



THE ARCHETYPE APPROACH / CASE STUDY LIBRARY

AA-CS-025

The Adults Are Part of the Ecology

How Balance-Based Supervision Strengthened Staff Confidence, Reflection and Team Culture



CASE TYPE	Practitioner Ecology, Staff Wellbeing & Reflective Supervision
CONTEXT	Whole-team synthesis from three signed practitioner reviews and one supervision case
DATE RANGE	2025-06/2026
PRACTICE SITE	Children of Towan Kindergarten, Cornwall
EVIDENCE BASE	Anonymised practitioner self-report, team impact ratings and observable practice change

EMERGING AA PRINCIPLE

The adult is not outside the developmental system. When practitioners can see and balance their own patterns, the emotional and relational ecology around children can widen too.

OBSERVE

What is happening?

RECOGNISE

What pattern is this?

BALANCE

What is missing?

INTEGRATE

What has emerged?

Observe -> Recognise -> Balance -> Integrate

What was happening?

The adult ecology as it first appeared



INITIAL PRESENTATION

The team did not begin from a place of obvious failure. Practitioner reviews described an already caring, supportive setting with experienced staff, positive relationships and a willingness to reflect. What became visible through the Archetype Approach was that adult confidence, habits and ways of interpreting behaviour varied just as children's patterns did.

One supervision case made this especially clear. A highly caring practitioner was confident in quiet one-to-one work but found professional exposure difficult: parent-facing observations were infrequent and whole-group story reading had remained outside her confidence for roughly two years.

PATTERNS VISIBLE ACROSS THE TEAM EVIDENCE

- Practitioners already valued relationship, care and reflection, but described room to deepen their understanding of behaviour.
- Several staff described a shift away from behaviour as something to manage or correct and towards behaviour as communication.
- Confidence was uneven across different forms of practice: a practitioner could be deeply competent relationally while still avoiding exposure, leadership or visible professional judgement.
- Labels and established expectations could narrow perception even within an experienced and supportive team.
- Staff wellbeing, emotional climate and practitioner confidence appeared repeatedly in the reviews as relevant areas of impact.

WHAT WAS THE TEAM SHOWING US?

The adults were not neutral observers of the children. Their own confidence, assumptions, relational habits and comfort zones formed part of the environment children experienced.

What pattern emerged?

Seeing the adults inside the system



TEAM-LEVEL LENS

EXISTING STRENGTHS	Care, relationship, experience, reflection
RECURRING PRESSURES	Behaviour interpretation, visibility, confidence, consistency
DEVELOPMENTAL NEED	A shared non-shaming language for adult patterns
KEY SHIFT	From staff correction to reflective balance

WHAT PATTERN EMERGED?

The same principle used with children became relevant to adults: strengths can become narrow when their balancing capacities are less available. Care can become over-responsibility. Reflection can become hesitation. Sensitivity can become avoidance of exposure. Confidence can become reliance on familiar interpretations.

The important move was not to label staff with archetypes or turn supervision into personality assessment. It was to use patterns as a language for noticing what was already strong and what might need widening.

PERCEPTION BEFORE PERFORMANCE

- One practitioner described seeing children for who they are rather than only what they can and cannot do.
- Another described moving away from management and control towards communication of needs and unmet needs.
- A third described looking beneath behaviour rather than immediately trying to correct it.

DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

The team did not need a new standard to perform against. It needed a way to notice the adult patterns already shaping observation, interpretation and response.

What was introduced?

Balancing the adult without shaming the practitioner



WHAT WAS INTRODUCED?

Reflective supervision began to use the same balance principle as child observation: identify what comes naturally, name the strength within it, then become curious about what sits less comfortably on the other side.

