**Enabling effective and supportive supervision for development of advanced practitioners**

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Supervision is a familiar part of healthcare practice. At its best, scheduled supervision offers a safe space to share, explore, and resolve practice uncertainties with a focus on maintaining and promoting professional and public safety through continuous professional learning. Revans (2011, p5) observes ‘one may be cognitively aware of a need to behave differently and yet remain determined not to do so in practice’, while Maben, Cornwell and Sweeney (2010 p11) point out that ‘Really relating to patients takes courage, humility and compassion, it requires constant renewal by practitioners and recognition, re-enforcement and support from colleagues and managers.’ Making and taking opportunities to share, reflect on, and examine our everyday practices with a skilful supervisor ensure we spot and seek to resolve uncertainties as well as recognising and building on successes for our own and patient benefit (Harding 2019; Eraut 1994). We are familiar with the ways in which supervision can support our uncertainties whilst developing in traditional uni-professional roles as pre-registrant students, but beyond initial registration, progression into multi-professional advanced practice roles has created further uncertainties about what supervision is required, who can appropriately provide it, and how we should develop and prepare supervisors to support development and ongoing practice at advanced level.

The publication of the (2017) *Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England* by Health Education England prompted discussion about what supervision was needed to ensure the safe development of a multi-professional workforce to advanced level practice. Following extensive consultation with educator, practitioner, and employer stakeholders, in 2020 the Centre for Advancing Practice produced guidance for *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice*. This guidance sets out details of seven fundamental considerations for supervision of those developing in advanced practice: Practice context; Competence and capability; Multiple professional registrations; Individual learning plan; Professional development and transition; Integrated approach; and Supervisor development.

The Centre for Advancing Practice (2020) *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice* guidance prompts consideration of supervision arrangements for advanced practice trainees from the outset, as part of the initial workforce planning for developing their roles.  Integrating supervision in advanced practice planning is further highlighted in the Centre for Advancing Practice (2022a) *Governance Maturity Matrix*, which further strengthens the case for that integration by drawing attention to employer responsibilities for advanced practice in the provision of training, professional development, and supervision with reference to regulations 12 and 18 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

As the Centre for Advancing Practice (2020) *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice* guidance suggests, to understand what supervision is required and who can provide it, there needs to be consideration of the practice context in which the advanced practitioner will be working which then helps to identify the necessary advanced level capabilities. Increasingly, area specific advanced level capabilities are set out in the Centre’s approach to multi-professional credentials in England (Centre for Advancing Practice 2022b) and specialty frameworks for advanced practice such as those of the [Royal College of Emergency Medicine](https://rcem.ac.uk/emergency-care-advanced-clinical-practitioners/) (2019). Supervision will also need to take account of multi-professional factors including how different professions in the same cohort of advanced practice trainees will have different learning needs by virtue of their qualifying profession, which integrally informs their discrete future practice as advanced practitioners. Supervision will need to support these individual learning needs as well as guiding the trainee through the acknowledged socio-professional challenges which accompany transition to advanced practice (Murphy and Mortimer, 2020; Moran and Nairn, 2018).

Supervision of advancing practice will, as [Proctor (2001)](https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203843437.ch3) describes, include formative (teaching style supervision), normative (co-monitor style supervision), and restorative (colleague style supervision) dimensions. The Centre for Advancing Practice therefore encourages an integrated approach to supervision of advanced practitioner trainees. This integrated approach has similarity with the approach adopted in the UK to support post-graduate medical specialty trainees but recognises that trainees in advanced practice are experienced registered professionals who are progressing towards advanced level practice not only in the clinical pillar of practice but also in the leadership and management, research, and education pillars. That integrated approach recommends each trainee has a coordinating education supervision who supports the practitioner throughout that period of advanced practice development with additional supervision from associate workplace supervisors who provide specified aspects of development across the pillars. Additionally, the Centre’s (2022c) *Minimum standards for supervision*, an *Employer’s advanced practice supervision action plan*, *Supervisor readiness checklist*, and *Readiness to become an advanced practitioner* are further resources which accompany the Centre’s (2020) *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice* guidance.

Colleagues reasonably point out that it can be hard enough finding one supervisor. An alternative proposition is to question whether traditional supervision models make being a supervisor unrealistically onerous by behaving as if one person can be omni-skilful in supporting the diverse range of possible concerns any given practitioner might bring to supervision. Considering the overlapping formative, normative and restorative dimensions of the most cited supervision model (Proctor 2001) how often is a supervisor sufficiently adept and agile to support all dimensions and the many ways in which they intertwine? More important is that supervisors are alert to all dimensions, knowing when to signpost to other supervisors or psychological support, not least because as registered professionals, supervisors should be satisfied that the supervisory support required is within their own scope of practice. For supervisors to maintain critical control of their supervisory practice brings us full circle to the need for them to engage in supervision and education development as described in their own learning plan and hence, the final fundamental factor in the Centre for Advancing Practice (2020) *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice* guidance is supervisor development, something which has too often been left to chance across the healthcare system.

