

Audio transcript

Alison - a professional supervisor who works with young people

It's interesting to think back on what has made me the supervisor I am today. ...It's the end result of many different experiences – my work as practitioner and manager, as well as my experience of being a student myself.

One of the most important things for me has been my own experience of receiving supervision. I've had one excellent supervisor in particular. She was also my line manager. I learnt a lot from her – how important it is to feel relaxed and comfortable with your supervisor... the importance of building trust and respect between the two of you... challenging in a way that doesn't put a person down but that helps them learn and develop professionally.

I felt that she really listened to me and was there for me – although she didn't just sit and agree with me. She would ask me some really challenging questions... making me think about what I believe in...how I could do things differently in my work with young people, and how I could link my learning in college with what I was doing every day back in work.

I also had a great deal of professional respect for her. I knew that she knew what she was talking about. She had a real commitment to young people, which showed through everything she did.... I suppose she has been a role model for me.

I've also had less positive experiences of supervision, which have left me feeling frustrated, where I've felt my supervisor was just going through the motions, as if supervision was just another thing they had to do rather than really being there and being committed to making it work.

We never really sat down at the beginning to share our expectations of what we each wanted from supervision, which I now know was a mistake. ... One positive that came out of it, however, was to help me reflect on what I didn't want to be like as a supervisor, and how important it is to share expectations and to be honest about when things aren't working!

I've done a course in supervision since I've qualified... I've also found peer supervision really useful, and it has helped me to think about the importance of developing networks of peer support.

I've also supervised lots of workers as a line manager – full-time as well as part-time staff. I know that supervising part-time staff can be particularly difficult, trying to make sure they have the same level of support as a full-time worker, in the much smaller amount of time that I have with them in work, and knowing that they're also usually juggling another job and a family, which restricts the times when we can meet.

Since I first trained, I've also supervised a number of students undertaking professional training. I've always enjoyed doing this and have learnt something new each time. Students come with different experiences and perspectives and levels of confidence.... Some find it relatively straightforward to link theory to practice and to make reflective recordings about their work....Others find it much more difficult and really need help and support to make some of the connections....It also helps me to keep fresh in my own practice, by exposing me to new ideas and keeping me in touch with what's happening in developments in professional training since I qualified.