

SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATION OF CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS IN ESTONIAN MUNICIPALITIES

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The context of Estonia

- The past 20 years in Child Protection in Estonia has shown that the dealing with the consequences is not sustainable. Therefore, the main goal of new Child and Family Policy (2012-2020) in Estonia is focused to preventive approach.
- The new Child Protection law is going to come into force in 2016 and pay great attention to Child Protection workers professionalism and supervision.
- Supervision, as a tool for professional support in social work, is widely used. Estonia made the first steps in this direction.

The purpose of the study

This survey is one part of bigger project – *Implementation of Child Protection workers supervision practice in Estonian context.*

The first step in this project is to analyze the context of Estonia and current situation related with supervision in Child Protection.

The purpose of this study is to answer the following question:

What are the current supervision experience and expectations of child protection workers in 15 Estonian municipalities?

The survey was focused on external supervision and explores the experience and expectations of Child Protection workers in following types of supervision: the individual-, group-, team- and network supervision.

The types of supervision was defined as follow:

- **Individual supervision** – dyadic form of supervision, one supervisor and one supervisee. The focus is in case supervision (ECVision. A European Glossary of Supervision and Coaching 2014).
- **Group supervision** – the participants are from different municipalities (all of them are child protection workers). The focus is on the opportunity to supply their own topics and working with the group resources (ECVision. A European Glossary of Supervision and Coaching 2014).
- **Team supervision** – the participants are from same department and the focus on supervision is on team relationships, communication boundaries, team roles, the atmosphere in the team etc.
- **Network supervision** - the participants are from different professions and areas related with child protection field and current cases.

Basic definitions

- **Child Protection** - the general principles, standards, regulations and interventions for children's rights in Estonia to ensure the welfare of children, which will create a framework for families, community and the public, and non-governmental institutions (PricewaterhouseCoopers...2013, 13)
- **Child who needs protection** - a child (less than 18-year-old) whose development and well-being is not secured (eg, abused child or at risk to be abused), the child whose case the Child Protection worker has started to tackle (Child Protection law of Estonia 1992, PricewaterhouseCoopers... 2013, 13)

Basic definitions

- **Estonian Municipality** - local institution in Estonian Constitution who has the right, ability and obligation under the laws to organize and manage local issues independently (Local Government law 1993, § 2). Municipality must create the conditions for making child protection (new Child Protection Law § 17).
- **Child Protection Worker** - the worker in Board of Social Insurance, in county or local municipality who protect the rights of children and child's well-being in the context of Child Protection law (new Child Protection Law § 18).

Method of the study

According to the data of Social Ministry of Estonia in 2011 there were 177 Child Protection workers in 15 municipalities.

A link to the online questionnaire was sent via e-mail to 121 Child Protection workers, except for 56 workers from Tallinn Social- and Health Protection Department. The purpose was to focus on the small municipalities.

The questionnaire was pilot tested, and modifications were made before distribution to respondents. The period of survey was from 1.2.2013 to 23.2.2013.

Description of Sample

- **The number of respondents** was 106, the 88% of overall sample.
- **Most respondents** (58%) are middle-aged (31-50 y. old) women (97%).
- **71% of Child Protection workers are higher educated** in social work and 21% are educated in non-social work field, 8% have secondary education.
- **The biggest part of sample** (39%) have 4-10 years experiences in Child Protection.
- **More than half (58%) of respondents** have post of Child Protection specialist, 21% have post of social worker, 10% are different types of advisers and others 11% are professionals who work in several different areas: social work and child protection; social-pedagogue and child protection; youth-work and child protection.
- **The daily work of 49% of respondents** is in full related to child protection and 51 % have to spend their working time doing some other job.

The results and findings of the survey

The results of survey

This study had four questions to answer:

Experience

1. What kinds of supervision types were offered to Child Protection workers and how often?
2. What are the benefits of experienced supervision for Child Protection workers?

Expectation

1. What are the suggestions of Child Protection workers to improve the efficiency of supervision?
2. What are the most important topics to work in supervision?

