



Canterbury Christ Church
University College

OCCASIONAL PAPER
MICHAELMAS TERM 2001

Supporting personal advisers in Connexions:

Perspectives on supervision and mentoring from allied professions

Andrew Edwards (Editor)

The Centre for
Career and Personal Development

The Centre for Career and Personal Development (CCPD) is committed to contributing to enquiry and research, which supports the development of good practice in a range of guidance contexts.

Produced by:

The Centre for Career and Personal Development
Canterbury Christ Church University College
David Salomons Estate
Broomhill Road
Southborough
Tunbridge Wells
Kent, TN3 0TG

t: 01892 507500

f: 01892 507501

e: a.j.edwards@canterbury.ac.uk

w: www.cant.ac.uk

The views expressed in this paper are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the College or the sponsors.

Purchasers and sponsors are authorised to make copies of selected pages for use within their own institutions for the purposes of policy development and training.

Published in November 2001 by Canterbury Christ Church University College.

ISBN 0-9537258-2-0

© Canterbury Christ Church University College

Design & layout: Ariss Design 01227 452752. Printed by: Parkers 01227 766555.

Contents

Page

| | |
|----|---|
| 5 | Foreword by <i>Professor Tony Watts OBE</i> |
| 7 | <i>Introduction</i> |
| | Chapter 1 |
| 8 | <i>David Bucknall</i> Supervision in social work – messages for the Connexions Service |
| | Chapter 2 |
| 18 | <i>Kit Field and Chris Philpott</i> Mentoring in schools: from support to development |
| | Chapter 3 |
| 26 | <i>Janet Woods</i> Supervision from an informal education/youth work perspective |
| | Chapter 4 |
| 32 | <i>Helen Reynolds</i> Supervision in counselling and psychotherapy: a critical space |
| | Chapter 5 |
| 40 | <i>Hazel Reid and Claire Nix</i> Support and supervision for guidance practitioners in a personal adviser role |
| | Chapter 6 |
| 49 | <i>Andrew Edwards</i> Developing a framework of support for personal advisers |
| 60 | <i>Contributors</i> |
| 61 | <i>Index</i> |

Foreword

A. G. Watts

The role of the personal adviser within the new Connexions Service is still at an early stage of development. While greater clarity is still needed at a policy level, it seems likely that the role will be characterised by ambiguities and conflict, and potential sources of stress, which individual personal advisers will have to cope with and resolve themselves. The development of appropriate supervision structures to support them in this process is accordingly a high priority.

The personal adviser role in Connexions was first outlined in the Social Exclusion Unit report *Bridging the Gap*. This indicated that the new service should include 'a network of personal advisers to provide a single point of contact for each young person and ensure that someone has an overview of each young person's ambitions and needs' (SEU, 1999, p.81). Subsequently, a Government policy statement on Connexions stated that these personal advisers would represent a 'new profession' which would 'end the current fragmentation of services' and 'take responsibility for ensuring all the needs of a young person are met in an integrated and coherent manner'. They would 'be drawn from a range of backgrounds including the Careers Service, Youth Service, Social Services, teachers and Youth Offending Teams, as well as from the voluntary and community sectors' (DfEE, 2000a, pp. 35, 45).

The underlying analysis was focused on the needs of young people who had already dropped out of the education, training and employment system, or were at risk of doing so. The core of the analysis was the belief that the ineffectiveness of current provision was due significantly to the proliferation of specialist agencies, each dealing with a disconnected part of the young person's life. Accordingly, the agencies needed to be brought closer together; as part of this, each young person should be linked to a personal adviser who could form a relationship of trust with them, see their problems as a whole, provide a first point of intervention, and then 'broker' the support of the relevant specialist agencies (Bentley & Gurumurthy, 1999).

In converting this analysis into the operational design of Connexions, there has been much confusion (Watts, 2001a; 2001b). To avoid labelling the targeted group and the stigma this might carry, the Government declared that Connexions should be a universal service, for all young people. But the balance and relationship between the services for the targeted group and for other young people have been unclear, as have the role relationships between personal advisers and other specialists. In an attempt to clarify some of these matters, a statement was issued distinguishing between three roles: Connexions personal advisers, who would 'work with those young people facing a range of barriers and needing in-depth support'; Connexions advisers, to include youth workers and careers workers; and Specialist advisers, to cover such areas as drug abuse, pregnancy advice and counselling (DfEE, 2000b). A subsequent statement indicated that this three-level structure was for planning purposes only, and that all advisers within Connexions should be termed personal advisers when working with young people (DfES, 2001). For our purposes here, the main though not exclusive focus of attention is the narrower group of 'Connexions personal advisers'.

In the Connexions pilots, a clear need was articulated for professional supervision arrangements for such workers. Many personal advisers found themselves deeply engaged in, at times, disturbing and even dangerous relationships with young people and their families (Newman, 2001). Moreover, the boundaries within which the personal adviser were operating were not clear. Many were working within and across three systems: the setting within which they were operating (a school/college or agency); the formal structures of the Connexions partnership; and the social systems of

the young people with whom they were engaging. Transactions across these different systems seemed likely to pose continuing issues about where the primary responsibility of the personal adviser lay, and where their role began and ended (see also Colley, 2001). There was a risk that all three parties – the school/college/agency, Connexions, and the young people themselves – would make competing demands on the personal adviser, and that the strains of coping with these demands would result in regular conflicts, unanticipated crises and premature burnout (Watts, 2001b). Supervision could provide the support to enable personal advisers to avoid these traps.

This collection of essays identifies some options that are available and some issues that need to be addressed in developing robust supervision arrangements for Connexions. One of the potential strengths of the new service is that it aims to draw from, and where possible weld together, a range of professional traditions. Accordingly, the papers include contributions from social work (David Bucknall), schools (Kit Field & Chris Philpott), youth work (Janet Woods), counselling and psychotherapy (Helen Reynolds) and career guidance (Hazel Reid & Claire Nix). The papers illuminate both the common ground and the differences between these traditions: these are analysed by Andrew Edwards in his concluding paper.

The papers were prepared for, or stemmed from, two seminars held by the Centre for Career and Personal Development at Canterbury Christ Church University College in February and June 2001. The seminar stimulated lively debates. The papers are being published to sustain these debates and help to ensure that they are converted into effective action.

References

BENTLEY, T. and GURUMURTHY, R., (1999) *Destination Unknown: Engaging with the Problems of Marginalised Youth*, London, Demos.

COLLEY, H., (2001) *Righting rewriting of the myth of Mentor: a critical perspective on career guidance mentoring*. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(2), 177-197.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, (2000a) *Connexions: the Best Start in Life for Every Young Person*, London, DfEE.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, (2000b) *Connexions Service Planning Guidance*, London, DfEE (mimeo).

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS, (2001) *Connexions for All*, London, DfES.

NEWMAN, S., (2001) *A Connexions Service pilot: developing the personal adviser role and working with schools*, *Careers Education and Guidance*, Spring, 8-11.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT, (1999) *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training*, London, Stationery Office.

WATTS, A. G. (2001a) *Career guidance and social exclusion: a cautionary tale*, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(2), 157-176.

WATTS, A. G. (2001b) *Connexions: the role of the personal adviser in schools*, *Pastoral Care in Education* (in press).

Introduction

Andrew Edwards, Director, Centre for Career and Personal Development

This is the first Occasional Paper published by the Centre for Career and Personal Development (CCPD). This Centre was created in August 2000 as a result of the merger between the College of Guidance Studies (COGS) and Canterbury Christ Church University College. The CCPD is based in new purpose-built facilities at Salomons, which is the College's west Kent site near Tunbridge Wells.

The Centre held two seminars and a conference during its first year to promote dialogue around some of the important issues facing the new Connexions Service. The seminars brought together academics and experienced practitioners from the various sectors represented in this paper. The aim was intentional – to explore some of the key themes relevant to the emerging Connexions Service, and to draw upon the perspectives of contributors from related sectors as a means of informing the debate. This publication is a result of that process.

The challenge of providing effective supervision, mentoring and support to personal advisers has to be addressed by Connexions services. This paper suggests, that there is much that can be learned from the traditions and practices of allied professions, which also provide services to young people with challenging needs and circumstances. Connexions services therefore do not have to begin this process empty handed! We therefore hope that this material will help readers to formulate their own perspective on the 'support process' and how this should be applied in the Connexions context. It does not address every issue, or provide answers to every question, but it does provide the basis of a conceptual framework upon which to start the debate. To that end, we welcome feedback from readers as to how this paper helps them in this task.

Our particular thanks go to the Kent and Medway Connexions Service Interim Partnership Board, and the Careers Management Confederation for supporting this publication.

Chapter One

Supervision in Social Work - Messages for the Connexions Service

David Bucknall

Abstract

This paper considers the role played by social work supervisors in working with children and families. It highlights some of the challenges and difficulties supervisors face in working in the contemporary political and organisational environment and the problems which may arise. The paper develops an 'outcome focused approach' to supervision based on solution oriented practice as a way of responding to these challenges in a constructive way. Given the resonances between the role of social worker and that of Connexions personal adviser the paper focuses on issues which should be relevant for Connexions personal advisers in developing approaches to supervision including managing work, promoting effective outcomes and sustaining the worker.

Introduction

The profession of social work has a tradition of supervision both in the supervision of field social workers and in the supervision of trainee social workers undertaking the Diploma in Social Work. There is a helpful body of literature about all aspects of the supervisory process. (Kadushin 1985. Morrison T. 1994. Pritchard, J 1995. Hughes and Pengelly 1997). This paper will focus on supervision in the field of working with children and their families. It will highlight some of the roles supervisors play and discuss the demands and challenges which supervisors currently face in working with children and their families. As a tool in assisting in the process the paper will introduce an 'Outcome Focused' approach to supervision, based on solution oriented approaches to practice. Given the resonances between the role of social worker and the role of the personal adviser it is hoped that this will be a source of ideas and suggestions in developing supervision for personal advisers.

The current situation

In contemporary social work there is an expectation that all social workers will be supervised. Successive child protection inquiries have stressed the need for social workers to be supervised with a view to ensuring the quality of risk assessment and the associated decisions for children. The Department of Health Framework for Assessing Children in Need highlights the importance of supervision. (DOH 2000 p.85). Most Social Services Departments (SSD) have a 'supervision policy' and for example, in the case of the Kent SSD, this outlines the frequency and conduct of the supervisory process.

Supervision is usually provided by the social worker's line manager, although in some cases social workers will be supervised by a senior practitioner. Generally, supervision will take place on a 'one to one' basis with the line manager supervising several members of a social work team. Sometimes staff organise themselves to develop 'group supervision', however, this usually has the status of informal consultation and is a 'supplement' to individual supervision. Senior Staff will be supervised by their line managers and so on.

Supervision is a central component of social worker's training and student social workers are supervised while on placement by a specially trained and qualified practice

teacher whose role will be to supervise the work of the social worker and to make a formal assessment of their competence. (CCETSW 1996).

Most social workers appreciate and want good supervision. Effective supervisors are valued and remembered. The ideal of supervision is often not matched by the reality for many social workers. Supervision may take place on an irregular basis if it takes place at all and the quality of supervision may be variable or may not meet the worker's needs. There are often many competing demands on the time of senior staff and the reactive and crisis ridden culture of many short staffed social work offices militates against a culture of supervision and reflective practice. One of the factors that seems to be important in maintaining a structure of supervision is the development of a culture of supervision which maintains the priority given to supervision despite changes in staff over time and pressure of work.

Role and function of supervisors

Social work supervisors are expected to take on a number of roles and to manage a range of tasks as part of the supervision process. Some of these concern the management of the work while others focus on the support and development of the social worker. Management functions include, case planning and decision making, ensuring the Department's policies and procedures are carried out, making decisions concerning eligibility for services and resource allocation. The supervisor will also be expected to support and encourage the worker offering advice, guidance and helping the worker develop their skills; offering 'coaching' where appropriate.

Supervision may play an important role in 'performance review and appraisal' schemes where they exist. Where 'career progression' is linked to the development and assessment of competence, supervisors are likely to play an important part in recommending training.

