

Group Supervision

Best Practice Guidance 2026

Background

This document provides a shared understanding of

- Group supervision definition & purpose
- Circumstances in which group supervision may be helpful
- What to expect at a group supervision
- Participant roles and responsibilities when taking part.

This guidance should be attached to invitations to group supervision and may be a useful resource during group sessions.

This guidance was written to support practice at the launch of Families First, 2026, and will be reviewed and updated as required.

Definition

Group supervision is a process where a group of individuals, often with similar roles or working towards a common goal, meet to reflect on their professional practice and input.

Group supervision benefits

- strengthening relationships between practitioners
- building shared understanding
- improving case thinking with diverse perspectives
- fostering a learning and collaborative culture
- increasing confidence in applying the practice framework, through focusing on strengths, child safety and shared goals
- collective problem-solving, making practice more dynamic and effective.

Purpose

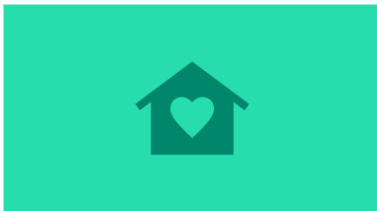
Group supervision is part of 'every day' practice across children's services.

Findings from the workforce survey (December 2025) identified three circumstances when it might be helpful to bring together multi-agency partners for a group supervision:

- To reflect on collective practice when a situation feels 'stuck'
- To resolve challenges/barriers in communication between professionals
- To explore differences of perspective regarding threshold or response

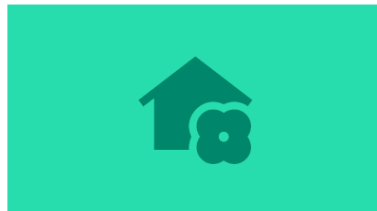
To facilitate the most helpful response, the lead practitioner will consider any suggestion for a multi-agency group supervision with the practice supervisor. N.B. group supervision is not and must never be seen as an opportunity to have a professionals meeting without the family.

Group supervision supports a focus on practice which delivers our Meaningful Measures:



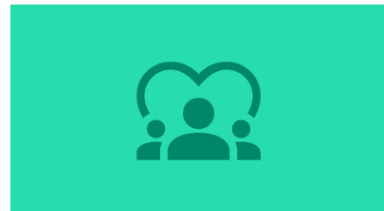
Stay home

More children remaining at home or in their naturally connected network and community.



Come home

More children returning to their family or network where it is safe to do so or at the very least returning to York when this is in line with their wishes.



Safe and Connected

Children are safe and connected to their network, community and supported to learn.

Timeliness of the response

Group supervision is not intended to be an emergency response and should not replace other decision-making processes. Arrangements for group supervision should be based on the needs of the family, the reason for the supervision, and any recommendations by the lead practitioner. The facilitator will have discretion to prioritise competing requests for group supervision based on the needs of the family.

Arrangements for group supervision

Duration: 60–90 minutes.

Attendance: Minimum of four practitioners present. The facilitator will help determine who needs to be present. For multi-agency group supervision, all key professionals involved should be invited. Facilitators will take into account the availability of colleagues when scheduling multi-agency group supervision, however, the needs of the family will be prioritised and it may not be possible to accommodate all scheduling requests.

Venue: Group supervision should take place face to face wherever possible, however the facilitator may decide that an online meeting is more useful in some circumstances. Invitations will be sent by the lead practitioner, where relevant.

Facilitator: Group Supervision may be led by Service Managers, Practice Supervisors, Lead Child Protection Practitioners or Senior Social Workers. The facilitator will consider with the lead practitioner any suggestions for multi-agency group supervision so that the meeting is purposeful and not used in place of other processes (e.g. strategy meeting).

Group Supervision/ Multi-Agency Group Supervision: Group supervision should be routinely held at least fortnightly in all children's services teams. All team members within social care are expected to attend group supervisions where possible, as this will enable group learning space for reflection and supportive challenge. Agency partner colleagues may be invited to attend a planned group supervision, or it may be more appropriate to arrange a separate meeting depending on the circumstances; this will be at the discretion of the facilitator.

Lead Practitioner: The practitioner responsible for the case presented. The lead practitioner does not need to have in depth knowledge or prepare notes. The practitioner may find it helpful

to draft a genogram in advance to assist with remembering family structure, however, group supervision will include drawing the genogram.

Recording: Each agency is responsible for recording their own notes for group supervision. In Children services, group supervision is not minuted, however, notes will be taken to assist discussion/ work. A case note recording will be made of the group supervision, detailing who was present, what the area of focus was, and how this impacted thinking. If a partner agency is present, we invite the same detail to be recorded within alternative systems. Individuals should consider noting any actions arising from discussions/ learning.

Transparency: If a child and their family ask what group supervision is, the following can be considered “supervision is when a worker meets with their supervisor, and sometimes other colleagues to talk about the support they are providing to a family. Supervision is required by lots of professions, as it helps ensure families receive a good quality service. During supervisions, workers will talk about what’s working well, any thing that isn’t working so well, and any worries, and what needs to happen next, to ensure you, your child and family get the right support at the right time”.

Roles & Responsibilities

Facilitator: Ensures structure and timekeeping. Promotes reflective practice, curiosity, and respectful challenge.

Lead Practitioner: Presents relevant information and updates.

Participants: Contribute constructively, use evidence-informed practice, and avoid assumptions. Uphold anti-discriminatory, trauma-informed, and family-sensitive practice.

Model & Steps for group supervision

Practitioners will have different experience of supervision models. Within York Children’s Services, we use the Signs of Safety framework. Findings from the workforce survey (Dec 2025) showed that the group supervision model that respondents across the partnership reported the highest degree of familiarity and confidence with is Signs of Safety. This model invites curiosity while promoting learning and development, ensuring consistency in language and methodology.

