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EXPLORING HOW
SUPERVISION SUPPORTS
PRACTITIONER WELLBEING
AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY
YEARS PROVISION IN
ENGLAND

Jayne Margaret Hamey

Masters Dissertation
E822 Childhood and Youth

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Abstract

This small-scale investigation looks to ascertain how aspects of supervision relate to practitioner wellbeing and professional development in the EYFS within a Nursery Group in England. A mixed methods approach using a quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured narrative interviews provides contextual data on supervision within the Nursery Group, alongside personal accounts of practitioners lived experience of supervision. Findings suggest a dualist approach could better support practitioners in the Nursery Group and adhere to the definition of supervision provided in the EYFS. This dualistic approach combines group discussions focused on child outcomes, and personal effectiveness supervisions supporting practitioner wellbeing and development.

Key words: EYFS, wellbeing, professional development

Word Count: 100

Chapter 1 Introduction

Supervision has been a requirement of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2023) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) since 2012. Supervision has been defined in the EYFS as follows:

'Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching, and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

Supervision should provide opportunities for staff to:

- *Discuss any issues – particularly concerning children's development or well-being, including child protection concerns.*
- *Identify solutions to address issues as they arise.*
- *Receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.'* (DfE, 2023, p27)

Supervision can offer opportunities for open and honest discussion about the pressures of working with children and for reflection on effective support for children's needs (The Open University, 2019c). When working with children ethical considerations are at the forefront of practice, and this can cause heightened emotions in the workplace. Supervision provides a forum for deeper reflection and when facilitated well, can improve working practice (DfE, 2011; DfE, 2023)

Supervision can, however, be a contentious issue within my organisation. Finding time to dedicate to each staff member is difficult and leaders often feel pressured to complete supervision. Originally envisaged as a reflective tool it is now a tick box exercise, another task to add to the burgeoning workload of the ECEC leader. A position Dame Clare Tickell warned against in a review prior to its inclusion in the EYFS (DfE, 2011).

As an experienced ECEC professional, the researcher has witnessed a multitude of changes over the last 20 years in the sector, dictated by Government policy directives. The demands on the sector are high, with children's earliest years seen as pivotal to their future life chances, yet hegemonic discourses of a low paid, low status, unprofessional workforce prevail (Osgood, 2019). Research in 2023 from the Early

Education and Childcare Coalition (EECC, 2023) found a workforce in crisis, with staff retention declining due to increasing workloads, low funding rates and a need to support escalating numbers of children living in poverty or with special educational needs and speech disorders. With workforce morale low, supervision should offer opportunities for staff to reflect on their own practice and offer support to address understandable disillusionment within the sector. Supervision should also provide time for reflection on working with children. Indeed, the premise of supervision as defined by the EYFS is clear, 'promote the interests of children' (DfE, 2023)

The E809 Module Unit 16: Supervision (The Open University, 2019d) focused my attention on research within social work practice which found no evidence to suggest supervision improves children's outcomes or improves practitioner practice (Carpenter, Webb, and Bostock, 2013). This research had a profound impact on my perception of supervision and its delivery within my organisation. The assumption that a happy, content, high quality workforce supports high quality provision and therefore drives children's outcomes is prevalent. Indeed, the EYFS states:

'a well-trained, skilled team of practitioners can help every child achieve the best possible educational outcomes' (DfE, 2023).

A deeper examination of supervision in social work practice cemented my concerns. Wilkins (2017) research on reflective supervision in social care found supervision was essentially absent from social work practice, but this had no detrimental effect on children or practitioners as other forms of holistic support were available. Intent on discovering whether these findings in social work practice are mirrored in the ECEC sector, my goal is to ascertain how effective supervision is in my organisation.

Measuring changes in children's educational outcomes would require an ethnographic study with access to children's developmental data over a longer period of time. However, understanding practitioner experience of supervision would be a good starting point, with the intention for further research on measuring children's outcomes against practitioner performance in the future. This Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) therefore focuses on how practitioner experience of supervision relates to its definition in the EYFS (DfE, 2023), aiming to gather practitioner views to answer the main research question:

How do aspects of supervision relate to practitioner wellbeing and professional development in the EYFS in England?

The research takes place within a Nursery Group in England (hereafter referred to as the Group). The Group have a large workforce of over 200 staff and provide care and education to around 1000 children. Ofsted ratings across the Group are predominantly Outstanding and the Group have an exemplary record in meeting the needs of children and families, often in areas of deprivation.

A literature review in Chapter 2 analyses the research undertaken since the implementation of the EYFS, and enabled the formation of three subsidiary questions:

- How relevant is supervision to the formation of ECEC practitioner's professional identity?
- How does supervision support ECEC practitioner's wellbeing?
- To what degree do Early Years qualifications and sector training support the facilitation of supervision, mentoring and group discussions?

These questions underpin the research design, detailed in Chapter 3, informed by an interpretivist paradigm (Corbetta, 2003). The research aims to understand practitioners lived experience of supervision by using a convergent parallel mixed methods approach (Creswell and Clark, 2011; cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). A questionnaire provides contextual data on supervision within the Group, while semi-structured narrative interviews afford personal accounts of supervision during practitioner careers in ECEC. As an insider researcher (Arber, 2006; Tuffour, 2018) I acknowledge my position within the organisation presents a challenge, and I have engaged in ethical reflexivity (Reeves, 2007) throughout the study.

A presentation of the data follows in chapter 4. Findings provide context of current supervision processes and their relevance to the definition of supervision within the EYFS. Dominant themes of identity, wellbeing and professional development were identified using thematic analysis.

This small-scale investigation concludes with implications for the Group alongside opportunities and recommendations for further research. Finally, an examination of research limitations and a narrative critical reflection closes Chapter 5.

Word Count: 1000

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

Supervision has been an integral part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2023) in England for 12 years. A review by Dame Clare Tickell in 2011, prior to its inclusion in the EYFS, called for clarity in the context and content of supervision. Dame Tickell cautioned ECEC on using supervision as a 'tick box approach' to performance management (DfE, 2011, p47). She recommended approaching supervision as a reflective practice tool fundamental to quality leadership practice. This chapter attempts to capture literature surrounding supervision and reflective practice in the ensuing 12 years. It will consider whether Dame Tickell's recommendations are reflective of its application, and will address the primary research question:

How do aspects of supervision relate to practitioner wellbeing and professional development in the EYFS in England?

Research in this study focused on supervision, reflection, and well-being in the EYFS (DfE, 2023) in England. With a broader context linked to international studies. The parameters used in the Open University Library included peer reviewed articles since 2012. Search terms were 'supervision' 'reflection' 'preschool' 'nursery' and 'early years.' 'ECEC,' 'EYFS' and 'childhood' were included due to limited results. The Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the quantity of research in recent years. Research prior to 2020 in Europe, America and Australia is evident but research in England was limited both before and after the pandemic. Wider ranging terms including 'mentoring' 'leadership' 'discussion' 'professional development', and 'well-being' were subsequently added. I also searched online in Early Years publications such as Nursery World, Early Years Educator and Teach Early Years. Research from sector champions such as the Early Years Alliance and the National Day Nurseries Association provided context to recent concerns about the wellbeing of the workforce. However, these reports and articles appeared highly emotive and biased against government policy. I have therefore limited literature to peer reviewed articles on research in England, while drawing on international studies which bear similarities.

A clear definition of supervision is difficult to operationalise, it has been termed dialogue between professionals (Sturt and Wonnacott, 2016), effective customer

service (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002, cited by Belton et al, 2011), and a reflective space for continuous professional development (Belton et al, 2011) These varying descriptions influence its meaning to those involved. The individual reality of supervision in practice will have informed the professional identity of the practitioner. Effective supervision can create a happier, more efficient workforce and thus better results for children (DfE, 2011, DfE, 2023) However, working with children is challenging and the emotional toll can have an enormous impact. Coupling this with regulatory demands and governmental policy changes, means well-being comes under greater scrutiny and professional identities face challenge and uncertainty. Professional identities are at the heart of supervision and are a recurring theme throughout the literature.

2.1 Professional Identities

The professionalisation agenda

Professional identities form through a vocational desire to work in ECEC, day-to-day experience, and professional learning opportunities. Scaachi (2023) describes this as a process of negotiation. However, professionalisation has been on government agendas since the introduction of Early Years Professional Status in 2006 (Robert-Holmes, 2013). Promoting theoretical knowledge ahead of day-to-day experience (Payler and Locke, 2013) has triggered uncertainty and confusion while implementation of neo-liberal policy directives positioning children as 'human capital' of the future (Hammond, Powell, and Smith, 2015, p142 quoting EIU, 2012) have significantly impacted the sector. These directives focus heavily on education over care, championing qualification status and promoting a graduate led workforce (Archer, 2024). Experienced practitioners suffered identity loss as the professionalisation agenda dominated headlines. Archer (2024) drawing on Osgood (2010) positions government policy as depicting practitioners as both saviours of the nation and poor relation to teachers. A depiction compounded by negative hegemonic discourses of a female, white, lower-class workforce which is in stark contrast to traditional discourses of professionalism which abound in England (Osgood, 2019).

Educational standardisation

Brown and Grigg (2017) use a critical narrative approach, to reflect on how this change of direction from care focused to educational accountability has impacted practitioner

identity. Government policy positions the majority of the work force as not yet good enough to educate children due to inadequate qualification requirements. A deficit discourse being created (Osgood, 2019) when experience is deemed secondary to theoretical learning. Assessment of educational practice to standardised outcomes by OFSTED is also criticised by researchers such as Hammond, Powell, and Smith (2015) and Elfer, Dearnley, and Wilson (2018a). They view the process as derogatory and a form of governmental dictatorship. This is a position echoed by Corral-Grandos et al (2023). Their ethnographic study observed a power imbalance between ECEC teachers and teaching assistants. Perceiving ECEC teachers as better educators due to their qualification, teaching assistants encountered barriers to professional learning imposed by their lack of qualifications. By dictating educational priority in ECEC policy initiatives the government inhibits autonomy and subsequently causes emotional conflict, identity crisis Campbell-Barr (2018) and a loss of agency in their roles.

Agency

Workforce agency and wellbeing is considered by Hammond, Powell, and Smith (2015, citing Meiners and Winn, 2014). They draw comparisons to Foucauldian theory of panopticism: government policy subconsciously influencing practitioners' professional identity. Balancing personal beliefs of quality care and education against educationally focused policy directives, inevitably causes a loss of agency in their roles (Osgood, 2010). Archer's (2024) analysis depicts policy makers trumpeting strategies to create a professional highly qualified workforce and initiatives to get parents back into work. While simultaneously positioning ECEC as a problem when policy does not match sector reality. Professional identities are being transformed by successive policy directives (Archer, 2024) while concurrently being 'corroded by this performative culture' (Roberts-Holmes and Moss, 2021, p144, quoted by Archer, 2024)

This crisis of professional identity is a pervading theme in action research conducted in Irish nurseries by Bleach (2014); and in a discussion paper regarding reflective mentoring relationships in England by Hammond, Powell, and Smith (2015). However, a critical narrative by Brown and Grigg (2017) drawing on Osgood (2006) portrays professionalism as a social construction, which can be challenged and shaped through reflective practice in the workplace. Reflective learning programmes can build confidence at ground level (Trodd and Dickerson, 2019). Confidence provides agency

to challenge policy directives conflicting with personal ethical views. A study by Bradbury, Hoskins, and Fogarty (2023) who researched in settings with high numbers of qualified and specialist practitioners found that while subject to uncertainty over funding and closure threats, practitioners felt they had agency within their roles. Seeing themselves as professionals delivering education and care to the most disadvantaged children, with qualifications seen as a precursor for professional identity within ECEC. Indeed, Melhuish and Gardiner (2019) argue qualifications and professional development programmes in ECEC do improve the quality of provision. However, the manner in which they are positioned by government policy disenfranchises practitioners, removing agency (Archer, 2024) and impacting on wellbeing

While the changing shape of government policy has been the main talking point in these studies, researchers have championed reflective techniques. Reflective spaces enable practitioners to discuss the challenges of the role and their agency in their own professional identity. The availability of these reflective spaces are key. Seen as safe spaces to share feelings and concerns (Reid and Soan, 2018) they are also spaces to discuss performance, provision, and further learning (Sturt and Wonnacott, 2016, citing Morrison, 2005). Taylor (The Open University, 2019c) stresses how important reflective spaces are for practitioner wellbeing and mitigating feelings of inferiority. While Soni (2019) warns practitioners may feel intimidated and demotivated if leaders do not effectively facilitate these reflective spaces. The reflective process itself can be difficult and cause feelings of vulnerability.

Many researchers used narrative interviews to comprehend the pressures on practitioners and their vulnerability is depicted strongly in many studies. The first subsidiary research question is shaped by these studies, focusing on the professionalisation agenda, agency and identity discussions in this literature review:

How relevant is supervision to the formation of ECEC practitioner's professional identity?

2.2 Well-being

While ECEC professional identities are deep-rooted in vocational aspirations of work with children the ever-present socio-political clash between care and education is

creating a workforce decline (Gibson, 2023) and escalating mental health issues (Lawler, 2021). However, Taggart (2018) contends misconceptions of professionalism in ECEC are not the main cause of disillusionment and burnout.

Emotional labour

Many studies refer to Arlie Hochschild's theory of emotional labour (Hochschild 1983, cited by Hallett, 2013; Taggart, 2018; Elfer, Dearnley, and Wilson, 2018a; Elfer et al. 2018b; and Elfer and Wilson, 2023) and the negative implications working contrary to one's own moral code has on mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, the connotations of prioritising educational targets above care practices is especially stressful when the needs and demands of children come into play. Studies analysing the lived experience of practitioners working with children highlight the impact everyday emotions encountered in settings have and how overwhelming these emotions can be (Taggart, 2018). Research by Hodgkins et al. (2021) using reflective diaries and semi-structured interviews highlights just how draining it can be to lend emotional support to crying babies and toddlers during transitions. An empathetic team was the linchpin of day-to-day support for these practitioners, as regular supervision was not prioritised by the leadership team.

The mental exhaustion felt dealing with children's emotional needs is often internalised in a desire to remain professional and maintain policy directives (Seaman and Giles, 2021). In a study by Hodgkins et al (2021) practitioners recognised they need extra support but envisaged this as training in dealing with children's emotions. The purpose being to feel better equipped to deal with intense emotions experienced by children in setting, rather than address their own stress and wellbeing during these heightened moments. The emotional labour exhibited by these practitioners warranted more regular supervision, while professionals skilled in supporting social, cognitive, and emotional states are also a much-needed support (Seaman and Giles, 2021)

Burnout

The physical and mental impact of working with children takes a toll. A survey by Višnjic and Halavuk (2021) found professional burnout was rife in Croatia where practitioners were leaving ECEC as they did not have the knowledge or skills to cope with the daily stress of their roles. While a Swedish study by Sjödin, and Neely (2017) found the combination of having a young family, high workloads and increased responsibility in

the workplace were the main contributory factors for stress and burnout. A Serbian study by Piperac *et al.* (2021) using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory to assess stress in three aspects of the practitioner's life: workload, client focus and personal circumstances, mirrored these Swedish findings. The added impact of personal financial and family concerns combined with workplace stress makes burnout often inevitable (Koulierakis *et al.* 2019) and quality of life is severely impacted by decreasing incomes. Scaachi's (2023) study in dual locations in England and Italy, found practitioners likened themselves to modern day Cinderellas, low paid babysitters with no agency or power to change. Lyndon (2022) draws comparisons to this in her study of poverty in England. Practitioners who themselves live in poverty, a situation under acknowledged in ECEC but one which has a serious impact on wellbeing, empathise with families in similar positions and have greater understanding of the impact on children in their care.

Ethics of care

An ethics of care is implicit in situations where children's personal living circumstances impact on their development and their safety. This necessitates reflective support for practitioners (Lyndon 2022, citing Osgood 2006), to enable them to discuss the emotional implications on themselves and on children. Piperac, et al. (2021) also draw attention to the subsequent knock-on effect to children's development. Something rarely explicitly stated in other studies. Research on the impact of practitioner wellbeing on children's outcomes is sparse, especially in England where research tends to focus on the dichotomy of education or care in policy directives and its subsequent impact on practitioner wellbeing. Research indicates emotional labour in ECEC is a direct result of neo-liberal policy directives denigrating the caring and nurturing practice of ECEC practitioners (Taggart, 2015 citing Brickner, 2015) The dilemma of delivering on policy which derides one's own moral and ethical code is seen by Ward (2018) as a triggering factor to stress in ECEC. These studies moulded my second subsidiary research question:

How does supervision support ECEC practitioner's wellbeing?

2.3 Professional development

The explosion of ECEC qualification and training opportunities offered in the UK is indicative of the governments professionalisation agenda. Pre 2014, 165 qualifications up to level 7 were available (DfE, 2024b), while post 2014, another 89 qualifications were available in the sector. The diversity of these qualifications has a direct correlation to knowledge and practice within ECEC. Nutbown (2021) criticises successive governments for their lack of clarity on qualification criteria and career trajectories, which causes confusion and a deficit discourse in the sector. This variety of qualification content means practitioners undertaking qualifications will have vastly different experiences and knowledge of supervision (Puroila, Kupila and Pekkarinen, 2021) There are also wide-ranging variations in the implementation of formal learning across ECEC (Elfer et al. 2018b) This has serious connotations for the skills and ability of leaders delivering supervision.

Leadership

Trodd and Dickerson (2019) and Corral-Granados et al. (2023) draw on Eraut (1994) when positioning professional development as a key driver for effective leadership. It prepares and challenges leaders to develop reflexive practice which supports both knowledge development and well-being of practitioners. Puroila, Kupila and Pekkarinen (2021) recommend specific supervision training for leaders. By drawing on both their personal experience and theoretical knowledge within professional learning (Eraut, 1994, cited in Trodd and Dickerson, 2019) supervision training can prepare leaders for the emotionally driven contexts of their work (Brock, 2012). However professional learning for leaders must also provide opportunities to consider their own emotional literacy and empathy. Hallett (2013) sees leaders own emotional literacy as a key driver in the supervision of emotionally engaged practitioners. Effective mentoring and coaching skills are also key qualities for leaders in ECEC.

Mentoring programmes

Mentoring programmes can lead to transformative action. Supervision can provide opportunities for mentoring and by enabling practitioners to reflect on their day-to-day practice leaders can further support the development of their professional identities. Hammond, Powell, and Smith (2015) caution that learning through mentoring can position the practitioner within a deficit discourse perpetuating the not good enough

agenda pushed by government policy. Reflecting on practice and learning from day-to-day experiences can however be a real benefit of mentoring programmes (Sturt and Wonnacott, 2016 citing Hay, 1995) Trodd and Dickerson (2019) drawing on Bruner (1985) stress it is imperative practitioners are supported in learning how to learn if they are to develop secure professional identities. Their research defies the deficit discourse, positioning practitioners as active agents in wanting to progress and add value to their practice. Having agency in professional development is vital for practitioner confidence and professional identity. Trodd and Dickerson (2019) also draw on Egan (2004) when emphasising how important reflection is to practitioner confidence in building ethically grounded practice. However ethical practice challenged by policy directives, impacts on practitioner's agency. Spaces outside the workplace and collaboration with others are valuable in processing emotions and in improving practice (Brown and Grigg, 2017)

Group discussions

Reflective spaces are vital for enabling practitioner agency, Research points to the value of collaboration, using group discussions. The leading researcher in this area is Elfer, who in collaboration with Dearnley (2018a); Greenfield, Robson, Wilson, and Zachariah (2018b); and Wilson (2023) believe open discussion can enable transformational reflection. Championing Bion's (1961) theories of thinking and containment they attest that heightened emotions, stress, and anxiety are contained effectively by open and honest discussion groups. This supports professional development as it enables consideration of wider influences on their roles. Reflection on and in action, theorised by Schon, dominates research by Walton (2011); Bleach (2014); Brown and Grigg (2017), and Soni (2019, 2021). Team collaboration in the moment and in later discussions enables deeper thinking and provides agency. By thinking about wider policy initiatives, practitioners challenge and address concerns about policy that does not align with day-to-day practice (Walton, 2011). Bleach (2014) also champions use of Schon's dynamic conversations, arguing wider reflection on policy initiatives as a group should be an integral part of all professional development programmes. By reflecting together on previous practice practitioners can learn skills to reflect in action in the future (Welp et al. 2018). This can develop practitioner awareness and proactivity (Walton, 2011)

Effective facilitation of group discussions is however key to their success. Anagnostaki, Mandilari, and Marazopoulou (2021) highlight demands on the leader in facilitating group discussions. Group dynamics can be difficult to manage with practitioners being defensive, closed to questioning and disengaged by the experience if an open, honest and trusting environment is not facilitated by the leader (Elfer and Wilson, 2023; Belton et al. 2011) However once established, reflective discussions can be profoundly stimulating (Gradovski and Løkken, 2015). Hallett (2013) advocates for emotionally literate leaders, skilled at facilitating group conversations, and knowledgeable about underlying policy discourses impacting ECEC. A framework for these group discussions is also vital. Clear parameters create safe spaces for open discussion (Soni, 2013) and enable professional development (Puroila, Kupila and Pekkanin, 2020) Indeed, collaborative learning can promote professional identity when co-constructed in the workplace (Trodd and Dickerson, 2019; and Corral-Granados et al. 2023). These studies on leadership, mentoring and group discussions moulded my third subsidiary research question:

To what degree do Early Years qualifications and sector training support the facilitation of supervision, mentoring and group discussions?

