

Line Management Supervision in the Helping Professions: Moving from External Supervision to a Line Manager Supervisor Model

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Clinical supervision is a fundamental component in key fields of practice; counseling, social work, and health, for example. However, there are increasing numbers of organizations whose focus is to engage and support clients to manage their lives effectively, but which are not required by mandate to provide supervision for their staff. This article shares the experiences of five supervisors working in just such a “helping” organization, which has moved from an external supervisor to a line manager supervisor model.

The participants share their stories about clinical supervision from a line manager perspective and reflect on the part supervision could play in supporting staff who work in the helping professions.

KEYWORDS *line management, supervision challenges, perspectives*

INTRODUCTION

The term *supervision* can be problematic. It is widely understood by those in the counseling, social work, and health-related professions (for example, nursing, health care assistants, and so on) to describe a formal relationship between practitioner (counselor, social worker, clinician) and supervisor. The purpose of this relationship is to focus on clinical practice or client work, whereby the client is “present” in supervision. Carroll (1996, p. 8) describes the purpose of supervision as “the professional development of the supervisee and the welfare of the client.” The supervisor’s role is to attend to key functions, including assisting practitioners to maintain legal,

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ethical, and professional standards, develop their own client practice and support the psychological and emotional demands of the work. Kadushin (1976) summarizes these three functions as administrative (more commonly termed managerial), educative, and supportive. Inskipp and Proctor (1993) concur with the concept of three functions, but choose the terms normative, formative, and restorative to describe the central features of supervision.

Despite the differences in terminology, the focus remains the same. Supervision is a supportive relationship that ensures the development of best professional practice in client work. Regardless of the position of the supervisor, be they external to the organization or the supervisee's line manager, adherence to these functions is paramount. Supervision is an activity viewed as fundamental to ensuring the development and maintenance of professional, reflective, and ethical practice. Furthermore, training providers in counseling, social work, and health care settings in the United Kingdom have a mandatory duty to provide supervision to trainees, as do employers, post-qualification.

In other helping professions the concept of supervision is less commonplace and often misunderstood. There are a number of reasons for this, most notably that supervision is not necessarily viewed as a "requirement to practice" and there is therefore no legal imperative to ensure that a system of supervision is in place (Borders, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Hoge, Migdole, Farkas, Ponce, & Hunnicutt, 2011; Reid & Westergaard, 2013). For example, teachers, mentors, youth support workers, career counselors, paramedics, and charity and community workers are often unfamiliar with the concept of supervision. It is not an activity that is viewed as central to their professional practice. Yet these practitioners engage in one-to-one helping relationships, often use counseling skills, and work toward positive change with their clients.

This article examines supervision in an organization in the United Kingdom which is neither counseling-, social work-, nor health-related, but, nevertheless, employs practitioners using counseling skills who work in helping relationships with children, young people, and their families. This organization does offer supervision to staff, but made the decision to change the way the process was delivered, from an external supervisor model—where practitioners were supervised by a consultant who was external to, but employed by, the organization solely for the purpose of supervision—to a line management model, whereby the practitioner's line manager takes on responsibility for their clinical supervision in addition to other operational management functions.

This article draws on a qualitative research project with five line managers in the organization who were allocated the role of supervisor in addition to their line management function. It identifies the challenges they faced, examines the different ways in which they approached the task, and establishes their own perspectives on supervision in the helping professions.

SUPERVISION IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

The need for supervision across the helping professions has been argued strongly. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) assert that counselors, social workers, and medical practitioners are not the only professionals who facilitate helping, therapeutic, and healing relationships with clients. They cite a range of practitioners in different employment contexts who engage with adults, young people, and children in order to work toward positive change. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) acknowledges the existence of this increasingly significant workforce sector and provides information and advice to those who use “counseling skills” in their work. By contrast, in the United States, supervision for counselors is generally limited to those in training (Barden, 2001), while supervision in social work continues into practice (Munson, 2002). Hoge and colleagues (2011) explore the barriers to providing supervision for many “helping” organizations in the United States, suggesting that time and budgetary constraints may have an impact on the delivery and effectiveness of supervision in these settings.