Supervisors are expected to be able to manage these roles some of which involve potentially competing and sometimes conflicting demands and agendas; these include their responsibility for managing the overall workload of the team which may conflict with the worker's needs as an individual. The range of role expectations and demands necessitate good personal organisation including time management and the management of the process and content of the supervision session itself. Effective supervisors generally 'ground' the supervision in an 'agreement' which is negotiated with the supervisee. Many supervisors adopt a 'format' for the supervision session which is shared by the supervisee and this may include a routine agenda which allows for issues to be raised by the supervisor and by the supervisee. Decisions made during the sessions will be minuted and recorded on the case files. Issues affecting the supervisee will be recorded on the supervisee's file.

Challenges faced by supervisors and supervisees.

The statutory context of most social work with children and families places particular demands on supervisors and supervisees. The social work process is subject to the requirements of legislation, guidance and 'circulars' from central government through the Department of Health, and policies and procedures of the local authority through the Social Services Department. It is also influenced by research findings and publicity given to the social work profession through the child protection inquiries, many of which have taken place in public, following child deaths.

Consequently, social work has had to respond to many challenges and changes in the organisational, political and academic environment. These changes and developments have placed numerous and increasing demands and expectations on supervisors and have impacted on the structure and process of supervision.

Social workers in the 60's and 70's were challenged from within the profession (Wooton, B. 1960., Sinfield, A. 1970) and by academic commentators as being agents of social control. The psychodynamic theory base of social work which was prevalent was seen to facilitate this in that clients might be encouraged to tolerate inequality and material deprivation. At the same time social work practice was criticised as being 'vague', 'woolly', lacking in clear goals, with clients confused and not engaged in an active way with the process. At the same time 'behaviourists' (Sheldon, B. 1982) advocated behavioural methods in place of the psychodynamic theory and this contributed to task centred casework becoming the predominant fieldwork method.

Increasingly, social workers have been called to account for their practice. Maria Colwell's death in 1973 led to the increased priority given to child protection work and the call for social workers to be more accountable for their work including their mistakes. Child protection work has led to policies and procedures prescribing how work should be carried out. Successive inquiries have berated social workers and their supervisors for failing to follow the 'procedures'. Thus, accountability has become an increasing preoccupation for social work supervisors with the emphasis on the 'administrative' process including completion of forms and so on. For many this has led to 'defensive social work' in that 'We can't be criticised if we have carried out the procedures and completed the forms'.

Increasingly, social workers became 'functionaries' within the organization. As their professional autonomy has declined so has the gap between expectations of professional training and the day to day reality which social workers and their supervisors experience in the work place. Supervisors are seen as social work managers within the organisation mediating between the organisation's policies and limited resources and social workers trying to advocate for the clients in situations of scarce resources.

The organisational environment in which social workers practice is constantly changing with reorganisation following reorganisation. Generic community based social work has given way to specialist teams. Care management has been introduced with the consequent purchaser/provider division and changes in the role of social workers. There have been successive revisions of the child protection and children in need procedures. Management information systems have been introduced and revised. Forms have to be completed at every stage of the social work process

Recent research has challenged the bureaucratisation of social work and has stressed the need for social work to achieve better outcomes for children and families. 'Messages from Research' (DOH 1995) offered a critique to the orthodoxy of child protection work challenging social workers to work effectively with families and legitimising some of the traditional values and skills of social work. Most importantly it stressed the need to 'engage' families if effective outcomes for children are to be achieved.

The Audit Commission (1994) questioned whether Social Service Departments gave 'value for money' and stressed the need for more preventive services. Similarly, research into Looked After Children (DOH 1995) has highlighted the poor performance of local authorities in providing for the long term needs of the children in their care.

These developments have been associated with the 'refocusing debate' which encouraged social workers to develop 'evidence based' practice in order to achieve more effective outcomes for the children in need and for looked after children. Social workers are expected to be up to date on relevant research into outcomes and into the effectiveness of particular interventions and to incorporate this in their work. The

Department of Health Framework (DOH 2000) has introduced guidelines for assessing children and their families and is itself associated with procedures and prescribed forms.

The Quality Protects initiative set objectives and targets for local authority services (DOH 1998), and increasingly, central government funding has been targeted towards specific objectives and associated projects. These are subject to specific performance standards and outcomes.

Some local authorities have entered into Public Service Agreements with central government which offer the prospect of increased resources in response to the achievement of performance targets. (Kent SSD. 2001). These place social workers and their supervisors under pressure to achieve targets such as the reduction in the numbers of Looked After Children and increases in the numbers of children placed for adoption.

Supervisors and the supervisory process is seen as central to the process of achieving effective outcomes for children and families and for supporting and sustaining staff. They are responsible for ensuring that work is planned and that actions that have been agreed have been carried out and the work is 'on track'. At the same time there is an expectation that supervisors will make best use of the staff resources they have available and will play a role in developing their staff. Similarly, emphasis is now placed on engaging and empowering families in the process of change together with other agencies who might be able to provide resources and play a role in the change effort.

The best supervisors manage these demands effectively, maintaining a dual focus on 'good practice' and supporting and sustaining their staff. However, in the face of these demands there are dangers and supervision can degenerate in a number of ways; it may not happen on a regular basis, it may be cancelled in the face of other demands and commitments, such as the supervisor also being the 'duty senior', chairing a strategy meeting and so on. Sometimes the supervisor and supervisee tacitly 'collude' and agree that because of the experience of the supervisee they do not need regular supervision. This may lead to inadequate accountability and oversight of the work. A further danger is that supervision may be dominated by the manager's agendas leaving the supervisee feeling drained and exploited.

Supervision may be preoccupied with the latest crisis and become reactive, driven by short term decision making rather than by reflection. While the quality of decision making may suffer, some cases may be neglected only to become 'chronic' when a crisis emerges. The need to adhere to procedures or to comply with the demands of senior managers or the inspection and regulation process may detract from the focus on current work with clients.

What can help supervisors respond to these challenges in an effective way?

As this review suggests social work supervision exists in a 'turbulent' environment (Hughes and Pengelly, 1997) and supervisors face a significant challenge in providing regular and effective supervision which focuses on outcomes. The literature on supervision has often looked to the theoretical base of social work in developing approaches to supervision. This has led to the shift from a psychodynamic emphasis (Mattison 1975) to task centred supervision (Pettes.D 1980) and variations on this theme including a 'decision making approach'. (Gambrill and Stein, 1983). Since the late 1980's social workers in the UK have been introduced to the principles and methods of solution focused practice and this approach when applied to the supervisory process can provide a helpful framework for practice in meeting some of the challenges that have been outlined.

Solution oriented practice

Solution focused approaches to practice were developed by, among others, Steve de Schazer in the late 1970' and early 1980's. (de Schazer, 1985, 1988). Practitioners found out that in the context of therapy, brief interventions focused on solution finding rather than problem solving could be as effective as long term 'in depth' psychotherapy.

Solution focused approaches to practice are aimed at helping people find 'solutions' and achieve their goals in the quickest possible way. Practitioners do not assume that it is necessary to explore problems in detail or to analyse the 'cause' of problems in depth in order to find ways forward. Similarly, practitioners do not assume that solutions have to 'match' or 'fit' the problems being complained about. Solution oriented practice, however, is not 'problem phobic' and work may begin with an identified problem, if that is what the client brings to the work. Alternatively it may focus at the outset on the outcomes the client wants from the work. However, when the work begins, the aim will be to encourage clients to look towards the future and help them identify what they want to be 'different'.

Solution focused work builds on the core skills of building 'rapport' and listening to the client's 'story', however long it takes to tell. It is fundamental that the client feels listened to and that their problem or view of 'things' is respected and validated. The approach stresses the need to go slowly and work within the 'interactional framework' of client and worker. The work will not encourage 'problem saturated' 'stories and when the client is ready the worker will encourage the possibility of change and a different future.

A key assumption is that there will always be times when the problem is absent or when it less of a problem or different. Consideration of these times - *exceptions* - may help people to feel more optimistic about the 'possibility' of change and to identify things they might do or try to bring about change. An example of this might be a mother who finds her child impossible to control during term time but can recall times during the holiday when 'things' were different and they enjoyed time together.

Envisaging and describing in detail the 'desired future' can be used to help people sense the possibility of change and to develop and articulate 'useful goals'. It may also help people to explore what they are doing already that may help them achieve their goals.

Although, solution oriented work does not depend on 'goal setting' it is important in an activity such as statutory social work. Useful goals are described in positive, behavioural terms; they should be small, achievable, within the client's control. They must be meaningful for the client and described in terms of a 'next step'. The direction of change and movement towards the goal, however small, is emphasised as well as detailed description of what the client will be doing when the goal is achieved.

Solution focused work aims to build on people's existing strengths, things they are good at and the skills and competencies they already have. Work aims to build on what people are doing in the present (or past) that is helpful in relation to the future that they envisage. Similarly it may highlight what has already been tried and is seen not to be helpful in achieving the goals of the work. The 'problem is not the person' it is something the person wishes to be without.

Solution oriented work is rooted in the 'constructionist' tradition and gives particular importance to the 'knowledge' of the people involved and their 'frames of reference'. The worker's role is to *collaborate* with the client who is their *own best expert*. The worker acts as a facilitator or coach in helping build the client's motivation and explore new possibilities rather than being an expert in knowing what is best, giving advice and finding answers.

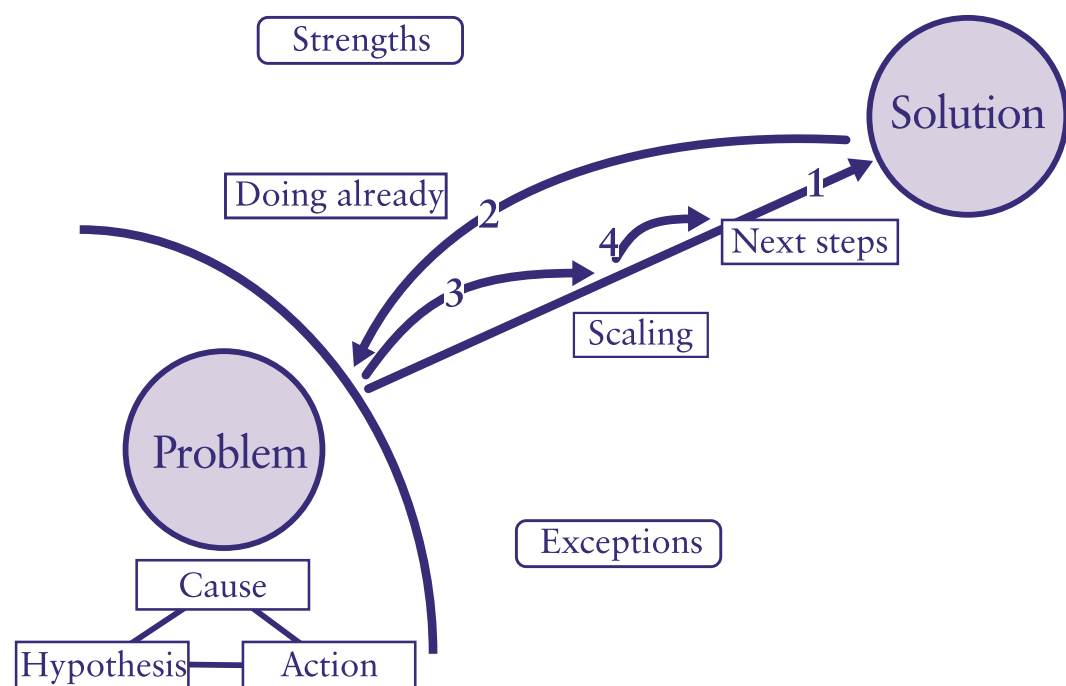
Solution oriented approaches emphasise the importance of language, and practitioners have developed a series of 'open' questions which encourage the client to develop detailed descriptions of the futures they envisage. These include future oriented questions such as the miracle question and questions searching for detailed description such as 'What would it look like...?'. 'What will you be doing when.....?'

Scaling questions is another useful tool in helping to generate information. 'On a scale 0-10 how difficult are things today?' 'What is the best they have ever been?' 'What number would make you feel that you had done enough?' The answers can be used to explore difference and to develop reflection and explicit description. Solution oriented practice *utilises difference* and asks questions which help people to *notice* the changes, for better or for worse, which can be used in helping people make choices. Similarly, *copying questions* can be used when progress has not been made to explore how people have coped or what they have been able to do to stop the situation becoming worse.

