should be specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-related (SMART).

Monitoring

A manager should be nominated to monitor and co-ordinate the appraisal system to ensure consistency in the assessment of employees. Monitoring should also identify if certain groups (e.g. women or members of Black and minority ethnic communities) are treated less fairly in appraisals, which can affect promotional opportunities. It can also help determine whether the process needs to be changed to meet the needs of the service or staff.

TRAINING

It is important that all staff are trained in supervision and appraisal processes, so that they are clear what is expected of them and can benefit fully from the process. Supervision and appraisal can involve dealing with problems in a staff member's work performance or conduct. Managers and staff must be trained to give and receive constructive feedback respectively.

APPEALS

There should be an appeal process for any employee who believes that the appraisal or supervision process was unfair or unsatisfactory, or that meetings are not frequent enough. In most drug services this will involve employees using the grievance procedure. See the briefing on Disciplinary issues, capability and grievances in this series for more details (featured in *Druglink* vol 19, issue 5, September/October 2004).

For further information on this topic contact the QuADS and policy support line, which offers general policy development advice and a free policy review service at brendan@drugscope.org.uk or call 020 7922 8701.

NEXT ISSUE

Complaints