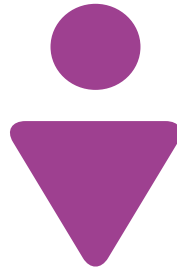




SUPERVISION IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS IN SERBIA





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CENTAR ZA INTEGRACIJU MLADIH

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“My supervisor supported me to recognize the strengths of one family with which I worked for a long time when it seemed that there were no more positive aspects. It was a question of whether the Center for social work would separate children from the family. With the support of supervisors, new strengths came at the first place and the family remained together.”

Participant in the research

Introduction



This report provides the findings from a mixed-methods study of supervision for professionals working in multidisciplinary child protection teams in Serbia. Data were collected as part of a regional survey of supervision in multidisciplinary teams in the scope of ChildHub project. Regional research has covered seven countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia). This report presents national context, situation and challenges as well as examples of good practice in the application of supervision in Serbia.

The holder of the research for Serbia is The Center for Youth Integration (CYI) as a local partner organization that coordinates the implementation of ChildHub project Serbia, from the very beginning. The Center for Youth Integration is an association of citizens based in Belgrade, founded in 2004. CIM is an organization that initiates, implements and supports responsible social change with the aim of increasing the level of social inclusion of children and youth from marginalized communities. It is oriented towards the protection of the rights of the child, through the implementation of programs that contribute to the respect of the best interests of the child and the implementation of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Utilising existing services and professional connections within the Child Protection Hub network, this project aims to explore different understandings, standards, and challenges of supervision faced by social workers and other child protection professionals involved in multidisciplinary casework with children and families. The aims of the project were to:

- Provide a snapshot of supervision for child protection professionals working in multidisciplinary team settings.
- Explore the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of child protection professionals regarding supervision.
- Identify key factors that hinder and promote supervision practices in multidisciplinary team contexts.
- Identify good practices in supervision.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening supervision in Serbia.

This research was conducted by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE), part of Cardiff University, and within the framework of the Child Protection Hub project, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, Oak Foundation and Terre des hommes. All views expressed in the report are that of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the above-mentioned donors.

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1

Overview of country situation and purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed look at the findings and recommendations from the project in relation to Serbia. A regional report has also been produced, which compares between the seven different countries. Here, the focus is on respondents from Serbia in particular, and what the findings mean for the Serbian context.

There is no universal definition of supervision, but the authors agree that supervision is a complex process that contributes to improving and maintaining the quality of work, improving practice and the professional development of supervisors and supervisees. Different definitions emphasize different goals aimed at supervisees and beneficiaries of the social protection system. Some of the goals that supervision achieves are learning from experience, steering, guiding and developing and professional acceptance. The adaptation of supervision to the context in which it is conducted and the clearly identified needs of the supervisees are crucial for the quality of supervision. (Branković, Šarac and Živanović, 2017).

Supervision is widely considered to be the cornerstone of good social work and child protection practice, and there is a remarkable degree of consensus about how it should function, and its myriad benefits (Beddoe and Wilkins, 2019). Having regular access to supportive and effective supervision is said to result in more positive outcomes for the worker, the wider organisation, and for children and families involved with services. These include emotional support and enhanced wellbeing for the worker (Mor Barak et al., 2009), greater retention of staff within the organisation (Renner et al., 2009; Chiller and Crisp, 2012), and more empathic, collaborative and purposeful practice with families (Bostock et al., 2019; Wilkins et al., 2018).

The key actors in the supervision process are the supervisor and the supervisee(s). The supervisor should have a good knowledge of theory and practice of social work, experience in provision of support and be the one who points out new opportunities and insights (Panić, Branković, 2011). In addition, supervisor should be a creative teacher of new skills, person of trust in the working environment and leader in empowering the supervisee as a professional (Panić, Branković, 2011; Branković, Šarac and Živanović, 2017). On the other hand, supervisee should be a professional who is ready to face difficulties and challenges in work, to learn and professionally develop himself, to take a positive attitude towards supervisor and contributes to a building supervisory relationship that will be based on honesty and openness. The supervisory relationship is crucial for evaluating supervision as positive (Hughes, 2010).

Supervision is crucial for the personal and professional development of a social worker and plays a key role in good social work practice and contributes to:

- development of self-confidence, professional competencies and stress reduction and empowerment in supervisees.
- development of self-awareness, attitudes and aspirations for the purpose of professional action.
- improvement of mental health and self-care
- quality control of work, which reduces the possibility of exposure to major risks, which benefits both the supervisor and the supervisor.
- increasing job satisfaction
- development of more efficient strategies in working with beneficiaries
- creation of new perspectives in working with different clients (Ajduković et al. 2016).

In Serbia, the Strategy for the Development of Social Protection (2005) introduced a strategic commitment to the development of professional capacity in the field of child protection. This included a recognition of supervision as an important component within the wider system of child welfare. In 2008, further guidance was introduced (Methods of Case Management and Supervision in Centres for Social Work), in which supervision is described as having various functions, including - support and professional development, monitoring, promoting professional responsibility and ensuring safe and effective services.

A comparative study of four countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey – found that the introduction of this case management guidance in Serbia could help improve services and lead to a higher quality of work (Žegarac, 2017). However, an evaluative study of supervision conducted more recently found that whether child protection workers received regular, occasional or no supervision made little difference to their experience of secondary traumatic stress or vicarious traumatisation (Borjanić Bolić, 2019). This finding was explained by reference to the general absence of relational and emotionally supportive supervision in the country, and the predominance of an administrative model instead.

The analysis of the documents identified that there is no separate policy document related to supervision in the area of child protection. Two documents are important for regulation of the field of supervision in general in the social protection system. The first one is Rulebook on organization, norms and standards of work of the centre for social work and the second is Rulebook on foster care. The first Rulebook defines for the first time the concept of supervision and supervisor and introduces case management as an approach to working with individuals and families. With the introduction of this approach, supervision has gained in importance. In addition, this document defines a purpose of supervision, how supervision makes a difference for professionals and beneficiaries and establish conditions that a professional must meet to have the role of supervisor. This document doesn't define dynamic of supervisory meetings but it states that supervisor must be involved in all phases of case management approach - in the assessment, planning process, review of the plan and case closure. The Rulebook on organization, norms and standards of work of the centre for social work points out that supervisor prepares a progress report on the work of the case manager and proposes a plan for additional trainings, but it doesn't define how supervisory meeting are recorded.

The second Rulebook is only for child protection professionals engaged in Centres for Foster Care and Adoption. This document doesn't define the concept of supervision or the purpose of supervision in child protection. There is only determination of who can be a supervisor and the number of supervisees for which one supervisor is in charge.

The legal framework of supervision has been defined according to the Anglo-Saxon model of supervision which is predominantly applied in the social protection system in Serbia. This model includes three different functions of supervision: development - educational, administrative, and supportive, but in the practice, there is a high number of beneficiaries for whom one case manager or counselor for foster care is in charge. Counting this, the dominant function of supervision is administrative in order to monitor the quality of work of the supervisee, timeliness, etc. (Veljković, 2019). On the other hand, in the residential care institutions, there is no established position of supervisor and there is no defined legal framework for the implementation of supervision.

The handbook for practitioners "From problem to opportunities in case management" is aimed at professionals in centres for social workers who apply the case management approach. This handbook writes about supervision, but the focus is on supervision during the case management approach. It is mainly for child protection professionals but is not specifically intended for them. This document envisages that supervisory meetings address topics related to different areas of the case management approach. The supervisor is involved in the assessment, planning process, plan revision, case closure, etc. There are also specific situations in which the role of the supervisor is emphasized. These include abuse, neglect, and domestic violence. In addition, through the analysis of this handbook, it can be seen that decisions made in the process of supervision should be an important part of the beneficiaries' file and should be recorded (Žegarac, 2016).