2.4 Conclusion

The lack of research on supervision, acknowledged by Soni (2021, citing Cherrington 2018) and Susman and Stillman (2020), creates a lack of clarity on sector wide opinions. While research has only included a limited number of practitioners in England, it is evident reflective practice is beneficial. Group discussions can facilitate learning and be an effective way of providing professional development opportunities. However, there is no definitive answer within literature to suggest group discussions are preferable to one-to-one supervisions. The professionalisation agenda, educational standardisation and emotional labour dominate. There is no evidence in the literature of Dame Tickell's ideal of supervision being used a reflective practice tool fundamental to quality leadership practice. However, the review provides three subsidiary questions, and clarification on methodology, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

Word Count: 3042

Chapter 3 Research Design

This small-scale investigation takes a convergent parallel mixed methods design approach (Creswell and Clark, 2011; cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Research methods depicted in the literature review, alongside gatekeeper discussions regarding research parameters and contextual indicators, informed the approach. Therefore, the research design has both quantitative and qualitative elements. The research centres on a small cohort of ECEC practitioners and their individual experiences of supervision. This chapter begins with the paradigm position and conceptual framework for the research. Ethical considerations then follow the research methods and instruments. Modes of data analysis complete the chapter.

3.1 Paradigm Position

As a researcher I aim to understand how practitioner experience of supervision relates to its definition in the EYFS (DfE, 2023). I acknowledge individual realities are socially constructed (Creswell 2012, cited by Mooney and Duffy, 2014) by the personal interactions, experiences, and career trajectories of participants.

The EYFS (DfE, 2023) provides a clear definition of supervision establishing expectations for the sector. However, in working practice, a different reality of supervision exists. This reality is constructed by the historical delivery of supervision, alongside cultural values and societal beliefs of the individuals involved. Their interpretations of these in relation to the definition of supervision in the EYFS (DfE, 2023) will have created divergent realities (Crotty, 1998, cited in Moon and Blackman, 2014) of supervision for practitioners in the Group. Therefore, a bounded relativist ontological assumption (Moon and Blackman, 2014) informs this research.

This ontological assumption is influenced by my career in ECEC, the module material and the literature review. A constructionist approach considers the cultural, historical, and societal structures which influence the individual's views and form their particular meaning of supervision (Crotty 1998, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) The reality of supervision will be a conglomeration of individually constructed meanings. Therefore, a constructionist epistemological opinion (Moon and Blackman, 2014) informs this small-scale investigation.

These ontological and epistemological opinions influence the methodological approach chosen. My methodological approach is to analyse individual realities of supervision and find meaning in their construction. Indicating the underlying paradigm running through this research is interpretivism (Corbetta, 2003). The researcher pursues the innate truth through the interpretation of the lived experiences of others. Corbetta (2003) contests it is impossible to understand completely all the intricacies of what has led to a certain lived experience. However, it is possible to understand the conditions which have made this reality possible. That is the premise of this research: interpreting how the experiences of individual practitioners have created the reality of supervision today.

Interpretivist research findings are formulated from the researcher's interactions and involvement with participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) and the accumulated data. Interpretations are tempered by my own reality of supervision and influenced by my insider position in this research (Arber, 2006; Tuffour, 2018). There are advantages to being an insider researcher. I understand the supervision process, have pre-formed relationships within the Group, and autonomy to put the findings of the research into practice (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) However my position dictates ethical considerations are at the forefront of research.

3.2 Conceptual framework

Developing an in-depth interpretation of practitioner realities is a necessity of a conceptual framework (Jabereen, 2009, cited in Farrow et al, 2021). Conceptual frameworks bring together concepts and relationships within the design of a piece of research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) providing a clear and concise representation. Lesham and Trafford (2007, cited by Farrow et al, 2021) emphasise research which is not conceptualised by researchers can lead to a lack of cohesion in the research. Creating a top-heavy focus on methods rather than concepts.

Ravitch and Carl's (2021) analysis of the components of a conceptual framework influence my design (Figure 1). The framework is split into quadrants. Quadrant 1 depicts the research questions driven by my ontological and epistemological assumptions and the literature review. Quadrant 2 depicts the theoretical discussions pertained within the literature review. Quadrant 3 depicts the methodological approach

relating to an interpretivist paradigm and gatekeeper direction. Quadrant 4 depicts the ethical considerations of my positionality as a researcher.

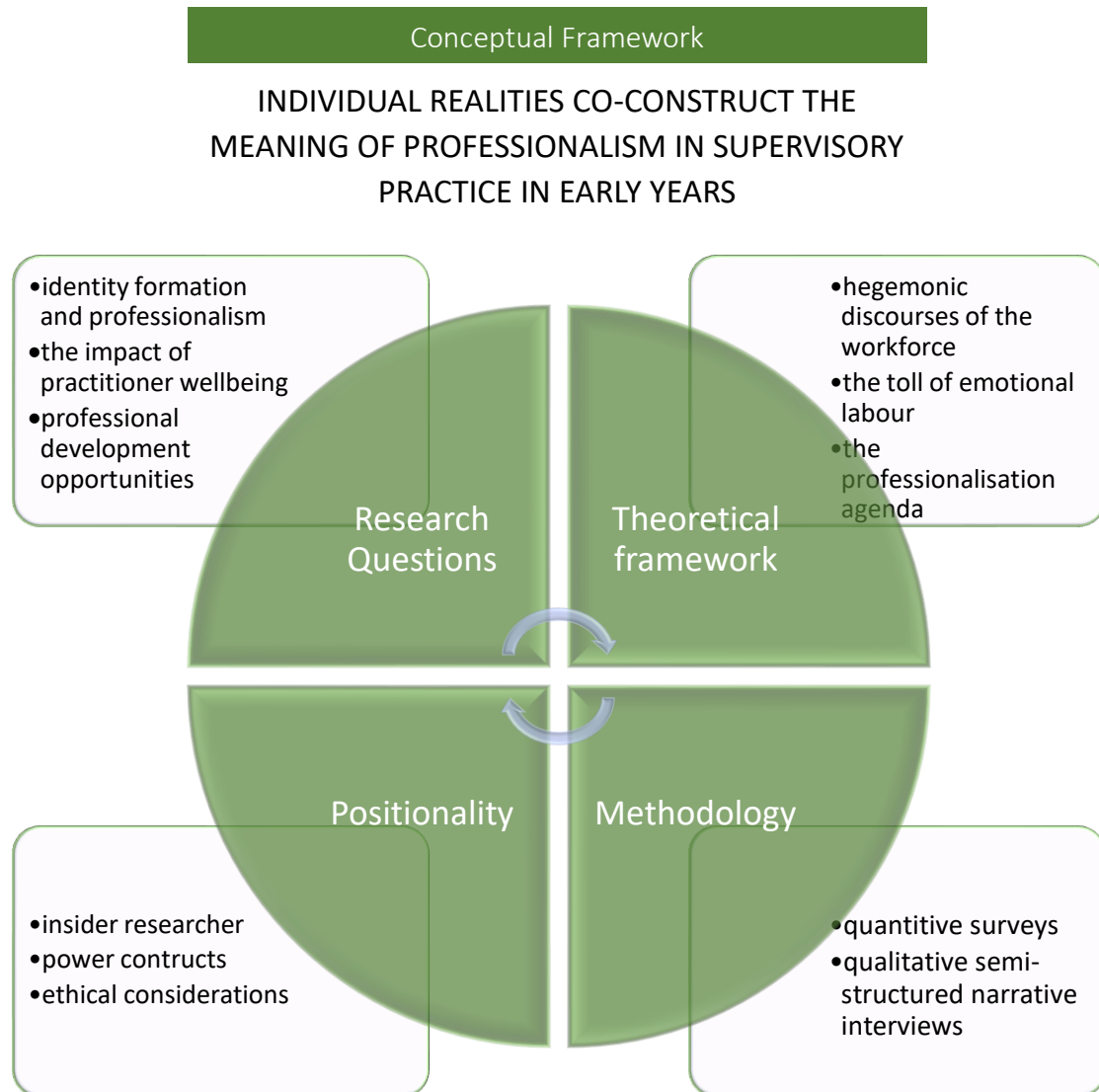


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework details the constituent parts of the research and the relationship of those parts to the overall scope (Farrow et al, 2021). Jabereen, (2009, cited in Farrow et al, 2021) regards conceptual frameworks as a means of interpreting social realities. This framework provides a relationship model and an overview of the research design within an interpretative paradigm.

3.3 Research Methods

The conceptual framework depicts a convergent parallel mixed methods approach (Creswell and Clark, 2011, cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) comprised of

a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire facilitated baseline data gathering of current working and demographical positions. Containing evaluative content, the questionnaire contextualised the findings to the cohort drawn from the Group.

Semi-structured narrative interviews drew out life history realities of supervision. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) see narrative interviews as an appropriate research instrument for an interpretivist paradigm. However, I wanted to embrace the value of the individual narratives while ensuring they kept within the parameters of the research topic. This approach did have risks, semi structured questioning could interrupt the flow and fluidity of the narratives (Dourcet and Mathner, 2003, cited in Reeves, 2007). Conrad and Serlin (2011) attest the difficulty researchers have in maintaining impartiality in qualitative research. As an insider researcher maintaining impartiality has indeed been of paramount importance. A purely narrative approach would have moderated the impact of my power and position (Arber, 2006; Tuffour, 2018). However, the need to remain within research parameters due to the scale of the study, meant semi-structured interviews proved most useful.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, cited by Conrad and Serlin, 2011) argue a mixed methods approach is capacious and flexible in form. This enables the researcher to deploy a heterogeneous style to the design and the organisation of the research. The mixed methods approach also facilitated the roll out to a wider audience.

As an insider researcher (Bulk and Collins, 2023) I was in the privileged position of being able to contact all the employees in the Group. I felt an online questionnaire would set a good baseline for the contextual data required by my Gatekeeper. The Gatekeeper voiced concerns that limiting the research to interviews would constrain the depth of the study. This would then impact the subsequent validity of any recommendations. Burton and Bartlett (2005) are generous in their praise of questionnaires for comparative analysis of trends in data. My Gatekeeper felt gathering cohort demographics and including evaluative questions for the larger audience accessible by the questionnaire, would be pertinent to the study.

The questionnaire comprised data gathering demographics of participants: qualifications, job role, time in sector, and frequency of supervision. The inclusion of evaluative elements focused on the requirements of supervision in the EYFS (DfE,

2023): wellbeing, safeguarding, children's outcomes, and professional development. The inclusion of evaluative questions and text boxes for additional comments laid groundwork for forthcoming interviews (The Open University, 2019b). Rowley (2014) sees topic knowledge as fundamental to the scripting of a quality questionnaire and I created the questionnaire easily and to a quick timescale.

I distributed the questionnaire by email and included a postscript requesting potential interview participants contact me to register an interest. Time-slots for interview were then arranged. I chose a semi-structured narrative approach for two reasons. Firstly, from an insider research position (Arber, 2006; Tuffour, 2018) my preformed relationships would naturally mean the interviews would be informal back and forth interactions. I felt a structure would keep the conversation on track and not deviate into other company matters. Secondly, a structure was more useful in encapsulating their reality of all the components of supervision. Supervision is not a singular topic, it is multi-faceted, and complex. In a simple narrative interview, there was the potential to overlook aspects which would then make findings less relevant.

As this was a small-scale investigation the research needed careful consideration and planning. I implemented a research schedule (Appendix A) and contingency plan (Appendix B) as part of my submission for TMA 02. These proved incredibly useful for the mitigation of risks, enabling the scheduling of questionnaire distribution and interviews effectively within time scale. A pilot study evaluated the veracity of the questionnaire, audio and visual equipment, and the transcription software.

3.4 Research Instruments

The research instruments focused on two aspects of data collection. The quantitative questionnaire ran parallel to the qualitative semi-structured narrative interviews. The interviews focused on the lived experience of supervision, while the questionnaire focused on contextual information and current supervision practices.

Prior to the launch of the questionnaire (Appendix E) an information letter (Appendix F) was distributed to the Group. Participants affirmed consent by submitting the questionnaire. However, while this protected individual anonymity it also mean they could not withdraw consent after submission. This consent stipulation was portrayed clearly in the information letter. The questionnaire contained questions gathering

demographic data, assessment data and evaluative data. A reminder email was sent 5 days later and a total of 43 questionnaires were returned within a 2-week period.

I produced a framework for the interviews to serve as a prompt (Appendix G). I had initial concerns about this semi-structured approach as I did not want to lead the narratives. However, the framework proved invaluable in engaging participants and keeping the flow of the interview on track. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) found a similar technique was useful for redirecting interviewees who veered off topic and in supporting participants who need structure. One participant wanted to prepare in advance and requested the questions prior to their interview stating this would alleviate any anxiety felt about attending the interview.

All the participants were known to me. I booked 10 interviews, 1 participant did not respond to the invitation, 1 failed to turn up to interview. I held the interviews on Microsoft Teams during working hours, meaning participants received remuneration for attending. At the start of each interview, I gained permission for recording and shared the research information details on the framework (Appendix G). Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2015) consider a framework for narrative interviews can support the researcher in keeping focus on topic. They suggest a framework includes: an introduction and explanation of the research, followed by a narrative phase where the researcher is attentive to the participants words and refrains from interruptions. I initially asked the participants to share their career journeys. This gave context to the construction of the individuals reality of working in ECEC.

Anderson and Kirkpatrick's framework (2015) introduces a questioning phase once the narrative phase is complete. This enables the researcher to review the narration, ask pertinent questions relating to the narrative and extend in areas not fully covered. The semi-structured framework enabled this questioning phase and provided useful pointers and reminders of the topic. Naturally, each interview was different. Some required more use of the semi-structured framework than others, while others shared everything during their narratives.

The final phase in Anderson and Kirkpatrick's framework (2015) depicts the conclusion of the interview and the transcription process. Handwritten notes proved useful in directing further questions in the questioning phase and in the interpretations initially made in the interview when hearing the narratives. Kvale (1996, cited in Roulston,

2010) values the interpretations the researcher begins to make during the interview. This allows the researcher to return and refine arguments and understand to a greater depth the participants lived experience. I was able to clarify and elucidate meaning throughout the interviews. Using this interpretative approach from the start brought depth to the data findings. The interviews concluded by asking the participants if they had anymore to share. Recording and transcription comparisons highlighted transcription errors. Transcriptions were stored on a secure platform with password access, with data backed up to a USB. A data plan (Appendix H) considered data protection issues to ensure compliance with data protection regulations (submitted as part of TMA 02).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout the research I was aware my position in the Group would be a challenge ethically and morally. Current supervision processes have been shaped by my own input to policy and procedure. To research its effectiveness in practice will naturally cause participants to worry I may take offence to any criticisms of the current procedure. Throughout every aspect of the research, I separated my work persona from my research persona. Being transparent in all communications and stating that my interpretations will be open to scrutiny by the Group. Gill Adams (The Open University, 2019a) faced similar conflicts in her research with teachers. However, by centralising her own impact and experience within the research itself she addressed this power imbalance head on. Ethical reflexivity is a necessity throughout the research process (Reeves, 2007). At every stage I considered whether my own bias affected the validity of the research (Appendix Q). In the interview process I was vigilant in ensuring I did not lead participants narratives. Each participant received an Interview Information Letter (Appendix D), and a consent form was issued pre-interview (Appendix C).

Dourcet and Mathner (2003, cited in Reeves, 2007) caution the researcher on the impact of their own bias in the interview process and in their interpretations of findings. The interpretivist approach employed allowed consideration of the intricacies of the lived experiences of the participants individually and as a cohort. However, it also enabled my own bias. On occasions, I had to re-focus on making meaning of the words spoken and lives lived by the participants through their narratives. Coulter and Smith

(2009) draw on the work of Erikson (1986) acknowledging interpretivist researchers must extract the detail from the narratives. They must reflect on the consequences of their assumptions and ensure the process is fully transparent. My position as an insider researcher using an interpretivist approach was challenging. It questioned my bias, and my position in the Group. However, it also enabled true reflexivity within the research. It reinforced my duty of care to the participants accounts of their lived experiences and ensured ethical considerations were at the fore of the research throughout.

Stutchbury and Fox (2009) advise that a methodical approach to ethics allows the researcher to bring clarity to their research. At every step I have reflected on the actions taken and the impact they have had on the participants. The 'becoming an ethical researcher' course (Open University, 2023) prepared me for reflective consideration of participants. I made every effort to reassure the participants of their anonymity in the dissemination of the research. I also reiterated consent guidelines and withdrawal procedures at every step. The research was designed with BERA (2018) guidelines in mind and informed by The Open University Ethical Grid (Appendix I) and The Open University Ethical Agreement Form (Appendix J).

On occasions the interview participants expressed their own vulnerability and introduced wellbeing concerns relating to the handling of supervision in the Group. This brought additional conflicts as an insider researcher. Thunberg (2021) asserts the researcher must protect participants from potential harm which may occur from their narrative accounts. While I did not want to detract from the importance of the concerns shared, I reiterated my researcher persona was separate to my work persona and offered the opportunity to discuss this separately in a work capacity after the interview. Thunberg (2021) advises moving the topic forward quickly if narrations cause distress to the participant or indeed the researcher. By redirecting the narrative, I was able to maintain the integrity of the participant account, support their well-being by taking the concern off record and minimise my own bias by situating the concern away from the research and into the work perspective.

3.7 Data Analysis

I used Microsoft Forms to analyse questionnaire results. From this I created statistical graphs (Appendix K) which depicted the demographics of the cohort. The evaluative data and free text were downloaded into an excel spreadsheet. I then used Braun and Clark's (2006) phased thematic analysis (cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) to analyse the data.

A thematic approach fits well with the constructionist epistemological opinion (Moon and Blackman, 2014) which informs this small-scale investigation. Constructionism derives meaning from the social realities of the participants (Braun and Clark, 2006 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018), searching for reasoning behind those views and how they have been constructed. Braun and Clark (2006, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) argue thematic analysis is a valuable tool for researchers as it can provide informative summaries and descriptions of data and is well-suited for making recommendations to policy development.

Interview transcriptions were accuracy checked to recordings and redacted for anonymity purposes. Thematic analysis began with parallel data reviews enabling familiarisation and coding of the data. The questionnaire data coding used an excel spreadsheet. Goy (2024) used thematic analysis to code interview transcripts, subjecting them to repeated readings until themes related to the research questions were identified. The interview transcripts were coded in a comparable manner. Woods et al, (2016, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) urge the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and reflect on how their own bias and values may impact the analysis. A third reading highlighted I was dwelling on negative aspects of the narratives. I therefore revisited the coded annotations and redrafted the excel spreadsheet until I was happy that the themes entirely reflected the narratives. Braun and Clark (2006 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) attest thematic analysis enables reflection of reality and unpicking of deeper understandings of this reality. Repeated readings of the transcripts delivered a much deeper understanding of the participants realities and the reasoning behind their construction.