In this way solution oriented approaches can be used to encourage detailed descriptions of the goals and outcomes that people desire and to develop constructive conversations about progress, change, and how these goals are being achieved. This can help clients to 'reflect' on what they are doing or need to do that is helpful, and to take responsibility for changes in their lives. Figure 1.1 provides a diagrammatic summary of the process of solution focused work.

Figure 1.1

Problem to Solution



Outcome focused supervision

Solution oriented approaches to practice can readily be utilised in supervision. Supervision is aimed at helping workers achieve effective outcomes which benefit clients. The overriding concern is to help the supervisee promote effective work with families and help them meet the needs of their children. While the supervisee's role is to empower families in bringing about desired changes, the supervisor's role is to empower the worker and to help them see the possibilities for change and to develop ways forward in the context of clearly identified outcomes. Supervision may focus on the supervisee or on the clients or both and given the 'interactional' nature of the work, solution focused questions are helpful in linking different perspectives.

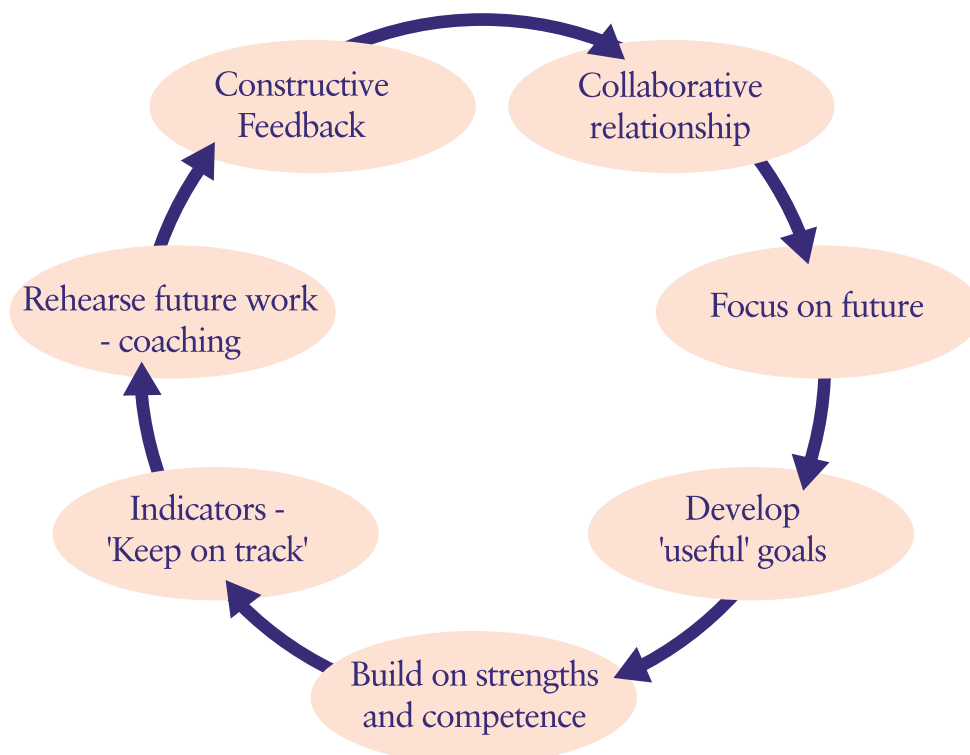
Given the dynamics of the supervisory relationship much of the commentary on solution focused work is relevant, for example, the attention given to language and the need to establish meanings and frames of reference of the supervisor and the supervisee. Solution focused work assumes that we all 'see the world' differently and it is important that supervisor and supervisee explore these perspectives and negotiate the goals they aspire to. The aim would be an *open relationship* in which language, expectations and ground rules are explored and common understandings developed. The relationship is viewed as a *collaborative relationship* aimed at helping the supervisee achieve identified goals to which both they and the supervisor are committed.

Outcome focused supervision focuses on defining and developing clear descriptions of desired outcomes and goals of the work. The 'end' of the work is 'mapped out' at the beginning of the work and clear descriptions and 'evidence' of the 'end' are developed so that workers and clients know where they are heading and when the 'end' has been reached. While this gives direction it also helps to focus work within a time scale, countering 'drift' and open ended work.

Focusing on *outcomes (solutions)* and on generating clear *descriptions* of outcomes i.e. when they will be achieved, helps the worker to keep focused on the outcomes of the work and provides a basis for planning the work and identifying 'next steps'. Clear descriptions of goals can be used to generate 'indicators' and this helps the supervisor and supervisee to review the progress of the work (or lack of it) and whether the work is 'on track'. The supervisor and the worker can decide whether 'corrective action' is needed and, if so, what action is required to make progress and to achieve the goals that have been identified. This will be particularly important in child protection cases where the needs of the child, including safety, represent the goals of the case. Having clear indicators can help the motivation of both worker and client in that they can see they are making progress towards the goal. Clear indicators will help decision making and discussion with the families and professionals alike. The process is summarised in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Outcome focused supervision



In the same way, the focus on solutions ensures that the process of supervision does not get bogged down in the analysis of problems and difficulties – ‘problem saturated’ supervision. A focus is maintained on planning outcomes and activities as well as moving work forward which is the essence of good practice and which helps to maintain the optimism of both supervisee and supervisor.

The process is aimed at *utilising* the *strengths* and personal resources of the supervisee together with any other resources that might be *utilised*, including resources of the family and other professionals. Just as solution focused work identifies *pathways* to goal achievement so this is a central process in supervision. The emphasis is on helping the supervisee develop effective ways of working and thus they will be viewed as ‘*experts*’ in what works for them, albeit within a framework of agreed *outcomes*.

Outcome focused supervision would adopt a *future focus*, *envisaging success* and ‘what it would look like’. It would help the worker plan the work and the actions they would need to take. This could form the basis for developing ‘action plans’ and reviewing progress. Envisaging and imagining times when the work is successful can be used to rehearse the actions the worker will be taking helping them to plan the work and to practice and develop their skills.

Part of the work will involve identifying *what is working* and *what is not* and this will help to develop more effective approaches in the work. The supervisory process is aimed at developing the skills of the supervisee and solution focused approaches have much to offer in terms of coaching and developing the competence of the supervisee. Solution oriented practitioners sometimes end sessions by taking a break from the session, thinking about what has gone on and reflecting on the constructive work the client has done. This is then feedback to the family or client in the form of a *compliment*, sometimes referred to as *constructive feedback*. This involves the worker reviewing and summarising some of the things that the worker has noticed that the client is doing that is helpful. This could be utilised in outcome focused supervision as a way of focusing the supervisee, promoting reflection and encouraging them in their work.

Given the ‘client centred’ nature of solution focused work ongoing *evaluation* and getting feedback from the service user is essential. Finding out whether they perceive the work as helpful and what they would like to be different is essential feedback for the worker. Similarly, in supervision evaluation of the supervisory process itself helps to ensure that the ‘supervision’ is ‘on track’ and provides feedback for the supervisor.

Scaling questions can be used in an infinite number of ways in supervision. The supervisee might be asked to scale the progress they had made since opening the case. They might be asked to scale where they would need to be to be close the case. Scales could be used to compare the worker’s enthusiasm for change relative to that of the client and so on. The scales could also be linked to behavioural descriptions to provide ‘objective’ measures of progress and this could be helpful in evaluating outcomes.

Many of the ideas and methods developed in solution focused work can be utilised in supervision. These include: searching for strengths, building on success, goal setting - including the qualities of ‘useful goals’, tackling ‘stuck’ work, future oriented questions and use of scaling questions and so on. While the ‘style’ will be adapted to the supervisory process the same principle will apply in that the supervisor has to find ways of ‘fitting’ with the style of the supervisee in order to be effective.

One of the reasons for calling this approach, outcome focused supervision is to distinguish the application of the approach from a therapeutic context. However, by its very nature and its associated value base, solution oriented approaches, when applied

to the context of supervision are unlikely to leave the worker feeling 'therapied' (Gardiner, D.1989). The questions encourage an open and shared agenda and it is likely that workers familiar with the approach, will be utilising it in their practice; consequently they will probably internalise the process and anticipate the questions. They will identify with the process and will not feel they are being manipulated. Perhaps they will respond in a similar way to an athlete responding to a coach in pursuit of common goals.

Solution oriented practice has had to be adapted to meet the circumstances of statutory social work. In child protection work many clients are mandated to work with the agency. The agency will have a particular view of the work the parents need to do in meeting the needs of the child. This may or may not be shared by the parent or carer. Solution oriented practice addresses these issues and has focused on the need to explore the client's goals and what they are a 'customer' for. There is much helpful literature on negotiating goals and building the client's motivation. (Turnell, A. & Edwards, S. 1999. Berg, I.K. & Kelly, S. 2001). The emphasis is on helping to find out ways of cooperating with the client rather than working to get the client to cooperate with the worker, albeit in relation to the goals of the work. While these ideas are helpful in helping workers work with clients who may not share the same motivation for the goals as the worker, they may also be helpful for the supervisor who may find their supervisee reluctant in a similar way. Again, personal advisers will be asked to focus on goals *for* their clients in much the same way and these ideas may be helpful.

In general, an outcome focused approach to supervision is an accountable, focused and realistic approach which, in that it maintains a focus on outcomes, avoids 'drift' and reactive decision making. By focusing on outcomes and exploring different ways of achieving them the process does not get bogged down in the lack of resources or services. A range of ideas and possibilities will always be generated when a focus is maintained on the desired outcomes. Focusing on outcomes also provides professionals from different fields with a 'common language' and should enhance and facilitate inter professional working.

As well as encouraging effective and reflective practice the approach provides an encouraging and 'supportive' framework for the worker which helps to achieve professional development and competence. Given the challenges which social workers face in contemporary practice outcome focused supervision provides a helpful way of avoiding some of the dangers and pitfalls which have been outlined. It can provide a framework for ensuring that procedures do not become 'ends in themselves'. It can help ensure that supervision maintains a focus on the outcomes of the work so that supervision does not become dominated by particular agendas be they those of the supervisor or supervisee.

While outcome focused supervision provides a framework which promotes and mirrors practice it should also generate a process which sustains and supports the worker in building on their strengths and developing their skills and capabilities. It builds on the core skills of the supervisor including the energy, interest and enthusiasm which they bring to the supervisee and the work. Given the role of personal advisers and the context in which the Connexions Service will develop, outcome focused practice should provide at least a source of ideas if not an approach to supervision.

Bibliography

Audit Commission, (1994) *Seen but not heard: Coordinating Community Health and Social Services for Children in Need*, HMSO, London.

- BERG, I. K. and Kelly, S., (2000) *Building Solutions in Child Protection*, Norton, London.
- CCETSW, (1996) *Assuring Quality for Practice Teaching-Rules and Requirements for the Practice Teaching Award*, CCETSW, London.
- Department of Health, (1995) *Looking After Children: Research into Practice*, HMSO, London.
- Department of Health, (1995) *Messages From Research*, HMSO, London.
- Department of Health, (1998) *Modernising Social Services*, HMSO, London.
- Department of Health, (2000) *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, HMSO, London.
- de SCHAZER, S., (1985) *Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy*, Norton, New York.
- de SCHAZER, S., (1988) *Clues: investigating solutions in brief therapy*, Norton, New York.
- GAMBRILL, E. and STEIN, T., (1983) *Supervision a Decision Making Approach*, Sage, California.
- GARDINER, D., (1989) *The Anatomy of Supervision: Developing Learning and professional competence for Social Work Students*, OU Press, Milton Keynes.
- HUGHES, L. and PENGELLY, P., (1997) *Staff supervision in a Turbulent Environment*, Jessica Kingsley, London.
- KADUSHIN, A., (1985) *Supervision in Social Work*, Columbia University, New York.
- Kent County Council, (2001) *Public Services Agreement*
- MATTINSON, J., (1975) *The Reflection Process in Supervision*, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London.
- MORRISON, T., (1994) *Staff Supervision in Social Care*, Longman, London.
- PETTES, D.E. (1980) *Staff and Student Supervision*, National Institute for Social Work, George Allen Unwin, London.
- PRITHCHARD, J. (Ed), (1995) *Good Practice in Supervision in Statutory and Voluntary Organisations*, Jessica Kingsley, London.
- SHELDON, B., (1982) *Behaviour Modification, Theory, Practice and Philosophy*, Tavistock, London.
- SINFIELD, A., (1970) *Which Way for Social Work?* In *The Fifth Social Service*, ed. TOWNSEND P., Fabian Society, London.
- TURNELL, A. and EDWARDS, S., (1999) *Signs of Safety: A Solution and Safety Oriented approach to Child Protection*, Norton, London.
- WOOTON, B., (1960) *Social Science and Social Pathology*, Allen and Unwin, London.

