



Aotearoa New Zealand
Association of Social Workers
Te Rōpū Tauwhiro i Aotearoa

SUPERVISION STRATEGY

2023 - 2033

Executive Summary

**Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou,
ka ora ai te iwi.**

With your basket and my basket, the
people will thrive

Moemoeā/Vision

Quality supervision which strengthens social work practice and supports and enables a thriving social work profession as leaders for social justice.

Introduction

ANZASW are excited to present our first Supervision Strategy for social work. This strategy aims to improve social work supervision quality, addressing some of the challenges social workers currently face when accessing supervision.

Supervision plays an important role in supporting social workers by enabling safe practice and encouraging professional growth so that we can continue to support whānau and communities in the important mahi that we do.

We have a long history of leading policy and practice recommendations for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand and upon speaking with the sector about supervision, we identified a huge variance in social workers' experiences of supervision. These variances can be divided into three groups:

- The **nature of the relationship** between social workers and their supervisors.
- The **expectations set** for supervision, including wider policy settings and supervision training.
- The impact of broader **organisational influences**, such as funding, workload, and cultural responsiveness.

This led us to think more widely about the strategies needed in the supervision space to achieve consistently high-quality supervision for all social workers. We have in this strategy re-defined what good social work supervision looks like and set out a 10-year pathway to collectively achieve this.

Who is this strategy for?

This strategy offers a direction for social workers and social work supervisors, however, equally important is the role of what we are calling 'the enabling sector'. The enabling sector includes all organisations, entities, and bodies that directly or indirectly influence social work supervision settings. This may be through mechanisms such as funding arrangements, contracts which influence workloads, and prioritisation of supervision alongside casework and legislative requirements.

There is a need to strengthen sector-wide understanding of the role and purposes of social work supervision and how it enables safe, high-quality practice and acts as a protection for the public when accessing social work services.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

ANZASW are strongly committed to our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as described in our Code of Ethics and Constitution. We have developed this strategy in close collaboration with our Tangata-ō te Whenua members, for whom we express our deep gratitude for sharing their insights, mātauranga Māori, research findings and lived experience.

Our strategy reflects the insight of our Tangata-ō te Whenua members and our commitment to Te Tiriti through the use of the overarching framework, Pā Harakeke, and specifically identifying and prioritising actions intended to support kāwangatanga, tino rangatiratanga, and ōritetanga for Tangata-ō te Whenua in this space.

Social work supervision: Using the Pā Harakeke Framework

We have positioned social work supervision uniquely in this strategy, as a single strand within a large network of support for social workers. Our adaptation of the Pā Harakeke framework illustrates this, placing the social worker at the centre, and presenting supervision as an important, but not the sole source of sustenance for quality social work practice.

Instead, this framework positions supervision amongst different roles and responsibilities held by many in supporting and nurturing a social worker's practice, including professional bodies and regulators, line managers, educators, kaumātua and other indigenous mentors, whānau, and peers.

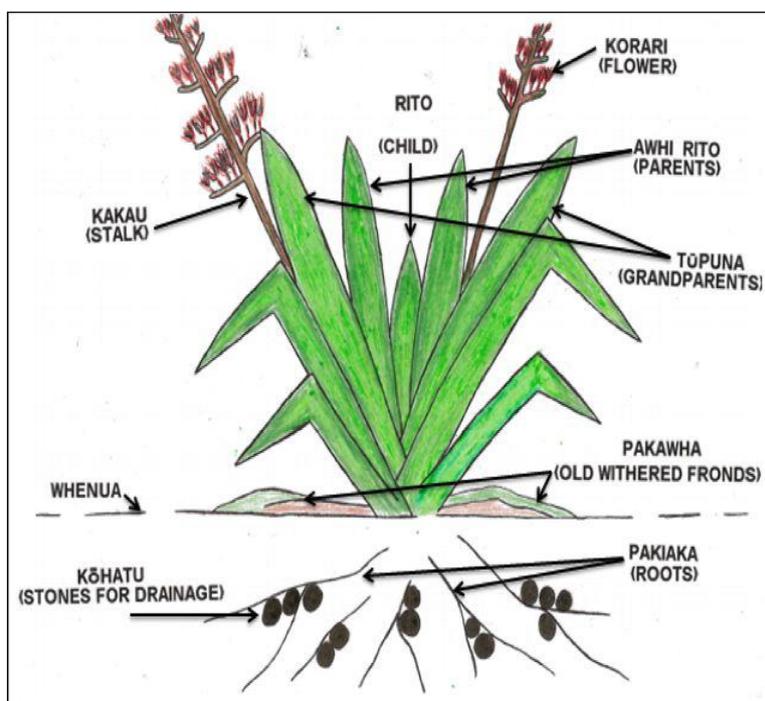


Figure 1: Pā Harakeke framework (diagram drawn by Hinemoana Watson-Pitcher).