The word *supervision* may be viewed with suspicion by those who are unfamiliar with the concept, having, as it does, connotations relating to power and surveillance (Feltham, 2010). Therefore those who work in the broad context of the helping professions but have not had access to supervision in the past may experience feelings of apprehension, fear, or downright resistance when a system of supervision is implemented by their employer.

The practice of supervision as we understand it today focuses on building an open and trusting relationship in order to scrutinize practice (Reid & Westergaard, 2013). The significance of the quality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is paramount (Nerdum & Ronnestad, 2002; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Reid & Westergaard, 2013). The characteristics underpinning person-centered philosophy (Rogers, 1951) and in particular the core conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard are viewed by many as central to the growth and development of the supervisee. Mearns (1991) suggests that in addition to these core conditions, both supervisor and supervisee should be committed to the relationship. Both parties must be willing to address and challenge conflict in order to develop and maintain a healthy supervisory relationship. Young, Lambie, Hutchinson, and Thurston-Dyer (2011) explain that “The supervisor-supervisee relationship parallels the counsellor-client alliance, in that to promote supervisee (client) growth and development a warm, trusting, empathic and non-judgemental relationship is primary” (p. 3).

The concept of the parallel process is central to supervision, whereby the skills and approaches used by the practitioner with clients are mirrored in supervision. The supervisor builds a relationship with their supervisee in much the same way as the supervisee interacts with their clients. Hawkins

and Shohet (2006) explore this “parallel process” in supervision in the helping professions in depth. Coulter (2012), writing from a counseling perspective, suggests that “Supervision is most effective when it can provide an experience for counsellors to learn how to use themselves more effectively in the counsellor-client relationship. By discussing the parallel process in supervision, the counsellor will become more aware of how one’s self is involved in the therapeutic and supervisory relationships” (p. 10).

So, supervision sets out to attend to the development of the supervisee’s practice, to ensure adherence to legal and ethical working, and to support and “restore” the helper. However, although increasingly recognized as being of value in a range of helping professions, there are still numerous professionals working in helping relationships who do not have access to supervision. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggest that a heightened awareness of the need for supervision across the helping professions exists. They cite a range of reasons for this. In particular they suggest that the issue of accountability for those who work in helping relationships with clients has become paramount. One way for organizations to ensure accountability is to provide supervision to their workforce, whereby client work undertaken by each practitioner is scrutinized in depth. That said, Hoge and colleagues (2011) suggest that in the United States, service organizations are not always supportive of supervision and clear policies on supervision practice in these organizations appear to be limited. They propose a number of reasons for this, including pressures of time, targets, and lack of supervision training. The research project introduced here focuses on supervision in one such service organization in the United Kingdom.

METHODOLOGY

The research took place in a London-based, U.K. charity as an example of a “helping” organization that is not required by professional regulation or mandate to provide clinical supervision to staff. This organization exemplifies many such charity or community groups working in the public services in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe. The organization works with families to ensure that children and young people are supported to remain in school; but it is not classed as a counseling service, local government social services department, or a health care service. Practitioners are based in schools and establish relationships of trust with the families with whom they work. The work is often long term; clients are seen over a period of time and are helped to explore the challenges they face in order to reengage with the education system. Although practitioners are not necessarily trained counselors, all use counseling skills in their work and the ethos of the organization is grounded in person-centered principles. The organization has recognized the value of supervision and a system of external supervision

was, until recently, the preferred means for offering support to practitioners. These external supervision sessions, although valued highly by the practitioners (supervisees), came, over time, to be viewed by the organization as an effective means to deliver support, but not necessarily the best way to ensure that the key issues practitioners were facing were known about and addressed at an organizational level.

In 2010 the service organization decided to move from external supervision to a line manager supervisor model. Line managers in the organization undertaking operational management functions, appraisal, and review, for example, were enrolled in an accredited supervision training program in order to take on the role of clinical supervisor alongside their line management duties. Practitioners were told that they would no longer receive supervision from their external supervisor, but that their line manager would take on the dual responsibility for both line management and clinical supervision. What follows is an exploration of the experience of being a supervisor, from the perspective of five line managers within the organization who undertook the initial supervision training and subsequently supervised the staff they also line managed.