Chapter Two

Mentoring in Schools: From Support to Development

Kit Field and Chris Philpott

Abstract

In name, mentoring has been an accepted professional development activity in schools for almost ten years. It has however developed in many guises, and has, of course, existed under other labels. Mentoring in one form or another takes place with trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers, teachers new to schools, aspiring head teachers and ‘serving headteachers’. The writers provide a critical examination of the practice, noting different levels of mentoring, and differing practices according to the professional status of the mentee. This article provides a framework for the categorisation of mentoring activities in the form of a hierarchy. The writers argue that effective mentoring at any level in the hierarchy demands successful implementation of techniques and an associated climate of development at the lower levels.

Introduction

The concept of mentoring is commonly invoked in many areas of professional development. It can be found in industry and is most pervasive in education where, for example, student teachers are mentored by qualified teachers, new headteachers are mentored by their peers and pupils are mentored by ‘captains of the community’. The mentor has a special relationship with the mentee in which the former acts to facilitate the development of the latter.

The concept of the mentor is taken from the writings of Homer. Mentor was left to care for the various needs of the young Telemachus while his father Odysseus took part in the Trojan war. From this original story it is possible to draw out some important themes. Mentor’s actions were *intentional* and involved him in *nurturing* Telemachus. Mentor was chosen for this nurturing role because he had *wisdom* and the *skills* to pass this onto the boy. Furthermore, Odysseus expected Mentor to be *protective* and *supportive* of Telemachus. Our current concept of mentoring can be traced back to this relationship.

The concept was established within secondary teacher education after the government circular of 9/92 (DES 1992), which cast a model of ‘school based’ training into the statute books. Given that trainee teachers were to spend more and more time away from Higher Education Institutions (HEI), the school teacher was set to become ‘Mentor’. The idea that trainees could learn how to teach merely by school experience and an occasional chat about their practice was untenable. In order for the school experience to become a productive learning opportunity, mentors were required to take a pro-active stance in the development of the student teachers within their charge.

However, the concept of mentoring is problematic, not least because of the different definitions and interpretations of the type of relationship which should/could exist between mentor and mentee. This paper will attempt to draw out some wider professional conclusions about the mentor role based upon the experience of teacher education. As we shall see the role can be differentiated by:

- the types of relationship between a particular mentor and mentee, and
- the types of relationship across mentors and mentees in different professional circumstances.

Mentoring is thus a multi dimensional concept both within and between mentors.

We shall maintain that different types of mentor relationships are appropriate for different professional situations, and that the style of mentoring adopted should be fit for the purposes of professional development for which it is designed. For example, the type of

relationship required when the mentor role is to offer peer support to a mentee, is rather different from that in which she is required to make judgements of professional competence.

A Critique of Mentoring in Schools

Types of mentoring have not been prescribed, nor even described, but have emerged through an examination of practice in a range of situations. The concept of mentoring is, however, an outcome of a philosophical stance adopted in the field of teacher education (see, for example, The Hillgate Group 1989, Lawlor 1990). This reaction against a theoretical approach to teacher training promoted a school based model as opposed to one which consisted of heavy higher education input, covering the philosophy, sociology and history of education. This coincided with the alternative development of a competence based approach (see Burke 1990), backed by Government Circular 9/92 (DES 1992) which defined a set of criteria for successful teaching. The publication of competences, which subsequently became standards (DfEE, 1997), provided a yardstick against which teachers and education professionals are able to measure their performance, and also set themselves and others targets for future development.

The work of Donald Schon (1987) also placed the concept of reflection and the reflective practitioner on the map. Just as educationalists posited that teaching was best learnt by 'doing' (O'Hear, 1988), those who propagated 'reflection', advocated that teachers should develop personalised approaches through the consideration of their own and others' practice. (Stenhouse 1975).

From this background, emerged the concept of mentoring. It was argued that the mentor, an experienced and supportive teacher could nurture the professional development of novice teachers (Turner *et al* 1997). The role, crucially, involved the development of a positive working relationship, one in which the new teacher is guided through the micro-culture and procedures within a school. Mentors also offered themselves as models of good practice, or at least as living examples of teaching in action. The assumption was that the novice would learn from observation and working alongside the mentor. Turner *et al* (1997), amongst others, label this form of mentoring as 'sitting by Nellie'. Arthur *et al* (1997) liken the process to an apprenticeship.

However, teaching is more than a technical craft. As mentors become partners with HEI tutors in the training process, and as relationships between mentees and their mentors develop, a further dimension to the process evolves. (See Pachler and Field 2001) As trainee teachers ask questions, comment on what they have observed and evaluate experiences they inevitably begin to reflect. Beyond being a 'buddy', the mentor becomes a facilitator of reflection. The mentor stimulates and takes part in discussions of practice, suggests alternative strategies, recommends the observation of colleagues with particular expertises, encourages feedback and negotiates developmental targets. Pachler and Field (2001) note the almost organic development of the mentor, into what, for some has become a co-tutor role. Mentor and mentee reflect and enter the realm of theorising. Turner *et al* (1997) recognise this more developed form of mentoring as 'talking with Nellie'. Arthur *et al* label the model as 'discursive mentoring'.

As equal partners with HEI tutors in the training process, the practice of mentoring is scrutinised with equal rigour to that of tutoring. Indeed, Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) inspections judge the quality of the whole training process, not that of the different contributors in isolation from each other. It has become important, therefore that school based mentors and HEI tutors have been able to negotiate and develop complementary roles; to reduce duplication of work and effort, and secondly to ensure full coverage of the standards against which trainee teachers are assessed.

Mentoring trainee teachers has had to evolve in a way which accommodates ever changing and diversifying training programmes. Work based training, including School-

based Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Registered, Graduate and Overseas Trained training programmes, demand even fuller and more active mentor participation. The role of the mentor is still not prescribed, yet the mentor is held responsible for designing and overseeing a training programme which enables trainees to reflect upon and gain from development activities.

New teachers now enjoy a form of mentor support as part of the newly reintroduced and named 'induction year'. Indeed, the experienced teacher charged with the care and support of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) through the deployment of an induction programme, is no longer labelled a 'mentor'. S/he is now a school based 'Induction Tutor'. The role consists of negotiating development targets, supporting development experiences, enabling discussion and feedback, and finally assessment against the published National Standards for Qualified Teachers (TTA, 1998). Although the induction tutor does perform the role of introducing NQTs to staff, of guiding NQTs towards resources and equipment and of acting as a shoulder to cry on in times of stress and crisis, the concept of a 'Buddy mentor' is long gone. More serious responsibilities include assessment and appraisal roles.

The mentor to trainee and new teachers also carries a degree of responsibility, authority and power. Mentors of trainee teachers and Induction Tutors are central to the assessment process, and do make judgements and decisions regarding the competence and also professional values and attitudes of those in their charge.

Activities such as being observed, teaching collaboratively and observing the mentee are not simply opportunities to explore, experiment and evaluate; but also carry the responsibility of supervision and assessment. Mentors must supervise practice, thereby exercising a degree of power and control not always associated with the term 'mentor'.

Ironically, as Field and Philpott (1999) point out, the learning process between mentor and mentee is not one way traffic. Mentors, themselves, identify aspects of their own practice which improve as a direct and/or an indirect consequence of being a mentor. Assumptions are questioned, practice is related to alternative approaches and to theoretical models. Mentoring is seen by many as a professional development, and, indeed, even a school improvement activity.

The range of functions of mentors

Mentors of trainee and newly qualified teachers have, through necessity, developed a broad range of strategies and activities designed to support, nurture, develop and assess their mentees. There are other types of mentors in schools, often which presuppose a different interrelationship with mentees.

Professional support in many schools involves the attachment of teachers with co-workers – those who hold no authority or power in relation to those they mentor. A 'buddy mentor' is a colleague who acts as a critical friend – somebody with whom one can share ideas, experiment without fear of failure, and indeed, confide in at times of crisis or concern without fear of incrimination.

Experienced headteachers following the Learning Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) are encouraged to pair up with a mentor from the world of industry and/or fellow headteachers from other schools. New headteachers on the Headlamp programme are also encouraged to seek the support of a mentor from within the education system. The purpose is to share experiences, discuss views on management/leadership related issues and to broaden their perspective.

These intended outcomes mirror those of the system of 'Learning Mentors' and pupil mentors which are being developed as part of the 'Excellence in Cities' programme.

Pupils are assigned to adults who are charged with discussing and promoting effective learning. Adults from outside schools, and occasionally from within, act as ‘sounding boards’ and support for learners who may otherwise be faced with challenges and barriers to their learning.

One feature of an effective school is, according to Sammons *et al* (1995), on behalf of OfSTED, that the school is a learning organisation. Mentoring, in its broadest sense, is one means by which continuous learning and professional development can be achieved. In some ways, therefore, the concept of mentoring is a hybrid term. It encompasses support and supervision systems for pupils, trainee and newly qualified teachers, experienced teachers and headteachers. However, underpinning this concept are common understandings and purpose. Mentoring is about supporting, nurturing, supervising and assessing performance through a positive, intentional and professional, one to one relationship. To enable such a process to take place, practitioners have developed almost standardised activities which academics have analysed and begun to conceptualise. (see Field, 1999). These activities include:

- initiation – the provision and explanation of procedures and systems, including the introduction of the mentee to key personnel and the organisational culture of institutions. This involves the provision and explanation of staff handbooks and crucial policies and procedures.
- being observed – enabling mentees to watch and critique practice in a non-judgemental way. Mentors inevitably justify actions and practice as it is observed, and also exemplify the planning and evaluation practices associated with performance.
- Collaborative teaching/learning – planning and delivering lessons in collaboration to enable mentees to hone skills and techniques associated with particular activities in isolation. Collaborative teaching is structured in a way that responsibility for particular classes is passed over to the mentee in a step by step, and structured way.
- Supervision – the overseeing and assessment of performance, through focused observation and feedback*
- Reviewing and target setting – the negotiation of targets for future development, through a review of past and current performance. This includes the identification of strengths as well as the aspects in need of attention.*

(adapted from Field, 1999)

** These activities may be private and confidential to the mentor and mentees, or may feature as part of an open assessment system.*

Field (1998) notes that the responsibility for learning and development is shared, but the detachment and subsequent objectivity of the mentor’s perspective places the mentor in the driving seat. The mentor has the responsibility to identify ‘signs of readiness to progress’ (Field 1999) in order to lead the mentee to more independent practice.

Mentoring in schools is complex and complicated. It requires a sense of trust and mutual respect between mentor and mentee. Mentoring as professional supervision therefore needs to be carefully planned and structured.

A Hierarchy of Mentor Roles and Types

There are, therefore, many different aspects to the mentor role as exemplified by Homer, which have emerged through the implementation of schemes and the

evaluation of their effectiveness. There are also many different types of mentor who can have different functions. In all cases, however mentoring is about providing the mentee with the resources and motivation to lead his/her own development. Figure 1.1 presents mentor roles which relate to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, which in turn relate to the many dimensions of the mentor role. Maslow (1970) proposed the hierarchy to model the nature of motivation as a factor of human development and he suggests that unless needs at the lower levels are met then higher levels of learning and personal development are unlikely to follow. Thus someone who does not feel safe is unlikely to develop self esteem, understanding and knowledge. It is only when physiological needs are met that one feels psychologically stable and it is only when such psychological needs are met we are likely to learn and develop.

There are several important issues related to the hierarchy when considering mentoring as an engine for professional development.

1. In order for professionals to learn and develop within an institution they need to feel physiologically and psychologically 'welcome'. The 'lower' more fundamental needs are an essential platform for 'higher' development of skills and cognition.
2. The lower and more basic needs do not simply disappear as a result of the mentoring process; basic physiological and psychological needs are constantly present.
3. If a mentoring approach to professional development is adopted, how can this be organised against the hierarchy? Can one mentor work within all the levels with a mentee, or will different mentors work at different 'levels' i.e. different mentors for different purposes?
4. Mentors will usually fit into a wider context of support and/or professional development. For example, the local industrialist who mentors a year 11 pupil might be able to assume that certain layers of need are being addressed by a school, and that it is their role to help develop the self esteem of the pupil through encouragement and counselling.