Q1. Which kinds of supervision types were offered to you and how often? (N=106,%)

Table 1. The types and frequency of supervision offered in Estonian municipalities

Scale	Individual SV (%)	Group SV (%)	Team SV (%)	Network SV (%)	Averag of droup sv types (%)
No experience	88.7	70.8	70.8	62.3	68.0
1-2 times per year	8.5	17.8	10.4	15.1	14.4
3-4 times per year	0.9	7.0	2.8	10.4	6.7
Single experience	9.4	24.8	13.2	25.5	21.2
5-10 times per year	1.9	3.1	8.5	8.5	6.7
more than 10 times per year	0.0	0.0	7.5	3.8	3.8
Regular experience	1.9	3.1	16.0	12.3	10.5
Single and regular in total	11.3	27.9	29.2	37.8	31.6

The most experienced type of supervision in Estonian Municipalities is group and network supervision 1-4 times per year. Child Protection Workers don't have regular supervision experience. The survey revealed that supervision is also called meetings, trainings and co-vision.

Q2. What are the benefits of experienced supervision for you? (N=106)

The experienced supervision has been particularly useful in terms as follow:

1) *usefulness related to collegiality*: sharing the experience and concerns with colleagues, make discussion and cooperation with colleagues, sharing responsibility for decision-making - **mentioned 33 times**

2) *usefulness related to the client work*: finding solution, the renewed focus on the case, getting new information, getting news in legislation - **mentioned 35 times**

3) *usefulness related to self-awareness*: getting the support, confidence and confirmation for thoughts and deeds, finding the potential resources, getting new knowledge - **mentioned 28 times**

4) *usefulness related to reflection of personal experience* - **mentioned 16 times**

Q3. What are your suggestions to improve the efficiency of supervision?

Table 2. The suggestions to improve the efficiency of supervision (All type of the supervision, N=106 number of times is mentioned)

Supervision should be regular	17
Supervision should be more structured	5
In addition to group supervision it is needed an individual one	4
Supervision should be obligatory for professional development	4
Supervision needs more time	3
Fund raising of supervision must be regular	2
The place for supervision should be outside of the work place	2
Motivation of all participants is important	2

Most of the suggestions is related to the organizing aspect of supervision.

Q4. Please rate the supervision topics by importance for you.

Rating of the most important supervision topics (N=106, %).

In individual supervision

- to find solutions in emotionally difficult situation **90,6%**
- prevent work-related stress and burn-out **84,9%**

In group supervision

- to find common solutions together with colleagues **90,6%**
- learn from colleagues **83,9%**

In network supervision

- to know how to choose the intervention, according to the complexity of the case **82,1%**
- to contribute to development of child protection services **81,1%**

In team supervision

- getting feedback from colleagues **67,9%**

Table 3. The rate of most unimportant topics for respondents (N=106,%)

Questions related Individual Supervision						
How important for you is...	Not at all	A Little	Not at all/ a little in total	Much	Very much	Much/very much in total
... to raise awareness of the own attitudes and behavior	4.7%	23.6%	28.3%	44.3%	27.4%	71.7%
... to understand the influence of your own behavior and activities on the client (child, family)	3.8%	26.4%	30.2%	53.8%	16.0%	69.8%
... to identify your strengths and development needs	6.7%	31.2%	37.9%	50.0%	12.3%	62.3%
Questions related Group Supervision						
... get the support from group	4.7%	20.8%	25.5%	50.0%	24.5%	74.5%
Questions related Team Supervision						
... to contribute to exchange of information in the team	7.5%	34.9%	42.4%	47.2%	10.4%	57.6%
... to create a better climate of cooperation in team	6.6%	35.8%	42.4%	48.1%	9.4%	57.5%
... mapping the team development issues and finding solutions	7.5%	35.8%	43.3%	44.3%	12.3%	56.6%
Questions related Network Supervision						
... to contribute to exchange of information in the network	3.8%	24.5%	28.3%	46.2%	25.5%	71.7%
... to support collaboration in network	2.8%	25.5%	28.3%	48.1%	23.6%	71.7%

Conclusion

In small Estonian municipalities the Child Protection workers **carry out many of tasks - take different work-roles**. They have a lot of various duties. Child Protection Worker is predominantly high educated in social work.

There is a lack of specialization in Child Protection work, as required by the New Child Protection law. They learn directly from they work and don't have possibility to reflect those experiences.

Some few supervision session do not give an experience of supported development process.

Conclusion

The current situation raise up the questions as follow:

- How to organize regular supervision to Child Protection workers in the country level?
- How to overcome obstacles to insure the regular supervision to Child Protection Workers?
- What can be the role of different institutions in the process of implementation supervision to Estonian context?
- How to make stronger inside-support to Child Protection workers in municipality/departments? Especially where there Child protection worker is only one.

The process on application of regular supervision need to start from raising awareness about supervision in a government and municipal level. Future studies should be directed to these questions.

Thank you for attention!