Participants

The focus of this research project related to the unique experiences, feelings, and stories of the individual participants. A biographical approach was therefore selected (Merrill & West, 2009) whereby it was the line managers' narratives concerning their personal experiences that were explored in-depth. Each participant was given the opportunity to share their story in a loosely structured interview, which was subsequently transcribed and analyzed. The organization was approached initially and the aim of the research was explained. An e-mail was then circulated to the 10 line manager supervisors in the organization who had received supervision training and were supervising staff, outlining the project and asking for interested individuals to make contact. Replies were received from 5 of the line managers: 2 black British females, 1 white British female, and 2 white British males between the ages of 35 and 50 who were willing to share their experiences of supervision. This sample was representative of the gender and ethnic mix of both employees in the organization and the client group.

Ethical Considerations

An ethics application was scrutinized and approved by an Ethics Review Committee at Canterbury Christ Church University, prior to the research, ensuring that the study adhered to the rigorous standards demanded by this institution. Each participant also signed a form giving their consent to their words being used. The interviews took place on one day at the head office

of the organization and were audio-taped and transcribed. Each participant received a copy of the transcript and was given a period of time in which to reflect on their words and respond. Every participant agreed to their words being used and each has been guaranteed anonymity.

Aim

The aim of the research was to illicit deep reflection on supervision from the perspective of line manager supervisors working in an organization located in the helping professions. It was the experience of the transition from line manager to line manager supervisor that formed the focus of the research. Each interaction was loosely structured, with the question “What have been your experiences of taking on the supervision of colleagues as well as being their line managers?” being the starting point, and the question that was common to each interaction. Data would therefore emerge in response to the narratives which unfolded. The rationale for this narrative approach was to encourage an open, honest, and unique response from participants, valuing each individual experience. Participants were free to explore the issues they encountered as supervisors, and although, of course, the position of the researcher and the researcher’s responses would have an impact on the stories told, the aim was to elicit and record the participants’ deep reflection in a “safe space.” The intention was not to take a reductive approach to the research, asking preset questions and searching for a set of characteristics or features which are common or applicable in every case (McLeod, 2003), but rather to explore the individual thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants.

Analysis

Having transcribed each interview, the written and verbal data were explored fully, reflecting on both the written transcripts and the subtleties of the spoken dialogue in depth. By so doing, key themes and similarities in participants’ reflections were identified and differences in their perspectives and approaches to supervision were also apparent. A separate pro forma was used to undertake further in-depth analysis of each interaction, continuing the exploration of the data to identify and extract key themes. The pro forma, devised using a biographical approach (Merrill & West, 2009) focused on four aspects: the emerging themes, the process of the research interview including observations on the nature of the interaction, the circumstances and possible impact of the interview on the participant, and finally the Gestalt in the material concerning the nature of the story being told.

As the research project was focused on the participants’ individual experiences, it was crucial that the sense and meaning in their words was captured and interpreted accurately (Gibbs, 2007). Interpretation will inevitably result

in some degree of fragmentation, as the position of the researcher in relation to the data cannot be ignored, but the participants' thoughts and feelings were represented with accuracy, integrity, and respect. The process was meticulous, rigorous, and unhurried, with care taken not to move too quickly to attempt to identify and interpret themes, until a thorough familiarity with the intricacies and complexities of the data was achieved.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Although the interviews were nondirective, the conversations focused on participants' experiences of line management supervision and therefore a range of broad issues and themes relating to this topic emerged. There were differences in response as well as shared views and reflections. Each participant expressed strong, often passionate, but not necessarily the same views concerning three key areas explored here: (1) the challenges of line manager supervision, (2) managing supervisees' resistance: adhering to the functions of supervision, and (3) the need for supervision in the helping professions.