The research instruments provided separate data sets for analysis, which then converged to provide triangulation of data (Creswell and Clark, 2011, cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Combining data enabled a final draft of the themes which

were then categorised within the parameters of the subsidiary research questions in a thematic mind-map (Appendix N)

3.8 Conclusion

The findings of the research study will be summarised in Chapter 4 along with recommendations for the Group and further research possibilities.

Word Count: 3013

Chapter 4 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented research design rationale based on my ontological and epistemological position. There are multiple ways a researcher may present their findings, based on individual interpretations of relevance to the research question (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) The findings firstly give context to current supervision processes within the Group. An interpretation of their relevance to the EYFS definition of supervision then follows. This chapter concludes with a discussion on dominant themes of identity, wellbeing, and professional development.

As an insider researcher I was aware my previous knowledge of the Group may affect interpretations of the results. Poulton (2023) attributes four characteristics to being a good researcher: courage, respectfulness, sincerity, and reflexivity. Throughout the research I endeavoured to mitigate my bias by recognising my power status within the Group and my pre-established relationships with participants. I have used anonymous participant quotes throughout to protect the integrity of participant's words and feelings.

4.2 Context

Demographical data from the questionnaire (Appendix K) provides an insight into respondent roles, experience, and qualifications. The majority of participants had over 5 years' experience in ECEC, were Level 3 qualified, and in a leadership role. Evaluative data from the questionnaire (Appendix L) provides contextual information of respondent's personal views of supervision processes in the Group and relevance to its definition in the EYFS. Interviews provide narrative data of personal journeys in ECEC and opinions of supervision.

Current supervision processes

The majority of participants receive supervision once per term with an average satisfaction rating of 4.53 out of a possible 5.

Aspects of supervision were given satisfaction ratings as follows in Figure 2:

	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Extremely Satisfied</i>
<i>Team working</i>	4.7%	16.3%	27.9 %	51.2%
<i>Performance Support</i>	2.3%	9.3%	41.9%	46.5%
<i>Professional Development</i>		14%	32.6%	53.5%
<i>Well-being</i>		14%	23.3%	62.8%
<i>Safeguarding</i>		4.7%	30.2%	65.1%
<i>Children's outcomes</i>		7%	34.9%	58.1%

Figure 2: Supervision satisfaction ratings

While the majority of participants were extremely satisfied with supervision only a small minority explained what made them satisfied. Those who ticked neutral as a response did not offer any expansion of their views. Those who did were either dissatisfied or extremely satisfied. This means views were situated on an opposing scale. These views have been categorised and distributed from positive to negative in Figure 3:

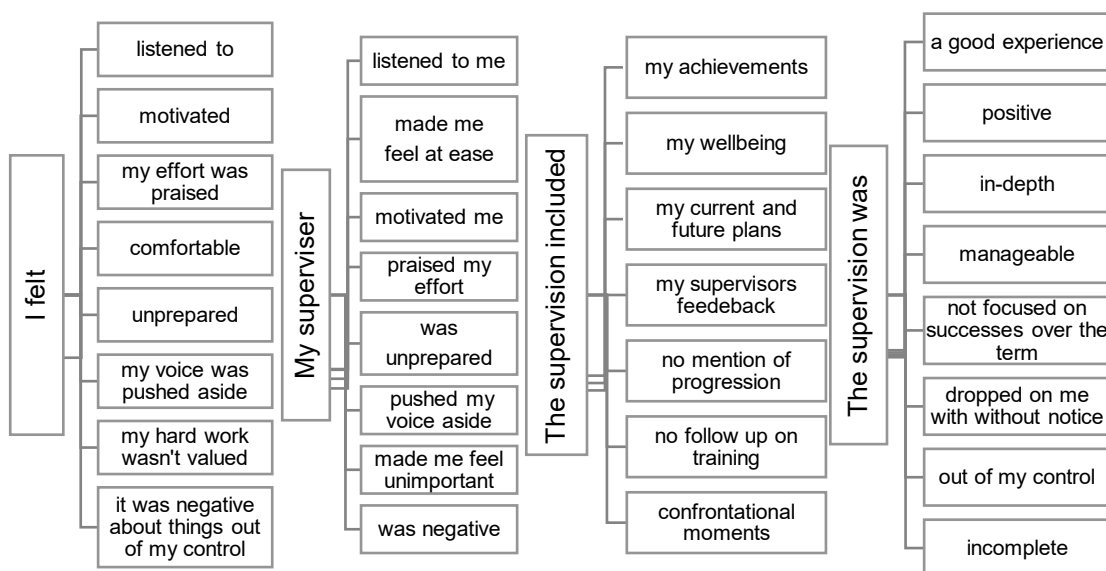


Figure 3: questionnaire participants views of their own supervision.

The main contention was inconsistent delivery. One participant noted:

'every manager has a different approach or timescale.'

Findings demonstrate crucial factors in the delivery of supervision are:

- when it is delivered,

- format of delivery
- attitude of the person delivering supervision.

Supervision should be a safe space for sharing and learning and being open about one's vulnerabilities. If this is not managed well, misrepresentation occurs and practitioners become jaded (The Open University, 2019c)

One participant explained their approach to supervision:

'they are so in depth, we talk about you... what have you been doing, how are you feeling, how is your role and any like wins that you've done any negatives. I think our... focus on... well-being is really indicated through our supervisions.'

Those who received good supervisions felt supervision was more holistic and tailored to their needs. They felt valued, listened to, and had clear direction in their development.

Value of supervision

Supervision was seen as valuable for identifying improvement within job roles:

'I think you can become very used to what you're doing and think you're doing a good job, but without having a supervision... if we don't do that, no one will ever progress. You just stay very stagnant.'

'it makes me personally feel better that I'm doing something right... it's almost a little challenge to myself when... something needs to be worked on... that challenges me... and that makes me feel good.'

Supervision also provided a platform for practice changes:

'it gives you an opportunity to... air out things that you need to tell them or that they need to tell you... finding ways to make things easier for everybody.'

'the whole point of supervision is that improves practise.'

Discussions on practice enable reflection of wider issues and instigate change (Elfer and Dearnley, 2018a; Elfer et al, 2018b; and Elfer and Wilson, 2023). Supervision be an effective tool for professional development (Bleach, 2014) and practice improvement.

Preparation

Those facilitating supervision consider its preparation to be relatively easy and generally book supervisions in advance with practitioners.

While 72% of participants agreed they had time to prepare for supervision, this question triggered the most text responses in the questionnaire. Participants want sufficient time to prepare for supervision. Another requirement is an agenda.

In a previous role one participant described how their supervisor prepared them for supervision:

'She would send out an e-mail saying these are the topics that we're going to sort of cover, and this is your previous supervision, and she would send me a copy of that so I can have a read through that and to get familiar with it.'

Preparation time is valued. Time to prepare for supervisions is vital, enabling deeper reflection. One participant noted:

'being put on the spot, it almost makes you forget different things which is important to bring up.'

Practicalities of facilitating supervision are important to all participants. They acknowledge day-to-day practice takes priority, but it frustrates them when supervisions are postponed or arranged without notice.

Difficulties meeting staff:child ratio requirements present problems in completing booked supervisions. One participant remarked:

'the hardest things was always... the ratio. I still had to... manage the supervision and... the setting.'

Participants find this frustrating and feel supervisions are time constrained as a result, meaning they do not get time to discuss matters important to them in enough depth. Those facilitating supervision feel they must constantly juggle bookings to meet business need, with time constraints having the greatest impact on their completion. One participant stressed:

'time is a big thing'... it is having that kind of time to say right, it's gonna be 9 and we can finish when we need to finish, rather than saying right, you've got 9:00 to 9:30... then it feels rushed and it doesn't feel like actually it's effective'

Time is the main challenge highlighted in the data.

Relevance to the EYFS definition of supervision

The requirement for ECEC practitioners, who have contact with children and families, to have supervision is defined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (EYFS) as follows:

- *discuss any issues – particularly concerning children’s development or wellbeing, including child protection concerns.*
- *identify solutions to address issues as they arise.*
- *receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.’ (DfE, 2023)*

84% of participants believe supervision meets the requirements of the EYFS (DfE, 2023).

<i>EYFS Requirement</i>	<i>Likely or very likely to be followed through</i>
<i>Professional development</i>	68%
<i>Actions</i>	77%
<i>Wellbeing actions</i>	81%
<i>Children’s actions</i>	93%
<i>Safeguarding actions</i>	98%

Figure 4: Likelihood of actions being completed after supervision

Child focus

Participants were clear in their view of supervision being a supportive process for reflecting on children’s outcomes.

‘when you’re working with children, sometimes it becomes really hard, and you are lost, and you don’t know where to go. You can feel that... you’re not doing a good job, and you don’t know how to look after one particular child... and...if you haven’t got a relationship with anybody else, where do you go? And that can then build up and... you can make mistakes.’

However, the literature review highlighted a general lack of research on the effect supervision has on children’s outcomes. Surprisingly, given the focus on children’s

outcomes in the EYFS (DfE, 2023) there was little comment on children in responses.

One participant noted:

'I'd also say it it's more about us than the children.'

This is an interesting consideration and could be due to, as one participant stated:

'well-being... is... very hot since COVID, isn't it?'

Wellbeing is a recurring theme in the findings and is discussed later in the chapter.

Safeguarding

The majority of questionnaire participants felt safeguarding was the most effective component of supervision (Figure 6)

	<i>Average effectiveness rating out of 5</i>
<i>Professional development</i>	4.61
<i>Wellbeing</i>	4.73
<i>Children's outcomes</i>	4.65
<i>Safeguarding</i>	4.78

Figure 5: average effectiveness of components of supervision

However, there was surprisingly little mention of safeguarding. Soni (2019) conducted research prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and found safeguarding the main topic of supervision. Indeed, there is a clear expectation to discuss safeguarding (Sturt and Wonnacott, 2016; DfE, 2023) Participants in this research noticeably disregarded safeguarding with focus drawn towards the practitioner, their wellbeing, and their development.

Professional Development

Nonetheless, professional development was the least effective component of supervision (Figure: 5) This corresponds with the likelihood of professional development being actioned, which was only 68% (Figure 4). This bears further examination as participants were very satisfied with professional development overall. Supervision includes discussions on professional development and personal effectiveness. However, failure to implement actions creates frustration and dissonance. Some participants were displeased with their experiences:

'In previous supervisions, professional training/actions has been identified but due to staffing was never carried out, meaning training wasn't completed.'

'if professional development was acted upon with the same transparency maybe we wouldn't come across staffing issues.'

However, participants recognise the value following through on actions can have:

'when you start that next one, they said... How are the actions going? Did it work? Did it not work?... because that's saying that you valued them, you remembered them, If you do that and then your staff is happy and content.'

'I think supervision... is mainly about me. How I am within the setting, how I'm doing. Am I struggling with anything? Do I need help with anything? Is there any training that I might like to do?'

There is a keen sense that supervision should be practitioner focused as can be seen in the varying recommendations made in the evaluative questionnaire responses (Figure 6)

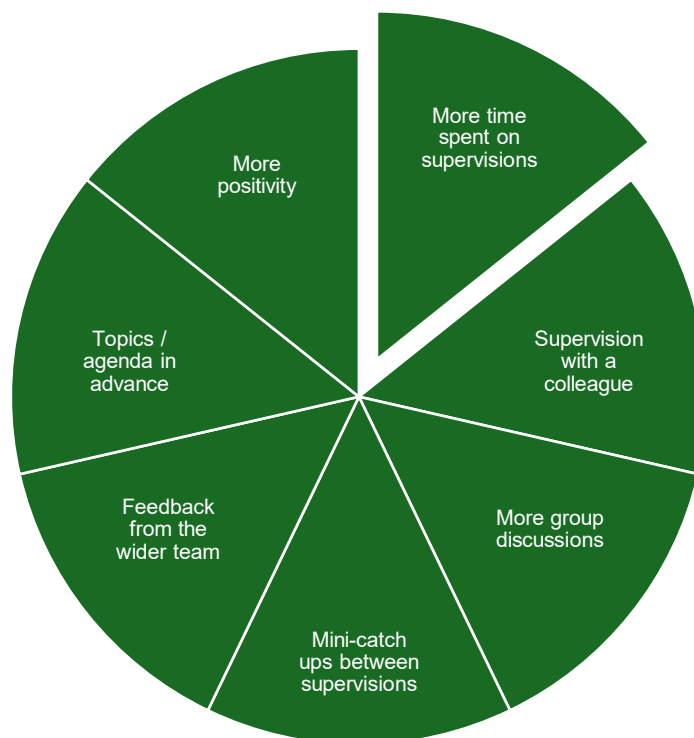


Figure 6: Evaluative responses recommendations

Participants strongly identify with their development, and their wellbeing being the priority of supervision.

4.3 Professional Identities

Findings demonstrate professional identities are forged from a vocational desire to work with children. These identities are entwined with their relationships with colleagues and leaders.

Vocation

Without exception, participants had a strong vocational desire to work in ECEC.

'I've always thought about a having a career in early years and then I came across the Kickstart scheme and that's how I got into childcare.'

'it was always my dream that I worked with children.'

'everyone's always been like, you're so good with children. And so that was kind of the path that I wanted to do... I was like I always want to work with children.'

'I've always known from about the age of 10-11 that I wanted to work with children.'

'I just felt... wasn't for me anymore. It didn't give me the fulfilment like it did working with the children.'

'I had my daughter, and my mentality changed... I guess in my desire to educate children... I was inspired by my own child.'

'I volunteered there for I think it was a week and I absolutely loved it and then realised that I'd found my place. I'd found what I've really enjoyed doing.'

'I chose to work in early years... as I wanted to help and develop and teach children to learn. And initially, I wanted to be a primary school teacher, but I chose, EYFS in the end.'

'I joined a group and supported young mums... I joined the committee which was my beginning of being in early years education''.

However, their routes into ECEC were diverse and did not follow a consistent trajectory (Appendix O). The diversity of routes into the sector corresponds with the diversity of

qualifications undertaken by participants This diversity continued with their recollections of supervision through their early careers.

'I don't think we ever had supervisions then or even real positions because it was all a matter of everyone got together and worked as a team.'

'The chair did my... they weren't called supervisions at the time... but we did meet up and chat about how I felt and if things were going ok.'

'we would have like just catch ups and things, but it wasn't really as documented as much as it is now, and it wasn't a really big thing.'

These personal perspectives give context to the sector prior to inclusion of supervision in the EYFS (DfE, 2023) and in the early years of its implementation. While this implementation was haphazard and unformatted, most participants did have someone to share worries and concerns with.

Relationships

A clear relationship discourse runs through these recollections. Building relationships as a leader supports more effective supervisions.

'it's really about really knowing your person... your relationships in the beginning have to be so good that you can honestly... say... you know that person, a bit like we know children.'

Trusting your leader supports practitioner wellbeing and value:

'you need to be able to feel confident that you'll be listened to and that your opinion is valuable.'

Having effective team working relationships supports quality practice and happiness within the role.

'once you build up that relationship... people are so much more honest and tell you things that make sense of behaviours and make sense of their worries. It makes such a sense to me now, but I wouldn't know that unless I've given them the time in the first place.'

Participants acknowledge not all relationships are positive, and this leads to negative experience of supervision. Choosing who facilitates your supervision has been highlighted as a solution:

'I think you should have a choice of who you have your supervision with. Because sometimes you might find it really easy to speak to one person and really difficult to speak to another. And then you only say part of what you want to say and then that sits with you, and then the next time you don't bring that up again.'

Effective relationships enable honest and open sharing of views. Trust is extremely important when sharing personal feelings, and wellbeing matters are to the fore of supervision for all participants.

4.4 Wellbeing

Participants who lead supervision were extremely focused on the wellbeing of their staff. Assessing staff wellbeing and providing support were dominant themes.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

There is a general consensus that wellbeing has been at the forefront of supervision since the Covid-19 pandemic. A report by the British Medical Association (BMA, 2022) found the mental health of 1 in 3 people has been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This correlates with one third of the workforce in the Group having some kind of mental health concern.

Participants repeatedly refer to the pandemic in their narratives. It still has a profound effect on their personal and professional roles. Participants are conversant on the effect poor mental health can have on colleagues and recognise how good mental health can support wellbeing and retention:

'Mental health at the moment is on such an increase... especially with... maintaining and retaining staff... it's important for staff to know that they're cared for and looked after.'

Having experience and training in mental health mitigates burgeoning wellbeing issues within the sector. A study by Hassard et al. (2024) found leaders with mental health training were better able to offer empathetic support leading to greater staff retention and recruitment, decreasing long term sickness.

Focusing in on issues

Tactics used by leaders enable them to identify issues quickly.

'I think it's just about zoning in, isn't it? And thinking about, how people feel sometimes, you know, it's very easy to say come in and leave your stuff at home, but sometimes coming in makes it worse.'

This suggests leaders feel a duty to approach wellbeing first, rather than staff initiating conversations about wellbeing:

'it's always the first topic of conversation... how are you?

'you kind of have to tease stuff out of them, they're just like, yeah, everything's fine. And so, you kind of have to ask some more leading questions because... it's for their benefit.'

The inclusion of wellbeing in the Early Years Inspection Framework (DfE, 2024a) may have triggered this sharp focus. One outstanding criterion in Leadership and Management states: 'Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues,' and this may be a driving factor for leaders.

Participants did not always appreciate this tactic:

'at my previous setting when I brought up in a supervision that I was struggling, everybody found out quite quickly.'

'when it comes to me and my well-being and my mental health and my personal life, I don't really want everybody who doesn't need to know knowing.'

Confidentiality is paramount when supporting staff with such sensitive issues.

It is evident wellbeing dominates supervision. However, practitioner wellbeing support should not distract from practical improvements to practice (Reid and Soan, 2018) and findings point to wellbeing overshadowing other aspects of supervision.

4.5 Professional development

The EYFS (DfE, 2023) provides a clear directive to the sector: 'Effective supervision provides support, coaching, and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests

of children'. Participants are keen to continue their learning and want to progress in their roles.

Lifelong Learning

Participants view learning as a lifelong pursuit in ECEC.

'I don't think I can ever stop learning. I'm still learning now.'

Significant changes within the sector to policy, regulation and qualifications mean practitioners have to keep learning in order to progress in their roles and stay conversant with current expectations.

'just because you're qualified doesn't mean that's it. Through your career you should be having, like you know regularly meetings and things to check in so you're always going forward with your professional development practise.'

'childcare is now delivered very different to how it used to be. So, I've learned very different to say, like someone just qualifying now. I think childcare changes so much.

It's really hard to kind of keep on top of what's changing and what's not.'

Having a supportive leader who acts as a coach and mentor enables dissemination of knowledge and policy initiatives.

'you need someone to guide you and so therefore you need to have a relationship ... in order to be able to do that.'

While it is clear some participants were not privy to effective support from leaders, the majority were complimentary of leaders' identification of CPD opportunities. Participants also stated group discussions were helpful in keeping up to date with changes in the sector. They provide opportunity to hear colleagues' views on situations:

'That's why we like the staff meetings because you can hear each other's points of view and you sometimes think, oh, I didn't think of that.'

Group discussion is highly beneficial as seen in research by Anagnostaki, Mandilari, and Marazopoulou, (2021). Effective leadership enables focused discussions to take place, enabling reflections in a safe and secure atmosphere (Hover-Reisner, Furstaller and Winniger, 2018)

'So, I think it would be quite nice to do like a group supervision... just to see how everyone else feels that everyone else is doing as well. So actually, they know each other's stronger points or weaknesses probably as well as we do.'