What is the role of mentors in relation to the hierarchy? Firstly, an institution would need to be convinced that mentoring is useful to both their own needs and the needs of individuals in their charge requiring high level strategic decisions and direction. The questions should be asked: why do we want to employ a mentoring approach to professional development? Secondly, an institution would need to be sure about which levels in the hierarchy are best served by employing a mentoring system. For example, the question can be asked: do we service basic needs through mentors or all developmental needs? A response to a question of this type shifts the discussion to operational concerns. For example, an institution might set up 'buddy' mentors for their staff who nurture basic needs and leave other levels to a different system of professional development. In short it is essential that institutions and individuals understand why the mentoring is in place and what purpose it serves. Those institutions who wish to adopt mentoring as a major tool in professional development will need to ask themselves: how far do we want to go? Does the mentoring system stop at basic needs or do we expect our mentors to become critical and judgmental friends? If the latter vision is adopted it is important that all the implications of the hierarchy are understood. We are positing that there is a hierarchical relationship between the forms of mentoring, and consequently, for those wishing to establish a 'mentoring system', due consideration must be given to the prerequisites before the type of mentoring system envisaged is developed.

Figure 2.1

A Hierarchy of Mentor Roles and Types

| Maslow | Mentor type | Mentor role | Activities |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Understanding and knowledge | 'partner' in professional development, critical friend, making judgements and suggestions for development | Professional development | Reviewing and target setting through observation, modelling, feedback, discussion, collaborative teaching, joint development |
| Self-actualisation | 'appraiser' and facilitator of professional development – agenda set by mentee | | |
| Self-esteem | 'counsellor' who gives psychological support in relation to triumphs and tragedies | Psychological support | Supervision through regular meetings, support and feedback |
| Love and belonging | 'buddy', a friendly ear to question and to talk about hopes and frustrations | | |
| Safety | 'inductor' into Fire regulations, use and position of important equipment e.g. photocopier, basic procedures etc. | Induction into basic needs of the institution/scheme | Initiation through meetings, support and the provision of details pertaining to systems, procedures and resources |
| Physiological | 'instructor' into location of the key facilities such as toilets, food and refreshments etc. | | |

If a mentor is to be both 'buddy' and 'partner' in professional development this will involve them in friendly support and help with basic needs *as well as* making professional judgements about their mentee. For those in teacher education this can be a testing balance which on the one hand involves developing a supportive relationship and on the other making critical judgements backed by support. While 'splitting' the role might on the face of it seem sensible the best mentoring of student teachers in schools seems to happen when judgements are based on a trusting relationship. To 'parachute in' a mentor for the higher levels might seem to offer distance and objectivity, yet this could breed a sense of anxiety which negates work carried out where a 'buddy' mentor may have facilitated a smooth transition into an institution. Given that critical judgements are likely to impinge on any mentee's self esteem it could be argued that these judgements should always be made by those who are also able to support the psychological consequences for the mentee. This would seem to argue for a unified approach to the mentoring process. Again it must be emphasised that the needs of the institution and the needs of the individual ought to be served by any approach to mentoring adopted.

Conclusion

Mentoring has become an important concept in professional development in education. By way of summary here are some critical questions which an institution might ask itself before developing a system for mentoring:

- Why do we want to use mentoring as a tool for professional development?
- How far do we want our mentors and mentees to go in relation to the hierarchy?
- Do we want to employ different mentors for different 'levels' of professional development?
- Once set up, is there a common understanding of the concept amongst the participants?

- Are the mentor and mentee trained in relation to the physiological, psychological and professional development needs?
- Do mentors and mentees have time and resources? Is the process given status?
- Is there an agreed format for the process of mentoring e.g. meetings, observations, collaborations, target setting, feedback, recording of process?
- If the mentors are to have a judgmental role, do criteria for success exist?

These questions recognise the diversity and variety of the mentor concept yet also suggest that the role needs to be individually tailored for particular circumstances. There are few 'off the shelf' models which can be easily adopted because the process is potentially as complex as human relationships themselves. Finally, and as an illustration of this complexity, mentoring in teacher education is usually viewed as being mutually beneficial for mentees, mentors and schools alike. Field and Philpott (1999) suggest that mentors value their mentoring role as professional development for themselves. By rationalising and sharing their practice, they maintain that they become better teachers. However, it also seems clear that the 'higher' levels of the hierarchy offer more potential for mutual professional development than the lower levels.

While this paper has emphasised the role of the mentor, it is important that the concept is ultimately located in the context of an holistic model of professional development. At its best, mentoring is good professional development for pupils, students, trainees, staff, middle and senior management alike.

References

- ARTHUR, J. DAVISON, J. and MOSS, J., (1997) *Subject Mentoring etc*, London, Routledge.
- BURKE, J. (ed), (1990) *Competence Based Education and Training*, London, Falmer Press.
- DES, (1992) *Initial Teacher Training (Secondary Phase) Circular 9/92*, London, HMSO.
- DfEE, (1997) *High Status, High Quality Circular 10/97*, London, HMSO.
- DfEE, (1998) *Excellence in Cities*, London, DfEE.
- DfEE, (1998) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/a-z/EXCELLENCE%5FIN%5FCITIES.html>
- DfEE, (2001) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/headship>
- FIELD, K., (1999) *From Observation to Independence: Signs of readiness for further progression in Mentoring and Tutoring* 6.3, Trentham Books pp 49-59.
- FIELD, K. and PHILPOTT, C., (1998) *The Role of the HEI Tutor in Secondary PGCE Programmes in Mentoring and Tutoring* 6.1/2, Trentham Books pp 3-17.
- FIELD, K. and PHILPOTT, C., (1999) *The Impact of Hosting Student Teachers on School Effectiveness and School Improvement* in *Journal of In-Service Education*, Spring 2000 Vol 26 No. 1.
- HOMER, *The Odyssey*.
- LAWLOR, S., (1990) *Teachers Mistaught*, Centre for Policy Studies.

MASLOW, A. H., (1970) *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd edition, New York, Harper and Row.

O'HEAR, A., (1988) *Who teaches the Teachers?*, London, Social Affairs Unit.

PACHLER, N. and FIELD, K., (2001, forthcoming) *From Mentor to Co-tutor: redefining roles and responsibilities in Initial Teacher Education/Training in The Language Learning Journal*, Association of Language Learners, Rugby.

SAMMONS, P., HILLMAN, J. and MORTIMORE, P., (1995) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: A review of school effectiveness research for OfSTED*, London, OfSTED.

SCHON, D., (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

STENHOUSE, L., (1975) *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, London, Heinemann.

THE HILGATE GROUP, (1989) *Learning to Teach*, London, Claridge Press.

TTA, (1998) *National Standards for Qualified Teachers*, London, The Teacher Training Agency (TTA).

TURNER, T. with FIELD, K. and ARTHUR, J., (1997) *Working With Your Mentor* in CAPEL, S., LEASK, M. and TURNER, T. (eds), (1997) *Starting to Teach*, London, Routledge.

Chapter 3

Supervision from a Informal Education/Youth Work Perspective

Janet Woods

Abstract

This paper looks at the role that individual supervision plays in the professional support of informal and community educators and suggests that this form of support needs to be also offered to personal advisers. The values and principles that underpin the supervisory relationship are considered and the advantages of non-managerial versus managerial supervision. The writer advocates the use of group supervision as a means whereby personal advisers can collectively identify their values and professional frames of reference.

Supervision and the Informal Educator

I am using the word 'informal educator' rather than the more familiar title of 'youth worker' because the different title reflects more accurately the different environments where the work takes place. The informal educator works in a number of settings including, colleges, schools, streets and shopping centres, residential homes, young offenders units, outdoor centres as well as youth centres and clubs. They engage with young people on a voluntary basis and tend to work informally but can also use more formal methods.

Informal educators are expected to be able to work without resources other than themselves, and to use their abilities and skills to form relationships that make for human flourishing. They are often called to work with people at times of tension and vulnerability. They often have to work on their own, sometimes in isolated situations. They are expected to be able to take decisions that are underpinned by the values and aims of the work they are doing and to take responsibility for the work done.

The complex nature of each situation means that there are not always obvious solutions to problems and there is not always an opportunity to go away and think about what to do. The dynamics in having a conversation with a young person means that the informal educator has to make a decision of some sort, not least in deciding how to respond to what the young person is saying.

Donald Schon in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* describes the work of a professional person as demonstrating 'complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value-conflict'. (Schon 1995:39). This does seem to describe the work of those in 'people-related professions' including informal educators, social workers, health and careers guidance workers and personal advisers.

In looking at the work that is expected of a personal adviser, there is a potential for all those situations as identified by Schon. The personal adviser will be working primarily with young people and their parents and carers but they will also be working with a number of different agencies, which means other professionals. Each situation they are working in will be at least to some extent unique, with varying degrees of tension and vulnerability. The decisions they make are likely to have a profound influence on the lives of the young people they work with and they will be expected to deliver the goods! Working with these pressures will have an impact on the ability of the adviser to function effectively.

It is recognised that in order for professionals, working in these emotionally charged areas, to function effectively, they need to have good support. This support needs to be beyond the comforting phrases given out over the teacups and similar pats on the head. It means support that enables the professional space and time to reflect on the work they have done and to understand it more clearly. They need to recognise what they are trying to achieve, to understand those they are working with, to know themselves and their strengths and their weaknesses, their skills and abilities, and to be aware of their attitudes and values and how these affect those they come into contact with.

The Process of Supervision

Informal educators are offered this 'space and time to reflect' during supervision sessions. These are usually regular one to one sessions with another professional where the worker has the opportunity to discuss their work. The supervisor can be the worker's line manager and the process is then called 'managerial supervision'. Supervision can also be given by someone from outside the agency in the same or similar field and this is usually called 'non-managerial supervision'. The focus of supervision is on the work of the informal educator and the purpose is to enable the worker (or supervisee) to 'see more and to see it more accurately', and with this new understanding to become a more effective worker. (Christian and Kitto 1987:9).

The word 'reflect' is deliberately chosen and denotes a natural process that we all do either during an event or afterwards. It would be difficult for us to stop doing it. However the importance of looking back with a genuine need to see what had happened and to learn from it is also stressed in the diploma training course for a personal adviser. One of the objectives of the course is that the successful participant will acquire the ability to 'engage in reflective practice within the new role of personal adviser'. (Connexions 2000:10).

But 'reflect' is more than just a word to identify a method of thinking; it also demonstrates a particular type of thinking. Reflection implies a looking back, a revisiting of a situation. The purpose of supervision is for the worker to look again at areas of uncertainty or complexity in their work before deciding what action to take in the future. Workers need to identify as clearly as possible what the problem is before they can find a solution. Sometimes workers can come to supervision having identified the problem and looking for a solution. In some circumstances, for instance in matters that are of a practical nature, this might well be the right thing to do. However in matters relating to complex relationships between people or where the worker has doubts or is confused, it has been found useful to revisit the problem again. There is always something more to learn and if the problem can be properly identified then maybe the solution becomes easier to see.

Values and Principles

The supervisory process is similar to any activity in that the process will reflect the values and principles that underpin the activity. Supervision reflects the same values that inform the work of the informal educator with the young person. Both informal education and supervision are educative processes where the young person or the supervisee are seen as holistic beings with both achievements and problems and not as patients. The informal educator and supervisor are not seen primarily as having a therapeutic or counselling role although this is not to say that the processes or activity might not have a therapeutic effect.

Part of the role of the informal educator is to encourage the young person in the transition from child to adult, to recognise and use their own autonomy and authority in making choices and to take responsibility for them. Autonomy in the supervisory

process means both partners, the supervisee and the supervisor, using their own authority within their roles. As the focus is on the education and support of the worker, he or she will be responsible for choosing the piece of work that they want to discuss. It is also the worker's perception of the incident under scrutiny that is the starting point of the supervision process. It is how they saw the situation, what feelings they had, what actions they took and what motives they had for taking such actions that are significant. It is only by enabling the worker to reflect on the situation as they experienced it that they will be able to understand more fully what was happening. The supervisor 'works with the account of the events and not with events themselves'. (Christian and Kitto 1987:8).

