

## **APPENDIX 17 – SUPERVISION**

### **What is Supervision?**

The key features of supervision are:

- (1) To review and account for work.
- (2) To plan and prioritise work.
- (3) To be supported in the work.
- (4) To receive feedback about the work and to give feedback.
- (5) To periodically identify training and development needs in relation to work.

### **Objectives of Supervision**

Supervision should seek to meet the needs of the job and of the individual performing the duties of the job. The former refers to whether or not staff are performing the duties to an acceptable standard in order to achieve NICVA's aims and objectives. This is the aspect of supervision that is concerned with accounting for work and planning ahead. Meeting the needs of the individual involves ensuring that training and development needs are met in order that staff can perform well in their role. NICVA is concerned with recognising the importance of providing an environment where staff can develop in their work, explore concerns, and get support and feedback when they are experiencing difficulties.

### **Features of Supervision**

#### **(1) Frequency**

Supervision at NICVA will happen at least once every eight to ten weeks. This will predominantly focus on reviewing and accounting for work as well as planning and prioritising work. Any issues of a disciplinary nature must be dealt with accordingly and in line with NICVA's disciplinary procedure. Supervision may be used however as a way of monitoring corrective behaviour. In this instance supervision may occur more regularly. It will be the line manager's responsibility to arrange and ensure supervision happens. Dates should be set in advance by the line manager and ideally sessions for throughout the year should be planned at the beginning of the year so that the time is allocated in both the supervisor's and supervisee's diaries. Changing or cancelling supervision can indicate a lack of commitment and must be avoided.

#### **(2) Duration**

Line managers shall allocate a reasonable period of time for each supervision session (normally two hours). The session must begin and end on time to allow for individual work schedules.

#### **(3) Location and statement on interruptions**

Supervision should ideally be held in a quiet and uninterrupted space. Both supervisor and supervisee should agree that the venue is conducive to this. Due to practicalities, the venue may change from session to session.

**(4) Method of Supervision**

Supervision will be on a one to one basis; however it can sometimes be three way in a job-share situation or where two part-time staff share one role. An agenda will be drawn up for each session that is either determined in advance or drawn up at the beginning of each meeting. Both manager and employee shall contribute to this agenda. At the start of each supervisory relationship a format for each session should be agreed which will include how you plan to put the session together.

**(5) Recording of Supervision**

It will be the responsibility of the line manager to ensure notes of the session are taken and agreed. Recording decisions and action at supervision is essential. Notes provide continuity to the process and offer a point of reference to be used as the basis for the annual appraisal process. Notes should be written up as soon as possible after the session and preferably within one week. The notes should be recorded by supervisor and supervisee in turn.

**(6) Confidentiality**

A record of each supervision session will be retained on the individual's personnel file. Usually only the manager and the member of staff concerned see supervision notes. In disciplinary and capability situations, supervision will be seen by other managers and the Human Resources Unit. The Human Resources Officer will have access to supervision notes for the purposes of ensuring consistency in the organisation (refer to (9) - Monitoring).

**(7) Ongoing Support**

Each supervision session shall link back to discussion and decisions made in the previous session, hence the importance of maintaining notes. Line managers will have ongoing and informal contact with staff between sessions that may be picked up on in the formal sessions. Line managers may also have meetings with staff in between formal sessions to discuss specific pieces of work.

Lack of supervision or irregular supervision can result in a breakdown in the relationship, poor communication and a lack of clarity in the work programme which in turn can result in a lack of development in the role which can be the source of demotivation and mediocre performance.

**(8) Linking supervision to other organisational processes**

Supervision is a continuous process of management and support and it is the responsibility of the line manager to reinforce this in supervision sessions. Other key processes include the organisation's appraisal and planning process.

Discussions in supervision will sometimes refer back to an individual's appraisal meeting, for example progress against targets or the meeting of development needs can be reviewed.