The Challenges of Line Manager Supervision

Each participant raised the issue of the duality of the role—both line manager and clinical supervisor—as a potential tension and a challenge (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). In particular, participants reflected on the complexity inherent in taking on the role of supervisor for practitioners who had previously experienced supervision within the organization but with an external supervisor. Jackie, a research participant, explained how she felt when she discovered that she would be supervising colleagues she line managed, who were supervised previously by someone external to the organization:

I was excited, because for me, it's all about the work and I didn't really like the idea of not knowing what my practitioners are doing with their families. I felt quite detached from it and very uncomfortable.

Ola, another participant in the study, agreed, identifying the benefits of being both line manager and supervisor, but also highlighting the potential conflict inherent in the dual role:

Actually, it was, like, how was I going to make that ... how was I going to separate my practice as a line manager and a supervisor?

Harrison and Westergaard (2006) highlight the difficulty inherent in integrating both roles. They suggest the following:

The supervisor has to take time to reflect on any existing relationship they have with their supervisee (e.g. line manager), and should consider

ways in which they can establish their role in a different context (as a supervisor). Making explicit the nature of the supervisory relationship, determining the focus of supervision and ensuring that adequate opportunity is provided to cover a range of issues, are all challenges that every supervisor must face. (p. 102)

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) take this idea further, suggesting that there is a risk that the supervisor may develop one aspect of their role over the others. This could result in the supervisor becoming therapist, case conference facilitator, or manager, “checking up” on client case management, rather than a supervisor who integrates aspects of each.

Tom was the only participant to express anger at the change from external to line manager supervision:

No there wasn't a “hurrah!” It was like “Why do I need to do this?” That was initially my reaction ... um ... because of the fact that I had good line management relationships with the staff and, you know, the line management was working okay.

Woods (2001) suggests that supervisees who receive supervision from line managers may have reservations about making themselves vulnerable in supervision to someone who has responsibility for managing their performance. It is interesting that in Tom's case, he too expresses reluctance about the process, but from his perspective as line manager supervisor. He is concerned about adopting the role of clinical supervisor for colleagues he also line manages, unsure initially about the impact this might have on his ability to manage effectively. Of course, it should not be assumed that an individual in a management role will necessarily relish taking on the additional responsibility that being a supervisor demands.

The ethical and philosophical debate about line management supervision has been on-going. Copeland (2001) asserts that it may be difficult for supervisees to share sensitive issues in supervision where they fear that their supervisor is making judgments about their performance. The risk here is that the very areas of practice which require in-depth exploration and development are kept hidden. Copeland goes on to suggest that if a dual-role approach is adopted, the line manager supervisor must adhere to strongly enforced boundaries. Others go further, arguing that the duality of the role is, in itself, highly problematic (Nixon & Carroll, 1994; Page & Woskett, 1994). The BACP agrees with this analysis and in the counseling profession in the United Kingdom the line manager supervisor model is discouraged. However, Steve, another participant, takes an opposing view:

... previously managers were really almost divorced from the work, and in a sense were much more doing the task stuff ... “have you done the

work plan, have you done your statistics?" You know they didn't really know about what the work was like.

Where Copeland (2001) argues that time allocated to supervision risks being supplanted by managerial issues, Steve suggests that it is important that managers have a deep understanding of the issues and challenges their supervisees face. He explains:

I want to know what our practitioners are doing. If there's going to be an ongoing forum where that's discussed in some detail and people are asking interesting questions and thinking about things afresh and all of that, I mean, of course as manager I should be part of that.

Edwards (2001) concurs, stressing that line managers have a legitimate interest in the work undertaken by practitioners and should have the opportunity to attend to issues raised in supervision. Lena, a participant in the study, agrees that understanding the minutiae of her supervisees' work with clients is central to her role as a manager. She explains how she manages the duality of the role:

I think it's probably about keeping the line management to the minimum that it has to be. You know, for me it's about not embracing the line manager role, it's more about embracing the supervision role.

All five participants were open about their feelings prior to taking on the role of supervisor. As just detailed, these ranged from excitement to apprehension to anger. Interestingly, having engaged in the process, every participant, with the benefit of hindsight, cited the positive aspects of a line manager model. Ola reflected:

I think line management supervision works because it definitely enriches the work that practitioners do. Where it works really well and when it works really well it's fantastic.