Through analysis of these three documents it can be seen that supervision in Serbia is recognized, but there is still space for improvement of supervision both in terms of policy and practice.

Methodology

2

Data collection within this research was conducted according to the methodology obtained from a lead researcher. This study adopted an observational and exploratory design and used a mixture of different methods to provide a snapshot of supervision in multidisciplinary child protection teams across seven different countries in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The study was organised into four work packages, running concurrently to complete the research within the required timeframe (between the start of February and the end of March 2022). The study was led by the lead researcher, based in the UK, working with a team of local researchers and Country Associates, who were responsible for recruitment and data collection, as well as making a significant contribution to data analysis, writing the individual country reports and having input into the regional report as well.

Data collection was organised into four work streams, as follows:

1. A brief desktop analysis of supervision policies and procedures
2. Interviews with key stakeholders
3. An online survey of managers and frontline workers in multidisciplinary child protection teams
4. A q-study and follow-up interviews of managers and frontline workers in multidisciplinary child protection teams

Work stream 1 – desktop analysis

2.1

The first work-stream involved a desktop review of existing policy and guidance. Local researchers, working with their country associates, were tasked with obtaining at least one example of a written policy and / or guidance document, for analysis in relation to the stated aims and purpose of supervision for child protection professionals. Using their own judgement, local researchers and country associates selected the most relevant documents and analysed them the aim of this work stream was to help understand the policy context for supervision within each country.

2.1.1 Work stream 2 – key stakeholder interviews

The second work-stream involved interviews with key stakeholders, for example senior managers in child and family-related services, to explore their understandings and conceptions of supervision for frontline staff in multidisciplinary and child protection teams. An interview schedule was developed for use in all seven countries, composed of nine qualitative questions, and an additional five questions for key stakeholders who themselves had direct experience of providing supervision. The interview schedule was developed by the lead author and used in a consistent way in all the key interviews. Local researchers were able to add additional questions as needed, to respond to what the interviewee said and / or to explore local nuances in relation to the policy and practice of supervision.

2.2 Work stream 3 – online survey

The third work-stream involved an online survey, conducted via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com), distributed via an anonymous, emailed link to supervisors and frontline staff in multidisciplinary and child protection teams. The survey was available in English, as well as Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian or Serbian. The translation of the survey from English into the other languages was completed by the local researchers and Country Associates.

At the start of the survey, respondents were asked to provide basic information about their personal and professional demographics (age range, gender, working pattern and environment, professional background), and provided with the same definition and description of supervision as used in the key stakeholder interviews. Respondents were then asked a screening question, about their own experience of either providing or receiving supervision. Those who provided supervision were asked questions in relation to their experiences of being a supervisor. Those who received supervision were asked questions in relation to their experiences of being a supervisee. If respondents said they both received and provided supervision, they were asked questions in relation to being a supervisor. Those who said they neither provided nor received supervision were asked questions about their attitudes and beliefs in relation to supervision, rather than their own direct experience of it.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide data on the provision and nature of their supervision (and / or what they would prefer), for example the frequency and length of supervision sessions, and to complete three standardised instruments - the Helpful Aspects of Supervision Questionnaire (Wheeler and Barkham, 2014), the Leeds Alliance in Supervision Scale (Wainwright, 2010) and the Supervisory Working Alliance (Efstation et al., 1990; Patton, 1992). Respondents were also asked several open-ended questions in relation to their best experiences of supervision, their views on how supervision makes a difference for them and for families they work with, and in relation to barriers and facilitators of effective

supervision. There were some minor variations between the surveys used in each country, mostly to reflect local vernacular in relation to job roles.

This report presents only the results for Serbia and does not reflect localized interpretations of the data for other countries involved in regional research.

Work stream 4 – q-study and follow-up interviews

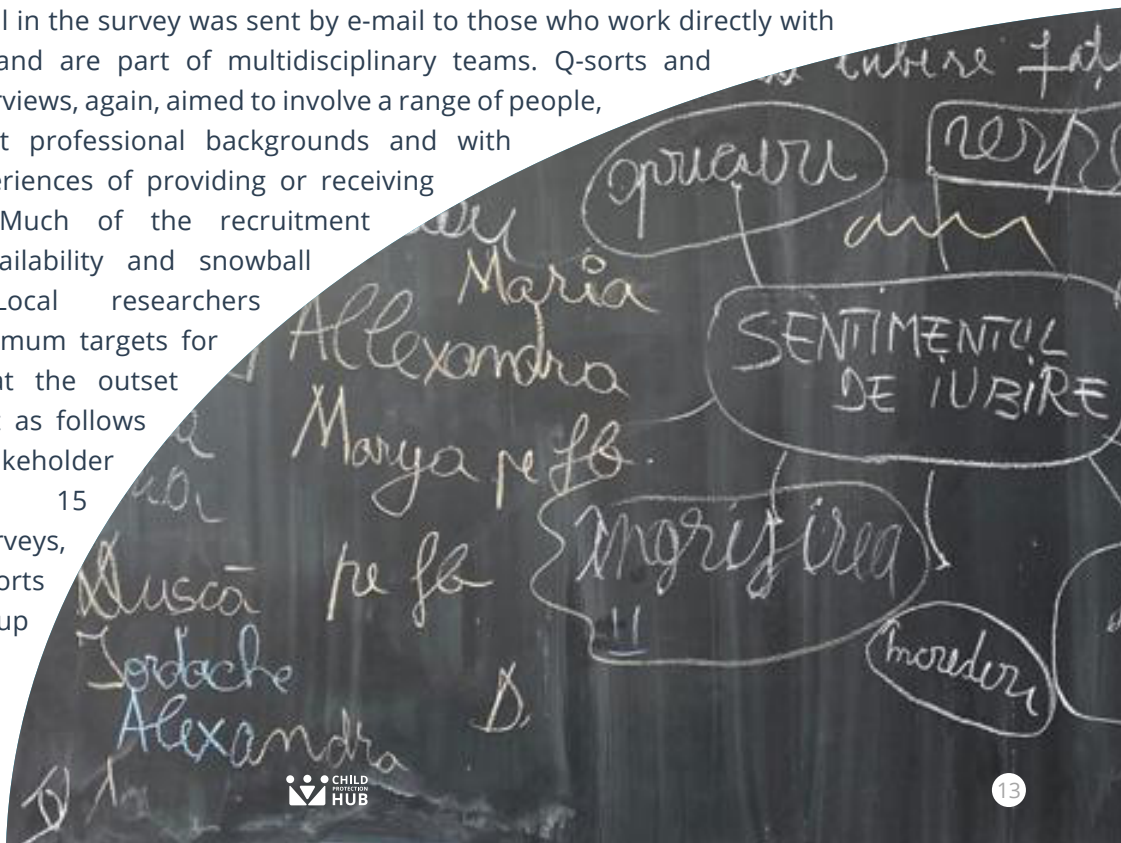
2.3

The final work stream involved a Q-study and follow-up interviews with supervisors and frontline professionals. Q-studies represent an especially useful method for exploring subjectivity, with a focus on the views, opinions, preferences, and beliefs of respondents. Taking part in a Q-study involves reviewing a list of statements and sorting them using a normalised distribution grid from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The way the statements are sorted represents the respondent's subjective view about the topic. Alongside the sorting task, respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions to explore their response to the different statements.

