



ABERDEEN ADULT AND CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES

SELF-CARE IN CHILD/ADULT PROTECTION WORK

Introduction

Working in frontline practice, particularly across public protection can be both a challenging and highly rewarding role. By its very nature working with those presenting with a number of vulnerabilities can be complex and at times can lead to job stress. If left unmanaged, it can affect your health, productivity, and wellbeing.

Situational stress is caused by situations over which you feel you have little or no control. These may include acute incidents such as the significant injury or death of a child / adult you have worked with.

Aberdeen Child and Adult Protection Committees recognise being involved in an SCR / Learning Review can be one of these times when staff can feel worried or stressed.

Please take time to read the full information provided in your SCR/Learning Review invite where you will find details about the process, support, and your expected contribution / involvement.

Without your professional insight we cannot know the full circumstances for the child/ adult/young person concerned and it is important to highlight that your contribution to the review process is very much valued and appreciated.

Please note that you should refer to your own organisations self-care guidance in the first instance.

What is self-care?

Self-care is the practice of taking care of yourself to improve your health and wellbeing. The ways people practice self-care may look different depending on the things that make you feel well-rested, relaxed, and refreshed to approach the current pressures at work or in our personal lives.

One challenge for many people who are working from home is continuing to practice self-care while managing everything that requires your attention.

Self-Care Strategies

When you spend all day working with families who need a lot of support, it can make it difficult to focus on your own wellbeing or remove yourself from the situation during

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your personal time. It is important to consider how to put protective factors in place to keep you motivated in the face of the daily challenges of doing child /adult protection work

1. Set Boundaries

If you feel overwhelmed in a high-pressure work environment or situation such as contributing to a Significant Case Review (SCR)/Learning Review please try to set limits to what you can do while this is going on. You know yourself better than anyone else.

If working from home, it's important to create new routines and schedules that help you distinguish between your home life and work life. Remember to turn off all your work notifications and wait until your next workday to respond to work-related emails. This can help you feel like you are away from work and stop you seeing emails related to adult or child protection work challenges during your personal time. Where possible try to have a designated workspace in your home.

2. Create a Routine

Again, if working from home, maintaining your regular work routine can help you stay motivated and ready to start your working day. It also reduces feelings of isolation. Did you previously have informal discussions with colleagues before you started your day? Do you still do this?

3. Communicate your Concerns

Working from home requires some adjustments. If you have any concerns about your adult / child protection work during these times please communicate them to your supervisor, manager, or employer. They can help you create strategies to contribute safely to any meeting where confidentiality is key such as contributing to an SCR or Learning Review.

Please also take time to become familiar with your organisation's Escalation Guidance if you feel you are not being heard or supported, before or during the Review. It is important to be directly involved in creating joint strategies to manage challenging situations which can feel more intense in your home environment.

4. Take Breaks

Taking regular breaks throughout your working day is essential to staying focused and reduce burnout. During any formal SCR/Learning Review contribution, whether in a group situation or a one-to-one discussion, we will offer breaks at the mid-point. These sessions may take place using Microsoft Teams.

If you need to step out at any other time during the session that is fine too. We factor in time for this to happen.

The critical thing to remember is that it is okay to step away from your desk/screen so that you relax your focus and allow your mind to drift.

5. The Role of the Supervisor

Managers and employees must ensure that the policies, procedures, and standards in their service are embedded and demonstrated in practice. Supervision should aim

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to support personal and professional accountability. Both parties have a responsibility to ensure supervision takes place.

Managers are required to support employees to undertake their professional role and quality assure their practice. Included is clarifying role and context of supervision, limits of confidentiality and creating a safe environment for employees.

For practitioners involved in day-to-day work with children and adults who have suffered or at risk of harm or abuse, the opportunities and ability to critically and openly reflect upon the work that you are engaged in is essential in enabling you to deliver service responsibilities in keeping children and adults safe.

Effective reflective supervision is important to promote good standards of practice and to support individual staff members to make decisions that keep children and adults are safe from harm.

Good quality supervision will also address the emotional impact of the work undertaken. This provides support for practitioners and explores strategies for coping and self-care. It is important to make sure that self-care is a standing item on your supervision agenda.

6. Identify a Support Person

Finding supporters at work is invaluable, especially in a high-pressure work environment. These people are in your corner and can provide a much-needed sounding board as well as friendship and advice. Remember that potential supports can come from all levels within the workplace.

Practitioners should always speak to their supervisor and be familiar with the supervision policies and procedures within that organisation. You can also consider managers, colleagues, or peers for informal support.

Your service will offer formal practical and emotional support to its employees. Whether the issue is personal or work related, your supervisor can help you with this. The available systems can also assist managers in supporting their employees with difficult or sensitive issues, please ensure you are familiar with this within your service.

For the purpose of a Significant Case Review (SCR) or Learning Review you will find advice about bringing a support person with you to formal SCR / Learning Review discussions or practitioner events. This is reinforced at the formal briefing ahead of the Review process starting.

You can also contact the Aberdeen Lead Officers for Child or Adult Protection for confidential advice or support relating to queries or anxieties you may have about the process at any time to as shown below.