STAFF SUPERVISION IN PRACTICE

- Strengths were named before areas for development.
- Practitioners were encouraged to notice their own recurring patterns rather than being given fixed labels.
- Opposite capacities were offered as invitations, not corrections.
- Reflection focused on how adult perception and regulation influence the environment around children.
- A shared language made it easier to discuss practice without reducing conversations to competence or failure.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

In one supervision case, a practitioner recognised strong Watcher, Helper and Friend tendencies: careful observation, nurture and close relational work. The developmental invitation was to widen autonomy, playfulness and visible action through gentle access to Rebel, Joker and Mover qualities.

There was no demand to become louder or more performative. Parent-facing observations and group storytelling were used as small, meaningful opportunities to practise professional voice and visibility from a position of safety.

BALANCING SEQUENCE

Recognise strength -> Notice the edge -> Invite the opposite -> Practise safely -> Integrate

What became newly available?

A more reflective and self-aware adult ecology



TEAM-LEVEL OUTCOMES REPORTED

Across all three signed practitioner reviews, staff reported improvement in team reflection, consistency between staff and relationships with children. The reviews also identified positive movement in emotional climate and understanding behaviour. Staff confidence was reported as improved, though the degree varied between practitioners.

- All three reviews identified staff wellbeing as an area the approach had been helpful in supporting.
- Practitioners described greater reflection and more individualised responses to children.
- Behaviour was increasingly discussed as communication rather than simply as something to stop.
- Two practitioners described the framework transferring beyond work into their parenting and family life.
- The existing supportive culture was described as having been deepened rather than replaced.

OBSERVABLE PRACTITIONER CHANGE

The supervision case added a behavioural indicator to the team self-report. Written observations increased from approximately one per month to around five per month. Whole-group story reading moved from longstanding avoidance to approximately weekly practice.

WHAT EMERGED?

The most important change was not that every practitioner became the same. Greater consistency came through shared understanding while individual styles remained intact. Confidence widened, reflection became more explicit, and the adults gained a language for seeing themselves as part of the relational system.

INTEGRATION

A balanced setting is not created only by balancing children. The adults who observe, interpret, plan and respond are part of the ecology too.



The Adults Are Part of the Ecology

KEY INSIGHT

Behaviour practice changes when adult perception changes. Reflective supervision can help practitioners recognise their own strengths, limits and habitual responses so that development becomes an invitation into greater range rather than a judgement of who they are.

AA SNAPSHOT

PRIMARY THEME

Adult patterns shape the relational environment

EVIDENCE BASE

Three signed reviews + one supervision case

CASE CATEGORY

Practitioner Ecology & Staff Development

PRACTICE SITE

Children of Towan Kindergarten

MAIN PRESENTATION

Strong caring practice with differing confidence, habits and interpretive lenses

BALANCING STRATEGY

Strengths-led reflective supervision and safe access to less-used capacities

REPORTED OUTCOMES

Reflection, consistency, relationships, emotional climate, behaviour understanding, staff wellbeing

OBSERVABLE INDICATOR

Approx. 1 -> 5 observations per month; group story reading to approx. weekly in one practitioner case

CLOSING REFLECTION

“If behaviour is relational, the adult can never be outside the picture. The work is not only to understand the child, but to remain curious about the lens through which we are looking.”

AA TAGS

Practitioner Ecology

Reflective Supervision

Staff Wellbeing

Team Culture

Adult Perception

Confidence

Consistency

Behaviour Understanding

Professional Voice

Strengths-Led Development

Balance

AA EVIDENCE THEMES

- Adults are part of the ecology
- Perception changes practice
- Shared reflection can support consistency
- Strength before stretch
- Staff development can be balance-based
- Balance rather than correction

AA DEVELOPMENTAL REFLECTION | EVIDENCE STRENGTH: 4 / 5

This is a strong internal practice case because the same themes appear across three independently completed staff reviews and are reinforced by a concrete supervision example with observable change. The evidence remains self-report from one setting, so it should not be presented as proof of causal impact. Its next step is replication with external settings and repeated measures of staff confidence, wellbeing and team consistency.