

STOP PRESS!

Evidence to the Social Work Task Force from the Centre of Social Work Practice has been heeded in the publication of the Task Force's recommendations:

On supervision:

“There is no regular training available for first line managers in providing ‘clinical’ supervision – as opposed to ‘managerial’ supervision. If they had not completed a practice teaching award or the ‘enabling others’ PQ module, there is no reason to expect them to be skilled. Recent research (Foster 2009) found no regular supervision in two out of three teams. Managers were supportive and helpful during the working day, but did not make separate times to see their staff.

“If we want to help social workers recognise unacceptable situations, they must have a protected supportive space to consider situations on the edge of their awareness. The defensive pressure to ‘do’ and not ‘think’ is considerable. Abuse takes place in chaotic and often frightening environments – people need the support of another’s mind to look further”.

On management training:

“The lack of simple, clear, accessible first line management training for field work team leaders is disastrous. Senior managers do not encourage first line managers to take up what training opportunities there are, perhaps because their absence would be too keenly felt. Consideration needs to be given to management training undertaken before starting the job”.

(Evidence submitted by Judy Foster on behalf of CfSWP, June 2009)

**The Social Work Task Force has responded (Final Report 2009):
Front Line Managers**

2.15 It is clear from what we have learnt about both workload and supervision that skilled and confident front line managers are essential to good frontline social work.

2.16 We have heard about excellent practice in management and supervision. However, we are also concerned about the overall quality and consistency of frontline management, and the pressures under which managers and supervisors are working, on a number of counts.

●● Professional supervision (see above) is often inadequate because line managers do not have access to training and development to help them to carry it out well. Even where training is available, managers are often too busy once in post to take it up.

- It is rare for the training offered to frontline managers to focus on how they support practitioners in becoming resilient in dealing with the emotional impact of the work, or on how they manage the performance of staff. In both areas, managers report feeling inadequately prepared.

- Time pressures on managers, and high numbers of staff reporting to them without any method for mitigating this, result in a need to focus narrowly on tasks and processes, and on meeting indicators, at the expense of concentrating on outcomes for service users and the quality of service.

Recommendation 8: Front Line Management
The Social Work Task Force recommends the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

2.28 This programme should be at three levels.

- **Aspiring managers**

In order to move into a first line management role, prospective line managers should have access to training and development to prepare them for this step. This training should be in line with a nationally agreed set of learning outcomes and a standardised assessment framework.

- **Newly appointed managers**

This level of the programme could adopt a similar format to programmes for newly qualified social workers with: statements about the skills, knowledge and behaviour managers should be able to demonstrate by the end of their first year in post; and frameworks covering how their progress is recorded and assessed and the support they should receive.

- **Established managers**

The training offered at this level of the programme would seek to ensure that established managers have achieved, and can maintain and build on, a basic level of competence as both a manager and expert practitioner.

Now all we need to do is to provide the knowledge and skills and encourage employers to provide the environment for managers to implement them.....