 Advanced practice has drawn attention to several practices which have become taken-for-granted in healthcare. Supervision is perhaps a really striking example. Colleagues across the professions are familiar with supervision, knowing it forms part of our respective regulators’ standards of proficiency (General Pharmaceutical Council 2017, Nursing and Midwifery Council 2018, Health and Care Professions Council 2023). Yet for many, developing as a supervisor is seldom a professional development priority. Given the vital role of supervision in maintaining both professional and public safety throughout a career in healthcare from support worker to consultant level, developing supervisor capability is something we should all take more seriously. To be at its best, supervision needs capable, effective supervisors; becoming a capable effective supervisor is the product of ongoing professional development of the education pillar.

We have ground to make up across the system in supervisor development and need to see investment in the development of supervisor capability from early career and beyond. The Centre for Advancing Practice (2023) *Advanced Practice Supervisor Capabilities* guidance proposes dimensions of supervisor capability as guiding principles for supervisor learning and development which are applicable for supervision across all levels of practice alongside capabilities which are specific to each dimension in the advanced practice context. The dimensions of supervisor capability are: Purpose of supervision; Supervision model and approaches; Models and theories of learning skills and acquisition; Critical reflection; Feedback and facilitation; Practitioner/Learner/Supervisee focus; Conducive learning environment; Registrant responsibility; Multi-professional considerations; Registrant responsibility; Multi-professional considerations; and Fair, valid, reliable assessment.

Investing in professional development for supervisors will have benefits beyond growing and sustaining a safe and effective advanced practice workforce. It offers the best opportunity for ensuring greater supervisor awareness and skill in creating the favourable conditions necessary for effective supervision (Rothwell et al, 2021), essential for supporting navigating professional practice which, as Bjorbaekmo et al (2018, p18) note is ‘a movement back and forth between supporting and letting oneself be supported; between confronting and being confronted; between pushing and being pushed’.

To be at its best, supervision needs capable, effective supervisors. Much as we develop our clinical capabilities over time and via a range of professional development activities, approaches to learning and practice experiences, so too our supervisor capabilities. The time has come for all registered practitioners who provide and receive supervision for any level of practice to acquire, evidence and maintain supervision knowledge, skills, and behaviours through ongoing engagement in supervisor focused professional development. In fulfilling their responsibilities, employers should seek to ensure supervisors across the workforce have protected time in job plans. Both employers and registrants should strive to identify learning needs, perhaps via regular appraisal and encourage access to a range of development opportunities including short courses, university modules, webinars, peer review, and supervisee feedback. The recruitment of supervisors for advanced practitioner trainees has more recently developed on multi-professional basis to be inclusive of experienced practitioners working at advanced and consultant levels of practice alongside medical colleagues, which in part has been stimulated by multi-professional supervision developing beyond medicine through initiatives such as the incept of designated prescribing practitioners for supervising development of prescribing capabilities (Royal Pharmaceutical Society 2019), as a facet of enhanced and advanced practice for many practitioners.

In the national context of advanced practice developments across the 7 NHS regions, the Centre for Advancing Practice and its associated regional faculties for advancing practice support the implementation of effective supervision in provider organisations through providing financial support for enabling the supervision and assessment of both NHS England funded and apprenticeship funded advanced practitioner trainees engaged in work-based learning of advanced practice across all NHS commissioned services. This dedicated funding is intended to create time and resources for supervision, and to enable an organisational culture of valuing the supervision of advanced practitioner trainees. This funding also helps recognise the unique perspective of advanced practitioner trainees as experienced registrant health practitioners from a variety of professions who retain their qualifying registration, are both an employee and a learner, and have discrete individual learning needs according to their prior experience as registrants, whilst needing to navigate uncertainty in their transition to advanced level practice.

Effectual strategies for supervision of advanced practitioners and further improving the capabilities of their supervisors are essential for expanding the advanced practitioner workforce for future transformation of the delivery of health and care services; the Centre for Advancing Practice and the regional faculties for advancing practice continue to work with colleagues across our networks and systems to enable those transformative strategies to evolve successfully, ensuring the advanced practitioner workforce can effectively expedite access to care and improve experiences and outcomes for patients, carers, and families.

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