When this network of support works together collaboratively, social workers will thrive, resulting in improved outcomes and wellbeing for individuals, whānau and communities.

The purposes of social work supervision

Rather than defining the term 'social work supervision', we stress the importance of the intentional nature of supervision, typically between two social workers and emphasise the orientation as a partnership. Within the strategy, social work supervision is perceived as:

Social work supervision

Social work supervision is an intentional partnership, typically between two social workers, which seeks to:

- **Ensure social work practice and supervision is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, cultural humility, and decolonising approaches.**
- **Focus on the wellbeing and safety of all with whom social workers interact, whilst seeking positive change for whānau, hapū, iwi, communities, and others (as relevant to the social worker's practice setting).**
- **Support and uphold ethical social work best practice, advocating for clients and system change which integrates human rights and social justice, through critically reflective conversations.**
- **Safely navigate the intersections between personal (including cultural, personal values and beliefs, motivations, and ways of making meaning) and professional identities, whilst attending to both political and organisational power dynamics as they impact on practice.**
- **Inspire and support professional development, growth, and leadership.**
- **Attend to the holistic wellbeing of the social worker.**

Quality social work supervision should encompass all these aspects and incorporate, where appropriate, specific models or frameworks which attend to the specific needs of the social worker, for example, indigenous or Kaupapa Māori approaches. Importantly, social work supervision should be viewed as a relationship, not a transaction, which emulates our professional values and conduct.

What changes are proposed?

To achieve the shifts sought in our strategy for social work supervision, our strategy requires the profession and the wider sector to work in collaboration. Different approaches are necessary to influence and change current practice and approaches to social work supervision. We have therefore organised our key shifts, aims and activities in reference to different groups.

Key shifts for social workers (Te Rito):

We want all social workers to have a social work supervision partnership which demonstrates care and kaitiakitanga, that they value, feels safe, is accessible, is regular, and meets the purposes of social work supervision in a way which is led by social workers and is culturally responsive.

Key shifts for social work supervisors (Awhi Rito):

We want to continue to build a diverse social work supervisor workforce with supervisors who are:

- **passionate about developing and supporting social workers,**
- **have sufficient experience as a social worker,**
- **have received training in supervision, which includes cultural responsiveness, and**
- **have access to ongoing support and development in their supervisory role.**

Key shifts for the Enabling Sector (Tūpuna):

We want social work supervision to be well understood and perceived as a collective responsibility and a valuable investment in social worker wellbeing, quality practice, and workforce retention. This means, working towards ensuring supervision is prioritised, adequately funded (including training and workforce development), and there are policies and minimum requirements that reflect the contribution social work supervision makes towards ensuring public safety and enhancing the social work profession.

Approaches needed to achieve these shifts

Achieving these key shifts, or future states will require a coordinated effort across four proposed approaches. These are:

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising involves consistent messaging aimed towards different audiences to change attitudes, beliefs and ultimately behaviour around social work supervision to achieve a common understanding.

Capacity Building

A coordinated effort is required to ensure that we have a large and diverse social work supervisor workforce to meet demand. Our social work supervisors need strategies to support them in their practice and there is a pressing need to ensure that the supervisory workforce reflects the diverse needs of both social workers and the whānau and communities they work with. The growth and strengthening of the Tangata-ō te Whenua and Pasifika supervisory workforce are a priority.

Relationships and Advocacy

Strategies that break down the wider barriers to accessing social work supervision are needed, barriers such as funding, workloads, and organisational structure. This approach prioritises building relationships and partnering across the sector to achieve this.

Recommended Policy Changes

Our last approach reflects the aspiration for a set of clear policy settings regarding social work supervision. In recommending and advocating for these changes, we encourage amendments to both organisational and sector wide supervision policies to reflect these consistent standards for supervision. They should be considered a minimum, as best practice would in fact reflect higher expectations. Even if these minimum expectations were met consistently across the sector, we would likely see a significant improvement in the quality and experience of social work supervision.