Group discussions can enable teamwork in day-to-day roles. Participants agree:

'we helped each other. We talked through the situations together because we were, because I was part of the team. It was a group thing.'

Facilitating supervision whether singular or group has significant implications for how practitioners feel. However, learning how to facilitate supervision has no clear direction in the sector within professional qualifications or in CPD opportunities.

Learning to facilitate supervision

The majority of leaders learnt how to deliver supervision on the job:

'I have learned through how I've had supervisions. How I've had them delivered to me, what I felt worked, what I felt didn't work. Kind of picking out the good points and then... making it how I want to deliver it.'

Level 3 qualifications provide basic knowledge related to the definition of supervision in the EYFS, while theoretical knowledge supporting the facilitation of supervision is largely absent from ECEC qualifications. Indeed, the variety of qualifications is a significant factor in the knowledge and experience of those facilitating supervision Puroila, Kupila and Pekkarinen (2021)

'you don't always learn that at college... you learn that as you're working, and you build on your knowledge.'

Participants who had undertaken some further professional development did however have more theoretical knowledge:

'that's... taught me... learning skills... how people learn, how people develop'

Theoretical knowledge about learning styles can be incredibly beneficial to leaders facilitating supervision. Sakr and Bonetti (2023, citing Rogers, Brown, and Poblete 2017) attest reflection through coaching enables the integration of new knowledge and effectively support practice improvements quickly. Meaning that on-the-job professional development opportunities can have more impact on supervision than formal qualifications.

4.6 Conclusion

Through analysis of the data sets from the questionnaire and interviews, participants have themselves identified how supervision impacts their personal identities, wellbeing, and professional development. The findings of this research will now be summarised in Chapter 5 and implications for the Group and for further research will be identified.

Word count: 3501

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

This small-scale investigation has drawn from a pool of ECEC practitioners within a Nursery Group in England. The research has demonstrated time constraints are a determining factor in effective delivery of supervision. It is apparent staff wellbeing is the dominant topic of discussion. This chapter will consider investigation findings in relation to research questions. It will discuss implications for the Group and close with an examination of the limitations of the investigation and considerations for further research.

5.1 Identity

There is a strong alignment between participants identity and their vocational desire to work with children. They speak positively of their working environment and their sense of belonging within the sector. They are frustrated with impingements to supervision processes such as time, staff ratio and failure to follow through on actions. There is a clear message that supervision is about them, their needs, and their wellbeing. However, the relevance of supervision to formation of professional identity during day-to-day practice of working with children was not evident.

5.2 Wellbeing

Wellbeing dominates evidence. Participants speak positively about their ability to discuss their wellbeing and the focus this has in supervisions. It is evident supervision does support wellbeing. However, this focus on wellbeing severely limits discussion of other issues 'particularly concerning children's development or wellbeing, including child protection concerns' (DfE, 2023, p27) and therefore detracts from the purpose of supervision as defined in the EYFS.

5.3 Professional Development

The facilitation of supervision in the Group is dependent on historical delivery to leaders. It is evident formal training does not exist in the sector and leaders learn from being supervised themselves. This creates an inconsistent approach across the Group. While leaders identify professional development requirements, they do not action them consistently. This causes frustration and limits progressional opportunities.

5.4 Implications for the Group

A Dualistic Approach to Supervision

Practitioner wellbeing dominates supervision in the Group. This research recommends a dualistic approach, returning to the definition of supervision provided in the EYFS (DfE, 2023). This dualistic approach combines group discussions focused on child outcomes, with personal effectiveness supervisions supporting practitioner wellbeing and development.

Part 1: Child focused discussion

This research recommends implementation of child focused supervision through group discussions. The literature review indicates children's outcomes are more likely to be discussed in group discussions. They provide a dedicated forum for discussion of ideas, better working practices and safeguarding. Participants also emphasised previous staff meetings were effective spaces for reflecting on children's needs. With practitioner wellbeing dominating individual supervisions, group discussion offers opportunities to re-focus on children and engage in group reflection. Facilitation of group discussions, which sets clear parameters for dialogue, and action planning, is a necessity for the successful implementation of group discussions.

Part 2: Personal effectiveness supervision

This research recommends implementation of a mentoring programme to provide personal effectiveness supervision. This addresses practitioner wellbeing, performance, and professional development needs. Mentors will facilitate an integrated approach – offering wellbeing support when needed, observing practice, and recommending professional development opportunities. A crucial factor in these personal effectiveness supervisions is the ability of practitioners to build a relationship with their mentor and for it to be a collaborative undertaking.

Recommended time-frames for this dualistic approach are 6-8 weeks plus a mid-point check in. With a shorter time-frame of 4 weekly supervisions and weekly check ins for practitioners with more significant wellbeing concerns.

Professional Development for Leaders

Leaders within the Group have learned how to facilitate supervision through individual experiences of their own supervisions. Formal leadership training is a recommendation of this research:

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Burgeoning issues of mental health and wellbeing in the ECEC sector since the COVID-19 pandemic are taking a toll on the workforce. Wellbeing concerns of participants dominated participant recollections while the emotional labour of working in ECEC was a dominant theme in the literature review. An awareness of signs and symptoms of mental health and approaches to signpost staff to further are vital skills for leaders. A study by Hassard et al. (2024) found leaders with mental health training were better able to offer empathetic support leading to greater staff retention and recruitment, decreasing long term sickness. This study recommends leaders undertake Mental Health training to support staff in the workplace effectively.

Mentoring and coaching

Supportive relationships enable practitioners to feel valued and have a voice in the workplace. Participants were frustrated by ineffective scheduling of supervision and the unimportance attributed to actions to support their professional development. The literature reviews indicated that mentoring and coaching is effective in supporting practitioners to integrate new knowledge. This study recommends leaders undertake mentoring training and monitoring processes to ensure practitioners reap the benefits of training and development opportunities. This study also recommends the Group implements a monitoring system, to ensure scheduling and action planning is robust in the future.

5.5 Limitations and further research

This was a small-scale investigation which collected views of 43 ECEC practitioners, 8 of whom provided a detailed depiction of their personal journeys and experiences of supervision in the sector. Research methods chosen for data collection were straightforward to manage and useful for the small number of participants involved. Limitations of cohort size and locality mean the findings are specific to the Group.

Expansion of this research is recommended to discover whether similar findings are applicable in the wider ECEC context.

An ethnographic study could prove useful in ascertaining how and if supervision does support professional development of ECEC practitioners and indeed impact on child outcomes. However, this would present dilemmas for the researcher. Supervision is deeply personal, it is a means of sharing concerns and brings confidentiality, safeguarding and ethical considerations. Improvements in child outcomes would be difficult to correlate to supervision alone. A range of contextual factors could naturally improve outcomes and while observation and assessment of child development would afford data on progress, substantiating this was a direct result of the impact of supervision would be difficult to demonstrate.

Word Count: 988

Postscript: Narrative Critical Reflection

I began my postgraduate study in 2021, with a desire to expand my knowledge and test my academic abilities further. Postgraduate studies opened up new avenues of thought and reflection. Studying Childhood and Youth has been a humbling and rewarding experience. It has widened my knowledge of philosophical studies and the social sciences and deepened my understanding of gender constructions and intersectionality. In many ways it has opened my eyes to further opportunities for study that I would like to pursue in the future, both in my particular interest of ECEC and in historical perspectives of childhood and how children are positioned in the world through dominant cultural discourses. Postgraduate study has highlighted research opportunities for the future, and I am excited to see where these take me.

Being an insider researcher has undoubtedly been a challenge. My position in the Group dictates a certain power differential when engaging with colleagues who are research participants. However, participants were fantastically engaging, open and honest throughout the research and this certainly attributed to the wonderful recollections I was able to include in the presentation of data. My knowledge of processes in the Group both supported my understanding of participant perspectives and challenged my own bias, especially as a leader who delivers supervision myself. However, I now know that I can separate myself from my work persona and can develop a deeper understanding of other perspectives as an insider researcher.

My research skills were one of many areas of focus highlighted on my skills audit at the start of E822 (Appendix M). Searching for articles was a difficulty as research on supervision in England is scant. This was frustrating but by expanding the search I broadened the research and found some great articles on wellbeing and burnout internationally. Realising the struggles the sector faces in England are mirrored internationally, was fascinating to research. My ability to appraise articles has drastically improved this year, as has my ability to use an article library. I am so pleased I took the time to do this as it has provided me with a wonderful reference library for the future.

While I struggled with the paradigms, I enjoyed this area of the module materials the most this year. My tutor offered feedback in this area (Appendix P), and I read many different perspectives before honing into the paradigm position underpinning this

research. My tutor also stressed how important structure is to the dissertation (Appendix P) and I know in the past I have been guilty of long sentences and huge paragraphs. One of my biggest learned skills has been in structuring effectively in this dissertation.

Finally, balancing working full time with completing the research, transcribing the interviews and analysing the findings was extremely difficult. I found the support of the Forums and the WhatsApp chat invaluable. I have never been a hugely vocal contributor to the tutorials, but the style of learning at The Open University works for me and this years tutor was especially wonderful to listen to in the tutorials. The dissertation has been incredibly hard work, but also incredibly rewarding. I am proud of the research and look forward to future research possibilities.

Word count: 533

Total Word Count: 12077

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Appendices:

Appendix A Research Schedule in the form of a GANTT Chart

Appendix B Contingency Plan

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Appendix K Questionnaire Demographics

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Appendix M Skills Audit

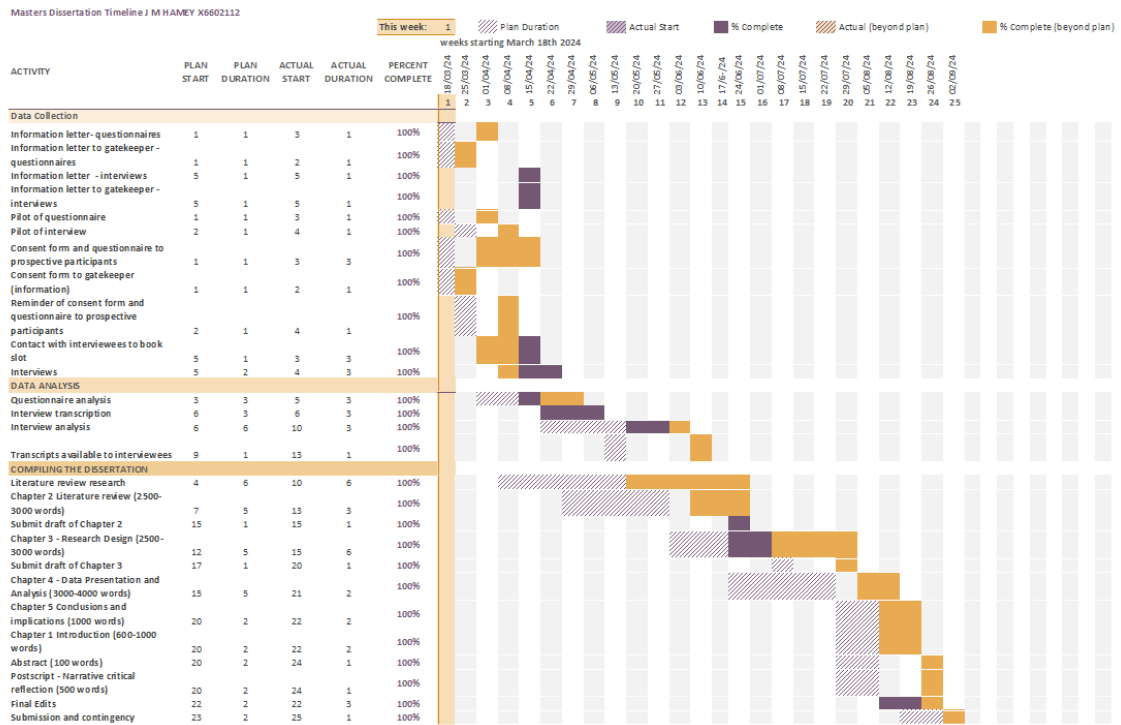
Appendix N Thematic mind map

Appendix O: Routes into Early Years

Appendix P Reflection Evidence Grid

Appendix Q Ethical Appraisal Form

Appendix A – Research Schedule in the form of GANTT Chart



Appendix B – Contingency Plan

Contingency Plan for MA Research	
Challenge	Strategies of Response
Surveys:	
Inaccessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCartney (The Open University 2019g) recommends piloting which covers access, plain English, grammar, and anonymity. • Printable survey emailed to participants, returned by Group internal mail ensuring anonymity. No cost to the participant as printing in setting with Gatekeeper agreement. Extended analysis time factored into the research planner.
Low response rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up communication after one week, extending original deadline.
Responses missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most questions prevent the respondent moving forward without responding. • Section 2 of the survey is specifically for leaders and other respondents must move straight to section 3; therefore, leaders may potentially miss section 2. Leaders will be signposted to complete all sections. • Analysis should indicate responses were missing, and must be considered in conclusions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018)
Respondents fail to understand questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pilot will evaluate the veracity of the survey. (The Open University 2019g) • Respondents' interpretations of questions may vary, or respondents may not understand their meaning. Analysis should indicate responses were corrupted (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2018)
Contaminated survey responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents may contaminate the survey with illegible or bogus comments. • Analysis should indicate responses were corrupted.

<p>Safeguarding or well-being disclosure</p>	<p>Anonymity of disclosure means a risk analysis is needed to determine whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting to well-being support is sent to all users. • The Group designated lead is informed of an anonymous disclosure. • The Group mental health first aider is informed of an anonymous wellbeing disclosure.
<p>Interviews:</p>	
<p>Low response rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May occur due to relationship conflict and my position of power in the Group (Dourcet and Mathner, 2003; cited in Reeves, 2007). • Information will include anonymity and confidentiality, clearly demonstrating my research and professional roles are separate entities. (Appendix D and F)
<p>Scheduling issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants working within child-adult ratios during working hours (DfE, 2023) may require interviews outside shift hours. The gatekeeper has agreed interviews outside of shift hours will be remunerated which is a similar approach to Breeze in their research with youth workers (The Open University, 2019e)
<p>Failure to attend</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second time slot will be offered
<p>Confidentiality of the interview space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview spaces will be chosen by the participants, a similar approach to Adams in their research with teacher participants (The Open University 2019e) • Before commencing interviews, the comfort of the participant will be ascertained and confidentiality of response will be stressed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018)
<p>Lack of engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A request for a break or to terminate the interview will be offered.
<p>Audio recording failure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes taken as back-up. These will be shared with the participant for veracity of content ascribed to the

	interview (The Open University, 2022; Anderson and Kirkpatrick, 2016)
Audio transcription failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual transcription and back-up notes referred to. Extended analysis time factored into the research planner.
Participants do not consent to audio recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes taken as back-up. These will be shared with the participant for veracity of content ascribed to the interview. (The Open University, 2022)
Consent withdrawn during interview or after interview but before publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes, audio, and consent form will be destroyed as per retention guidelines. (The Open University, 2019f)
Safeguarding disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group designated lead will be informed if disclosure meets the threshold of immediate concern. The participant may be informed a referral will be made, dependant on whether a child will be harmed by the participant knowing that a referral will be made. If so, the participant will not be informed of the referral as per guidelines in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2024c)
Well-being disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant will be signposted to further support and the Group mental health first aider. • The interview may be stopped if the participant is distressed.
Controversial disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A risk analysis to determine whether the disclosure is to be shared immediately with the Gatekeeper. • As an insider researcher (Arber, 2006; Tuffour, 2018) my knowledge and role will need to be tempered to the controversial aspects of the disclosure. Ensuring my own bias does not prevent reporting of the disclosure or conversely mean addressing the disclosure myself, as this will blur the line between my roles.

Data loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular laptop updates.• The USB is new and checked for damage after every use.
Unforeseen circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contingency time factored into the research planner at every stage of the research allowing for unexpected delays in data collection.• Gatekeeper aware of timescale, reduced researcher workload allowing increased time allocated to the research.

Appendix C- Interviews Consent and Assent form



ECYS/WELS

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

(to be completed by all participants)

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by 17th April 2024 by email to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview?	YES	NO
Has someone explained this interview to you?	YES	NO
Do you understand what this interview is about?	YES	NO
Have you asked all the questions you want?	YES	NO
Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?	YES	NO
Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time?	YES	NO
Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded?	YES	NO
Are you happy with how your data will be stored?	YES	NO
Do you understand that <u>your</u> and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview?	YES	NO
Are you happy to take part?	YES	NO

If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** sign your name.

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name and today's date

Your name _____

Date _____

Return form to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Thank you for your help.

Appendix D – Interview Information Letter

E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews.

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual's perspective on an aspect of education, childhood, and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This interview is designed to help answer my research question: how supervisory practice contributes to professional development and wellbeing within the Early Years sector – a qualitative study of Early Years educator perspectives within a Nursery Group in XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research question. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 30 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you and others in the setting to be mutually convenient. This might include an online interview setting. If there is anyone else affected by the interview, such as a member of staff, they will also have been consulted about when would be a convenient time and permission has been granted from XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. If we will be using video conferencing software for the interview, you can choose whether

to use your video and show your face or not. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it forming part of the final dissertation. A copy of this transcription will be available to you on request. Your contribution will be recognised by a pseudonym, and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name should be used. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out your perspective on your journey and the impact supervision has had on your work with young children. I can share the questions with you in advance if you would like.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our professional setting as agreed with XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the Company Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes and recording will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed within 24 hours.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study, I would be happy to answer them. Please contact me at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Appendix E – Questionnaire

Supervisory practice in the EYFS - MA research project

J M Hamey

23 Feb 2024

I invite you to complete a survey by questionnaire related to your perspective of supervisory practice in the EYFS at your setting. If you consent, please complete and return the questionnaire. If you would like more information about the questionnaire before completing it, please do not hesitate to contact me first.

* Required

Supervision received (all participants)

1

On average how often do you receive supervision? *

- Monthly
- Half termly
- Termly
- every 6 months
- once per year
- can't remember the last time

2

How satisfied were you with your last supervision? *



3

Please explain the rating you gave to Question 2. *

4

In your opinion does your supervision meet the requirements of the EYFS *

Supervision of staff

3.27 Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching, and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

3.28 Supervision should provide opportunities for staff to:

- Discuss any issues – particularly concerning children's development or well-being, including child protection concerns.
- Identify solutions to address issues as they arise.
- Receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.

Yes

No

To some degree

5

If you ticked no or 'to some degree' in Question 4, please explain why you feel this way?

6

Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of supervision you receive. *

	Extremely dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisf
Performance support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safeguarding support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Development support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Well-being support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting children's outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7

Is it easy for you to prepare for supervision so that you have time to discuss matters of importance to you? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8

Please explain your response to question 7.

9

Which of the following would improve your experience of supervision? *

- More regular supervisions
- More time spent on supervision
- Agenda of topics to be covered in advance
- Dedicated space outside of setting for the meeting
- Online supervisions through Teams video call
- Group discussions
- Mentoring provision from a colleague
- Other

10

If you have chosen 'other' in Question 9, please explain further.

11

How likely is it that professional development highlighted on your supervision is followed through and arranged quickly? *

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

12

How likely is it that actions highlighted on your supervision are followed through and dealt with quickly? *

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

13

How likely is it that actions highlighted on your supervision related to wellbeing at work are followed through and actioned quickly? *

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

14

How likely is it that actions highlighted on your supervision related to children's outcomes are followed through and actioned quickly? *

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

15

How likely is it that actions highlighted on your supervision related to safeguarding is followed through and actioned quickly? *

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

16

Do you have any additional comments or feedback on Questions 11-15?

17

Do you have any additional comments or feedback on the supervision you receive?

Supervision facilitated (leaders only)

If you are not a leader that facilitates supervision please move to Question 31

18

On average how often do you facilitate supervision in the setting?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Half termly
- Termly
- every 6 months

19

Have you received any formal training on facilitating supervision?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20

In your opinion does the supervision you facilitate meet the requirements of the EYFS

Supervision of staff

3.27 Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching, and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

3.28 Supervision should provide opportunities for staff to:

- Discuss any issues – particularly concerning children's development or well-being, including child protection concerns.
- Identify solutions to address issues as they arise.
- Receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.

