# Kolb’s Cycle of Supervision

**Encouraging Reflective Supervision**

**Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory**

Kolb’s learning theory sets our a four stage learning cycle;

**Concrete Experience –** Feeling e.g. interviewing a service user for the first time, learning from specific experiences and relating to people and feeling.

**Reflective Observation –** Watching e.g. reflecting on what they did, making observations, discussing, looking for the meaning.

**Abstract Conceptualisation –** Thinking e.g. making links with previous experiences and any theories or knowledge they can apply; logical analysis.

**Active Experimentation –** Doing e.g. considering ways to improve and trying out methods and strategies; taking risks.

**Applying the Kolb Cycle to Supervision**

This process involves asking open, reflective questions targeted at each stage of the learning cycle. The aim is to encourage reflection and a ‘problem solving’ approach to issues raised in supervision:

**Focusing on Experience** – The emphasis is on facilitating an accurate and detailed recall of events. A partial description of the situation would undermine the rest of the cycle.

**Focusing on Reflection** – The emphasis is on eliciting feelings and patterns. This may bring out further information or reveal the supervisee’s underlying attitudes. It may also give clues to other personal factors complicating the supervisee’s experience. Helping the supervisee make links between the current situation and his/her prior experiences, skills or knowledge.

**Focusing on Analysis** - The emphasis is on analysis and explanation, probing the meanings that the supervisee (and others) attribute to the situation. This includes consideration of other possible explanations, the identification of what is not known or understood, and areas for further exploration or assessment.

**Focusing on Strategies and Action Plans** – The emphasis is on translating the analysis into planning, preparation and action. This includes the identification of outcomes and success criteria as well as consideration of potential complications and contingency plans.