

Practical ways to provide virtual supervision

Virtual supervision refers to any supervision which does not take place face-to-face. This might therefore refer to any supervision which you undertake using a video link (through platforms such as Facetime, WhatsApp, Teams, Skype or Zoom) or it may be a telephone call.

Whilst it is possible to undertake supervision over the phone, we would recommend wherever possible that you should undertake it using a video link. When you can see the person, you are talking to you will have more non-verbal cues to allow you to assess how the other person is feeling and to assess how engaged they are in their supervision. The fewer non-verbal cues you have the harder it will be and the more likely supervision is to only focus upon tasks and not the other important elements of supervision including well-being.

It is recommended to also review associated Policies and Procedures you may have (for example; a supervision policy) before implementing virtual supervisions. This is to ensure that it reflects how the supervision process has changed.

When undertaking supervision virtually, please also consider the following factors.

Preparation	Ensure that the supervisor lets the supervisee know what will be covered in the meeting, so they have time to prepare.
Frequency	Supervisors and supervisees may agree that the frequency of supervisions remains the same. However, it is recommended to regularly discuss this (potentially you may decide to meet more frequently).
Equipment	<p>Ensure that the supervisor and supervisee have access to IT equipment that will enable good picture and sound quality (consider alternatives if not).</p> <p>Ensure that the supervisor and supervisee feel confident in having a virtual meeting? If not consider some practice runs possibly between colleagues willing to test the approach.</p> <p>If you want to share supervision notes on screen, practice beforehand to ensure you know how to do this. Ensure you are comfortable with the technology before the supervision.</p> <p>If you choose to record the supervision check this out with the supervisee first, be clear you know how to record the supervision, save it and share it before you start. Be clear as to how this record will be safely and securely stored just as you would with any written record.</p> <p>Consider swapping to an alternative format if the issue persists (e.g. from Zoom meeting to phone call) or if this becomes a longer term issue, revert to meeting in person but adhere to any social distancing rules that apply.</p>

Time	<p>Having a conversation online can sometimes be more tiring than face-to-face. If you usually have supervisions of 60 minutes or more, consider breaking these into two shorter calls.</p> <p>Just as you would with face-to-face supervision, ensure the time of the supervision is convenient for both you and the supervisee.</p> <p>If there are technical or other issues that delay or interrupt the meeting, build in a reasonable buffer to allow you to slightly overrun if needed.</p>
Environment	<p>Just as when you are in the office having a supervision, ensure you will both be comfortable, that your supervision will be confidential and that neither of you are likely to face interruptions from other people.</p> <p>For supervisor and supervisee, let other colleagues know that to not disturb you unless there is an emergency. Try to conduct the supervision from a private room.</p>
Timekeeping	<p>Remember to share details of how to access the supervision in advance to avoid delay in joining.</p> <p>When undertaking a supervision online, it is important that you as the supervisor are ready to begin the supervision at the agreed time.</p> <p>This is especially important if you have set up supervision using a system where the supervisor has to let the supervisee into a virtual room. Being kept waiting is not a good start to supervision and can affect the quality of the subsequent supervision.</p> <p>If you are undertaking supervision by phone agree in advance who is calling who and confirm the number that you are to call.</p>
Agreeing outcome of supervision	<p>When you have supervision face-to-face you will most likely be accustomed to both the supervisor and supervisee signing the agreed record of supervision. When undertaking supervision virtually you need to consider how to do this. Some possible solutions include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If the video call allows, record the supervision (with agreement of both parties), at the end confirm what has been agreed and share the video in place of supervision notes. ■ If you can share documents on screen you can share the record of supervision with the supervisee and both sign these before saving. ■ Alternatively, agree to produce and share a hard copy (and agree when this should be returned to the supervisor) ■ Agree when you are meeting next
Data Security	<p>When selecting how you will undertake your virtual supervision ensure in advance that you are satisfied with the data security of the method that you select.</p>

Further information and advice about Effective supervision is available from www.skillsforcare.org.uk/supervision