Yes

No

To some degree

21

If you selected No or To some degree in Question 20, please explain why you feel this way?

22

What are the main challenges of facilitating supervision in the setting? (Please tick all that apply)

	Main Challenge
Time	<input type="radio"/>
Space for meetings	<input type="radio"/>
Ratio requirements	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge of staff performance	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>

23

Please state what challenges you face if you have ticked 'other' in Question 16.

24

Is it easy for you to prepare for supervision with each staff member?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

25

Please explain your response to question 24.

26

How effective is supervision in supporting professional development of your staff team?



27

How effective is supervision in supporting safeguarding in the setting?



28

How effective is supervision in supporting staff well-being at work?



29

How effective is supervision in supporting children's outcomes?



30

Do you have any additional comments or feedback on the supervision you facilitate?

Demographic information

31

How long have you been working in Early Years? *

- < 6 months
- 6 - 12 months
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 5 - 10 years
- > 10 years
- prefer not to say

32

How old are you? *

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 45
- > 45
- Prefer not to say

33

What is your current job role? *

- Apprentice
- Nursery Assistant
- Early years Educator
- Room Leader/Senior
- Manager/Deputy Manager
- prefer not to say

34

What is your highest level of qualification in Early Years? *

- Unqualified
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4
- Level 5
- Level 6
- EYITT or QTS
- prefer not to say

35

Appendix F – Questionnaire Information letter



Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport
Study related to Masters module 'E822 Multidisciplinary
Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'
For participants invited to complete a questionnaire
E822 Information Letter: Questionnaires

Dear employee [REDACTED]

I am currently studying on the Masters module 'E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth' at the Open University in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport. My studies are being supervised by a personal tutor and I am following research protocols recommended by the University which have been approved by a named supervisor in this setting. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to answer the following question: how does supervisory practice contribute to professional development and wellbeing within the Early Years sector – a qualitative study of Early Years educator perspectives within a Nursery Group [REDACTED]. This small-scale investigation aims to help me better understand and develop supervisory practice and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

I invite you to complete a questionnaire which will take no longer than 15 minutes. This is to be completed online and I would appreciate the return of the questionnaire by 25/03/2024. This has been agreed with [REDACTED]. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the questionnaire in advance of offering your consent to participate.

Information collected will be de-identified and kept confidential, being stored securely on password protected devices. If you do not consent to participate, this is absolutely fine: simply do not complete the questionnaire. It is not possible to withdraw your consent once submitted online because the questionnaires are de-identified and therefore cannot be identified for removal. Before submitting you will be able to save your own responses for future reference.

If you consent, please complete and return the questionnaire. If you would like more information about the questionnaire before completing it, please contact me at [REDACTED] or on TEAMS.

I would also like to invite you to take part in an interview over TEAMS to explore how supervisory practice has affected your professional journey in Early Years. If you would like to participate or would like more information, please contact me by return of email. You will be paid by [REDACTED] to attend this interview. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
Jayne Hamey

The ethics protocols and documentation to support the E822 Multi-disciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth have been developed with advice from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee and have been confirmed by the Chair as fully compliant with The Open University's Ethics Principles for Research with Human Participants. Link: <https://www.open.ac.uk/research/governance/ethics/human/guidelines>

Appendix G – Semi-structured Interviews Preparation Sheet

Semi-structured interviews preparation sheet

The research

My research question is

How do aspects of supervision relate to practitioner wellbeing and professional development in the EYFS in England?

Subsidiary questions:

How relevant is supervision to the formation of ECEC practitioner's professional identity?

How does supervision support ECEC practitioner's wellbeing?

To what degree do Early Years qualifications and sector training support the facilitation of supervision, mentoring and group discussions?

Opening statement:

Thank you for agreeing to meet me today for this interview for my Early Childhood and Youth Masters research project. The research is concerned with the extent to which supervisory practice contributes to professional development and wellbeing within the Early Years sector, specifically within the nursery group.

I have chosen this topic as it is pertinent to my role in delivering the requirements of the EYFS and I aim to collate and analyse first-hand accounts of ECEC educators and leaders' experiences of supervision throughout their careers. This will inform practice within the nursery group which in turn will enable a review of current supervisory processes and advise actions for necessary change for the future.

This topic came to my attention when reading an article by Carpenter, Webb, and Bostock (2013) introduced during study with The Open University. Their article reported that evidence for the effectiveness of supervision in social work practice was scant. This study took place just one year after the introduction of supervision in the early years sector in 2012 (Soni, 2013) and I was fascinated to then discover that a study by Wilkins (2017) found that while supervisory practice was practically non-existent in social work practice by 2017, there was no significant detriment to children supported by those social workers. Firmly embedded in practice, supervision is seen

as a key component of work in ECEC, and I had never questioned its relevance to the sector's work with children, nor considered what actual benefits there were to supervision, and I began to consider the possible implications of this discovery. If there was no significant impact on children in social care, could this mean that social workers professional development was facilitated outside of supervision, and were concerns about children similarly just raised in a different format? Or was supervision redundant because reflection on practice was part and parcel of the social work role with social workers proactive in their own professional development and not requiring managerial supervisory support to access training and coaching? If this was so, how did this then correlate with supervision in ECEC?

This research study is therefore interested in your journey and the impact supervision has had on your work with young children and I am very much looking forward to listening to your account.

References:

Carpenter, J., Webb, C.M. and Bostock, L. (2013) 'The surprisingly weak evidence base for supervision: Findings from a systematic review of research in child welfare practice (2000–2012)', *Children and youth services review*, 35(11), pp. 1843–1853. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.08.014>.

Soni, A. (2013) 'Group supervision: supporting practitioners in their work with children and families in Children's Centres', *Early years (London, England)*, 33(2), pp. 146–160. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2013.777695>.

Wilkins, D. (2017) 'Does reflective supervision have a future in English local authority child and family social work?', *Journal of children's services*, 12(2-3), pp. 164–173. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-06-2017-0024>.

Informed consent:

Thank you for your consent to take part in this interview. Can I ask if you would still like to continue with the interview? Do you have any questions for me before we start?

I will now begin the recording.

Opening question:

Could you begin by sharing your own journey working in the early years sector? Why did you choose this career and how has it progressed since you first started working?

Subsidiary questions – all participants:

How relevant do you feel supervision has been in the progression of your career in terms of professional development opportunities it has made available to you?

Thinking about your own well-being throughout your journey in the sector, can you explain how this has been supported or acknowledged through supervision?

When you envisage supervision what does it look like for you?

Do you feel this meets your needs in respect to supporting your career and day to day work experience?

How does this support your work with young children?

Do you see supervision as a reflective process where you can talk about your work with young children?

Have other forms of supervision, for example focus groups or mentoring, helped you in your work with children?

In what ways have they helped you, or could help you in the future?

Could you share the ways in which your qualification in Early Years has prepared you for supervision?

Subsidiary questions for leaders facilitating supervision:

What professional development have you undertaken that has supported you in facilitating supervision?

Similarly, what professional development have you undertaken that has enabled you to feel confident in supporting staff wellbeing during supervisory practice?

Can you share how you support staff professional development during supervision, for example how do you reflect on staff capabilities and practice, and how does this support their continued practice with working with young children?

What other methods of supervisory practice have you tried, such as group discussions and mentoring? How did you find these from a facilitator perspective? To what extent did they support staff practice of working with children?

Appendix H – Data Protection Plan

Data Protection Plan	
Topic	Considerations
Purpose of the data collection	Data will be collected to analyse the extent to which supervisory practice contributes to professional development and wellbeing within a Nursery Group.
Safe storage	Data stored electronically on the researcher’s computer in password protected files. The laptop is password protected with facial recognition software installed. File copies stored on a password protected USB flash drive. The laptop and UBS are stored at the researcher’s home and used at the offices of the Nursery Group, transported via the researcher’s car.
Access	Data solely accessed by the researcher. Participants able to request a transcript of their interview. Questionnaire participants can save their response when submitting the questionnaire. The Interview and Questionnaire information sheets state participants have access to their own data.
Type of data	Demographic data – age range, qualification, job role Supervisor perspective of supervision Supervisee perspectives of supervision Email addresses and names of interviewees. Consent to participate forms
Collection methods	Microsoft Form Survey: linked to researcher’s email address with responses accessible via password. Survey to ‘All Users’ in the Nursery Group with Gatekeeper consent, other email addresses obscured. Microsoft Teams Interviews – linked to researcher’s email address. Participant access through personal email address.
Data retention	Data will be retained for the length of the research and deleted in September 2024

	<p>Where consent is withdrawn, the collected data and consent form will be deleted within 24 hours.</p>
<p>Anonymisation</p>	<p>Microsoft Forms survey is anonymous.</p> <p>Those wishing to participate in the interview stage must contact me via email.</p> <p>Transcripts and notes will be anonymised – participants will be allocated a pseudonym of their own choice.</p>
<p>Participant information and consent</p>	<p>Interview and questionnaire information sheets will be sent to participants.</p> <p>Consent forms for interviews will be completed prior to the interview.</p> <p>Consent will be gained by completion of the questionnaire, and this is stated in the Microsoft Forms Survey.</p>

Appendix I- Ethical Grid

Rationale	No	Question to consider	Your thoughts
External/ecological			
Cultural sensitivity	1	What are the values, norms, and roles in the environment in which I am working and are they likely to be challenged by this research?	Supervision is a done to tick box exercise that leaders do not see as important. Educators may challenge the relevance to their everyday lives, and Managers may challenge the ability to do supervision better in current time frames and ratio requirements.
Awareness of all parts of the institution	2	What is the relationship between the group/individual I am working with and the institution as a whole? How does it affect the participant(s)?	Split between educators and leaders perspectives will be apparent in the research. The institution dynamic is driven by myself and xxxxxx. Participants may be intimidated by my role and xxxxx involvement They may also be fearful of reprisals from leaders.
Responsive communication – awareness of the wishes of others	3	How might my work be viewed/interpreted by others in the institution? How will the language I use be interpreted?	Must be plain English and relevant to EYFS framework – leaders in institution may see it as a money saving exercise or a way to criticise their practice.
Responsibilities to sponsors	4	What are my responsibilities to the people paying for or supporting this research (local authority, my school, external bodies)?	Responsibility to xxxxxxxx to address outdated perceptions of supervisory practice and produce more efficient and timely modes of working for the benefit of the business
Codes of practice	5	Have I worked within the British Educational Research Association guidelines? Are there other relevant codes which might also be applicable? Am I aware of my rights and responsibilities through to publication?	BERA referenced – EYFS referenced – xxxxxxxxxx GDPR policies referenced. Not sure about my rights – understand my responsibilities.
Efficiency/use of resources	6	Have I made efficient use of the resources available to me, including people’s time?	Yes, questionnaire is a valuable tool for initial data gathering and then the

			interviews have been minimised to 10 with expectation of 4 dropouts.
Quality of evidence on which conclusions are based	7	Have I got enough evidence to back up my conclusions and recommendations?	Not completed yet
The law	8	What legal requirements relating to working with children do I need to comply with? Am I aware of my data protection responsibilities? Am I aware of the need for disclosure of criminal activity? Do I need written permissions?	EYFS, WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN, GDPR, DBS
Risk	9	Are there any risks to anyone as a result of this research?	Some risks to educators who make disclosures which may need to be taken forward – and to their well-being if triggered by interview – signposting needed.
Consequential/utilitarian			
Benefits for individuals	10	What are the benefits of my doing this research to the participants? Would an alternative methodology bring greater individual benefits?	Improved supervisory activity within the company and improved professional development.
Benefits for particular groups/organisations	11	What are the benefits of my doing this research to the school/department? Could these be increased in any way? How will I ensure that they know about my findings? Is my work relevant to the school development plan? Can I justify my choice of methods to my sponsors?	Same as above. They will be cascaded across the company.
Most benefits for society	12	Is this a worthwhile area to research? Am I contributing to the 'greater good'? Is it high quality and open to scrutiny?	Yes, supportive of professional development for all.
Avoidance of harm	13	Are there any sensitive issues likely to be discussed or aspects of the study likely to cause discomfort or stress?	Safeguarding children, disclosures, and whistleblowing. Triggers on well-being.

Benefits for the researcher	14	Am I going to be able to get enough data to draft a good thesis or paper? Am I aware of my publication rights? What might I learn from this project? Will it help in my long-term life goals?	Hopefully, will learn from educator perspective and inform better supervisory practice for them and will learn what leaders need to perform supervisory practice better. Will help my career in the company as will support my vision for leadership.
Deontological			
Avoidance of wrong – honesty and candour	15	Have I been open and honest in advance with everyone who might be affected by this research? Are they aware that they can withdraw, in full or in part, if they wish?	Yes, they will be aware in all the documentation
Fairness	16	Have I treated all participants fairly? Am I using incentives fairly? Will I acknowledge everyone involved fairly? Can I treat all participants equally?	No incentives – all participants will be treated equally no matter their level within the company.
Reciprocity	17	Have I explained all the implications and expectations to the participants? Have I negotiated mutually beneficial arrangements? Have I made myself available when those involved might wish me to be? Are the participants clear about roles, including my own, as they relate to expectations?	Completed through information letters for questionnaire and interviews, and also during the interviews.
Tell the truth	18	If there is any need for covert research, how will I deal with this? What will I do if I find out something that the participants/school/department do not like? How will I report unpopular findings	No need for covert research. Will be honest in findings – will run by xxxxx before publishing.
Keep promises	19	Have I clarified access to the raw data and how I will share findings including at publication? How will I ensure confidentiality?	Participants will have access to transcripts. Anonymous questionnaires. Interview names redacted.
Do the most positive good	20	Is there any other way I could conduct this research that would bring more benefits to those involved?	Have everyone participate but this would be tricky to manage the amount of data.

Relational/individual			
Genuine collaboration/trust established	21	Who are the key people involved? How can I build a constructive relationship with them?	Already have relationship with leaders – hopefully will have educators I know well too. Will separate company role from researcher role.
Avoid imposition/respect autonomy	22	Am I making unreasonable or sensitive demands on any individuals? Do they appreciate that participation is voluntary?	No insensitive demands – all participation is voluntary.
Confirmation of findings	23	What steps will I take in my methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings? Can I involve participants in validation? Will I report in an accessible way to those involved?	Will discuss findings with participants – and report to them first.
Respect persons equally	24	How will I demonstrate my respect for all participants? Have I treated pupils in the same way as teachers?	Be honest and open, explain why the research is necessary and what I hope to achieve.

Appendix J – Ethical Agreement Form



E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth

E822 Dissertation Ethical Agreement Form

Return this completed form by the TMA01 cut-off date in November, by emailing a scanned version which makes clear the handwritten signatures to email address: WELS-ECYS-Masters@open.ac.uk, marked in the subject line 'For the attention of the E822 module team'. If you need to change your decision from an SSI to an EP at a later date this should be only after discussion with your tutor. A new version of this form should be completed and returned as above.

Student details Name: Jayne Hamey [REDACTED]

Student declaration

I accept that the Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences of my actions in carrying out research as part of this dissertation module, which in particular relates to my decision to carry out the small-scale investigation format of this dissertation module.

Should I wish to carry out the small-scale investigation:

In order to explain the expectations of this module, I have shared the Letter to Setting Gatekeepers and Guidance for Setting Gatekeepers with the Setting Gatekeeper.

I agree to work with the Setting Gatekeeper and/or Supervisor to ensure that I adapt the processes and protocols supplied by the Open University to fulfil any legislative requirements and guidance relevant to that setting.

I understand that the setting will have expectations of me with respect to safeguarding practices related to interacting with participants who are aged under 18/vulnerable adults and the disclosure of criminal activities.

Should my participants be aged under 18/vulnerable adults, I have shared with the Setting Gatekeeper a copy of my Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced disclosure (DBS) certificate* (see page 3) (or equivalent for those outside the UK). If I do not have the stated certification, I have completed Annex 1 of this document and my Gatekeeper is happy that there will be safe arrangements for me to carry out data collection with participants aged under 18/vulnerable adults.

I commit to using both University and setting advice to support me in taking responsibility for completing my small-scale investigation safely for all involved, ensuring that the privacy, autonomy and dignity of individuals is preserved.

Please tick one of the boxes below:

1. I will be undertaking my data collection in a practice setting as part of a small-scale investigation (SSI) for my dissertation.	X
2. I have decided not to complete data collection in a setting and will be conducting the extended literature review and proposal (EP) form of my dissertation.	

Signed [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED]

If you have ticked box 1, please complete the following section in conjunction with a leader who will act as the gatekeeper to the setting. This should be someone who can confirm you have permission to conduct data collection in your chosen setting, and who is either willing themselves or able to identify for you someone willing to supervise** your conduct while

*collecting data. (**See the Guidance for Setting Gatekeepers for further information about the role of a Setting Supervisor).*

If you are not planning to conduct research directly in a research setting, and do not need to request support from the setting (and this has been agreed with your tutor), sign as the gatekeeper. In these cases you are also signing to say that you will let the leaders of the setting know about your plans for research as a courtesy and offer them a chance to comment before you start your research.

Gatekeeper details	Name: [REDACTED]
	Position/role in setting: [REDACTED]
Setting details	
Setting address: [REDACTED]	
Postcode: [REDACTED]	

Practice-setting gatekeeper declaration – I give permission for Jayne Hamey to carry out data collection as part of their masters' multidisciplinary dissertation module E822, in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will act in the role of supervisor** or have delegated this role to someone within the setting to oversee the data collection tasks they will undertake (interview, observation, documentation and/or questionnaire). I have read the Open University E822 Letter to Setting Gatekeepers and Guidance for Setting Gatekeepers. The student and I have discussed the guidance provided and I agree that procedures and protocols will be followed which ensure the research is undertaken ethically in this setting. Please tick one of the statements below:

- I am satisfied that Jayne Hamey has the necessary disclosures (eg DBS) in place to work with participants under the age of 18/vulnerable adults.