Jackie agreed:

For me it gives me an opportunity to have a handle on what is going on for the practitioner. You know, their practice, engaging families and what their needs are, their training needs, their areas of learning you know, the sort of knowledge, what they need to improve on and develop in their practice. I think it's much more holistic. I just didn't like the fact, before, that I was detached from them and I'd meet and we'd do the targets and whatever, but I didn't have any knowledge of what the issues were and what was going on for them. I think this line manager model is better. One hundred percent.

Steve went further:

I think it's the right thing for our organization. I don't have any doubts about that, partly because of the risk that with the external model, line managers really don't know what practitioners are doing.

Tom, who had expressed anger initially at taking on the role of supervisor, explained how he feels now:

I think it's actually important to build that connection with your supervisees. At the end of the day, if they don't feel that there's a connection there ... they will go "in-house" ... you know ... talking to their colleagues, but they'll not share information with me.

Lena was surprised at how her resistance to the idea had changed once she began supervising. However, she went on to suggest an alternative model of line manager supervision that she felt might work as effectively, but allow for greater openness in the relationship:

I would say that I'm not so anti supervision/line management as I was. I feel that even though it's been tricky, it kind of has worked. Whether that is because I'm not particularly authoritarian as a manager, I don't know. But I guess for me, the best way probably would be, if we were going forward, it would be about having a supervisor who is a line manager, but not the supervisee's own line manager.

In spite of the initial anxieties expressed by participants about taking on the role of supervisor to colleagues they line manage, there was an overwhelmingly positive response regarding how effectively the system has worked. The literature strongly suggests that a line management supervision method is something that should be approached with caution (Westergaard & Garrod-Mason, 2006). Indeed, the participants in this study expressed similar feelings at the outset. However, the reality for these line manager supervisors proved to be a positive experience. That is not to say, of course, that these views are necessarily shared by their supervisees. Indeed, each participant reflected on the resistance they experienced initially from those they were supervising and considered the strategies they had used to address this.

Managing Supervisees' Resistance: Adhering to the Functions of Supervision

Understandably, supervisees in the organization who had built existing relationships of trust with their external supervisors were likely to experience a range of emotional responses when informed that they would now be supervised by their line managers. In reality that transition was challenging for all participants, but the supervisors' knowledge of the formative, normative, and

restorative functions of supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993) offered a strong base from which to manage the resistance. Ola explained:

It is easier with some and more difficult with others. So it really is very reliant on individuals and how they perceive the purpose and functions of supervision and whether or not I've been able to bring them along on that journey.

Lena agreed:

It took a long time to build the relationship up; they were fairly guarded and I think that I didn't know what to expect so I was, you know It's hard. I think now they see me more as a supervisor than a line manager. It's always there, the line management, but I think they see me in that more supportive role where I give them the opportunity to reflect back on what's going on in their lives and also how it's affecting their clients.

Steve went further:

There were definitely some practitioners who, who . . . were still very much, you know, in mourning, if you like, for their previous supervisor.

Added to the sense of loss that Steve described, Feltham (2002) argues that the concept of supervision has connotations relating to monitoring and surveillance. Harrison and Westergaard (2006) suggest that the term is, at the very least "loaded," and therefore those who are new to supervision may experience anxieties or even resistance concerning the process. In the case of this research, these concerns are magnified. Not only are supervisees being told by their organization that they are losing their supervisor—someone external to the organization with whom they could share challenging professional and sometimes personal issues openly—but they are also informed that their new supervisor will be their line manager. Participants shared their different approaches to managing this resistance. Lena explained:

I think they have learnt to open up and say, you know that they're really, really angry or that they're . . . you know, we can get into all those feelings. But that didn't happen to begin with. I think that's, you know, that's about the building of the relationship. It's almost like they filled their time with the facts at first and then they kind of relaxed as time went on.

Jackie emphasized the importance of transparency in supervision from the start in order to build a relationship of trust:

So it was good just to sit down and say, you know "How are you? How are you feeling about it? It must be really strange having me now as your

supervisor. Let's talk about it. It feels strange to me too actually. You know, I'm having to put on a different hat, and yeah, it's all a bit different".

