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## Chapter 7: What is supervision?

We have already had the opportunity to touch on the thinking behind staff supervision. It is now necessary to take a more general view of the process and to understand the goals it is designed to achieve and the processes at work.

### What does supervision mean?

The place to start when thinking about supervision is of course a definition. This might seem like a rather straightforward point, but supervision in fact has very specific elements which we have to understand in order to understand its relationship to safeguarding. There are a number of available definitions on which to draw and they all include the same essential requirements for supervision.

- **Supervision is accountable:** This means that it clearly explains the actions and decisions of staff - both those who are being supervised and those who are doing the supervision - and that it is understandable to those outside of the process.
- **Supervision is supportive:** Supervision should, in its content and structure, support the work of the supervisee specifically and the work of the organisation in general.
- **Supervision provides oversight:** Supervision should assure the quality of the work undertaken by the supervisee.

## Appendix 1: Case study

### Supervision

Mary is a worker at your setting and she is attending her supervision meeting.

Kevin is Mary's key child.

You are discussing Mary's key children one by one and come to Kevin in the list.

You ask Mary, *"Tell me about Kevin"*.

*(Worker describes situation unhindered.)*

Mary says, *"Kevin has just started attending the setting; he is three years old, he attends four mornings a week"*.

*(You leave a silent space for the worker to think about the information they have and to see if they will add anything unprompted. It is important to allow the worker time to consider what information to pass on and to decide what is important. Starting the questioning too soon can change the agenda in a way which prevents a focus being placed on observations which may be of concern with regards to the child's safety and welfare.)*

You ask, *"Is there anything important we need to note about Kevin?"*

*(Starting the questioning with an open and general question, which gives some structure to the worker's thinking, is a good way of giving a second chance to consider the observations they have made and think about the content of the report being given.)*