Signed: [REDACTED]

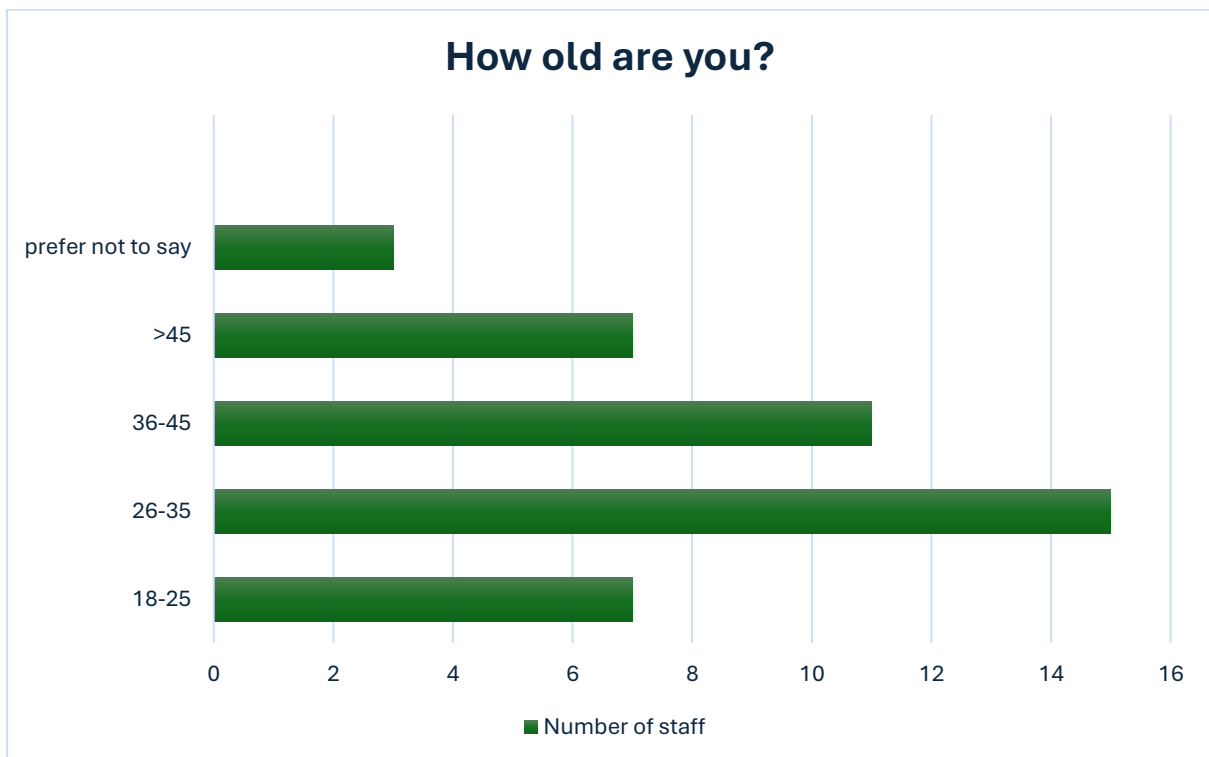
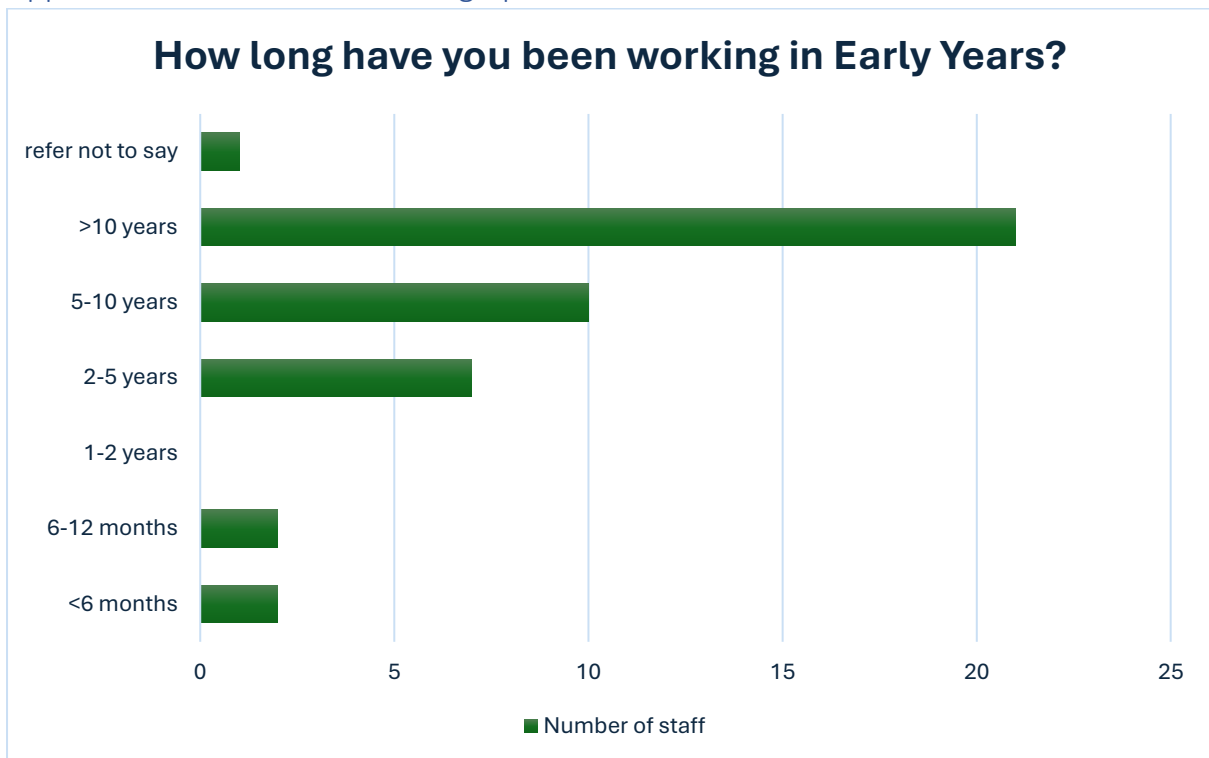
Date: [REDACTED]

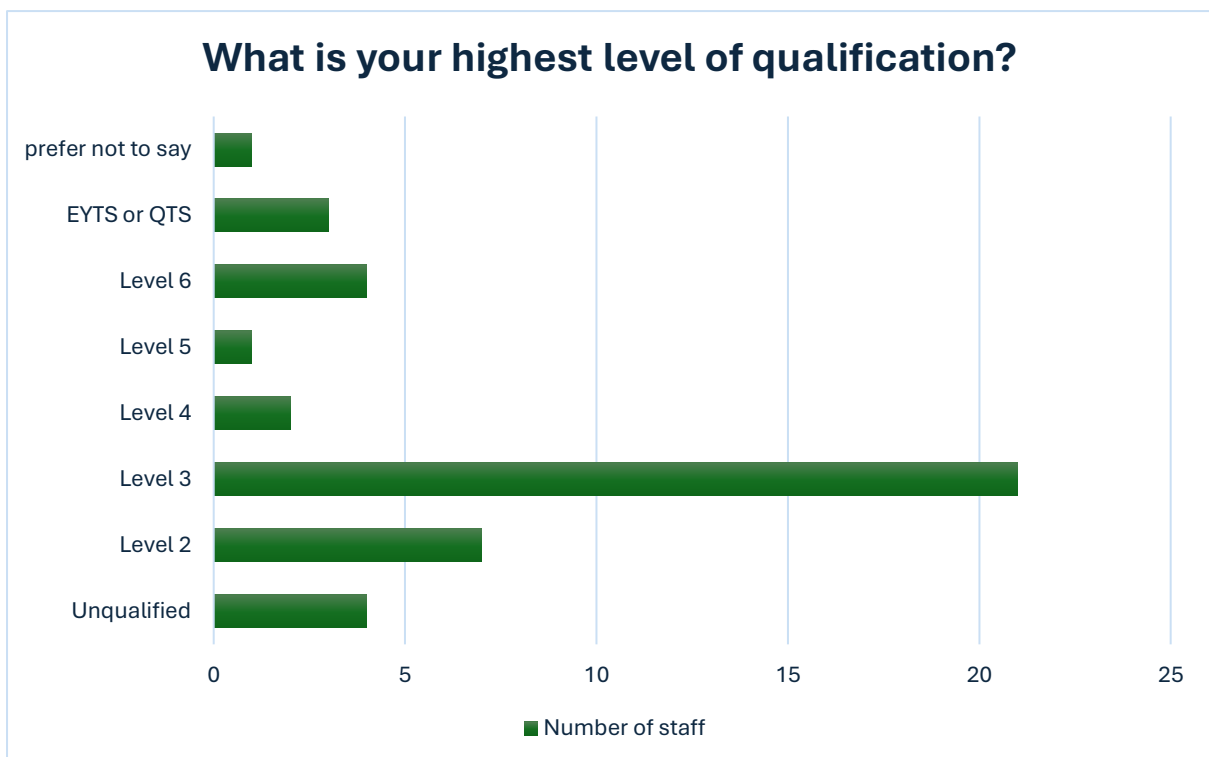
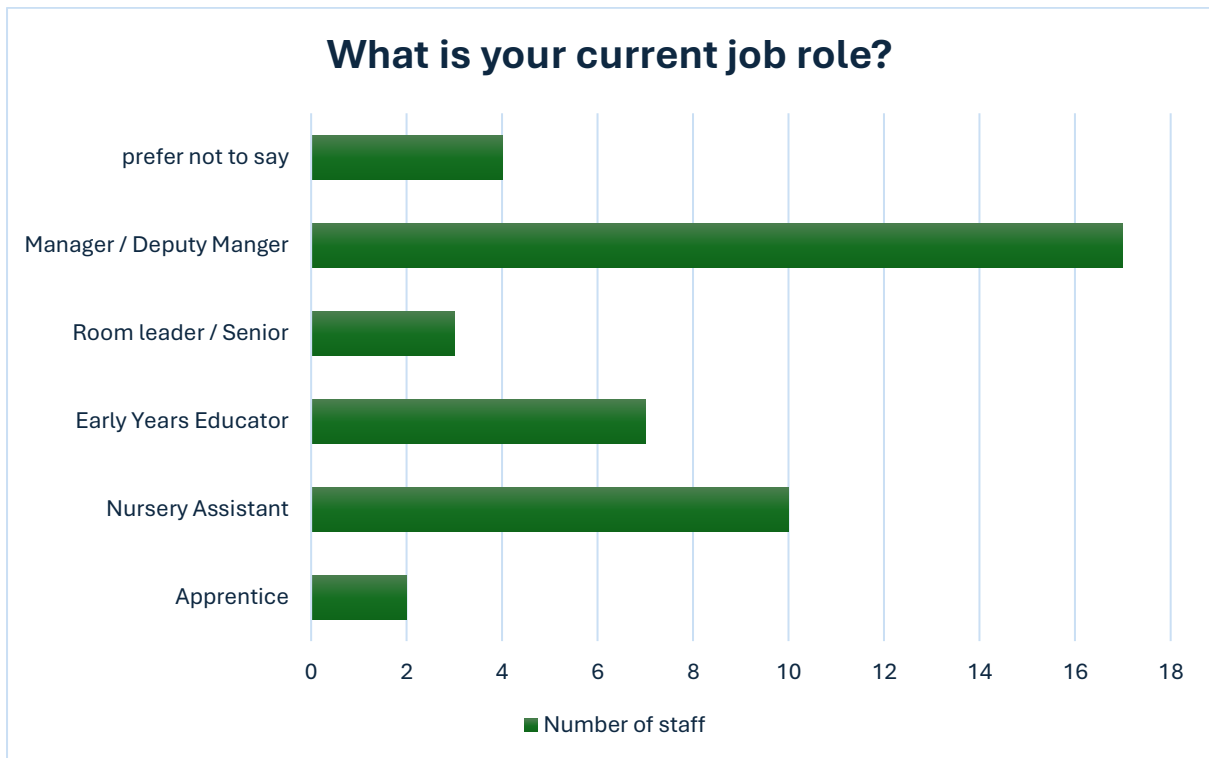
Please print name: [REDACTED]

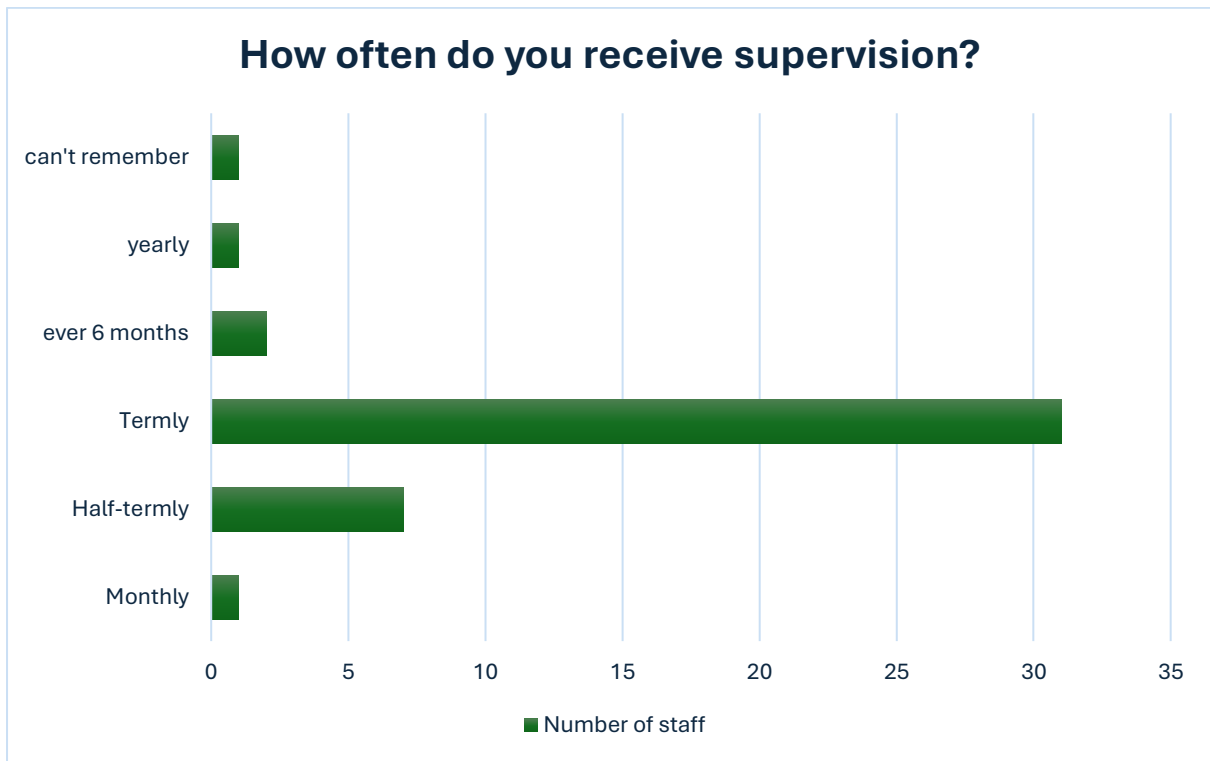
Please complete this form and return pp. 1–2 to the E822 Module team by the TMA01 cut-off date in November. No data collection should be made unless a signed form has been returned declaring the agreed arrangements for this to take place. We will keep this form for 2 years from the start of your study on E822 and then destroy it. If you need to change your decision from an SSI to an EP at a later date this should be only after discussion with your tutor. A new version of this form should be completed and returned to the email address on p1.

***The Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure certification (or equivalent in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) must bear the same name as that given by you on p.1. Students in Scotland will also need to evidence that they meet the requirements of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. You must have a clear, enhanced DBS disclosure (or appropriate equivalent) which is current. It must be appropriate for the setting in which you intend to carry out your research and must be recent, i.e. within the last two years.**

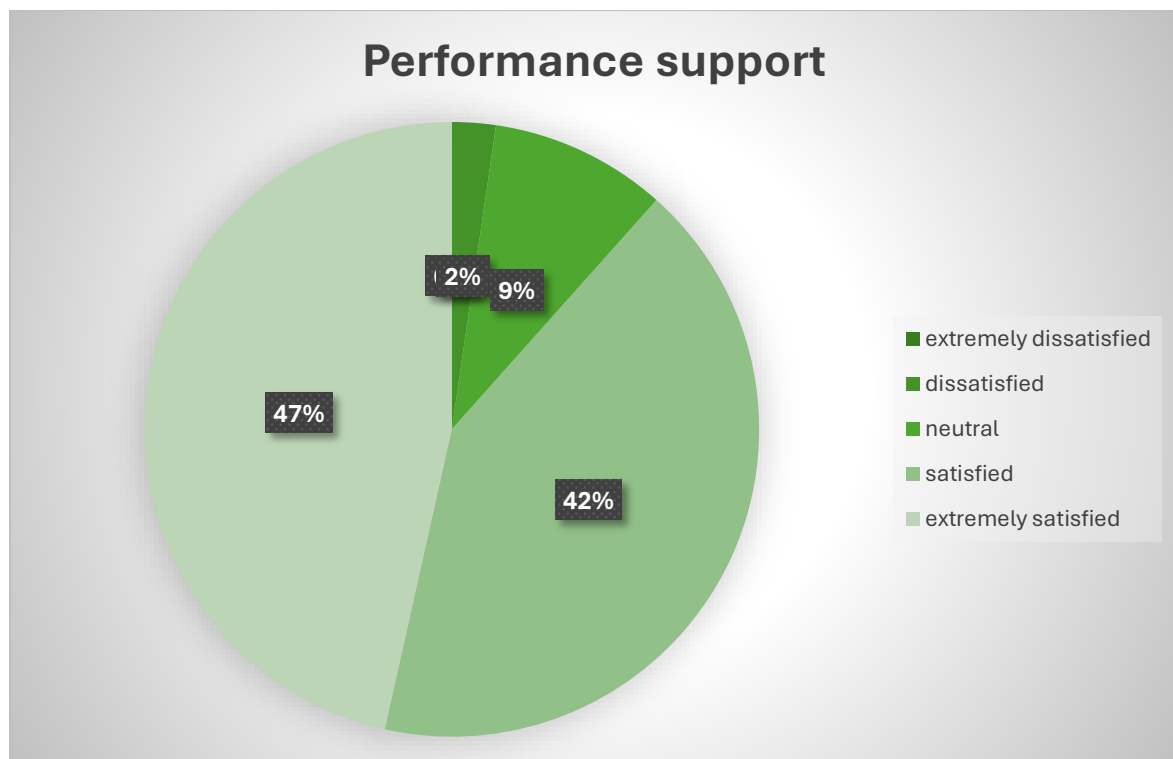
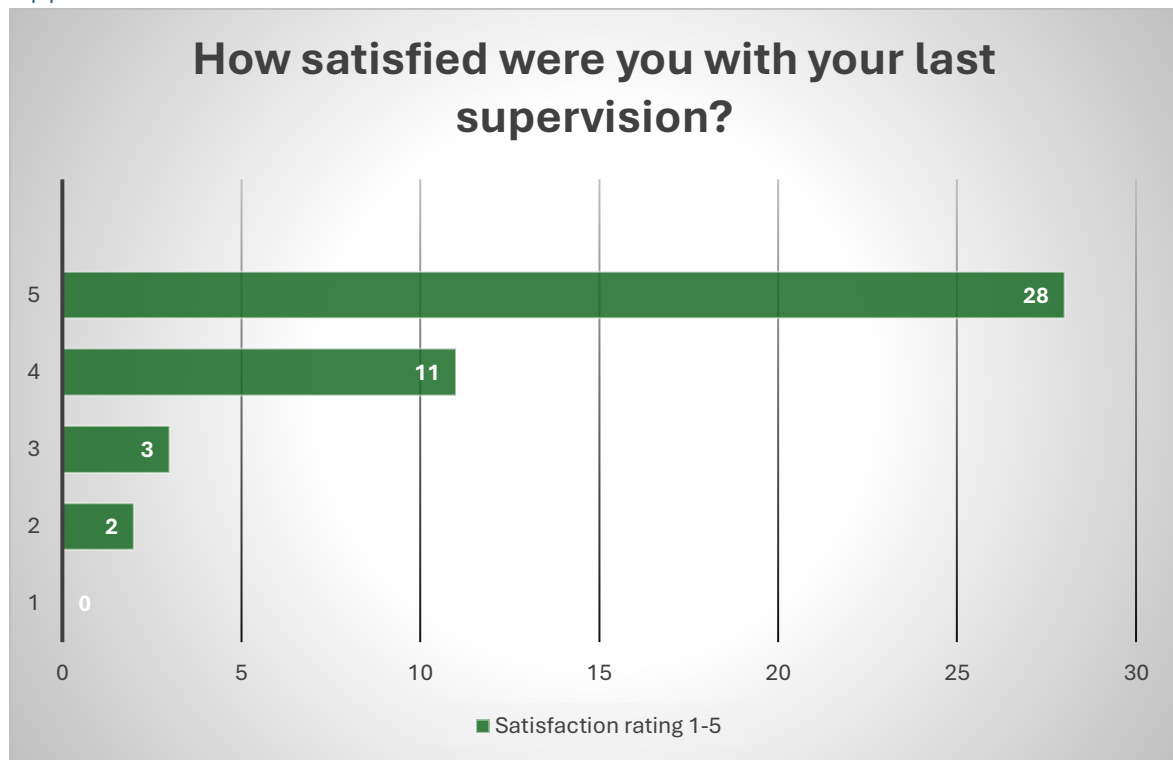
Appendix K Questionnaire Demographics