Sampling

2.4

Sampling was conducted on a pragmatic and purposeful basis (Robertson and Sibley, 2018; Suri, 2011). Key stakeholder interviews aimed to involve a range of people from different professional backgrounds, to ensure variability in the data collected. It was important to get views from stakeholders who work in different institutions as well as those who are not in direct contact with beneficiaries to ensure a diversity of perspectives related to both practice and policies. Sampling for the survey aimed to reach as many professionals across the country. The invitation to fill in the survey was sent by e-mail to those who work directly with beneficiaries and are part of multidisciplinary teams. Q-sorts and follow-up interviews, again, aimed to involve a range of people, from different professional backgrounds and with different experiences of providing or receiving supervision. Much of the recruitment relied on availability and snowball sampling. Local researchers were set minimum targets for recruitment at the outset of the project as follows – five key stakeholder interviews, 15 completed surveys, and five Q-sorts and follow-up interviews



3

Findings

The sample of this research consisted of a total of 30 respondents from different professions and roles in the social protection system. A total of 5 interviews with key stakeholders were conducted, 5 Q interview methods, and 20 participants took part in completing the online questionnaire. In order to get a clearer picture of the policies determining supervision in Serbia, three documents were analysed – two Rulebooks and one handbook for practitioners (Rulebook on organization, norms and standards of work of the centre for social work; Rulebook on foster care; “From problems to opportunities in Case Management- handbook for practitioners”). The research sample is also shown in Table no. 1 while table no. 2 shows the distribution of the sample related to gender.

Table 2: Distribution of sample in relation to gender

	Key information interviews	Survey	Q-method and follow-up interviews
Number	5	20	5

Table 2: Distribution of sample in relation to gender

	Total	Male	Female	Self- described survey participants
Number	30	5	23	2

3.1 Results of key informant interviews

Key stakeholder interviews involved five interviews with key stakeholders from different institutions, from centres for social work, residential care institutions, OCD, and university. The research aimed to include representatives from practices and policy level, so respondents are engaged in different positions. Some of them are in the position of supervisor, but all of them are involved in direct work with beneficiaries. There is one specific situation in the practice of supervision in Serbia, which means that, for example in Centre for social work, one professional has the role of supervisor and the case manager at the same time. Also, in residential care institutions, there isn't a separate work position for a supervisor. A person who works directly with children is involved in the role of supervisor. All of them are members of multidisciplinary teams.

At the start of each interview, the local researcher provided a standard definition and description of supervision, as follows:

"A process which aims to support, assure and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised (the supervisee). It provides accountability for both the supervisor and supervisee in exploring practice and performance. It sits alongside an organisation's performance management process with a particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for people who use services and their carers."

Respondents gave different opinions about this definition. The respondent from the center for social work mostly agreed with this concept of supervision but also recognized that, in practice, focus is on control and the administrative function of supervision. A respondent from residential care institution said that her experience is different and that focus is more on support and prevention of burnout through supervision. All of them see supervision as a possibility for the development of knowledge, practical skills and competencies for direct working with beneficiaries. But, at the same time, they recognize that there are not enough possibilities for practice supervision. In addition, all respondents recognized that model of supervision which is implemented in Serbia isn't very useful because its focus is mostly on administrative function instead of educative, developmental and supportive.

History of the development of supervision in Serbia

3.1.1

All respondents agree on history of the development of supervision in national context. They stated that supervision started to apply in the early 2000s. Before that period supervision was organized spontaneously. In the centers for social work the official implementation started in 2008. with the introduction of case management approach. In institutions for residential care, supervision started in the early 2000s, but unfortunately, they still don't have a position of supervisor defined in the job catalog. Besides this, there is no national legislation about supervision in institutions such as residential care institutions. The centers for foster care and adoption started with supervision in 2008. when these institutions were founded.

Importance of supervision in child care system and challenges in the realization

3.1.2

All respondents recognized importance of supervision in the context of working with vulnerable children in the social protection system. They recognized that it is necessary because professionals who work with children need to make a good and quality assessment and organize quality support for those who need it. Respondents realized that supervision helps them to improve their work with beneficiaries, but that it is also important in the context of supporting and recognizing their feelings and preventing vicarious trauma. They told that it is necessary and it means a lot to professionals.

Respondents pointed out the importance to preserve both the quality of work and the interest of beneficiaries. It is also especially important in the context of prevention of burnout syndrome among employees, especially since they are overburdened with the number of cases they work with (especially in the center for social work). They also see the importance of supervision in strengthening teams that are working with children and families. This way of working helps to improve team relations, communication, cooperation, etc.

One of the respondents told about the need to improve the educational system for supervisors. Their role and duties are complex and they have need for better education. There is a rule that supervisors should finish education for supervisors, which lasts 5 days but there is no specialization for it.

In the interview is also recognized that in Serbia should be used different modalities of supervision. For example, group supervision could be very useful and constructive for solving problems in work with children and their families, education of supervisees, solving team problems, etc. Respondent pointed out that it is not the same as the group therapy, but in some cases could be more powerful than individual supervision.

A difference was found in terms of supervision meetings. Namely, there is different dynamic of meetings between centre for social work, residential institutions and centre for foster care and adoption. In residential institutions, supervisees have monthly meetings. In the center for social work, they are referred to each other every day due to the nature of the work. They meet at least once or twice a week, and when a family crisis occurs the meetings are intensified.

The position of the supervisor is also complex regarding double burden – the role of a case manager or professional who work directly with beneficiaries and supervisor for professionals. In the center for social work, they have a “sandwich” position, between management and professionals. And both sides have demands that are not always conciliatory. Management is related to getting the job done, and professionals need support, understanding, and sometimes “protection” from management. They also talked about support and control in one person as a major obstacle to quality supervision. In addition, roles and responsibilities of supervisors are not clearly defined, especially in double role situations. They told that they don’t have enough time to prepare for meeting with professionals in the context of all duties and they stated that they need more external supervision as a kind of support.

3.1.3 Representation of supervision in policies

All respondents are aware of the main policies which regulate and define supervision in Serbia. But, they believe that it is necessary to improve the regulations because this area is not sufficiently regulated in our country, especially when we talk about institutions for child care and different service providers, such as NGOs. All respondents recognized that supervision needs to be a standard in work but also that there is a need for changing policies in this area.

Recommendations for improving supervision

3.1.4

Based on interviews conducted with key stakeholders, we came to the following recommendations:

- Having in mind the specifics of child protection, it is necessary to create a special policy that will deal exclusively with supervision in the field of child protection.
- Respondents recognized greater efficiency if group supervision is more used, and also if different modalities of supervision are used (supportive, creative, etc). It is also important to provide a more supportive and educational function of supervision, rather than a dominant administrative function.
- It is recognized that the supportive role of the supervisor should be separated from his/her control role.
- It is essential that the supervisor be independent and have no other role to be able to support, empower and take care of all phases of the case management process.
- Supervision needs to be available to all child protection professionals and external supervision for supervisors should be more accessible.
- To be able to successfully perform tasks from the role of supervisor, it is necessary to improve the system of education of supervisors.
- Supervision should be recognized as a standard in work for all - and for the center for social work and service providers and to be defined so.

Example of good practice in supervision

3.1.5

Despite some of the challenges outlined so far, the key informants we interviewed also identified some clear examples of good practice in supervision. One of the good practices in supervision is from residential care institution for children and youth from Belgrade. As it is mentioned, they established supervision in 2002. Before that, they didn't have supervision, only exchange between professionals. From 2018, they started with provision of external supervision. This institution have several organizational units and supervisor from one unit is in charge for another organizational unit. Usually, they are working in groups, monthly. The interesting thing is that there is no established workplace of supervisor in this institution, but they organize it in accordance with their awareness of the important of supervisor. They don't have one person who is only supervisor, but that person is at the same time supervisor and professional who work directly with children and youth. Supervision in this institution aims to develop skills, improve knowledge, empower, professionally support, resolve dilemmas, contribute to team development. All efforts to provide supervision are based on an understanding of the role of supervision and benefits for employees and beneficiaries.

