

## Tool 24: Giving feedback on supervision

Supervision is based on a relationship of trust and respect. Within that relationship negotiation can happen about how to work well. Challenge and support can be offered.

This tool helps you to give feedback on the supervisory relationship in a constructive way to ensure that you get what you need from supervision. Ideally this will happen regularly from both parties. This means that if there is an issue, you are already accustomed to talking about how things are going.

*Supervisees and supervisors can use this tool as a template for discussion, or to help prepare to give feedback. You can also use this tool to start a conversation about how you want to be able to feedback to one another.*

### Principles

If you are giving feedback, there are some important ethical considerations about doing this well (Morrison 2005).

- > Representation – does the other person have a chance to give their views?
- > Consistency – would I raise this in the same way with someone else?
- > Impartiality – am I being affected by personal feelings or bias?
- > Accuracy – do I have evidence for what I am saying?
- > Correctability – am I prepared to find out that I am wrong?
- > Ethicality – am I treating people with respect and dignity?

This is also how you should be responded to.

Feedback should be clear, owned, regular, balanced and specific (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006).

### CLEAR

Try to be clear about what the feedback is that you want to give.

### OWNED

The feedback you give is your own perception and not an absolute truth. It says as much about you as the person who receives it. It is helpful to state that it comes from you e.g. “I felt that...I liked...”

### REGULAR

Regular feedback is more likely to be useful. This allows ongoing learning. Try to give feedback when a person will find it useful and in a timely manner.

### BALANCED

It is good to balance positive and negative feedback. Feedback should be rounded and not totally based on one specific, out of character occurrence. If you find that the feedback you give one person is always positive or always negative, it probably means your view of that person is distorted. This does not mean you must always balance something positive with something negative, but try to get a balance over time.

### SPECIFIC

It is not easy to learn from very general feedback, for example, “you are a wonderful listener”. It is more helpful if you can say something specific like, “When I am talking you always stop what you are doing and give me your whole attention”. Specific feedback gives the receiver information they can use.

## Giving difficult feedback

The first step is to consider the evidence of what good looks like and what is happening. You can gather information about what good supervision should involve from this resource and from your supervision policy. You can then note down what is happening in your supervision that is different from this.

Discuss the gap between what you expect from supervision and what is happening. “I need to talk to you about how supervision is going. My understanding is that this should be happening... However, I have noticed that this is happening.”

Ask the other person for their view. “What do you think?”

If there is agreement that there is a gap, then you can discuss why this might be happening and what you can do about it.

You may be able to work differently together, seek additional support, or influence the organisation to change. There are lots of tools in this resource that can help you to think through what you need and how to achieve it.

What good looks like	What is happening
What could happen differently	

- > You may want to get advice and support from a trusted colleague before giving feedback if you are not sure about how best to give it.
- > It is often helpful to write down what you are going to say and to practise saying it to someone else.
- > You may need to get support from HR or from a representative.
- > If this is a widespread issue in the organisation, then you may need to try to influence it as a whole team or a service.