

Transcript

# Leadership stories: Simon Community Scotland

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Iriss  
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# Introduction

This transcript was taken from the recording **Leadership stories: Simon Community Scotland** which is part of [Leadership stories: developing effective supervision](#)

## Transcript

Simon Community Scotland are a third sector organisation, operating in central Scotland, who work to combat the causes and effects of homelessness. When the team from Simon Community Scotland entered into the leadership and supervision workshops with the SSSC and Iriss they believed that their aims were clear. They were looking for technical answers to the issues that they had identified in their supervision processes, and they expected that the process would be fairly quick and easy. The issues were around the wide variation in approaches taken by supervisors, particularly to the paperwork they were being asked to complete, and a recognition that the form itself was no longer fit for purpose. However, as the project began, they realised that they were failing to consider how challenges for staff around values and a changing environment, were contributing to these shortcomings and were leading to a number of individuals failing to engage fully with the supervision process.

The first workshop began with an appreciative inquiry approach, exploring participants best experiences of supervision, and what it felt like when the process was at its most successful. They identified underlying values such as trust, honesty, positivity, inclusiveness, empathy and collaboration.

Following the workshop, the management team put the same question to the Simon Community Scotland's staff and discovered a similar set of values. Staff wanted to feel positive, motivated, valued, at ease, involved, listened to, and they wanted a sense that their achievements were being recognised and their values reinforced. It was also clear that many staff did not get these

feelings during supervision. There was clearly a lot more work to do that the team had expected.

By the second workshop, the project team had developed not only a prototype of a revised supervision form, but also a new supervision contract. This was with the hope of developing individual responsibility and buy-in to the value of the supervision process, as well as encouraging more equal relationships between the supervisor and supervisee. The team had trialled the new model with around 15 staff and received positive feedback.

Managers and team leaders found the form easy to use, and staff felt that there was more emphasis on learning and development, and that the new process would be more useful for their SSSC registration. Comments from staff included: “It made me think more about my role,” “I enjoyed filling the form,” “the form was more challenging than what I am used to,” and “there was more onus on me to take responsibility for my work and development.”

At the first shared learning day, Simon Community Scotland came together with the other partner organisations taking part in the project. Each partner was given the opportunity to feedback on each other’s issues, with Simon Community asking the other participants about how they could fit the work done under this project within a wider continuous learning framework. The feedback given made them ponder if the new form was too complicated, and that further streamlining would help to gain buy-in from staff and managers. Before the next workshop, the team continued to meet up to develop the new form and contract and review their policies to reflect their new approach.

The third workshop was a chance for the team to consider what it had been like to work as the supervision review group. They all agreed that it had been a very positive piece of work and that they had seen their confidence grow in leading change in their organisation. They saw that they could really influence learning and development across the service. They saw the results of their efforts taking effect, and the wider organisation was recognising that

their work was making a difference. It was ensuring that supervisors were better equipped to support staff, and that staff were more actively engaged.

Having finalised the Supervision Form, Contract Agreement and Policy, and with a new Assistant Director now in role, who places a high priority on staff training, the new supervision model may yet be rolled out across the organisation nationwide. Part of the change has been making two of the codes of practice more real for people, one focusing on the organisations responsibilities and the other focusing on the workers. They read “A social services employer must provide training and development opportunities to enable social service workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge” and “As a social service worker, I must be accountable for the quality of my work and will take responsibility for maintaining and improving my knowledge and skills.”

The final version of the form requires staff members to fill out 50% of the content before they arrive for the session. This gives them the power to influence the agenda for the discussion, and the kinds of support or development that they feel they want or need. Between each supervision, each staff member now has a full days allowance to focus on their own development. This can be taken as a single day, or a number of shorter slots. Through a meaningful investment of time and resources, helped by the SSSC and Iriss work, the organisation is taking its commitment to shaping a culture of learning and development seriously.

The new supervision form and contract has now been trialled with 20 staff. The team have noticed individuals ring-fence their time for looking at resources to support the trials and become increasingly proactive. Staff are now coming to supervision with evidence of their learning including papers that they have read or completion of Open Badge certificates of their achievements.

At the final shared learning day, the team met again to look at how to tell their story. As they outlined everything that had happened, they were amazed at how much effort and work had been put in. There was a real sense of partnership working and achievement as the team recognised how they had influenced change and were ultimately bringing about improved outcomes for the people they support.

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