All employees are involved in group supervision, not only professionals. For example, also nurses are included because they are also exposed to different types of challenges through direct work with children. This practice is sometimes challenging for supervisor, because it could affect the organization of the work of the supervisor in terms of transferring knowledge and skills because there are members of the group who are professionals and members who are not. But on the other hand, it is certainly important to have support for both. In that context, the burnout syndrome is prevented and the quality of work of all employees in the institution is increased, team members are more motivated to work and concerning their emotional well-being able to exercise good professional practice.

3.2 Survey results

The survey questionnaire was completed by 20 participants. The next sections will present general information about the respondents, their experience of supervision, views on the dynamics of supervision meetings, the purpose of supervision as well as views on how supervision should look like. Having in mind that the sample of the survey is 20 participants, data will be presented in numbers and not in percentages.

3.2.1 General information about respondents

Table 3: Age

	TOTAL	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Number of respondents	20	7	10	2	1

Table 4: Gender

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Self-described	Full-time working
Number of respondents	20	3	15	2	20

Table 5: Highest level of education

	TOTAL	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree
Number of respondents	20	11	8	1

Table 6: Area of practice

	Health	Social work / social care	NGO	Education	Other
Number of respondents	/	18	2	/	/

As Table no 3 indicates, half of the respondents are aged between 35 and 45, seven survey participants are aged 25-34 and only three of them are over 45 years old. Regarding gender, most of the respondents are women (15) and there were three men who completed the survey. Besides this, two persons preferred to self-describe their gender and their described themselves as “persistent and positive” and “dedicated person”. This is a fact that could be expected since the majority of employees in the social protection system in Serbia are women.

Looking at the highest level of education, data indicates that more than half respondents have Bachelor’s degree and that eight of them have master’s degree. Only one survey participants own doctoral degree. The results are not surprising since the work in the field of social protection in Serbia requires a completed faculty in the field of humanities (social work, psychology, pedagogy). One more important information about respondents was their area of practice. As can be seen from Table no 6, 18 respondents are from social work and social care practice and just two of them were from NGO. This distribution of respondents about the field of practice helped to identify what are the main characteristics of supervision in the area of social protection and child care in Serbia.

In close relation to the area of practice are current roles of professionals and Table no 7 presents those results.

Table 6: Area of practice

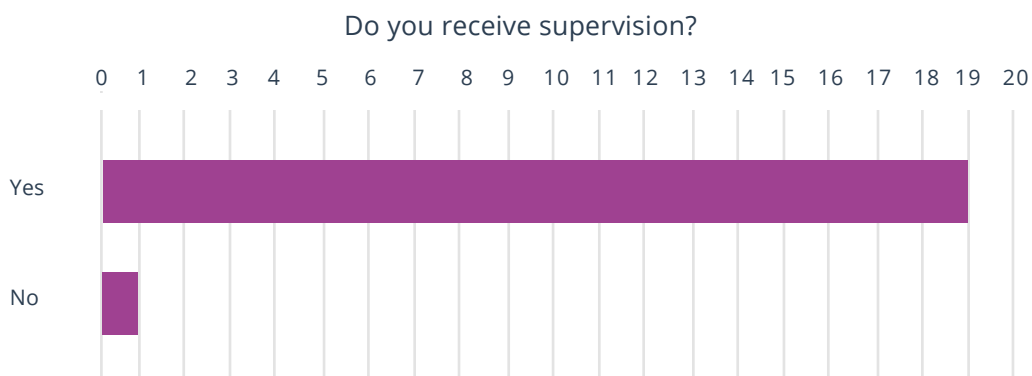
	TOTAL	Psychologist	Social worker	Social care/ family worker	Teacher	Other
Number of respondents	20	8	8	1	2	1

Table no 7 shows that the dominant roles of respondents are a psychologist or social workers, and they are equally represented in the sample. Two professionals have the role of teacher and we can assume that they are in the role of a professional associate in the social protection system. One survey participant chose an option other, but didn’t explain the role. All those professionals work directly with children and families.

3.2.2 Experience of supervision

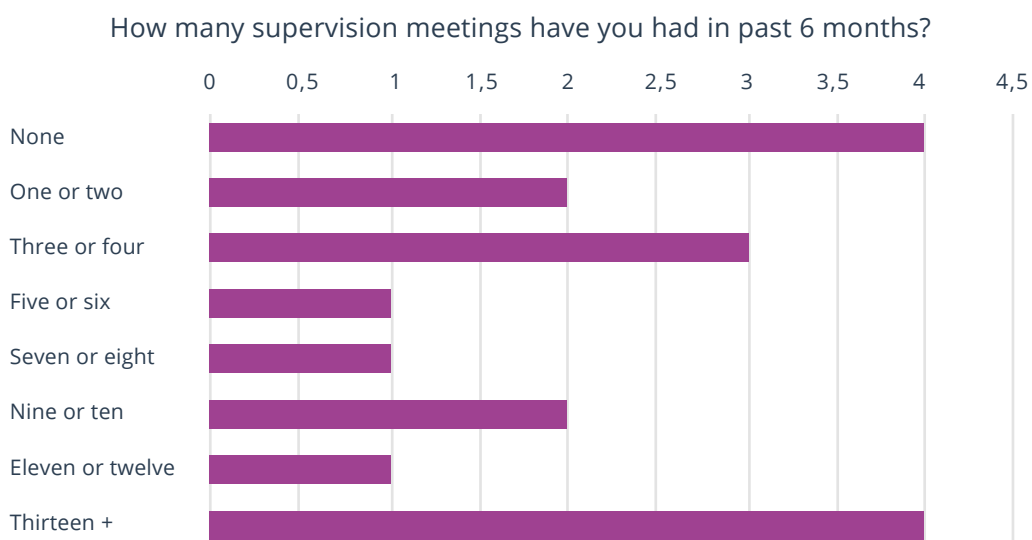
The questionnaire contained questions that provided insight into the dynamics of supervision meetings (frequency, duration) and the number of families discussed by the supervisor and the supervisee during their meetings. This segment was particularly interesting as the legal framework does not define how often supervisory meetings are held. The data shown in the graphs below allow to get a picture of the dynamics and experience of supervision.

Graph 1: Receiving supervision



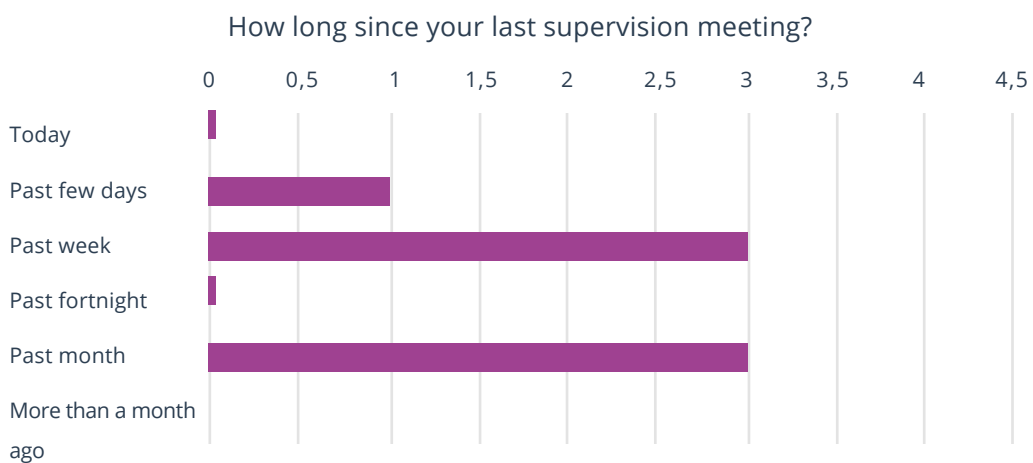
At the first point, it was important to see how many survey participants receive supervision. Graph no 1 shows that almost all participants receive supervision (19 respondents) and that one person doesn't have supervision at the work. This distribution is important because allows making some conclusions about those who receive supervision but limits conclusions about those who lack supervision.