This is not to say that the supervisor does not exercise his or her own autonomy. The supervisor does not merely reflect back to the supervisee what has been said but is an active participant in the process, thinking about what is being said and making choices about how to respond. The supervisor recognises the autonomy of the worker within the supervision relationship by not telling the worker what to do or by giving advice. But instead helps the worker to see clearly what the problem is and to identify the best solution for them, within each unique situation.

Another value that is also part of both the relationship between the informal educator and young person, and between the supervisor and supervisee is 'confidentiality'. This is more than just not gossiping about what happens within the relationships or keeping recordings safe or about the Data Protection Act. The origin of the word 'confidential' comes from the Latin *con fid* meaning 'with faith'. Relationships conducted 'with faith' imply that there are certain expectations about how both parties should behave. This is not to say that these expectations will always be met and they may have to be changed with experience. But in terms of the supervisory process for instance, the supervisee should be able to 'have faith' that the supervisor is committed to the process of supervision and is not doing it reluctantly because it is part of their job description or because it looks good on their CV. As Tash says, the supervisee should also 'have faith' that the supervisor will see them as a person of worth and significance not in terms of what they should be but in terms of the worker they are. (Tash 1967:155). The supervisor will also have expectations of the supervisee in terms of a willingness to be open and sharing about their work and coming prepared with material to sessions. It is only if both parties 'have faith' in the process and in each other that learning can take place. The supervisee should feel supported in their role by the supervisor and the supervisor should 'show that the questions that the worker has brought can be thought about, and maybe show ways in which they can be thought about' (Christian and Kitto 1987:7).

Managerial Supervision

The values and principles that inform both managerial and non-managerial supervision are the same. However in managerial supervision the manager has two roles, as supervisor and as manager with overall responsibility for the work of the supervisee. There can be tensions between these two roles. The worker/supervisee might see the supervisory relationship as being more about management control and that the manager thinks that 'getting the work done' is more important. But if the manager does see the growth and development of the worker as being vital to the effectiveness of the work, then managerial responsibility needs to be balanced in supervision with the educative and supportive elements. Any possible difficulties need to be acknowledged with honesty on both sides and the parameters thought through so that both parties can 'have faith' in the process.

Even if the line manager does all that is possible to hold to the values of the supervisory process and is 'sympathetic, understanding and helpful', the supervisee

may see things differently. If the worker is feeling 'tentative or inadequate' they may be reluctant to make themselves more 'vulnerable' to the line manager and are more likely to put up barriers to the process. If the line manager also has influence over promotion, increments or allocation of duties as is likely and the supervisee is at all ambitious then similarly they may protect themselves during supervision. (Tash 1967:162).

However helpful the supervisory relationship, it may still be impossible for the supervisee to talk to a managerial supervisor about the nature of the relationship between them. Even if the supervisee wants to talk about the relationship, it might be easier first to clarify what the problem is and how it might be broached with the line manager. This would need to be done with a non-managerial supervisor.

The same difficulties might also arise with personal advisers who wanted to explore with their manager their colleague/line manager relationships. To only have line management supervision would deprive the supervisee of the choice as to where they think it appropriate to take the issue. If a worker wanted to talk about a colleague it might also take a superhuman line manager to be able to detach themselves sufficiently from the matter being discussed to be able to see the situation from the supervisee's point of view. Knowing that colleagues may also see the situation somewhat differently might mean the line manager being caught up in feelings rather than being able to help the supervisee to think about the situation.

Some personal advisers therefore for similar reasons to informal educators might want access to non-managerial supervision. This is supported by a report published by the Institute of Career Guidance on '*Working with socially excluded and at risk young people*' (ICG, 2000), which looked at the support needed by the personal adviser. It concluded that support and supervision should be provided on a regular basis from someone external to the organisation. The research found that workers who received regular support and supervision were over three times less likely to take time off due to stress.

Group Supervision and the Personal Adviser

The emphasis so far in this paper has been about one to one supervision, a form of education that seems to best meet the individual needs of the worker. However group supervision may also be useful particularly in the somewhat diverse field of the personal adviser. Diverse because the role of the personal adviser is a new one and the principles and values are still to some extent unclear while the expectations of the role are high. People who have already been appointed as personal advisers come from a variety of backgrounds; the youth service, social work, careers service and the probation service etc. These professionals come from fields that have different values and frames of reference and may at least at the beginning, find it easier to operate within their known constructs. Even if they wanted to work differently, at the moment there is little empirical knowledge on which to build new ways of working.

Working in a changing and more complex world is of course not new. Increasing globalisation and expanding technology are changing economic structures and the way we work. The language and the processes of the business environment are being seen increasingly in the public service and people related professions. We work with people and organisations with different frameworks to ourselves and sometimes they are in conflict. These different frameworks are sometimes not easily accommodated and can challenge our values and principles. The Connexions training course refers to this diversity where the 'crosscutting role of personal advisers, drawing colleagues from a range of agencies together.... may challenge existing attitudes and assumptions'. (Connexions 2000:8). Barnett calls this the 'supercomplexity' of the work situation

where we work with 'a multitude of facts or ideas or possibilities...within a particular domain of activity or understanding', but says that this can lead to learning and development within the work place. (Barnett 1999:31/32). This is echoed by the Lincolnshire Connexions pilot scheme which has twenty six organisations involved in the partnership but it was found that 'working in multi-agency teams has been key to breaking down barriers of suspicion'. By working together they have not only learnt more about each other but also 'increased their understanding of how they can work in partnership to offer a better quality service to young people.' (*Personal Adviser*:10).

In the new world of the personal adviser there may well be different frames of reference but if the professionals are to be able to work together for the good of the young people these will have to be accommodated. These will need to be discussed and one way of identifying values and different frames of reference is through group supervision. This way of working enables concrete experiences to be studied and discussed by a group of colleagues.

Group supervision follows a similar practice to one to one supervision in that the focus is on a piece of work presented by a member of the group. The other members of the group work as supervisors to the presenter to identify more accurately what happened and to increase understanding. Although the presenter hopefully learns more about their practice, the group also learns more about the different values and principles that inform each other's work. They are able to identify common areas as well as differences and to draw together some collective understandings about their practice.

Students on a recent Supervision Studies course found that group supervision helped them to gain knowledge about the supervisory process and to increase their skills and their confidence. They found working in a group with similar fears and doubts gave them an opportunity to support each other in a direct and purposeful way. Similarly, over 30 years ago, a group of new supervisors met as a group to discuss their practice. They found that in the group they were learning much more quickly 'from several people about a variety of situations.... relating different knowledge and different aspects'. This was found to be a good opportunity to relate theory to practice and to also discuss the principles of professionalism like 'confidentiality, non-judgmentalism, self-determination or equality'. These principles 'were no longer seen as a set of absolutes, but they were understood as words which raised innumerable questions, and suggested difficult choices when applied to people with whom one was working.' (Tash 1967:172/173). In the training course for personal advisers the need to discuss practice as a group is emphasised. Part of the learning activities includes 'engaging in an action learning set with nine other learners to share ideas and explore best practice'. (*Connexions*:15). It would not mean a major change in focus for 'action learning set' to become 'group supervision'.

Through taking part in group supervision, either while in training or in work, the professionals involved in the role of personal advisers could come to some understanding about the theory and practice about their work. There might also be a reason to extend group supervision to include other professionals with whom the personal adviser comes into contact. An obvious group would be the teachers at a school or college where personal advisers were based. In this way different professionals working with the same young people could gain more understanding about how each works, and within the group give each other the recognition and support they need in their different roles.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of the work of an informal educator or a personal adviser both depend to a large extent on the nature of the relationship between them and the young

people they work with. The relationship will be informed by the values, principles, experience and ideas of the people involved. In order to help the young person flourish, both personal advisers and informal educators will need regular supervisory support in order to fully exercise their knowledge, attitudes and skills.

But in truth the ideas and images in men's (sic) minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them, and to these they all, universally, pay a ready submission. It is therefore of the highest concernment that great care should be taken of the understanding, to conduct it aright in the search of knowledge and in judgements it makes.

(Locke, J. cited in Dewey, J 1933:22)

References

BARNETT, R., (1999) *Learning to work and working to learn* in BOUD, D. & GARRICK, J. (Eds), *Understanding Learning at Work*, London, Routledge.

CHRISTIAN, C. & KITTO, J., (1987) *The Theory and Practice of Supervision*, London, YMCA, George Williams College.

CONNEXIONS, (2000) *Diploma for Personal Advisers: Programme Guide*, DfEE.

DEWEY, J., (1933) *How We Think*, Lexington, D C Heath and Company.

INSTITUTE OF CAREER GUIDANCE, (2000) *Working with socially excluded and 'at risk' young people: research into the need for, and appropriate form of, support and supervision for personal advisers working within the new Connexions support service*, Stourbridge, ICG.

Personal Adviser, Volume 2 Issue 2 March/April 2001.

SCHON, D. A., (1995) *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Aldershot, Arena.

TASH, J., (1967) *Supervision in Youth Work*, Reprinted 2000, London, YMCA, George Williams College.

Chapter Four

Supervision in counselling and psychotherapy: a critical space

Helen Reynolds

Abstract

This paper will look at some of the key functions and issues for supervision in psychotherapy and counselling. Its basic argument is that, fundamentally, supervision provides a critical space for thinking (Mollon in Shipton, 1997:24-34), which is non-judgmental and allows the therapist to be open about work with clients. It is also a space in which to be critical and creative. This view of supervision is particularly important because there are tensions about its main functions arising from managerial requirements and a regulatory ethos. If the overall purpose of supervision is to ensure that the client receives the best therapy, appropriate to his or her needs, this will only happen when the therapist is able to think about the client as a real individual rather than a stereotype; and to think and learn from, rather than be criticized for, their, that is the therapist's, own mistakes.

The first part of the paper considers some of the background issues and looks at some of the functions of supervision described in the literature: these, essentially, are monitoring, educating, and supporting. (Lawton and Feltham, 2000, Scaife, 2001).

The second part of the paper takes further the notion of supervision as a place for reflective, critical thinking, and considers what the real benefits of supervision are to the therapist, and, therefore, the client. It looks at how supervision can develop an attitude of curiosity in the therapist and provide an effective forum to contain the therapist's professional anxieties.

The words therapist and therapy are used throughout as generic terms for counsellor, psychotherapist, counselling and psychotherapy. The paper is informed by experiences of supervision within both psychoanalytical therapy training and post-registration contexts, as well as by a review of some of the (now extensive) literature on the subject. (for example, Lawton and Feltham (eds), 2000, Scaife, 2001 and Shipton, 1997).

Introduction

The contexts, client groups and modalities for psychotherapy and counselling have burgeoned over the last couple of decades. Teachers, social workers and nurses, for example have always used counselling skills but now companies have developed counselling services. This is linked in part to a work culture of targets and productivity, which recognizes that emotions and personal circumstances affect how we perform at work. In a sense, therefore, the provision of in-company counselling can be viewed quite cynically as a managerial strategy to improve production. Supervision can play an important part in helping the therapist to focus on the needs of the client without being sidetracked by the needs of the organization to have the client 'fit for work' in a relatively short time. In such a context too, supervision may be under pressure to 'deliver' an effective therapist who can 'deliver' an effective worker.

There are conflicts too within the public services. For example, in Health, Education and Social Services the individual therapist may be faced with a conflict between their professional motivation to help others, and the ethos of the employing organization, whose priorities are broader, and may include the retention of students on courses, or the reduction of waiting lists. (For a further discussion of this aspect see Scaife and Walsh in Scaife, 2001:30-5).

As the contexts for therapy have increased, so too have the types of therapy developed to meet different needs and budgetary requirements. Short-term treatment has become a major feature of work in primary health care and student services, for example. One of the major tasks of the therapist is to negotiate a treatment that is appropriate to the client **and** within budgetary requirements. This has led, in many cases, to the development of a more flexible approach to treatment patterns, for example; the client may have weekly, bi-weekly or monthly sessions. This means that the assessment of client needs and management of the waiting list are key features of the therapist's job. It also means that the therapist may be dealing with a large number of clients at the same time.

While the contexts for therapy have increased and the job of the therapist has become more accountable, in terms of budgetary as well as therapeutic outcomes, the broader context is more litigious. Students, clients and patients now have clear rights as outlined in organizational charters and policies. They may seek re-dress even in the courts in extreme cases.

