BUILDING PRACTITIONER RESILIENCE – PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION ENVIRONMENT

BUILDING PRACTITIONER RESILIENCE –

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION ENVIRONMENT

This resource is a TARA-based initiative and demonstrates how trauma-informed practices are integrated into current best practices to improve the experience of both the practitioner and the children and families that they support. (Lotty, 2023). TARA defines trauma-informed practice as a "holistic therapeutic practice approach that reflects a mindset and skillset that promotes empowerment and growth for both the service user with lived and/or living experience of trauma and for the practitioner working with trauma" (Lotty, 2023a).

This Resource Focuses On The Building Of Practitioner Resilience

Building practitioner resilience is not just the responsibility of the individual practitioner or their personal capacities, skills, or resources. It is shaped by the quality of relationships, supports, and organisational systems surrounding them. When practitioners are supported within their teams and organisations, resilience becomes a shared process that enables them to manage the demands of their complex and challenging work more effectively.

High-quality supervision plays a central role in this process. Effective supervision maintains a balance between organisational tasks and reflective space — allowing time not only to review workload and performance, but also to consider the emotional impact of the work and the practitioner's own wellbeing.

Supervision should include dedicated time to focus on building practitioner resilience, ensuring that supervision supports both professional growth and practitioner wellbeing.

In this context, high-quality reflective supervision and the environment in which it takes place play a vital role in sustaining practitioner wellbeing and the quality of care provided to children and families.

This resource offers prompts to support supervisors and supervisees to reflect on the environment in which supervision takes place.

The questions are not intended as a checklist but as a way to encourage meaningful discussion and positive change.

Each setting will bring its own opportunities and challenges, and these prompts are offered to support both individual and organisational reflection.

Building Practitioner Resilience

6 key areas to support supervisors and supervisees to reflect on the environment in which supervision takes place.

6 Empowerment and Belonging

1 Arrival, Presence, and Transition

5 Collaboration and Openness

2 Privacy and Safety

4 Trust and Predictability

3 Choice and Comfort

Arrival, Presence, and Transition

1 Arrival, Presence, and Transition

Supervision begins as we enter the space, before discussion begins. The way both supervisor and supervisee arrive, settle, and leave can influence how grounded, regulated, and connected they feel within the process.

→ Is supervision scheduled at a time that works well for both supervisor and supervisee, allowing time and space for both to pause and settle before it begins?

→ Could a brief grounding or mindfulness practice be used to help settle into the session?

→ How does the environment support transition at the end — time to reflect, gather belongings calmly, or take a breath before returning to work?

→ Have we agreed when we will meet again for supervision?

Privacy and Safety

2 Privacy and Safety

A safe supervision environment begins with ensuring privacy, calm, and protection from unnecessary interruption. These considerations help both supervisor and supervisee to feel secure and fully present.

→ Has the supervisor considered what suitable spaces are available for supervision in the workplace? Do these rooms need to be booked in advance to ensure consistent access?

→ Do new staff understand what supervision involves? Increasing understanding can help to create a greater sense of safety for everyone.

→ Is the supervision space private and free from interruptions?

→ Can the door be closed, or can a sign be used to avoid unexpected entry?

→ Are phones silenced, notifications switched off, and laptops closed unless required?

→ Is the space quiet and free from unnecessary noise or distraction?

Choice and Comfort

Choice supports autonomy and reduces power imbalance. When supervisees have input into how and where supervision takes place, the process becomes more inclusive and supports a sense of comfort and ownership.

→ Does the supervisee have input into where supervision takes place — in person or online, and in which building or room?

→ Are there seating options that allow flexibility and comfort rather than a fixed position across a desk?

→ Is supervision scheduled at a time that works well for both parties, allowing time to settle beforehand?

→ Are breaks available when sessions are long or emotionally demanding?

→ Does the overall space feel calm, welcoming, and suited to reflective conversation?

→ Does the room have natural light, comfortable temperature, or calming elements such as plants or artwork?

→ Are portable items available (e.g., tissues, water, grounding objects) to support comfort when supervision occurs in different rooms?

Trust and Predictability

Consistency and transparency help to build trust in the supervision process. Predictable arrangements and clear communication allow supervision to feel safe and supportive.

→ Is the supervision space prepared and ready — chairs arranged, required items available, and time protected?

→ Is note-taking visible and explained so that its purpose is clear?

→ Where computers or laptops are used, are they positioned and used in a way that supports connection — for example, avoiding continuous typing throughout the session?

→ Is there transparency and shared understanding around how supervision notes or recordings are kept, who can access them, and how information may be shared, with awareness of the potential power this can hold?

→ Does the location of supervision remain consistent where possible to reduce uncertainty?

→ Is there a clear, agreed supervision contract or shared understanding of expectations?

Collaboration and Openness

5 Collaboration and Openness

Collaboration and openness grow from shared reflection and honest dialogue. When the agenda is agreed together, both organisational priorities and the supervisee's experiences can be heard. The physical and relational environment can also support equality and ease, helping supervision to feel genuinely collaborative and open.

→ Has consideration been given to the potential power dynamics created by where supervision is held (for example, when it takes place in a manager's office)? Could awareness of this help to support openness and collaboration?

→ Is the room arranged to support shared discussion (for example, not divided by a large desk)?

→ Is the space large enough to avoid feeling cramped or closed off?

→ Are both supervisor and supervisee encouraged to contribute to the agenda?

→ Does the physical setup support equality and partnership?

Empowerment and Belonging

6 Empowerment and Belonging

A well-considered supervision environment that values inclusion helps people feel welcome and included. Supporting supervisees to have input into the supervision space and process can strengthen a sense of empowerment and belonging.

→ Does the environment reflect a sense of inclusivity and shared values, supporting all staff to feel welcome and part of the team?

→ Are décor and images inclusive and free from content that could feel exclusionary or insensitive?

→ Is the space adaptable so that supervisees can bring items that help them feel grounded or comfortable?

→ Are small changes possible when something about the environment does not feel right?

→ Are supervisees encouraged to share feedback on the supervision environment or process, and is that feedback acted upon?

Reflective Prompts for Ongoing Practice

→ **What supports are needed to improve the supervision environment?**

→ **What small changes could be tried in the coming weeks?**

→ **How might these adjustments enhance safety, connection, or openness in supervision?**

Links to TARA Practice Tools

Lotty, M. (2023a). TARA Practice Model (Trauma, Attachment, Resilience into Action). Zenodo. Available at: **https://zenodo.org/records/11395102**

Lotty, M. (2024). The Thermometer of Regulation. Zenodo. Available at: **https://zenodo.org/records/11394136**

Lotty, M. (2025). TARA - Build Mentalising Tool. Zenodo. Available at: **https://zenodo.org/records/15474987**

O'Donoghue, M. (2025). TARA – Grounding Strategies. Zenodo. Available at: **https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15341530**

O'Donoghue, M. (2025). TARA - Embodiment & Breathing Practices. Zenodo. Available at: **https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15344934**

O'Donoghue, M. (2025). TARA - Mindfulness Practices. Zenodo. Available at: **https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15344963**

Supporting Documentation

Lotty, M. (2023) 'Supporting child welfare practice through an integrated practice model: Trauma, attachment and resilience into action', The Irish Social Worker, pp. 11–20. Available at: **https://cora.ucc.ie/server/api/core/bitstreams/ee25dae7-2fd0-4198-8010-0671a33a44a6/content**

Acknowledgements

© **University College Cork**

www.ucc.ie/en/tara/