Graph 2: Supervision meeting in past 6 months



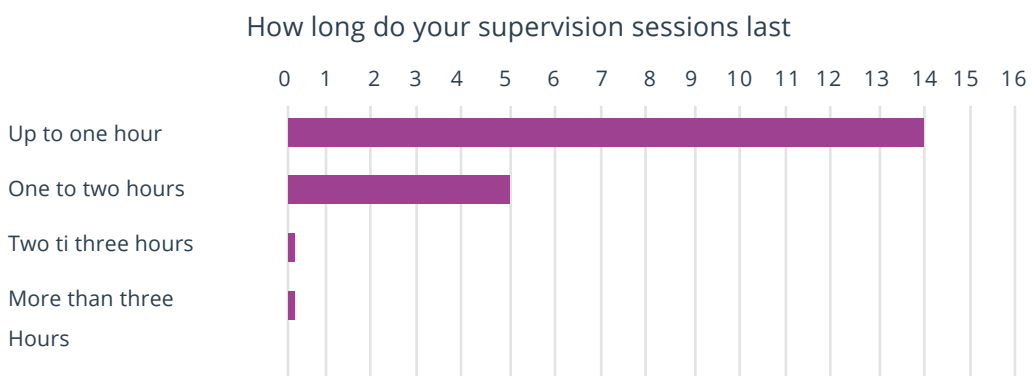
Responses about the meeting that supervisees had in the past 6 months are very different between respondents. A very positive result is that 4 participants had supervision meetings more than thirteen times. On the other hand, a matter of concern is data that 4 participants didn't have any supervision in the last 6 months. Three participants stated that they had supervision three or four times and two participants that they had meetings one or two times. This data indicates that five participants had a supervision meeting less than once a month. Other respondents were supervised at least once a month, and some of them even more often. The answers obtained could indicate that the supervision meetings are unevenly distributed and that there is no established clear dynamics of holding meetings.

Graph 3: Last supervision meeting



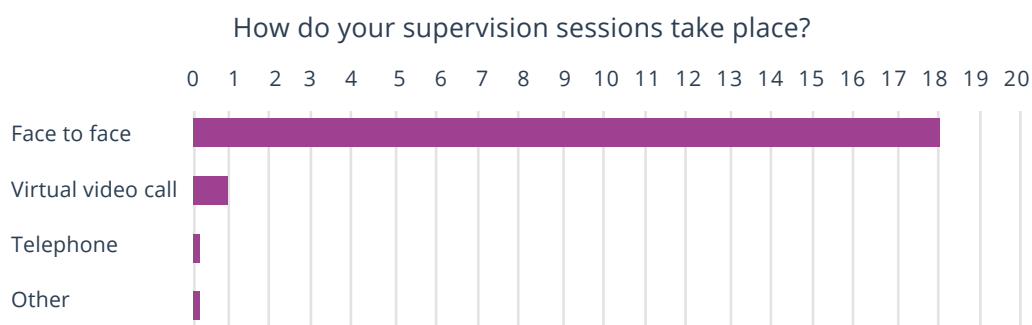
Four of the total number of respondents who answered this question (11) had their last supervision meeting more than a month ago, three last month, and the same number last week. As Graph no 3 shows, only one respondent had a supervision a few days before completing the questionnaire. The distribution of answers is also diverse in this segment, so it is not possible to say with certainty what the dynamics of holding meetings are most common.

Graph 4: Last of supervision sessions



Graph no 4 indicates that the majority of respondents have supervision meetings that last around one hour. Five respondents said that their meeting last one or two hours. This data correlates with data from other research and practice, which states that supervision meetings mostly last one hour (Veljković, 2019).

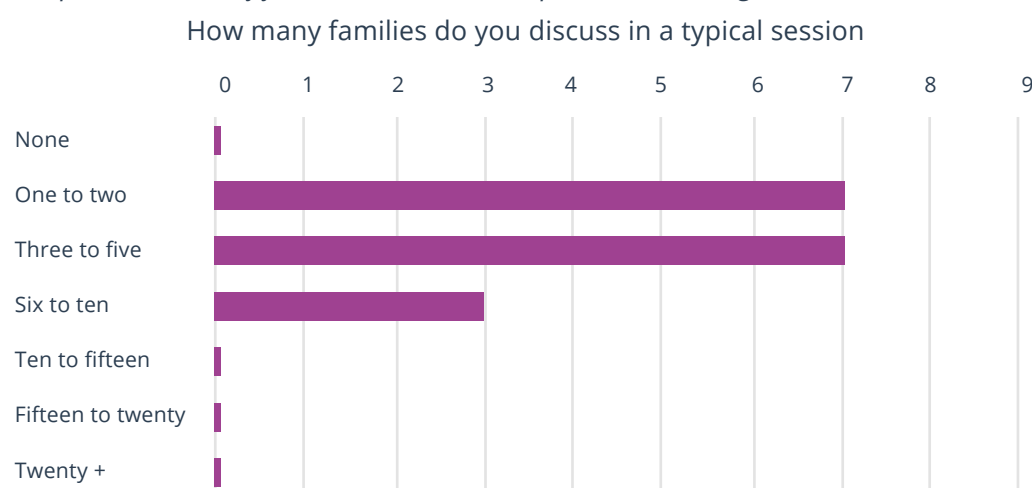
Graph 5: Taking place of supervision sessions



Researching the way supervision meetings are held, it was found that almost all respondents have face to face meetings with their supervisors. Only one respondent said that have meetings via virtual video call. although due to the current situation, the Kovid 19 pandemic and the experience of virtual meetings, it could be expected that supervision meetings were held virtually, the fact that almost all respondents maintained the practice of live contact with the supervisor is encouraging.

Another important information that this research wanted to gain is how many families supervisor and supervisee discuss during one typical session. Results are presented in the Graph no 6.

Graph 6: Number of families discusses in supervision meeting



The question presented in Graph no 6 is very important because it provides data about the quality of supervision meetings. This question was answered by 17 respondents, 7 of whom indicated that they were talking about one or two families, and the same number that they were discussing three to five families. Three survey participants stated that they discuss about six to ten families. The assumption is that case managers in Centre for social work need to discuss more families. This assumption is based on the obtained data that one case manager often leads up to 200 families. Accordingly, it is expected to discuss more than two or three families at the supervision meeting.

Something that was very interesting to research are perceptions of respondents about the situations in which supervision could be helpful. Table no 8 presents results about the statements which were evaluated at the scale 1 (Supervision would not help at all) to 4 (Supervision would always help).