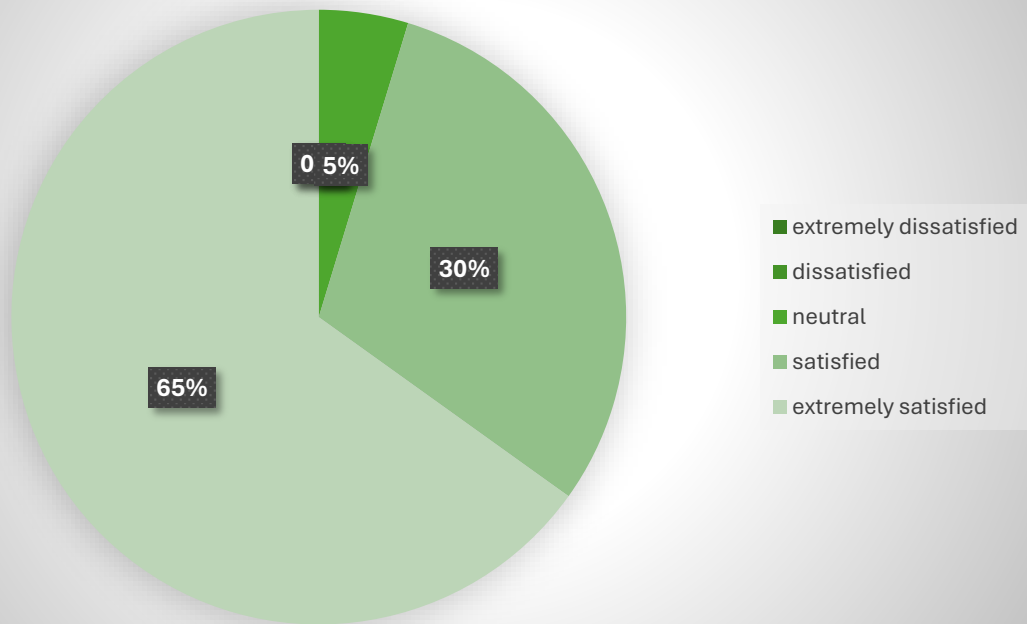




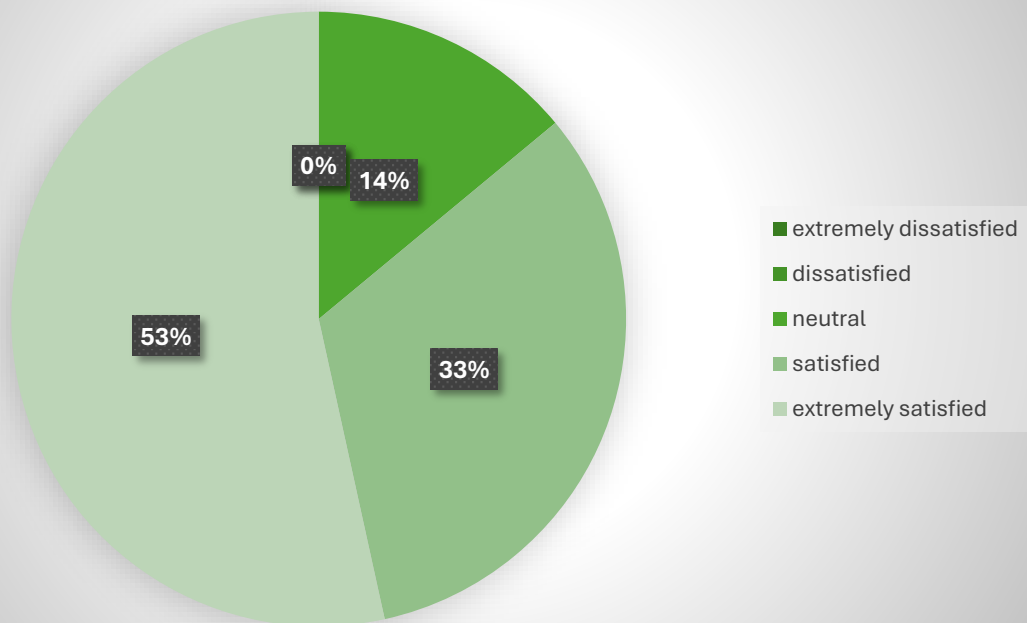
Appendix L Questionnaire Evaluations



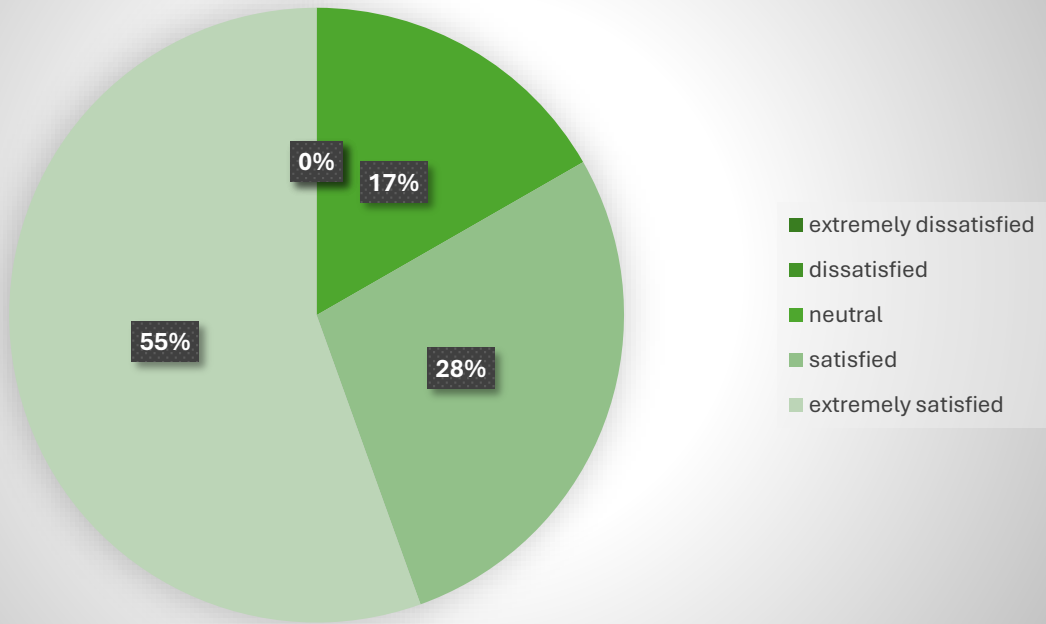
Safeguarding support



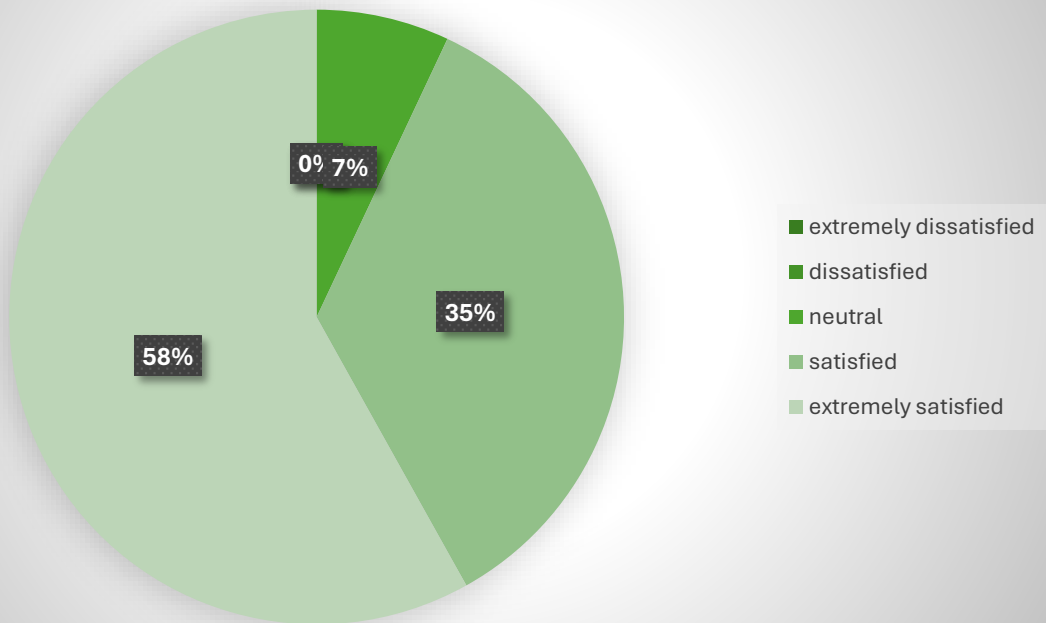
Professional development support

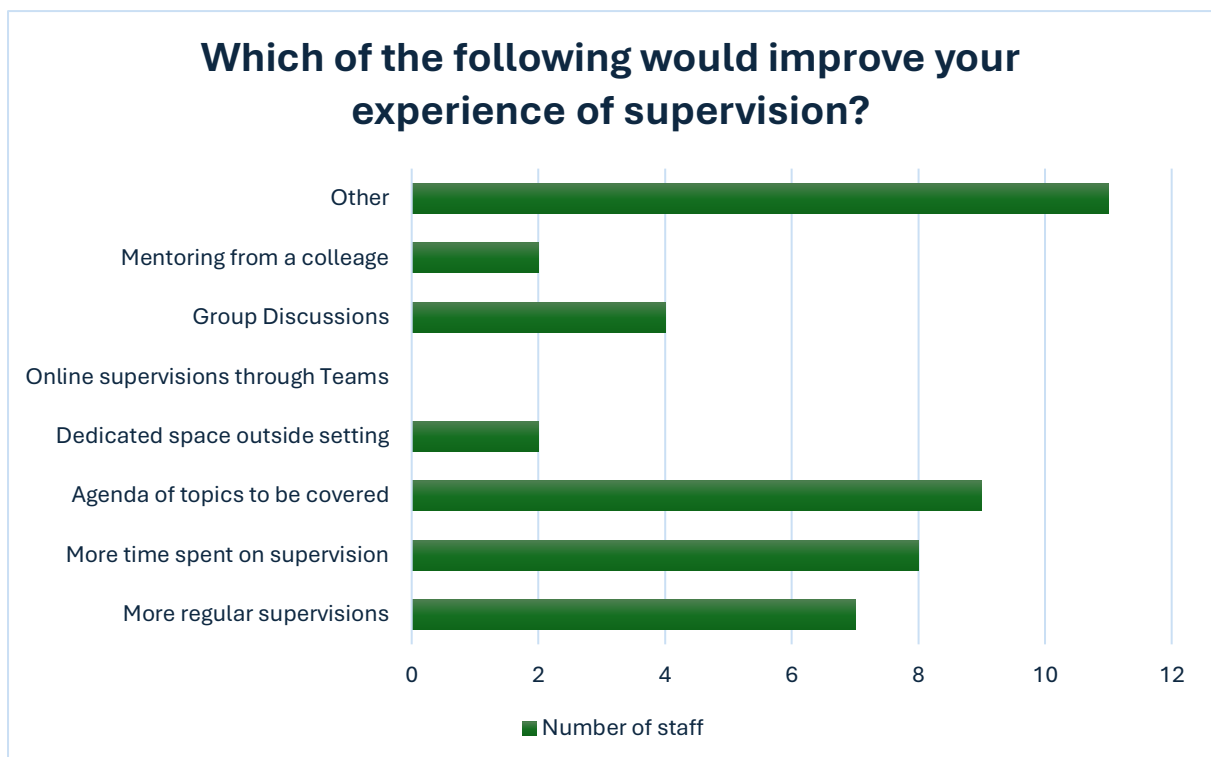
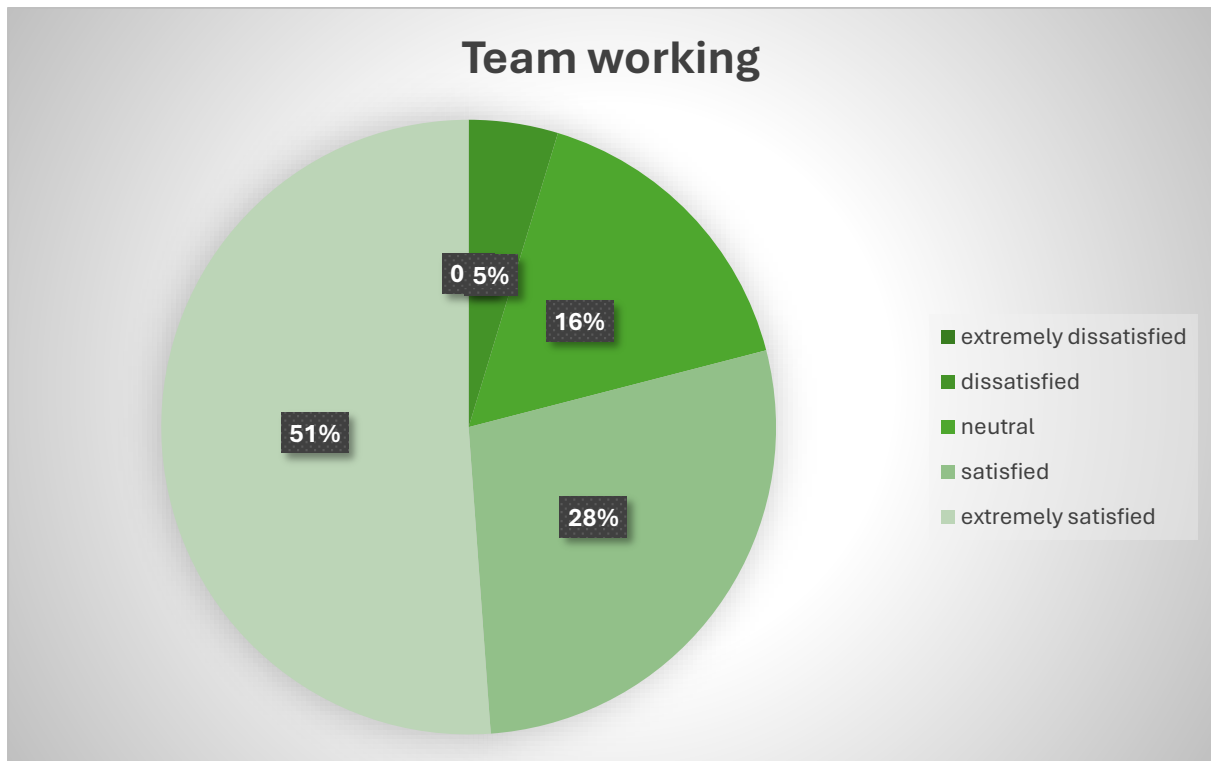


Well-being support

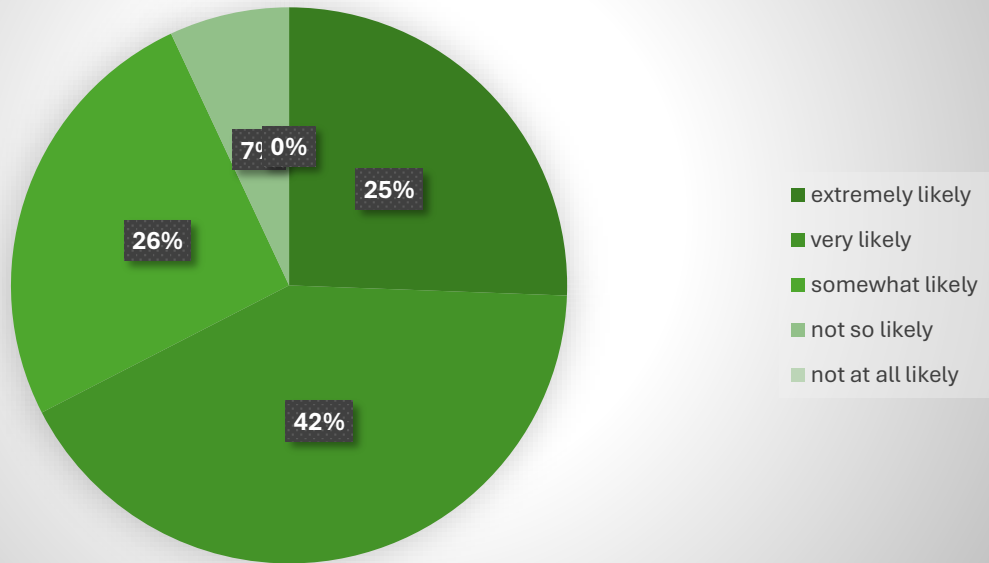


Supporting children's outcomes

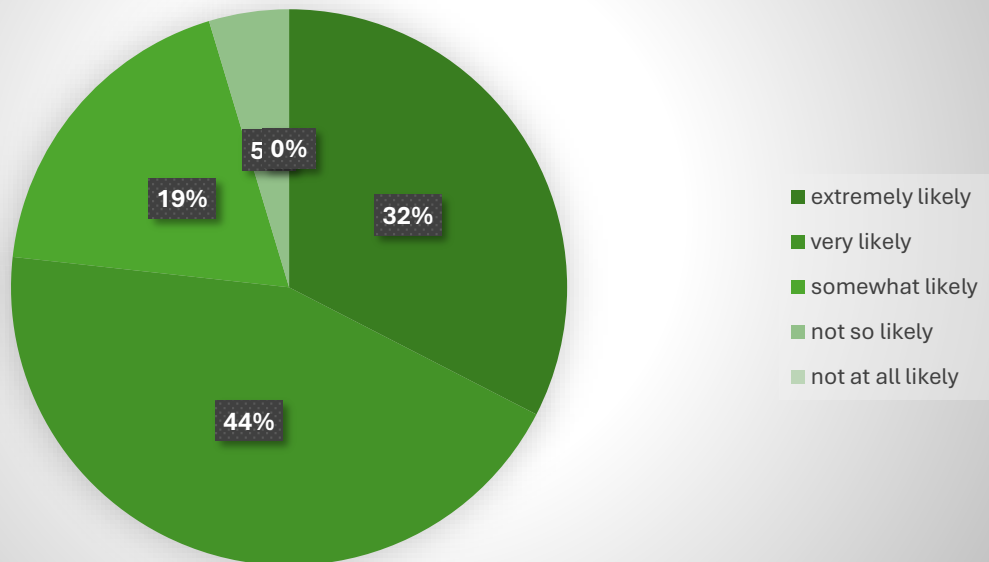




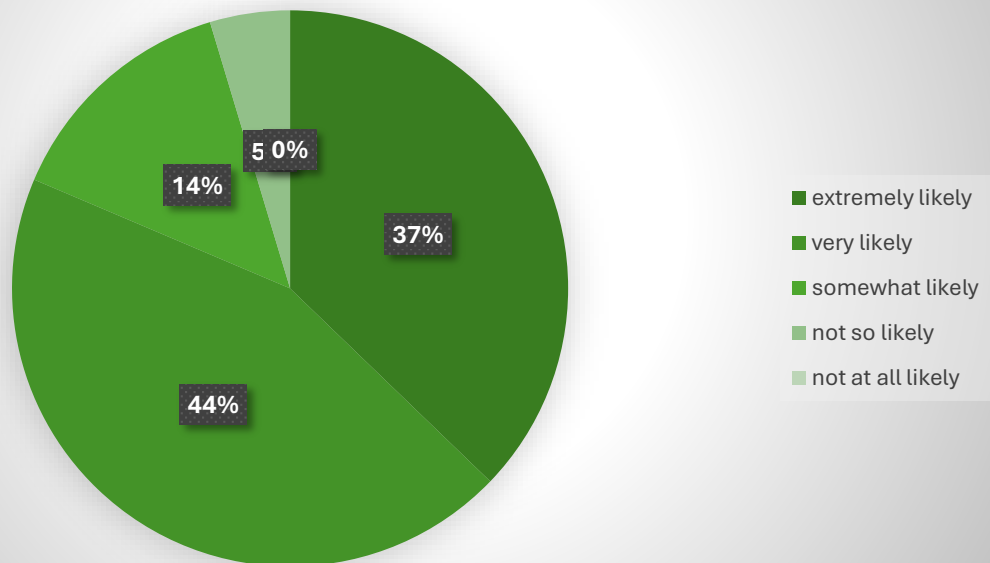
Likelihood of professional development being arranged?