Therefore, many therapists work with a broad range of clients and operate within a highly and publicly accountable framework. They have to balance the needs of the client with the resources available and the ethos of the employer. It would be easy to see therapy developing into a production line service (which would be the subject of another paper) and for the therapist to lose sight of the individual client, even to dislike them because they do not fit into the neat allocation of service resources. This is where supervision is important; it helps the therapist to retain a focus on the client, taking into account the frustrations and shortcomings of the therapist, and the working context, and enabling the therapist to remain 'interested' in, and able to work with, the client, in short, to think.

Supervision and its functions

There are many definitions of supervision in the literature, all of which refer to a professional relationship that aims to help the therapist and client achieve better client outcomes. For example Edwards (in Shipton, 1997:13) suggests that,

... the word supervision is generally used to describe the process by which a therapist or trainee receives support and guidance in order to ensure that the needs of the client are understood and responded to appropriately.

That being said, it should be noted that the very word 'supervision' is value-laden. Perhaps the first connotation is that of someone with authority over someone else at work, essentially an authoritarian role. Shipton (1997:1) adds a further dimension – that of an exceptionally clear sighted and omniscient, 'expert'.

But, the main aim of supervision is to provide a better service for the client (Scaife, 2001). How can supervision bring this about? Lawton and Feltham (2000: 1) propose three main functions for supervision: to monitor, to support and to facilitate the therapist's ongoing development. These functions imply three main roles for the supervisor; the roles of manager, counsellor and teacher. Inskipp and Proctor define a similar tripartite division (described in Scaife, 2001: 72-74). In their schema, supervision has three main functions, normative (to induct the therapist into the standards and culture of the profession), formative (to develop the therapist's skills, understanding and capacities) and restorative (to address the tensions of the work and enable the therapist to continue to work for the best interests of the client without succumbing to 'burnout').

The main functions of supervision can, therefore, be broadly summarized as:

- monitoring - control, standards, managerial;
- educational - theoretical and skills development; and
- supportive - development of personal understanding and processing the client's impact on the therapist.

The weight ascribed to each of these functions will reflect the values and needs of the professional context, the stage or needs of the therapist, and the orientation and professional role of the supervisor. It will also make a difference if the supervision is a mandatory requirement of the work.

The Monitoring Function

Supervision ensures that the work of the therapist is monitored in various ways. It has a 'gatekeeping' function for new therapists entering the profession as well as a place in quality assurance systems for qualified therapists. The supervisor has the task of inducting the trainee therapist into the norms and conventions of the respective discipline as well as the mores and norms of a particular environment. (Scaife, 2001:5,6).

The supervisor, whatever the setting, has some responsibility for client welfare (Scaife, 2001:72) and has to ensure that the therapist is practising in an ethical, safe, manner. Sometimes the supervisor may be the line manager and this can lead to conflict about how open the therapist can be about their mistakes. The monitoring function is a powerful, important one, not to be done with a heavy hand.

Feltham (1997:17) takes a hard look at the role of supervision and questions who it is really for. He conceptualizes it sociologically as a system set up to 'keep counsellors in order' and to impress 'on the public that serious steps are taken to monitor and preserve quality'. He questions its ability to do all it is required to do and asks for a re-evaluation of the way it is practiced. He questions the efficacy of mandatory supervision suggesting that this situation could potentially make it difficult for the therapist to be open about work and mistakes, because the way supervision is organized may remind the therapist of previous learning experiences, perhaps at school, when there was a premium on 'getting it right'.

How easily does a monitoring function sit alongside an educational one? There is potential for conflict between the two functions if supervision is established primarily as part of a quality assurance and assessment system. While these are not necessarily irreconcilable in a post-registration position, where other systems for quality assurance exist, the real issue is that, in order to learn and develop, the therapist must discuss, and not hide, misgivings and possible mistakes.

The Educational Function

A major task of supervision is to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the therapist, to enable them to function effectively with clients. Educational supervision is an essential component of both initial training and continuing professional development, although it should be noted that the therapist's need for supervision may change over time.

Although supervision is concerned with learning more about both client and therapist, the focus is on learning more about the client and what approaches and perspectives might help the therapist. It can involve learning more about the culture of the

therapist's working context, for example a G. P. surgery, in which it is important to appreciate how the health service operates and how such a surgery is located within that. Learning about the therapist is only in the cause of working more effectively with the client, and will be covered later in this paper.

Lawton and Feltham (2000:6) outline the value of supervision for trainees and beginners:

Supervision is probably the main place where, real, vivid learning and discovery happens: where theory and reality meet in the challenge of actual clients and the idiosyncratic demands they make on counsellors. The opportunity and the need to debrief, discuss and reflect on and anticipate next steps in clinical work are usually keenly appreciated.

Together, supervisor and therapist can consider which theoretical perspectives could be useful in relation to a particular client. The therapist can learn to be more flexible in their theoretical standpoint, to use different approaches with different clients, while adhering to core principles of practice such as the appropriate use of empathy, the development of a working alliance and the maintenance of boundaries. These discussions help the therapist to feel more confident in the quality of their work because they gain a more objective perspective towards the client. Crucially, this objectivity has to be very 'human'; it does not simply detach the therapist from the client by providing a 'label' for him or her.

Much of the above discussion is valid for inexperienced and experienced therapists alike. However, needs for supervision may alter over time. There are many ways of undertaking continuing professional development (see Feltham, 2000: 15,16 for a full discussion) in counselling and psychotherapy. Experienced therapists may prefer to use the word consultancy to describe the process of meeting with a peer to discuss casework, gain ideas and ensure that they are maintaining an appropriate professional 'stance'. Peers may meet in pairs or local groups. Attendance on courses, self-evaluation, quality assurance, are all possibilities. For counsellors operating under British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) regulations, ongoing supervision is mandatory whatever their stage of development.

Barbara Lawton (Lawton and Feltham, 2000:28) has researched into how a number of established counsellors working in colleges of further education organized and experienced their supervision arrangements. She wanted to examine the function of supervision where the qualifications and experience of the supervisor and the supervisee were equal. Do experienced counsellors really need supervision? Their professional association, the Association of University and College Counsellors, had recommended external rather than work-based supervision. In practice, although the counsellors valued supervision, they often felt that they had to minimize the amount of time it took, partly because of their busy professional lives, and partly because of what they perceived as a 'hostile attitude' on the part of their managers in the colleges who could not understand why 'qualified and experienced practitioners needed expensive external consultation.' (2000:28). The recommendations emanating from Lawton's research include the need for counsellors to be educated in their own role in supervision and the need for employers to be educated about the nature and necessity for supervision. She also implies the need to use a different term because of the 'unfortunate connotations' of the word 'supervision'.

The Supportive Function

Supervision helps the therapist to understand, and use therapeutically, his or her own reactions to clients. It helps the therapist to process and, come to terms with, some of

the distress they encounter with clients. It emphasizes the human, not superhuman, nature of therapeutic work.

Scaife (2001:12) argues for a broad definition of learning within supervision. This includes personal learning about the therapist's emotions at work - in order to help the client rather than to provide therapy for the therapist. While the therapist's reaction to the client is fundamental in terms of helping the therapist to understand the client, there are times when the feelings evoked in the therapist are primarily to do with their own histories. For example, some therapists may not feel competent to work with clients with eating disorders if that has been an issue for them. In such situations, the important principle is for the therapist to acknowledge these responses and think critically with the supervisor about them. This helps the therapist to regain a more empathically neutral response to the client; occasionally the therapist may seek particular support from their own therapy if the issue is very troubling; in some circumstances the therapist may refer the client to a colleague.

Client needs can only be met by help from a 'well-enough' functioning therapist who is aware, or capable of becoming aware, of his or her own 'weaknesses' or tendencies. Supervision must enable the therapist to use their feelings to understand and help the client. On occasion, when a therapist concentrates only on the client's problems, this can be a way of avoiding their own uncertainties, prejudices etc. It can be more comfortable to learn about the emotions of the client than those of the therapist.

How supervision can help the therapist

Supervision has three main functions, as discussed above. For the therapist it can be reassuring to be monitored, to know that one's work is 'checked' by someone else; it is stimulating to learn in supervision; and it is encouraging to know that there is someone else with whom to discuss disturbing issues. However, there are also contradictions and tensions within and between the functions. While this next section will look further at these tensions it will focus primarily on the benefits of supervision for the therapist, and, therefore the client.

Therapy is based around the thoughts and feelings of client and therapist (and supervisor). Supervision provides the neutral 'space for thinking', (Mollon, in Shipton, 1997), about both aspects, which enables the therapist to consider what the client has said and how they said it, in a thoughtful way; and to stand back and appreciate issues and meanings that had not been obvious in the session, to digest and 'metabolize' how the client seemed in the session and the therapist's reaction to that. This is essential for the therapist because 'effective' therapy requires the therapist to maintain a fine balance between empathically understanding the client in their situation, becoming absorbed in the client's world, and distancing themselves from the client in order to think.

The therapist needs to be able to engage with the client, and this requires a 'safe' framework. In a sense, these are the 'boundaries', provided largely by the therapist, but affected by the environment. To provide boundaries, the therapist must also feel 'safe'. For real engagement with the client, the therapist must be able to steer a course between over-involvement with the client and over-rational, distant interpretation. Supervision, as a space for thinking, provides two crucial elements, which help the therapist to manage this balance, and, therefore, to feel 'safe' themselves, and to practice safely. It develops an attitude of curiosity and provides containment for the therapist's professional anxieties. These are common ground between therapy and supervision: they are both familiar concepts to the therapist in their own work with clients, and build well on the educational and supportive functions of supervision outlined earlier.

Curiosity

Good supervision fosters an attitude of appropriate, not intrusive or prurient, curiosity in the therapist that allows the therapist to think about the client as an individual for whom experiences and feelings have particular meanings. The therapist does not know what these are until they have been ‘explored’ with the client. Supervision encourages this attitude of openness to the meanings that clients ascribe to events that the therapist would perhaps see differently. This means that the therapist as a person and as a professional is brought into the equation so that their views, in terms of their values and how they see themselves, may well be challenged.

Although supervision is not therapy for the therapist, there are a number of parallels between the work of the therapist with the client and the work of the supervisor with the therapist. For example, one of the main tasks of the therapist is to build a therapeutic or working alliance with the client, to enable the client to be an active participant in the therapy, to gain an understanding of themselves, their situation and of how, and if, to change. Similarly, the supervisor and therapist need a working alliance to enable the two of them to work on issues together. While therapists have ‘hunches’ and sense where a client may be going, the important task is to understand **with** the client. Similarly, supervisor and therapist have to work towards a joint understanding. ‘Mistakes’ or misunderstandings by either supervisor or therapist can then be used to achieve a better understanding. Supervision, by fostering an attitude of ‘curiosity’ in all concerned (client, therapist and supervisor), helps the therapist to move beyond their own ‘blocks’, for example, irritation with a client, for not making ‘progress’, or a sense of inadequacy with themselves. It is easier, potentially, for the therapist to be open about their work and to discuss their ‘mistakes’ and misgivings as issues to be ‘interested in’.

Importantly, an attitude of curiosity helps to keep the therapeutic work ‘alive’ and to keep the therapist motivated, particularly at difficult stages of the therapy, or when the work environment also proves challenging.

Containment

The distinguished psychotherapist Michael Balint commented, ‘working with disturbance is disturbing’. From this we might infer that the therapist would benefit from having somewhere to deal with their appropriate disturbance and, in the first instance, that place is supervision. In the longer term the therapist can process much through ‘self-supervision’ as well as other development activities. One of the real strengths of supervision is that it can provide a situation that helps to ‘contain’ anxieties and uncertainties in the therapist, particularly in the early stages of their professional practice.

The relationship between the supervisor and therapist is important in creating such an environment. If the therapist distrusts the supervisor or feels criticized in a negative way, supervision is likely to be a stilted, unproductive process that will be of little benefit to the client. The therapist may feel alone with their clinical work and unable to think critically about it.

As Mollon (in Shipton, 1997:30) points out, anxiety interferes with true reflective thinking. Therefore, the supervisor should aim to provide an environment in which the therapist feels ‘safe’ enough, not necessarily comfortable, to be honest about their work and to reflect openly and critically on it. As discussed in the section on monitoring earlier, this requirement to be open can sometimes be difficult for trainees, or other therapists, who prefer not to reveal their doubts, and possible mistakes, to a supervisor who may also be an assessor, and therefore, seen as the arbiter of the therapist’s success or continued employment. Yet, to be an effective therapist, it is essential to be able to

be open, so a negative monitoring function may defeat the purpose of supervision – which is better therapy for the client.