Table 8: Benefits from supervision

	TOTAL	Supervision would not help at all	Supervision would help a little bit	Supervision would help a lot	Supervision would always help
Making good decisions	16	0	7	8	1
Thinking clearly about risks and needs	16	1	3	9	3
How to help the children they are working with	14	1	7	6	0
How to help adults / parents they are working with	16	1	7	7	1
How to ensure they are working effectively (quality of practice)	16	0	8	7	1
Making a good analysis, and reflecting on things	16	0	5	9	2
Emotional support for the worker	15	0	9	3	3
Developing the intervention plan for the child (e.g. a child protection plan)	16	0	4	10	2

It is presented that the majority of respondents think that supervision would help a lot in the area of making good decisions but also in making a good analysis and reflecting on things. This is very important having in mind that supervision encourages reflections on a professional's own practice. This data indicates that respondents in this research recognize the importance of reflective practice. On the other hand, respondents pretty much agree on the importance of supervision in the area of development of the intervention plan for the child, but also in thinking about the ways how to help children they work with. An important finding is that respondents think that supervision would help a little bit in emotional support for the supervisee. This is in accordance with the findings from key informant interviews and we can conclude that professionals don't get enough emotional support from supervision and that they recognize that supervision can be a little help in this field. In addition, the majority of respondents think that supervision would help a little bit in ensuring that they are working effectively. This finding can be based on the fact that supervisors give a new angle of view, encourage development, steer the work, but do not intervene instead of supervisees.

Respondents also have the opportunity to answer an open question about benefits of supervision and about what helps them related to supervision. Key findings are listed below:

- "We are overwhelmed by the volume of cases and supervision help us to exchange key issues regarding burning cases;
- Discussion about risk assessment and creation of safety plan for the child;
- Support to make a list of priorities in the work and understanding by the supervisor;
- The readiness of the supervisor to actively listen, validate professional's assessments, encourage discussion about the problem and the process of researching possible solutions in some specific cases;
- Feedback from supervisor about my practice is always helpful and provide additional strengths for me for further work;
- Give clear guidelines on how to act in a specific case, consider standards and norms, and work in the best interests of the child;
- Supervision is a side insight! Supervision contributes to sharing care, exchange of experience and knowledge, direction, understanding, strengthening professional safety and prevention of burnout.
- Supervision is shared responsibility in the work and it is helpful because it presents looking from different angles, support and respect of professionals.
- Supervision is helpful because it ensures adequate case analysis and contributes to the creation of clear attitudes and concrete activities of professionals which leads to the quality of service.
- Group supervision meetings are useful for exchanging experiences, joint thinking on a specific problem or topic".

As it is listed above, respondents find supervision very useful and helpful for their everyday practice, but also, they recognize supervision as support for them

as professionals. In addition, they see that supervision contributes to the quality of their work with children and families and that supervision helps them to work according to the law but first of all according to the best interest of the child.

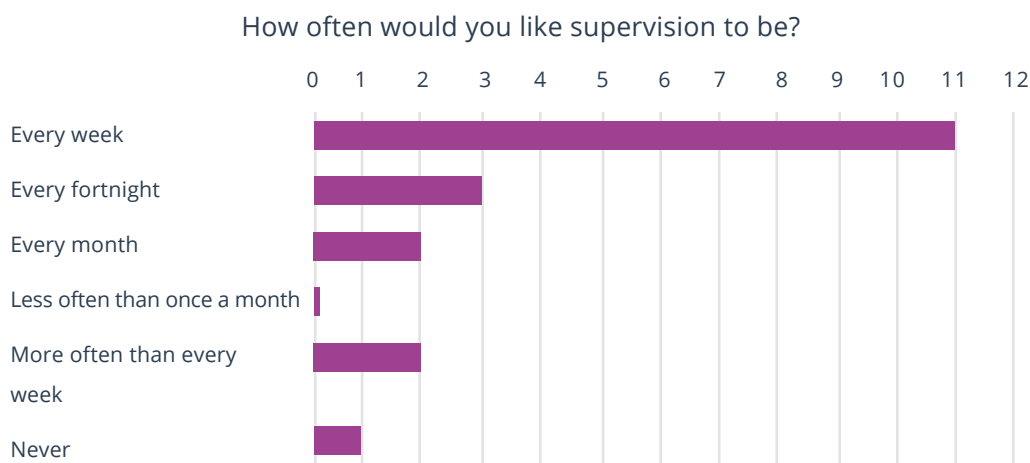
Despite different challenges in the everyday practice of professionals who work with children and families and despite the fact that supervision is not equally available to all practitioners, there are examples of good practice and examples of how supervision can help professionals but firstly to children and their families. One example of good practice came from one case manager who wrote her experience about one case of family violence. In this case, children were placed with the mother who was the victim of violence, but they wanted contact with the father who was the alleged perpetrator. With the support of the supervisor, the case manager organized seeing children with the father respecting all measures that were imposed on him. The supervisor was present in this meeting and everything went very well. After this, both parents were open to counselling and individual work. The case manager was very proud of this practice because she put the best interest of children ant the first place, satisfied with the happiness of children, with the results and manner of professional work and support of supervisors.

Recommendation for future development and quality of supervision

3.2.3

A few questions were focused on researching attitudes of participants on future supervision and potential for improvement of the quality of supervision. Graphs no 7 and 8 represent findings.

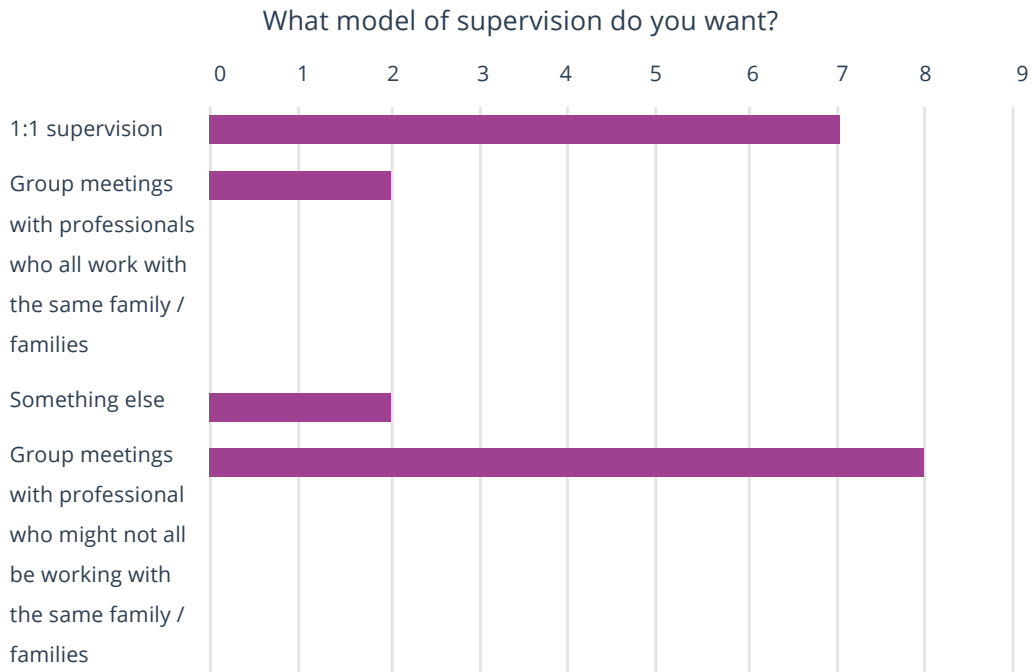
Graph 7: Dynamic of future supervision meetings



The dynamics of supervision meetings are not defined in the domestic system. Accordingly, the research sought to determine which dynamics of the meeting would suit the respondents.

The majority of respondents (11) said that they would like to have supervision every week, two of them even more often, three respondents said that they want to have supervision meeting every fortnight and two of them every month. These data indicate that respondents primarily recognize the importance of supervision and express a frequent need for it.