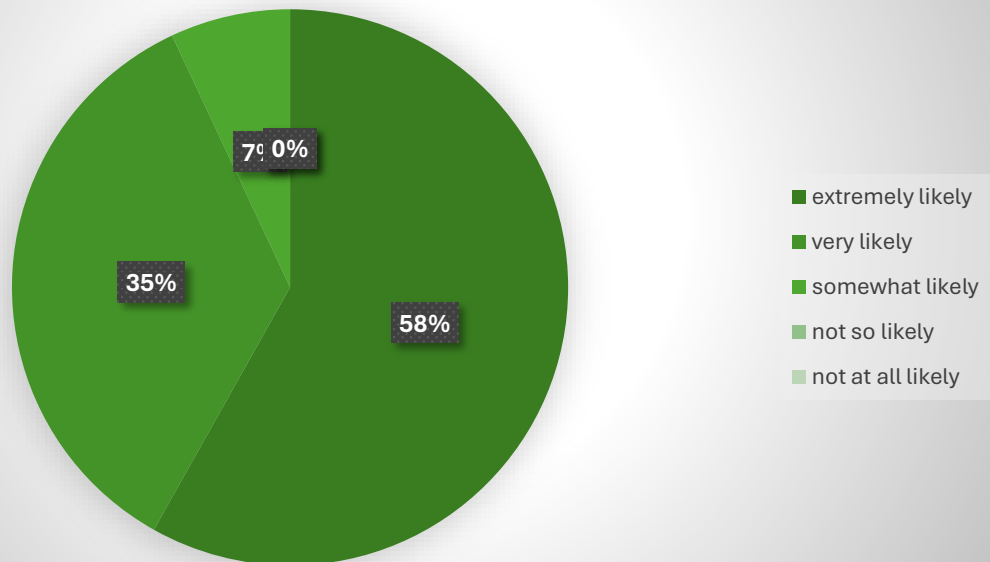
Likelihood of actions being followed through?



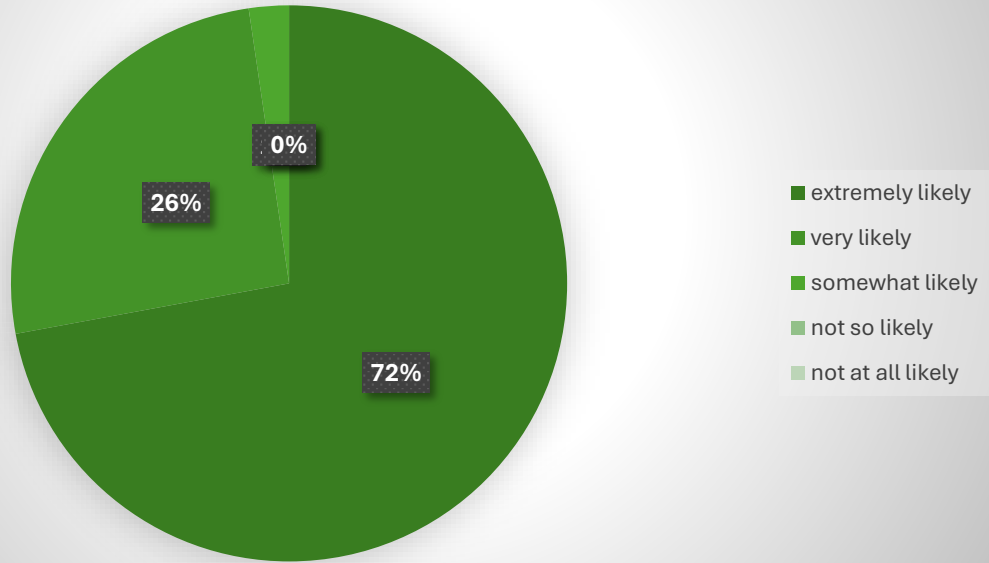
Likelihood of well-being actions being followed through?



Likelihood of actions on children's outcomes being followed through?



Likelihood of safeguarding actions being followed through?



Appendix M: Skills Audit

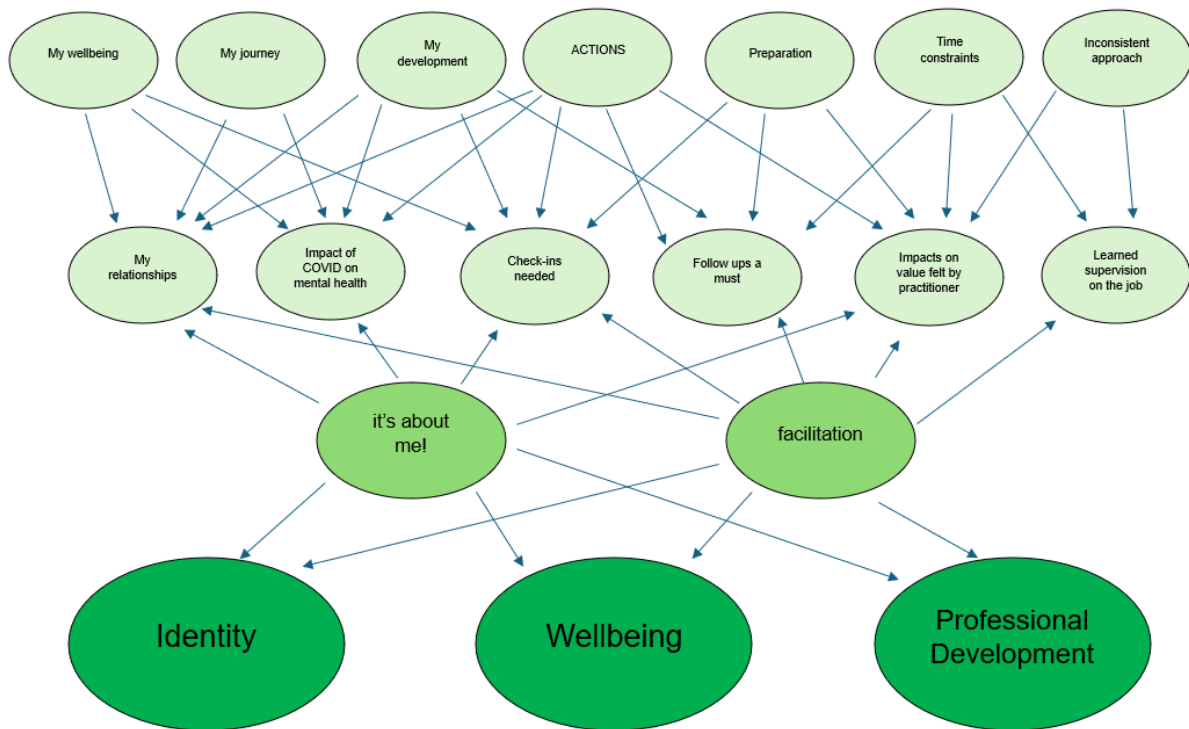
J M Hamey xxxxxxxx – PDP Skills Audit 1 Start of course End of course course	This is new to me	I have some idea about how to do this	I am confident in this area	I am confident and can explain to others how to work in this area
Personal skills				
1.1 Studying by distance learning in terms of accessing the various tools which allow me to engage with materials, my peers and tutors			X	X
1.2 Organising my study notes in order to refer back to them			X	X
1.3 Finding a work-life balance whilst I am studying		X X		
1.4 Maintaining enthusiasm for my research for the duration of the dissertation		X	X	
1.5 Challenging my own assumptions about education, childhood and youth.		X	X	
1.6 Managing an extended project		X		X
Any other skill you would like to work on. Planning my time efficiently		X X		
Academic skills				

2.1 Independently search for and access academic publications		X		X
2.2 Independently read academic publications with a critical perspective		X	X	
2.3 Critically analyse current themes and issues related to the focus of your module		X	X	
2.4 Synthesise current themes and issues in relation to the focus of your module		X	X	
2.5 Formulate an argument in relation to debates related to the focus of your module		X	X	
2.6 Clearly communicate ideas through written text employing an academic writing style		X	X	
2.7 Use references and cite source materials correctly		X		X
Research skills				
3.1 Appreciate the range of approaches used in applied (empirical) research		X	X	
3.2 Be able to critically evaluate the evidence base of published empirical research		X	X	
3.3 Interpret, assess, and deploy research	X		X	

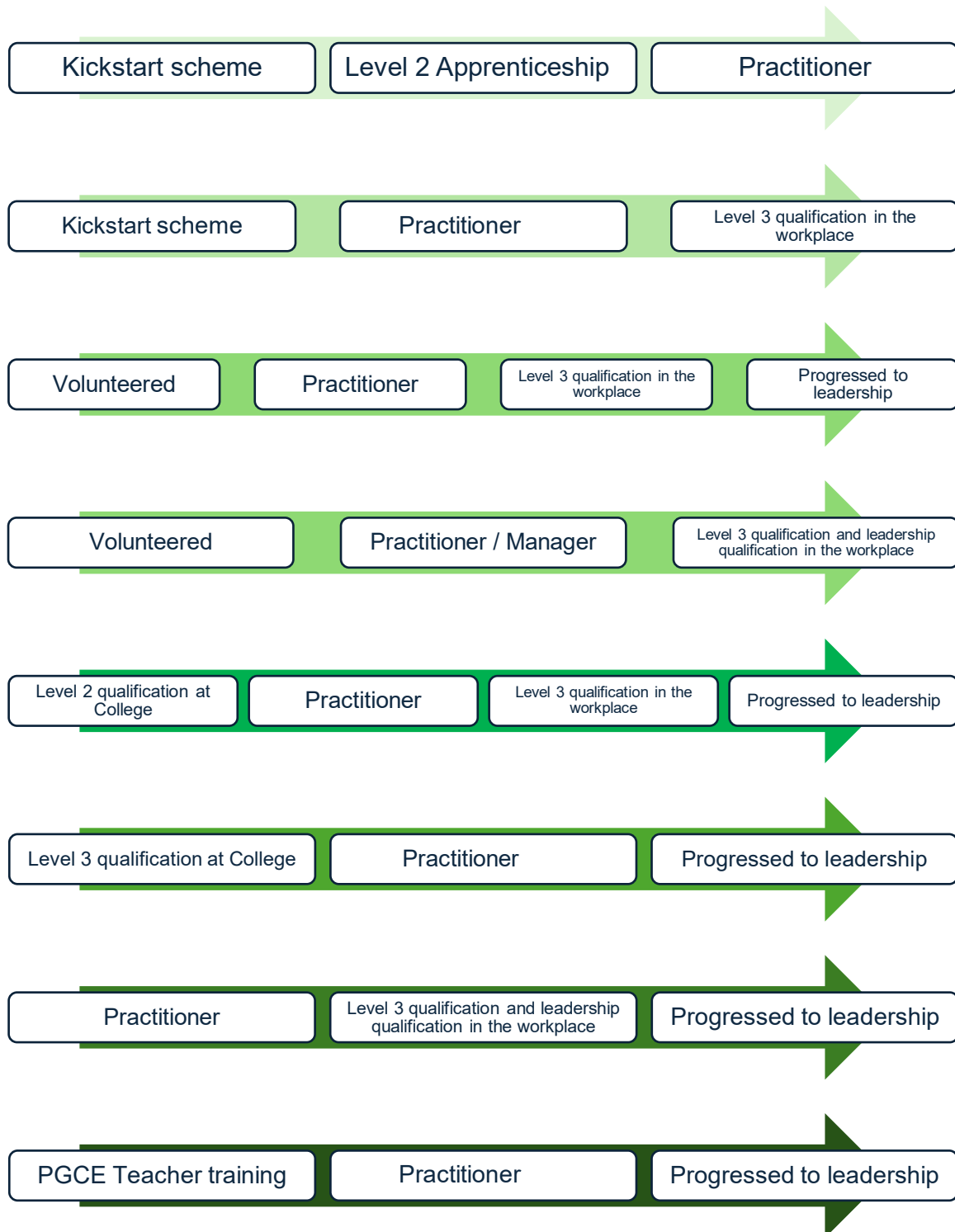
methodologies and their evidence				
3.4 Articulate my own perspective on research approaches and my influence/ assumptions within the process.	X		X	
Application to professional practice				
4.1 Be able to articulate a personal vision in relation to the focus of your module			X	X
4.2 Critically reflect on your own practice (in relation to the focus of your module)			X	X
4.3 Be able to engage critically and creatively with debates relevant to the development of your professional thinking about issues related to the focus of your module			X	X
4.4 Reflect on how theory applies to practice or practice to theory		X	X	
4.5 Share my research thinking and findings with other professionals		X	X	

4.6 Consider the legacy of my dissertation for myself and others	X		X	
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Appendix N – Thematic mind map



Appendix O Routes into Early Years



Appendix P: Reflection Evidence Grid

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved, and areas of development worked on	How did this shape my dissertation?
<p>Knowledge and understanding: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues</p>	<p>PDP Target: Importance of keeping up to date with ECEC sector updates. Also widening this to encompass health and social care sectors working with children.</p>	<p>Keeping abreast of changes in the sector enabled deeper understanding of the literature review findings. Knowing the issues facing the sector post covid was incredibly helpful when looking at wellbeing and mental health. Researching social care practice has been incredibly beneficial as it enabled comparisons in supervision practice. Which helped form the basic premise of this study,</p>
	<p>TMA 01: 'The final research questions all seem to begin with? to what extent? -this opening has certain problems (other than it is more common as an essay title). It also suggests a can of measurement between potentially two elements.</p>	<p>I rewrote all the subsidiary questions to tighten the focus and reworded the main research question. This now has a sharper focus on professional development and wellbeing. I did change</p>

	<p>Therefore, narrowing the research topic. And the idea of measurement almost suggests some form of quantitative approach. It is more common to use terms like how, what and why. ‘</p>	<p>the geographical area within the question, to just England, as I was concerned that by including the area readers may be able to identify the Group.</p>
	<p>TMA02: ‘The title might include a reference to professional development also the only thing we need to figure out is who are the participants and where they might be located are they all in the same centre?’</p>	
<p>Critical analysis and evaluation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others’ research; analysing and evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis;</p>	<p>PDP Target: Since starting the Masters in 2021 a main focus has been improving academic writing with a critical stance</p>	<p>I honestly believe that writing critically will always be my nemesis, but I have made serious attempts in this Masters to improve. Scores in my final year certainly attest to that so I feel much more confident in this area, especially when writing the literature review.</p>
	<p>Chapter 3 feedback: ‘As with most everybody else there is a suspicious and tentative consideration of ontology epistemology/methodology methods (paradigms). I can understand this and the tables</p>	<p>Without doubt the most difficult aspect of the module materials was understanding ontology/epistemology/methodology paradigms. I have</p>

<p>comparing and connecting practice and theory.</p>	<p>which we have in the module though presented with the hope that they would simplify an issue perhaps only make it more nebulous.</p> <p>I have linked Moon and Blackman - it is a handy outline not necessarily much better than the others as I have issues with it also. I have a certain personal sympathy with the absence of subtle realism in the list of ontology versions (it would appear between critical realism and bounded relativism) as it was developed by Martyn Hammersley. Given that it is the small-scale investigation which is in development it is perhaps not the biggest issue on the board. But it is so much nicer when it's fits together well.'</p>	<p>attempted to break this down more simply. A bounded relativist ontological assumption was highlighted in Moon and Blackman (2014), and this fitted so much better. I was also able to revisit constructionism, and this again worked better. I think I would definitely consider this the hardest part of the dissertation to write.</p>
<p>Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to designing and/or applying research methods; developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and making</p>	<p>TMA 01: 'The outline of the professional practice is clear, and it places you in an intriguing position in terms of position allergy/power relations. (Something to consider? but it should not be too much of a problem if explained correctly)'</p>	<p>My position as an insider researcher certainly caused me to worry that participants would not be as open and honest as they were. I was very mindful all the way through that my own bias had to be</p>

adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.		contained so as not to taint the findings.
	Tma 02: 'Separating narrative interviews from semi-structured interviews perhaps needs to be done. They both work, perhaps one better than the other'.	I researched using a question framework for the interviews and went with semi-structured in the end. This was definitely the right choice as one participant asked for questions in advance, and some needed extra prompts when responses were short.
	Chapter 2 Feedback: 'Give more detail in the search criteria to home in on the results'	I have expanded on how the search was carried out. The lack of research on supervision created issues for the search criteria which has been explained.
Structure, communication and presentation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes; communicating	TMA 01: 'You have given the title? always think that the title is just the topic and have considered that shortening your title would be also doable.'	I have shortened this considerably and its now 15 words.
	TMA 02 – 'The number of interviews considered should be noted. Perhaps the nature of the recruitment of participants - number of years in service, et cetera. One wonders what your	I have added all of this contextual information and also added in the demographics in text and in appendices, so

<p>concepts, findings and ideas for different audiences.</p>	<p>actual quantitative baseline data is. It is not really explained - and this would be the first step towards triangulation'</p>	<p>it is clearer what was asked.</p>
	<p>Chapter 2 Feedback: 'Rebuilding the two segments Professional Identities and Wellbeing – and creating sub sections within them would make things sit more coherently n the Professional Identities – one could introduce the bits by saying identities will be looked at from the perspectives of historical overview, issues of qualifications, issues of experience, practitioner autonomy etc. While the wellbeing section could have subsections also- the emotional labour element of Hochschild is interesting (could bring in international cross reference?) – This would lead to work and home – and the problems and pressures involved. And wellbeing is always affected by financial issues- which looks back I guess at professional identity. While creating subsections – it allows you to add an initial introductory</p>	<p>I restructured the whole report to include subsections. These were actually really useful for breaking the dissertation writing down into chunks and then tying each part together. I have really concentrated on sentence structure and the number of words in each sentence, and in each paragraph. I have also looked at the number of passive sentences I write and tried to address that. I followed the structure suggested but then tweaked it considerably as the pieces of the puzzle didn't quite fit when I was writing. I think the structure now works well, and I have definitely increased the readability of the whole piece considerably. I</p>

	<p>element to the section. It will also allow you to create perhaps more concise paragraphs. Lots of sound information but it becomes hard to follow in long winding paragraphs.</p>	<p>also looked at the layout overall, and changed contents around between chapter 3, 4 and 5 to make the flow a little better</p>
	<p>Chapter 3 Feedback: 'The nature of mixed methods is perhaps the real puzzle. Given that Corbetta and Grix predate the real emergence of mixed methods. I have added the table from chapter 2 of Cohen and Mannion with the various types of mixed method design. Overall, the wonderful set of appendices which are setting up looks good. You have this massive questionnaire, but you have no clear instructions of how the data was processed. This leads to the comments are basically made in the script – chapter 3 is basically an instruction book for someone to read and carry out the research (which you do and consider the results in chapter 4). However, it should be presented in a way that somebody can take chapter 3 go out in the field and</p>	<p>I revisited mixed methods and included the reference to Creswell and Clark (2011, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) regarding a parallel convergent mixed methods approach as this was certainly pertinent. I'm really happy with the appendices, they took time but deliver the full picture of the research and of the questionnaire. I have discussed the questionnaire process and data in more depth. I've addressed how I transcribed the interviews and how I used thematic analysis to identify the themes</p>

	<p>do exactly what is intended. (You mention interviews – not where they’re taking place, not what recording equipment was used, no mention on how it was transcribed – although a lot of this would be referred forward to the data analysis chapter) the semi structured narrative interview is little wonder. And requires quite an interesting analysis phase due to the fact that you will have a question schedule (for the semi structured) you will also have certain questions which will figure like a small examinant question - to initiate narrative’</p>	<p>and interpret the findings. I have also included a thematic mind map, which enabled the triangulation of the data.</p>
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Appendix Q- Ethical Appraisal Form

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

a.	Student name	JAYNE M HAMEY	
b.	PI	XXXXXXXXXXXX	
c.	Project title	Exploring how supervision supports practitioner wellbeing and professional development in Early Years Provision in England	
d.	Supervisor/tutor	John Eastwood	
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	x

f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	18 th March 2024
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	24 th April 2024
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	England UK

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	X	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? ¹	X	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	X	
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so, have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		X

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure ('police check') can obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation

5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		X
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so, have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	X	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	X	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?	X	
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	X	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		X
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		X

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/committees-and-services/res-and-recs/>).

and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

⁴ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