Summary of Key Recommended Policy Changes

- 1 Social workers **should** have choice in their social work supervisory relationship, it should be with someone who is outside of their immediate team and with someone who does not hold line management responsibility for them.
- 2 Social work supervision should be set at the frequency of:
 - **Fully registered social workers:** At least once per month and a minimum of 10 sessions per year (recognising supervision may not occur during leave periods).
 - **Provisionally registered social workers:** At least fortnightly until fully registered, provided additional social work support is available, such as a line manager or mentor. If additional social work support is not available, supervision should be weekly for the first 6 months of practice.

Social work supervision sessions should be uninterrupted and last at least 50 minutes (it is expected sessions will typically be at least 60 minutes).
- 3 Supervision partnerships must have a written supervision agreement as the foundation for the relationship. These should be led by the supervisee and supervisor and reviewed at least annually. Supervision agreements must include:
 - Agreed structure and goals of sessions.
 - Confidentiality and privacy parameters (including what will be recorded).
 - Conflict resolution and process for giving and receiving feedback.
 - Agreed review process and information exchange between social workers/supervisor/organisation.

Agreements should be negotiated between social workers, supervisor and, when relevant the employer/ organisation, but remain a supervisee-led process. Guidance will be developed as part of implementation.
- 4 Social workers who are supervisors must complete at least 5 hours CPD related to supervisory practice as part of their annual CPD hours. Some of this must demonstrate furthering cultural humility and responsiveness in their supervision practice.
- 5 Supervisors must engage, at least bi-monthly*, in intentional supervision about their own supervisory practice. Arrangements could include peer or group supervision with other supervisors, or participation in reflective communities of learning.
- 6 Social workers must have a minimum of 2 years' experience, following full registration, before undertaking social work supervision practice, and;
- 7 Social workers wishing to begin practicing as a social work supervisor must complete at least 20 hours of learning about supervision. A further 20 hours of learning (of which at least half must be face-to-face**) should be completed within 2 years of commencing supervisory practice, and includes:
 - skills-practice,
 - attaining knowledge of theories and frameworks, and
 - cultural responsiveness in supervision practice.***

**For social workers whose practice is solely supervision, this minimum requirement would in fact be monthly, as social work supervisors are not exempt from requirements of all social workers to engage in monthly supervision which includes reflection on practice.*

*** Face-to-face may also include real-time online learning which includes skill practice with others*

****A full 40 hours or more of training which meets face-to-face requirements can be completed before commencing supervisory practice without the need for additional face-to-face learning within 2 years.*

Implementation of the strategy

There are a wide range of specific actions which can be undertaken to achieve the various aims and shifts of this strategy. In consideration of this, and to ensure this strategy is responsive to real-time changes across the sector, an annual workplan of implementation activities will be developed.

Some of these activities will be significant for the social work sector and will require time, planning and financial and resource investment to implement. We will be calling upon decision-makers to recognise social work supervision as a key service component in budget bids, service design and pay equity settlements. Additionally, some of our proposed strategies such as workforce development will be achieved incrementally as the sector responds to need.

An annual workplan allows for feasibility planning as to resource, timing, and flexibility, constantly looking to pair implementation of this Strategy with complementary priorities and projects occurring within the sector. The implementation plan will clearly set out what ANZASW can do and identify gaps which could then be actioned by others.

Concluding statement

Social work supervision is unique, a reflective space where the sharing and extension of self and practice serve to achieve better outcomes for clients and whānau. Supervision enables the gravity, intensity and at times trauma, associated with work in the social work sector to be safely acknowledged.

It is where the personal and professional identities of social workers collide, and the wellbeing of social workers is nurtured to ensure ethical practice, cultural responsiveness, and the safety of clients. In supervision, decision-making is reflected upon, and the development needs of social workers are identified. Social workers are both challenged and celebrated via the supervision partnership.

The benefits of supervision relate not only to outcomes for social workers but their clients and the organisations they work for. Supervision is a key accountability mechanism for social workers and supports the safety of the public.

It is our sincere hope that in implementing the approaches identified within this strategy, our vision of quality supervision which supports and enables a thriving social work profession as leaders for social justice will be achieved across Aotearoa New Zealand. However, this strategy will not succeed due to the actions of the ANZASW alone, it requires a spirit of partnership and commitment from all who work in the social work sector.

We are therefore calling upon all social workers, all organisations who employ social workers, our government and other partners, and colleagues at the SWRB to take up the wero and intention of this strategy, so that we can together share in its success and strongly support all social workers and our profession into the future.

We would like to thank all our members who have been involved in this journey, as without your honest, open discussion and passionate engagement, this strategy simply would not be.



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