Graph 8: Model of future supervision



Graph no 8 indicates that 8 respondents would like to have group meetings with professionals who might not all be working with the same family or families. This can be a learning opportunity as well as an opportunity to exchange practice with professionals who present different challenges in their work. On the other hand, 7 respondents expressed their wish to have individual supervision with their supervisor. Those are probably respondents who would like to exchange their dilemmas, opinions, practical challenges in 1:1 meeting with supervisors. Two respondents said that they would prefer to have group meetings with professionals who all work with the same family or families. The assumption is that this kind of supervision would help to find a proper approach, resolve dilemmas and that will provide together understanding of the situation in the family and further interventions.

Survey participants had the opportunity to answer open question related to potential changes that they would like to see in the practice of supervision. They provided important insights that served to create the following recommendations.

- Supervision should be available to all professionals in social protection system.
- It is necessary to establish minimal dynamics of supervision meetings.
- Reduce the workload in order to increase the commitment of supervisors and case managers. Engage new employees in the field of social protection.
- It would be useful to provide more space for group supervision so that supervisees can learn from each other and to exchange experiences.
- It is necessary that supervision, in addition to administrative, also fulfils a developmental and supportive function. If it is based only on the administrative, then the supervisor is seen as a controller and not as a support, which is not good for the supervision itself.
- in order for supervision to cover all its functions, it is necessary that the supervisor be only the supervisor, without additional roles (case manager, counsellor for foster care, social worker, psychologist)
- For the improvement of quality of supervision, it is necessary to ensure more trainings for supervisors especially focused on child protection.
- For the improvement of the quality of services for children and families, it is needed that supervision meetings contain specific topics such as education on teamwork, assertive communication, stress management, etc.

Those recommendations are significant because they came from practitioners. Together with previous recommendations from key informant interviews, it will serve as a basis for final recommendations of the research.

3.3 Results of Q-method and follow-up interviews

In total, thirty-eight Q-method interviews were completed in the scope of regional research, with thirty-seven included in the final dataset (one had been incorrectly completed and could not be used). As outlined above, each participant was presented with a list of thirty-seven statements and asked to sort them into a pre-defined grid. The statements were re-used from a previous study of supervision in the UK (Pitt, 2021), and covered a variety of supervision-related areas, including the benefits of supervision for the worker, and for children and families, the ways in which supervision may help support good practice, and potential limitations. The Q-sorting procedure was treated as an interview and completed face-to-face or via Zoom.

After completion of the sort, participants were also asked six follow-up questions:

1. Thinking about the statements and the way you have arranged them, are there any that you found particularly easy or difficult to think about? If so, what ones and why?
2. What are the main aims, would you say, of having supervision, for you or for child protection professionals within multi-disciplinary teams more generally?
3. During your supervision meetings, when you're thinking about work with a particular family, what sorts of things would you talk about it?
4. What difference does your supervision make for you? And for the families you work with?
5. What is the best thing about your supervision? Can you give a specific example of something that has been helpful to you?
6. If you could change one thing about your supervision, what would it be?

Across the region there was consensus about nine of the statements. Taken together, these

indicate a shared view between participants from across the region that supervision helps with professional development, provides emotional support, and helps members of multi-disciplinary teams to reach a common understanding about families they are jointly working

with. In addition, there is a consensus that supervision does not involve examining a worker's personal biases, and that it helps provide workers with solutions (addressing their questions in relation to their work). More detail findings of Q method analysis can be found in the report of a leading researcher who compared data obtained from seven countries.

On the other hand, follow-up interviews provided additional information about the main aims of the supervision. The majority of respondents agree that the main aims are the well-being of the beneficiary which can be achieved through another aim - emotional and professional support to professionals. For respondents supervision represents support to overcome difficulties to ensure quality interventions toward children and families. With supervision and

a dedicated supervisor, they feel that they are not alone with ethical dilemmas and professional challenges. They would like the supervision to be available to all professionals in the child care system and to change the model of supervision which is dominant in our system so that its function is more educational and supportive, and less administrative.

Overall summary of findings

3.4

Research on supervision in multidisciplinary teams in Serbia has shown that supervision is implemented in various institutions, but that there is room for improving policies and practices in this area. First of all, the research found that supervision is not equally available to all professionals involved in working with children and families. The small number of employees in the social protection system and the overburdening of case managers and supervisors also affect the quality of supervision, since one case manager works with two hundred families and the supervisor is in charge of up to seven case managers. In such circumstances, the administrative function of supervision becomes dominant while there is little time left for development and support. On the other hand, child care institutions do not have an established position of supervisor, but they recognize that it is important that supervision becomes a standard in work and accessible to all. All respondents recognize the importance of supervision both for themselves as professionals and for children and families.

They point out that supervision should be more focused on the development and emotional support of professionals, to encourage the resolution of ethical dilemmas, to provide new perspectives in working with children and families. Despite the many challenges that exist, examples of good practice have been identified. Although it has not been established and there is no position of supervisor, the institution for accommodation of children and youth has organized itself to provide its employees with supervision that is primarily focused on support, building knowledge and skills, prevention of burnout. On the other hand, supervision seems to be extremely important for case managers in Centres for Social Work when working on cases of violence against children or in the family.

4

Discussion

Observing the development of supervision in Serbia, we can conclude that some progress has been made, but there is still a need for further development and improvement in this area. Through the analysis of documents conducted for this research, we can see that there isn't a specific document on supervision in a multidisciplinary team specifically in child protection area. Supervision is defined in Rulebook on organization, norms, and standards of work of the centre for social work but Rulebook on foster care doesn't have the definition of supervision.

Both of these two documents are more focused on defining who can be a supervisor and on duties and responsibilities. But there isn't a specific explanation about the dynamic of supervision, about topics of work with supervisees, about reporting on supervision meetings. In Serbia main focus is on supervision in case management procedures for centres for social work. There is no document which regulates supervision in institutions for accommodation of children and young people or other service providers.

The model of supervision that is represented in Serbia emphasizes the administrative function of supervision. This includes monitoring during all phases of the professional procedure, and that means fewer opportunities for the implementation of supervision in the area of educational-developmental and supportive functions. In that context, the purpose of supervision is to provide quality service and harmonize professional roles with professional standards in a work.

This research identified different perspectives between supervisors from institution for accommodation of children and youth and supervisor from Centre for social work. The first supervisor pointed out that the main aim of supervision is to develop knowledge, skills, to encourage sharing experience and that they are not involved in everyday practice of their supervisees. On the other hand, supervisor from Center for social work highlighted the role of monitoring the everyday practice of supervisees and her wish to have more time for professional development and education of supervisees. We can conclude that different contexts and organization of child care determine the way that supervision will be applied.

Despite different challenges, this research identifies examples of good practices which indicate the importance of supervision in providing quality support to children and families. The two examples presented indicate that there is awareness of the importance of supervision in the domestic system. The participants in the research emphasized that they cannot imagine their work without supervision, even when it is realized in difficult conditions.

