Observation guidance

Trainees benefit from observing their supervisors working with clients because of the obvious advantages they gain from seeing good clinical work being modelled by their supervisor. Trainees benefit from supervisor observation since structured debrief provides them with direct feedback on their clinical work. Members of the User Advisory Group have strongly recommended that all trainees must be regularly observed during training, with feedback in part based on observation of the personal and relationship factors that service users particularly value. It is therefore encourage that observation by the trainee of the supervisor, and vice versa, is built in to all your placement goals.

Strategies for observation and/or joint work should be negotiated by trainee and supervisor at the beginning of the placement and reviewed throughout.

Benefits of mutual observation

1. Supervisor present as a resource/knowledge base
2. Provides support while trainee gains confidence
3. Experience of working in co-therapy
4. Opportunity for supervisor to give direct feedback on trainee's clinical work - removes bias of self-report in supervision.
5. Supervisor can give positive feedback and constructive criticism on trainee's development.

Observation strategies

- Shared work with supervisor and trainee working as co-therapy team or within therapeutic team.
- Trainee as observer.
- Supervisor as observer (e.g. sitting in on a session, assessment or training)
- Observing through one-way monitor.
- Retrospective observation using video and/or audio recordings.
- Indirect access to supervisor's clinical work through case discussion of supervisor's own work. While this does not fall within the broad category of observation, it remains an important adjunct of it.

Top tips for getting the most out of observation (supervisor observing trainee)

- Plan the observation.
• Gain consent from the client, and emphasize that the supervisor will be focusing on you as the trainee. Highlight the importance of observation as a way of ensuring good quality and transparent practice.
• Set up the room so that your supervisor is positioned outside of the client-therapist position (e.g. sitting more in the corner, or not in the direct eyeline of the client).
• Negotiate with your supervisor what particular areas of your practice you would like feedback on.
• Discuss with your supervisor how best to get feedback (good practice is to identify areas of good practice, and then to consider area for improvement). It could be helpful if you could agree with your supervisor what area you would particularly value feedback on (e.g. eliciting and sitting with distressing feelings, ending sessions on time etc).
• Just do it!

Consent

The service user should always have a full explanation about what is going on in order to decide whether to give informed consent to the observation. This should make reference to the learner status of the trainee and the nature of the observation. Any trusts will have policies around the recording of client activity. Trainees must work in accordance with the trust procedures.