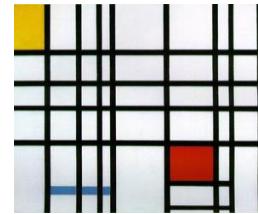


Supervision: Information for service users



Psychological therapists usually have supervision for the work they do. This leaflet tries to answer questions that service users might have about supervision.

What is supervision?

Supervision involves a therapist discussing their clinical work with an experienced colleague, and getting feedback on how they are doing. Supervision is a formal meeting – it isn’t a matter of having a “chat” about clients.

Why do psychological therapists have supervision?

Clients deserve to receive the best possible treatment. This means trying to make sure that clients get the therapy that is right for them, and that their therapist is doing the best for them.

When therapists are training it makes sense that someone more experienced should be making sure that their work is being carried out in the best way. As they are still learning, all trainee therapists receive regular supervision.

Even when therapists are fully qualified, most of them continue to receive supervision. This is because having the chance to talk about their work with a colleague helps them to think more carefully about the work they are doing – basically, two heads are better than one.

Who are supervisors?

Supervisors are experienced psychological therapists. They will have a lot of experience of carrying out therapy themselves, and will be able to draw on this to help give advice.

What is the aim of supervision?

If the person being supervised is in training, the supervisor will be like a teacher, helping the therapist to learn by improving their skills, and trying to make sure that they are doing the right things, in the right way.

If the person being supervised is already a qualified psychological therapist, supervision gives them an opportunity to reflect on what they are doing, and helps them to work as well as they can.

It may strike you as odd that even qualified therapists continue to have supervision. One reason is that therapists need to be able to stand back and think carefully about the work they are doing. Talking to a supervisor is usually the most effective way of doing this.

What sorts of things are discussed in supervision?

Usually the therapist will talk about the clients they are seeing. This often means giving the supervisor quite a lot of detail, and explaining exactly what they have been doing to try to help you.

The sort of discussion that happens in supervision depends on where things have got to in the therapy. For example:

- if a client has just started therapy it may be unclear what sort of approach is best. The supervisor might help the therapist to make decisions about the treatment to recommend to the service user as most likely to help
- if someone had been in therapy for a while, discussion might be focussed on how things are going – what is progressing well, what is going less well, and are there ways that your therapist could be working more effectively.

Confidentiality

One thought that may have already occurred to you is that if your therapist is being supervised, they will be discussing your personal details with someone else. Quite understandably this may make you worried about confidentiality.

Your therapist should talk to you about confidentiality, and explain who may be told about the things the two of you discuss. Obviously, this means that they should let you know about any supervision they are receiving. They should also have given you a chance to ask any questions about supervision, and about the supervisor. Because therapists know that clients might be worried that someone else is being given information about their therapy, they will be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have.

Recording sessions

Supervisors need to keep track of the way your therapy is progressing. One of the best ways of doing this is for your therapist to record sessions, using either audio or sometimes video recordings.

Even though it can be very helpful, recording can be a bit uncomfortable for therapists and clients, especially at first. Some clients might be quite worried about the idea of someone listening to what they actually say. However, your therapist will always have asked for your written consent before they start recording, and if you are really unhappy at the idea, it won't happen.

If your sessions are being recorded your therapist should explain what will happen to the recording (for example, who will hear them, and what steps are taken to make sure that no-one other than the supervisor can listen to them). In some settings they will ask whether you would like a copy of the recording for yourself).

If you feel uncomfortable or unhappy at the idea of recording you can ask for this not to take place - your therapist will discuss this with you. Recording should only happen if you are happy with the idea.

Any further questions about supervision?

There may be some questions you have that this leaflet doesn't cover. If this is the case, you should feel able to ask your therapist for more information.