Recommendations

The research provided an insight into the way in which supervision is regulated in Serbia as well as its practical implications. Based on the analysis of documents, the results of interviews with key stakeholders and practitioners, as well as the findings of the survey, the research provides the following recommendations:

- It is necessary to expand the regulatory framework of supervision and define it as a standard in the work of all institutions and service providers in the social protection system, especially child protection. Supervision should be available to all professionals in the social protection system and this would contribute to raising the quality of services and potentially preventing burnout syndrome.
- The new regulatory framework should define minimal dynamics of supervision meetings. With this standard, it would not happen that some professionals do not have supervision for several months. There must be a prescribed minimum of professional support to which the professional is entitled.
- The new regulation should define that supervisor has just the role of supervisor, not the other roles as it is the situation now. This will improve the practice of supervision and this would enable the supervisor to fulfil all the functions of supervision – developmental, educational, supportive, and administrative functions as well.
- It is necessary that the state invests in the employment of new professionals in the social protection system so that workload of current professionals could be reduced. This would ensure the greater professional commitment of supervisors and case managers to children and families.
- For the improvement of quality of supervision, it is necessary to ensure more trainings for supervisors especially focused on child protection. Supervisor should have continuous education in order to provide the best possible support for their supervisees.
- It would be useful to provide more space for group supervision so that supervisees can learn from each other and exchange experiences. Exchanges between different professionals would offer a new perspective and new ideas for working with children and families.
- Additional research should be conducted to explore the effectiveness of supervision and its impact on professionals, as well as the impact of supervision on the interventions of professionals in working with children and families.

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6

Appendixes:

6.1 Document analysis framework

Is there a separate policy document and / or practice guidance in relation to supervision for child protection professionals?

(Yes / no)

If no, is there a section on supervision contained within a wider policy document and / or practice guidance for child protection professionals?

(Yes / no)

If you have been able to locate a relevant policy document / practice guidance, who wrote it, and who was it published by?

Link to the document (if available) -

When was it published?

(Year)

When was it last updated?

(Month / year)

Who is it aimed at?

(Which services / professionals?)

How does it define supervision?

What does it say is the purpose of supervision? (Why do it?)

How does it say supervision makes a difference? For who or what and how?

Who does it say should get supervision?

Who does it say should provide supervision?

How often does it say supervision should take place?

What topics does it say should be discussed in supervision?

How does it say supervision should be recorded?

Interview schedule for key informants and supervisors 6.2

Read out (or share) the following description of supervision with the interviewee at the start of the interview

In this interview, I want to ask about your knowledge and experiences of professional supervision. Supervision is commonly used in social work and other child protection settings, and usually involves a manager meeting regularly with a worker (or with a group of workers).

During these meetings, the supervisor and worker will talk about what the worker has been doing and whether they are working to agreed standards (accountability), about whether the worker has the skills they need to do their job effectively (development) and will attempt to maintain a positive relationship between the worker and the supervisor (support).

Supervision has been described as:

"A process which aims to support, assure and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised (the supervisee). It provides accountability for both the supervisor and supervisee in exploring practice and performance. It sits alongside an organisation's performance management process with a particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for people who use services and their carers."

Q1. What do you make of this description? Do you recognise it as something that is happening in (your country) or field of work?

Generic questions (for all respondents)

Q2. What is your professional role, how would you describe what you do day-to-day and what your responsibilities are in relation to child protection work?

Q1a (If not clear) Do you directly provide supervision for child protection professionals as part of your role? (Yes / No).

(If yes, encourage them to complete the survey as well).

Q3. How would you describe the current state of supervision in the context of child protection work in (your country) or field of work? How is it provided, what is it for and what does it achieve?

Q4. Can you say something about the history of supervision in child protection work, how has it developed in (your country) or field of work and why?

Q5. Why is supervision important (or not important) in the context of child protection work in (your country) or field of work?

Q6. What policies and procedures guide the provision of supervision for child protection workers in (your country) or field of work?

Q6a (prompt if not otherwise mentioned) – What sort of policies and procedures specifically guide the provision of supervision for child protection workers from different agencies or disciplines, especially where they are

working in multidisciplinary teams for child protection cases?

Q7. How effective do you think supervision is for workers and for families in (your country) or field of work, and how do you know?

Q8. What do you think are the main challenges facing the provision of supervision in (your country) or field of work?

Q9. Thinking ahead to five- or ten-years' time, what would you like supervision to 'look like' in (your country) or field of work and what would need to happen to get there?

Additional questions for supervisors

Q10. Thinking now about the supervision that you provide; how often would you meet with the same worker and what sorts of things would you talk about with them?

Q11. What are the main aims of having supervision discussions with these workers, would you say?

Q12. Thinking specifically about your most recent supervision meeting, how would you describe it? What happened, what did you talk about, and how did you feel at the end?

Q13. How do you think your supervision helps the worker? And how does it help children and families?

Q14. And the final question, if you could change one thing about the provision of supervision in (your country) or field of work, what would it be?

6.3 Q – method and follow up interviews

Thinking about the supervision you receive (or provide), to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(If you receive supervision, 'the worker' or 'workers' refers to you; if you provide supervision, think about workers in general).

- 1 Supervision involves thinking about how the worker's feelings affect their practice
- 2 Supervision involves analysing the worker's thoughts
- 3 Supervision involves analysing the worker's values
- 4 Supervision does not require the worker to have much self-awareness
- 5 Supervision involves applying theoretical knowledge to practice
- 6 Supervision involves applying research knowledge to practice
- 7 Supervision involves thinking about things that have gone well in practice
- 8 Supervision does not include thinking about what went wrong in practice
- 9 Supervision involves thinking about what could have gone better in practice
- 10 Supervision involves the worker thinking about 'why did I do that?'
- 11 Supervision involves thinking about taken for granted assumptions that are held in society
- 12 Supervision does not involve thinking about the worker's personal biases
- 13 Supervision involves thinking about imbalances of power between professionals and the children and families who use services
- 14 Supervision involves discussing ethical issues and dilemmas that arise in practice
- 15 Supervision helps the worker manage his or her emotions
- 16 At times, workers may actively avoid having supervision
- 17 Supervision can be emotionally difficult for the worker
- 18 Supervision has little impact on the worker's decision making
- 19 Supervision enables the worker to think more clearly
- 20 Supervision does not enable the worker to develop as a professional
- 21 The worker does not learn a great deal from supervision
- 22 Supervision allows the worker to consider different ways of approaching the same problem
- 23 Supervision allows the worker to think more 'curiously'
- 24 Supervision allows the worker to practice in a more anti-discriminatory way
- 25 Supervision leaves the worker open to showing his or her weaknesses
- 26 Workers can have 'too much' supervision
- 27 Supervision is more about supporting the worker, and not helping children and families
- 28 Supervision allows the worker to better understand the children and families they work with
- 29 Supervision helps improve outcomes for children and families
- 30 Supervision makes it harder for the worker to do their job
- 31 Supervision usually ends up producing more questions than answers
- 32 Supervision allows the worker to practice with children and families in a more relational way
- 33 Group supervision for workers in multi-disciplinary teams helps them reach a common understanding of the case
- 34 It can be dangerous for children and families when child protection workers do not have supervision
- 35 There are more important things for workers to do than have supervision
- 36 I would like more time in supervision to be spent on reflecting
- 37 Group supervision is especially important for workers in multi-disciplinary teams in the context of child protection work

Additional questions to ask as part of the Q-sort

- Q1. Thinking about the statements and the way you have arranged them, are there any that you found particularly easy or difficult to think about? If so, what ones and why?
- Q2. What are the main aims, would you say, of having supervision, for you or for child protection professionals within multi-disciplinary teams more generally?
- Q3. During your supervision meetings, when you're thinking about work with a particular family, what sorts of things would you talk about it?
- Q4. What difference does your supervision make for you? And for the families you work with?
- Q5. What is the best thing about your supervision? Can you give a specific example of something that has been helpful to you?
- Q6. Final question - if you could change one thing about your supervision, what would it be?



@Tdh/Cristian Nistor. The photo was taken in Romania during an awareness raising session with professionals and youth



@Tdh/Cristian Nistor. The photo was taken in Romania during an awareness raising session with professionals and youth



SUPERVISION IN MULTI DISCIPLINARY TEAMS IN SERBIA

Belgrade, 2022.