This approach does not require participants to be experts in Signs of Safety; rather, it will provide a consistent model to build on existing strengths and confident within the system.

The key steps are as follows:

<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>	<u>Step 4</u>
Introductions Facilitator guides the worker to introduce themselves, their job role, their role in the case and how long they have carried it. It is important	Genogram The facilitator works with the lead practitioner to develop/ talk through a genogram that is simply a snapshot of the key players directly	Background of the Case Facilitator sets the timer for between 3 – 5 minutes and asks, “Tell me why this is an open case to child protection?” The facilitator does not speak again but	Worker’s Goal This is a mapping process. The facilitator asks the initial eliciting question, “what do you most want to get out of today’s session for your

that this step is not skipped even when the team know each other, often team colleagues don't know the worker's role or other details. This step is also important as it provides the opportunity for the case worker and facilitator relax into the process. Tip: Before starting Step 1, outline the roles of everyone in the room (facilitator, advisor, caseworker and observers) and group process rules for the session.	involved at this point in the case. The facilitator does this by leading with specific questions, role of the person (e.g., mother) name of the person (e.g., Jane) age of the person (e.g., 39). The lead practitioner only offers the information asked for – and does not offer comment on relationships or other dynamics. Genograms may be pre-prepared or developed live on the whiteboard and includes who lives with who. Tip: The facilitator leads with simple clear questions: "What is the mum's name?" "How old is she?" etc.	writes as much of the worker's exact words as possible. Only the case worker speaks until the timer ends. No extra time is given. If the worker takes less than 3 minutes the facilitator might ask "is there anything else?" Tip: The facilitator might summarise information back to confirm they recorded it accurately. This is NOT an opportunity for the worker to give more information!	case?", then uses the amplifying process to clearly establish the worker's goal. The Facilitator slows the worker down to ensure they can record verbatim, what the worker says, building their questions from the worker's responses, taking care to keep the worker focused on the question Tip: The workers goal will correspond with one of the Signs of Safety practice methods. The facilitators' role is to connect the goal with the relevant practice method and get the group working with the practice method. An example practice method might be to think about and write a safety goal, or to map out the harms matrix.
Step 5 Doing the Work Once the goal is established and the facilitator has confirmed the connection to the practice method with the worker (e.g., "It sounds like the best way to achieve your goal is to create questions to explore the middle column?") the group's work begins. The Facilitator has all group members, (including the facilitator), work individually to write down their best ideas related to	Step 6 Sharing Everyone's Best Ideas The facilitator leads the group in each person taking turns to share and read out their written work. The facilitator shares their work also. Once everyone has read their work the facilitator leads a conversation with the whole group, starting with the worker, focused on the question, "What is most valuable/what is you biggest learning listening to everyone's ideas?" Once everyone has shared their ideas,	Step 7 Demonstration (*This step is optional and time dependant) If there is time the facilitator can demonstrate' the practice method with the worker to deepen the learning of the work and the group. If for example the task has been to create middle column questions, the facilitator takes 15 minutes to map the middle column with the worker as a demonstration of asking questions and amplifying. If the task was to write a scaling question,	Step 8 Reflections and Learning Once steps 5 to 7 are complete, the facilitator asks the group to take 2 or 3 minutes working individually to write their reflections about, "Your biggest learning from the work we have just done". Once the time is up everyone reads out their reflections in turn. If time allows, the facilitator may choose to amplify some of the reflections. Tip: Someone saying, "I enjoyed hearing from my colleagues" is not learning, and the facilitator

the worker's goal (e.g., writing existing strengths and existing safety questions). The facilitator decides an appropriate time frame (usually between five and seven minutes) Tip: There are no 'passengers' in the room, everyone attending must participate	they hand their written work to the worker (or send to them electronically). Tip: The facilitator's role is to create a space where everyone feels comfortable to share their work, regardless of their experience	then the demonstration would be of the scaling process with the worker. Tip: To further deepen skills and practice, the facilitator can invite one of the supervision participants (not the lead practitioner) to lead the demonstration while the facilitator acts as the advisor.	should gently and firmly push for a more detailed response, focused on what the individual learned from 'hearing from' their colleagues.
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It is recognised that professionals across varied agencies may also use group supervision within their own setting and extend invitations to other professionals. Multi-agency group supervision hosted by children's services is not intended to replace other opportunities for group or individual supervision.

Principles of Safe Group Supervision

- **Respectful Practice:** The facilitator will remind participants of the structure and request silent working when needed. This is to create psychological safety and allow focused thinking time.
- **Active Listening:** All participants are expected to listen attentively and engage thoughtfully.
- **Adherence to Structure:** No interruptions during discussion unless seeking clarification.
- **Clear Expectations:** The facilitator ensures everyone understands the steps and what to expect at the start of the meeting.
- **Value and Inclusion:** Every participant is a valued member of the group.
- **Open Contribution:** All contributions are welcomed—there are no "stupid" questions.

Outcomes

Group supervision is not a decision-making process and should not be treated as a strategy meeting. Its purpose is to support reflection, learning, and consistency in practice. If a disagreement arises during group supervision:

First Step: Discuss the issue with the facilitator to seek resolution.

If Unresolved: Follow the escalation policy to address the matter appropriately.

Version Control

V.1	Workforce Group (supervision task & finish group)	Beth Hudson Principal Social Worker Mark Lynam, North Yorkshire Police Ellie Edward, Children's Services Helen Pulleyn, ICB Angela Casterton TEWV	Dec 2025
V.2	Following review by SLT	Emily Noble, Head of Quality of Practice Beth Hudson	Jan 2026