

Summary InfoExchange on Supervision

31st March 2020



Vicky Ling, Founder member of the [Law Consultancy Network](#). Vicky has also held the roles of Manager at a Citizens Advice and at a Law Centre, both of which have hosted pro bono clinics.

What is supervision? The dictionary definition states an 'action' or 'process' – it is something you have to do. Supervision is also a requirement under SRA regulations and standards, which prompts a crucial question: Who is going to provide supervision and how is it going to be done? The Code of conduct for firms (para. 4.2, 4.3, 4.4.) and Code of conduct for individuals (para. 3.5) provide guidance in this respect.

Although the SRA is not prescriptive, various aspects of supervision have to be considered to show SRA requirements have been met. There are different models of supervision that can be put in place at a pro bono clinic. It may be helpful to keep a log of who needs supervision and ensure they are touching base with supervisors. Also consider if the advisors have additional training needs, which arise from pro bono activity. It is useful to consider how to address these beforehand, including keeping skills and knowledge up to date and think about regulatory obligations. A file review system will help to ensure that your supervision system is working. A sampling process will give you the opportunity to review the advice given, consider whether it was appropriate. However, there will understandably be a need to weigh up the resource that goes into a file review process, with the amount of resource/capacity available to give advice to clients.

Zac Kuyinu, Trainee Solicitor, Shoosmiths. Zac was one of four trainees who founded their pro bono clinic in Milton Keynes, which was established to support local community need.

There were clear benefits to having trainees involved in the project and giving them the opportunity to advise (and be supervised) early in their training, as well as getting all participants to think consciously about pro bono.

The pro bono clinic works in partnership with Citizens Advice who help refer and triage clients. On the day of the advice sessions there is peer support; advisors are accompanied by a supervisor or remote supervisor for mental and/or practical support. Advice is given to the client on the day. This can be a challenge if trainees are giving advice in an area of law they are not familiar with, however the aim of the 'advice' is to provide options to clients to help them understand what best fits their situation. To help improve the service, Shoosmiths regularly gathers client feedback.

Questions and discussion

Solicitors can do volunteer work if furloughed, but it depends on the type of work they are doing. They are still allowed to conduct non-reserved activity. Otherwise, their position will need to be clarified and need to notify the SRA. Further considerations are insurance, conflict checking, confidentiality, record storage etc.

Training given to trainees at Shoosmiths is mainly done in house; by senior solicitors, experienced trainees and with support from LawWorks training resources. Per week, the time commitment of trainees at the Milton Keynes clinic is approximately two hours of research and half an hour of discussion with the supervisor, in addition to two client appointments themselves that approximately last half an hour.

Other clinic models include university students as well as law firm trainees, although no immediate advice is delivered during the session. Students conduct the client appointment and trainees supervise them in this appointment – students enjoy working with trainees as they feel they have a closer relationship with them. A letter of advice is sent following the client interview. Supervision is conducted by lawyers from the firm on the one hand and the clinic coordinator on the other hand.

Professional indemnity insurance arrangements in place where external solicitors are (also) involved may differ. The advice of LawWorks is to take any agreement back to the insurer for approval.