Thompson (1993) examines the concept of antioppressive practice, suggesting that relationship building is influenced by factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and others. In the preceding extract, Jackie explains how she addressed the potentially oppressive relationship of line manager supervisor, where the power dynamic cannot be ignored. By being open with her supervisee and discussing the reality of working together from both perspectives, Jackie hoped to address and overcome potential feelings of oppression in the relationship. Tom highlighted this tension further, explaining how supervisees expressed their resistance about his role as supervisor and line manager compared to the previous external supervision they experienced:

They've all been quite honest with me. They've said that it's not the same, it's different, you know, they don't expect the ... same sort of thing. One or two of them said they felt that, um, some things are off limits and they can't talk about some things to me. Because after all, you are the person who could go the capability route with them ... yeah ... so they are going to be a little bit guarded.

Jackie explained how her understanding of the formative function of supervision helps her to separate the role of line manager and that of supervisor, thus breaking down the resistance:

It's about equipping them to almost, you know, develop that internal supervisor. So that they come to the decisions themselves and I'm just facilitating that process. It's helping them to grow. I see it as a ... yeah ... supporting them to grow and helping them to be confident practitioners. And I have to be really careful not to kind of think with a supervisee, "Right, you know, you've done it wrong" in supervision. That's for the line management and I don't want it to be part of supervision. So I'm really very, very careful to ensure that it doesn't cross that line.

The literature stresses the significance of achieving a working alliance between supervisor and supervisee (Dryden & Thorne, 1991; Carroll, 1996; Barden, 2001; Shulman, 2006; Reid & Westergaard, 2013). The importance of this alliance is highlighted by the participants who, when reflecting on the effectiveness of their supervisory relationships, each made reference to the normative, formative, and restorative functions of supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993). They explained that understanding these functions offered a means to clarify the true purpose of supervision and provided the foundation on which they worked to build an alliance with their supervisees. However, examples were given where the relationship was not built

effectively. Ola described a particularly challenging situation with a supervisee:

One of my practitioners has been in the organization a long time. She was a nightmare to manage and she seemed even more nightmarish with my dual role. She knows everything... so it's always a difficult task engaging with supervision with her. And I had to do the contracting again and again and went through all of those things, you know, about what supervision is for.

This example demonstrates that a supervisee may not automatically view supervision as a good thing. The move to line manager supervision has not been effective in this case and has left both supervisor and supervisee feeling frustrated. Overall, though, in contrast to the initial fears expressed, the experience of supervising was positive. Participants agreed that from their perspective as supervisor, sound working supervisory relationships had been formed. Having considered their own practice with supervisees, the participants went on to reflect on a broader question about the place of supervision in the helping professions.

The Need for Supervision in the Helping Professions

Although clinical supervision is not mandatory for those who work in the helping professions, the participants in this study felt strongly that it should be fundamental to practice (regardless of whether the supervisor is external or a line manager). Tom argued the following:

I think it's essential. I think it's really essential in terms of having a safe space to actually talk about issues that concern you and look for solutions.

Steve agreed, citing teachers as a group of professionals who do not have access to supervision, but who might benefit from the process:

You know, schools don't have supervision. Far from it! Teachers get nothing. Teaching is a very good example. You know, they never get a chance to reflect on their work and you do what you do and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't... so yeah, I've got a strong commitment to the belief that it's useful to provide people in the helping professions with that space.

Ola referred to the importance of the restorative function of supervision, suggesting that it is central to the well-being of workers across the helping professions:

I think it's incredibly important not just to help practitioners to reflect on different ways and strategies to support clients, but also to attend to their

own feelings and their own perceptions, and how these might impact on the work.

Lena made an insightful point about those who choose to work in the helping professions:

The people who tend to go for these jobs are people who are very gifted at helping other people but there's also a real need for them to help. They're meeting a need in themselves. I'm aware of that in myself. And it's about working ... working with that need. And making sure that they're not, you know, taking on too much work, and that they are looking after themselves.