## **(9) Monitoring**

Line managers must advise the Human Resources Officer of agreed dates for supervision sessions for all staff and forward copies of notes of these sessions to be retained on the employee's personnel file. The Human Resources Unit will monitor whether the supervision sessions take place for all staff as per NICVA's supervision procedure. The Human Resources Officer will monitor notes of supervision meetings to ensure consistency across the organisation.

## **Format of Supervision**

### **(1) Introduction**

The following are important elements of supervision and need to be covered. The order in which they appear may vary according to individual styles and approaches. The important thing is to discuss and agree the format to be adopted in advance (Supervision Agreement can be obtained from Human Resources).

### **(2) Agreeing an agenda**

Once a format has been agreed, the line manager will then need to agree the specific items to be discussed particularly under (6) and (7) as these items will be where most time is spent.

### **(3) Overview**

This is an opportunity at the beginning of the session for the line manager to reflect on the previous period of time and say how it has been.

### **(4) Feedback to staff member**

The line manager will give feedback to the staff member on observations made about the positive and negative aspects of their work since the previous session. Thinking about this in advance is important as it enables the line manager to be more specific about observations of someone's work.

### **(5) Feedback from the staff member**

The line manager should invite feedback from the staff member on how they feel they have performed since the last session. The line manager should encourage them to look at areas of work they are particularly pleased about as well as areas where improvement might be made.

## **(6) Review work done**

Log/acknowledge work done over the last month. Depending on the situation or work area, this may involve discussing some of the work to identify strengths, weaknesses and possible future opportunities.

## **(7) Account for work**

Supervision is where staff formally account for the work they have done and where the line manager ensures that they are working to satisfactory standards. This will involve checking that specific work has been completed and keeping up to date with other work progress.

## **(8) Plan and prioritise work for the next session**

Discuss what needs to be done in the next six weeks, either new work or continuing work, what takes priority and what can wait? What is the source of the work, ie is it planned or unplanned work? Staff will look to the line manager to give them some direction as to what is essential and what can wait. Staff may come back to their line manager to renegotiate priorities. It is best that they do this and have a realistic work programme than go away from supervision with priorities they cannot deliver. If there is disagreement this will need to be discussed and resolved.

### **Summary of an Employee's Responsibilities**

- (1) To prepare for the session and contribute to the agenda.
- (2) To do what was agreed in the last session.
- (3) To think about supervision before they attend, what they want to discuss, get out of the session, etc.
- (4) To tackle difficulties if they arise in the arrangements for the supervision or the relationship.

### **Summary of a Manager's Responsibilities**

- (1) To prepare for the session, check notes and consider feedback to the employee.
- (2) To supervise staff in a planned and structured way every six weeks.
- (3) To listen, respond and give adequate time to an employee.
- (4) To agree date, time and venue for supervision in advance.
- (5) To tackle difficulties if they arise in the arrangements for the supervision or the relationship.

## **Summary of NICVA's Human Resources Unit's Responsibilities**

- (1) To provide advice and guidance to managers on the conduct of supervision.
- (2) To arrange for appropriate supervision training for managers and staff.
- (3) To advise managers and new staff at induction of NICVA's supervision arrangements.
- (4) To monitor practice to ensure that supervision takes place in a consistent manner.
- (5) To advise on/act on training needs and requests that come out of supervision.

## **Dealing with Difficulties**

- (1) However difficult, confront the problem, talk about it, don't avoid it.
- (2) Pinpoint specifically what the problem is and discuss how it might be constructively overcome.
- (3) Do not wait for the supervision session to occur if problems arise, try to arrange a meeting earlier if matters are particularly tense.
- (4) Look at what each party is doing to contribute to the situation.
- (5) Acknowledge if the particular difficulty or problems lies with you.
- (6) If supervision is not happening regularly or satisfactorily, employees are encouraged to raise the matter with the Human Resources Unit.

All documents relating to supervision will be kept by Human Resources.