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) confirm the growth in numbers of those working in the helping professions, some of whom receive supervision as a requirement to practice, others who do not. They summarize the current situation:

This enormous upsurge in both counseling and psychotherapy, and in counseling and therapeutic approaches within many of the helping and people professions, has brought in its wake the recognition that such work needs to be properly supervised. (p. 4)

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) go on to suggest that supervision, while being central to the well-being of the "helper" is "virtually ignored" after qualifying in some professions and not offered at all in others. That said, they cite work they have done with social workers, relationship counselors, the police, local government, health professionals, education professionals, and multi-disciplinary teams where there is no mandate or requirement for supervision to be offered and yet there is recognition of its value. Edwards (2006) describes a project to set up supervision in a youth support agency in the United Kingdom. He acknowledges the need to embed supervision systemically within helping organizations' culture and structures. Steve strongly supports this notion:

Anyone who is working with change, you know, counselors or our practitioners, they're helping people move away from destructive patterns and adopt a different approach to their life and developing self belief and, you know, meaningful ... meaningful ... real change, not just about problem solving. And anyone who is trying to help people change, it's not an easy thing to do.

All participants made reference to the current global economic challenges and the hardship suffered by many statutory, voluntary, and community groups in the United Kingdom who are experiencing cuts in funding. They

reflected on the dichotomy posed for organizations whereby the need for supervision becomes paramount as employees are working under increasingly demanding and stressful conditions, but the financial imperatives are focused elsewhere. Acknowledgment that supervision can assist with issues such as stress and burnout (Milne, Aylott, Fitzpatrick, & Ellis, 2008) provides a justification for organizations to consider ways to support employees who are under increasing pressure. In spite of the current financial climate, all participants believed strongly that organizations in the helping professions should continue to fund supervision. Jackie summarized what each participant expressed:

I think it's critical. It really, really is, to have that dedicated space to really talk through issues without being judged, without feeling incompetent. It's really, really important. Practitioners are increasingly working with complex, difficult cases because of the shift in policies. Because of budget constraints, there are a lot of services that are closing. They are "holding" families that are really difficult and so, in my experience it's crucial that they have that supervision and it should be guarded.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the findings of any research. First, this study was small scale, but in-depth. It was grounded in a qualitative methodology, drawing on five illustrative case studies. In addition, all participants were employed as line managers within the same organization, one that valued supervision rather than representing a range of employers from the helping professions, many of whom do not implement a process of supervision. In addition, the sample was self-selecting. It may be that the five line managers who agreed to take part in the study were either wholly dissatisfied with the new role they were taking on or, alternatively, were happy with becoming supervisors in addition to their line manager duties. However, within the sample of five line managers, a range of approaches to and perspectives about both management and supervision were evident. Further research in an organization within the broad remit of the helping professions that does not offer supervision would complement this project. Second, the project focused on the responses of the supervisors, not their supervisees. It may be that the perspective of those being supervised differs significantly from that of their managers. This would make an interesting study for the future. Finally, in a narrative approach to research, the position of the researcher cannot be ignored. Relationships with research participants are likely to be influenced consciously and unconsciously by factors such as role, status, power, and so on. In this study, the researcher took great care to elicit and represent the views of the research participants, while being mindful of her own position in the research process.

CONCLUSION

This research project explored the experiences of five line managers who, at the instigation of their organization, undertook supervision training and accepted responsibility for supervising colleagues they line managed. The participants had intriguing stories to tell and there were many issues raised that have not been examined here, including their experiences of their own support and development through supervision with their line managers, which is examined elsewhere in the literature (Reid & Westergaard, 2013), antioppressive practice, and the content of supervision sessions. These issues are worthy of exploration and, indeed, further research. What is detailed here are the three themes that were shared which help to inform our understanding of both the line manager supervisor debate and the place that supervision could play in the helping professions. Each participant expressed their feelings at being asked to take on the role of supervisor in addition to line managing their colleagues. They described the resistance they encountered from individual supervisees. They highlighted the importance of understanding and adhering to the functions of supervision in order to build an effective supervisory relationship, thus making the supervision process positive and worthwhile. Finally they each argued passionately for the need for supervision in the helping professions, an argument which surely resonates across a range of employment contexts.

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