Scaife and Walsh (Scaife, 2001: 30-51) deal with this problem by locating supervision within a particular culture of learning in which the emphasis is on learning rather than negative evaluation. The supervisor must be interested in ‘facilitating learning’, which includes learning about and from the therapist’s feelings. They argue that this learning forms part of the personal and professional development of the therapist and identify the following three aspects that could legitimately provide a focus for personal and professional development, and therefore, supervision:

- acknowledging the personal impact of work with clients;
- acknowledging the influence of events outside work on work with clients;
- acknowledging the influence of personal life history, values, beliefs and personal characteristics on work with clients.

If these are recognized as legitimate subjects for supervision the therapist can be open about the feelings the client evokes, such as anger, inadequacy, or boredom. An exploration of these emotions can help the therapist both to understand their feelings and use them to understand the client. This is a broad ‘curriculum’ for supervision.

However, where the supervisor advocates the attitude of curiosity discussed earlier, supervision can provide this ‘containing’ framework for this broad learning. It can establish a professional relationship that acknowledges, and can deal with, anxiety (as well as other emotions) not as problems but as a ubiquitous characteristic of human interaction. The therapist can use supervision to think, with the supervisor, about, for example, very distressing stories told by clients, and to explore the fear and anxiety that they may have created in the therapist. This can serve to contain them, to process them into a more manageable format. The therapist feels more able to work with the client because supervision has helped them to process, understand, the client’s ‘stories’ better, not because the therapist has unburdened himself or herself to the supervisor.

Conclusion

It is helpful to identify the functions supervision can perform; monitoring, educating and supporting are discussed in this paper. However, from the therapist’s point of view, they can also be re-configured within the context of supervision providing a unique and critical place to think. Such thinking is encouraged by an attitude of curiosity being allowed to develop in a contained environment, and mitigates any negative effect of the monitoring function.

References

- BALINT, E., COURTENAY, M., ELDER, A., HULL, S. and JULIAN, P. (1993) *The doctor, the patient and the group – Balint revisited*, London, Routledge.
- BION, W. R. D. (1967) *A theory of thinking*, in *Melanie Klein Today – Developments in theory and practice*, Volume 1: *Mainly theory*, London, Routledge Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1994.
- CASEMENT, P. (1991) *Further Learning from the Patient – the analytic space and process*, London, Routledge.
- COWIE, H. and PECHEREK, H., (1994) *Counselling – Approaches and Issues in Education*, London, David Fulton.

- DRYDEN, W. and THORNE, B., (1998) *Training and Supervision for Counselling in Action*, London, Sage.
- FELTHAM, C. and DRYDEN, W., (1994) *Developing Counselling Supervision*, London, Sage.
- HAWKINS, P. and SHOHET, R., (1989) *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- HOLLOWAY, E. and CARROLL, C. (Eds), (1999) *Training Counselling Supervisors*, London, Sage.
- HOLMES, J., (1993) *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory*, London, Routledge.
- HORVATH, A. O. and GREENBERG, G. S. (eds), (1994) *The Working Alliance: Theory, practice and research*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- LANGS, R., (1994) *Doing Supervision and Being Supervised*, London, Karnac Books.
- KING, G., (1999) *Counselling Skills for Teachers – talking matters*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- LAWTON, B. and FELTHAM, C., (2000) *Taking Supervision Forward – Enquiries and Trends in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, London, Sage.
- PALMER, S., DAINOW, S. and MILNER, P., (1996) *Counselling: The BAC counselling Reader*, London, Sage.
- SALZBERGER-WITTENBERG, I., HENRY, G. and OSBORNE, E., (1983 1992) *The Emotional Experience of Learning and Teaching*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- SCAIFE, J., (2001) *Supervision in the Mental Health Professions – A Practitioner's Guide*, Hove, Brunner-Routledge.
- SHIPTON, G. (Ed), (1997) *Supervision of Psychotherapy and Counselling – Making a place to think*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- WINNICOTT, D. W., (1949) *Hate in the countertransference*, International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 30: 67-74.

Chapter Five

Support & Supervision for Guidance Practitioners in a Personal Adviser Role

Hazel L Reid and Claire Nix

Abstract

This paper will consider the issues relating to support and supervision that arise from the on-going professional training and development of guidance professionals. It will begin by reviewing the traditional role of supervision in training for guidance workers. Ethical issues related to professional boundaries will then be discussed, leading to an exploration of supervision as part of the training of personal advisers. The paper also contains an extended case study which highlights some of the concerns emerging from practice within a specific group of careers companies.

The traditional role of supervision in training for guidance workers

Supervision for those **in training** as guidance professionals/careers advisers is customary. In the “probationary” period the predominate method is managerial in character, linked to standards and national qualifications in a target-driven environment. In some cases organisations have provided mentor support and the opportunity for peer group observation. However, beyond the probationary period careers advisers have developed their own styles of working and, in the past, supervision opportunities to reflect on practice were not extensive. Most careers service organisations are now accredited as Investors in People and staff appraisal practices are in use, where experienced advisers can receive developmental feedback on their work, but a line manager often gives this. Peer review, which is less common, is not always a comfortable situation for guidance professionals. The lack of an established supervisory framework, or contract, causes confusion about the role of evaluating a colleague’s approach, which, having developed over time may make evaluation difficult. This lack of an established framework can cause role conflict, and clearly there are contractual issues here that need to be addressed.

Jenny Bimrose and Sally Wilden identified these concerns in 1994 when the careers service in England was, then as now, undergoing significant change. They argued for the development of ongoing supervisory practice to counter performance fatigue and to develop critical self-reflection (Bimrose & Wilden, 1994), which was admittedly ambitious at the time when top-down policy imperatives on managers and practitioners constrained opportunities for reflective practice. However, the current development of the personal adviser role and an emphasis on evidence-based practice now makes support and supervision a necessity not a luxury.

Ethical issues related to professional boundaries

Research undertaken by Sue Hulbert for the Institute of Career Guidance, recommends that, “An appropriate professional body should develop a code of ethics for personal advisers.” (Hulbert, 2000:16). This is an essential but a huge task – but are we referring to a new professional body, a merging of professional bodies, or an existing professional body? Of course, a code of ethical practice for members of the Institute of Career Guidance already exists (ICG, undated), but the Connexions Service National Unit may take responsibility for the development of a code of practice for personal adviser work. A pre-Connexions issue for the profession is the existing number of professional bodies that represent guidance workers; making claims for chartered status from any one institution, open to challenge. Added to this membership of a professional body is not compulsory in order to practice.

In the meantime, personal advisers and their managers are operating in new and challenging circumstances and are coping with a number of highly significant role changes. They are working across professional boundaries, and, wishful thinking, which ignores ethical issues about the effectiveness of a boundary-less profession, is hardly likely to serve the best interests of the young people concerned. Why have codes of professional conduct and occupational standards? Are they to protect the client or the practitioner, or both? In developing that code of practice the boundaries between information, advice, guidance and counselling will need to be clarified. It is recognised that before those “at risk” can begin to work towards decisions about education, training and employment, their personal and social issues have to be addressed. This is likely to involve counselling and, whilst many guidance practitioners have counselling skills they are not qualified to counsel clients. Clearly the development of the right level and range of skills is a specific training issue for both experienced guidance professionals and others who train as personal advisers.

The immediate answer to ethical issues about the limits of expertise is to refer to a specialist – but how does a personal adviser make this decision – and at what point if they are to build a meaningful and continuing relationship with the young person? Those giving in-depth specialist support when dealing with concerns relating to health, housing, substance use, dealing with the criminal justice system or dealing with the effects of a dysfunctional family life, clearly need support and supervision. Where personal advisers are working with challenging clients in complex situations – support and supervision and continuous training seems essential.

Support and supervision for the personal adviser can offer education, support and a means of managing quality and resources. (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989). Careers professionals will learn much from colleagues familiar with models of support and supervision, although even in the professions where support and supervision is well established McLeod tells us:

The development of theory and research into the practice of counselling and psychotherapy has not been matched by equivalent critical attention to the problems of training and supervision.

(McLeod 1998:347).

In the counselling and psychotherapy sector where support and supervision is an essential and established practice, supervision is described as “in its adolescence” (Inskipp, 1996:279) – implying a difficult age with unsettled definitions! It is important to recognise that for many guidance practitioners this transition to new roles will be a challenging experience. Support and supervision is not merely the provision of “comfort” in difficult situations, as part of its purpose is to enable practitioners to critically reflect on their expertise and effectiveness.

Supervision as part of the training of personal advisers

Although there is still some debate about the precise role of personal advisers, the need for the development of a model of support and supervision for careers specialists working with “difficult to help” young people is being explored. Hubert concludes that personal advisers,

...need appropriate support/supervision in order to enhance their competence and to effectively recognise and manage the emotional impact of their work in order to reduce stress and prevent ‘burnout’.

(Hulbert, 2000:15).

She also suggests that the costs of providing a system of support and supervision can be offset against staffing costs related to absence, due to stress related health problems and likely staff retention problems.

However, when discussing a process for support and supervision it is important to make the distinction between trainee personal advisers and experienced guidance professionals taking up the role of personal adviser. Clearly their needs and the need of the profession in relation to supervision for both groups will differ. However, this becomes less straightforward when discussing a changing role for existing practitioners that requires the radical development of new skills and new learning (for an additional qualification) in a changing work context. Unless experienced within an alternative or previous work role, all career guidance workers, whether experienced or recently trained, are new to the models of support and supervision currently being explored.

In all situations however, the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee is key. The British Association of Counselling (now “& Psychotherapy”, BACP) states, “The counselling supervisor role should be independent of the line manager role.” (BAC, 1992:para.B3.3). Although managerial supervision is a legitimate form of work management, when a manager has the power to influence the progression and promotion of the supervisee, this dual role is likely to have some influence over what is discussed and achieved. This difference in status may be overcome if acknowledged as part of the supervisory contract, but its influence is often underestimated. (Scaife, 2001).

So, in developing a process for support and supervision a number of founding principles need to be agreed in the contractual relationship before thinking about what topics can be brought to supervision. A balance needs to be struck here between a practice that allows the supervisee to decide what the issues are **for them** that need exploration, and the need for some focus in the supervisory relationship. That said, in initial training and ongoing practice the following **may** be appropriate issues for the personal adviser in supervision:

- their understanding of the client – their needs, issues to be addressed
- the feelings they have in reaction to the client – the social context of the client may be very different from the personal adviser who may hold opposing values/ beliefs
- the suitability of different methods of intervention
- the boundaries of practice and the limits of expertise
- the appropriateness of particular referrals and techniques for achieving continuity with clients.

It needs to be recognised that much of this new work will be with clients who may have a low commitment to change causing high levels of frustration for the practitioner. A real issue for supervision here would be clarification of where the responsibility lies for the motivation of the client and of the supervisee to continue with the work. Although the practitioner must act in an ethical manner within professional guidelines, in the end whether or not the client responds to intervention is up to them!

Should the supervisee, particularly in practice rather than in training, have the freedom to choose an appropriate supervisor? Given choice, might this lead to selection of the familiar rather than the challenge of supervision with a practitioner from a different approach (Scaife, 2001)? In discussing role conflict, Scaife argues that,

...people tend to be reluctant to acknowledge the potential difficulties that can arise when friendships and formal work relationships coincide.

(2001:13).

It is also worth remembering that although it is the work of the supervisee that is being supervised, the feelings of the supervisee in regard to that work can be regarded as a legitimate focus of supervision. Part of a contractual agreement in supervision may be this negotiation of issues to be discussed, as it is important that the supervisor does not stray into counselling the supervisee. In other words, there needs to be recognition of other sources of support for personal issues. Scaife makes a useful distinction here, she views therapy as having a “focus on learning for life” and supervision having a “focus on learning for work.” (2001:11). McLeod, considering the supervisory relationship, also comments,

To undertake this kind of open exploration of self in relation to the client requires the same degree of emotional safety and the same ‘core conditions’ that are offered to clients.

(1998:373).

If the conditions are right then ongoing supervision and regular consultations with other practitioners can form a major part of continuing professional development. However, there are a number of issues that would need to be addressed when support and supervision becomes a part of the training of personal advisers. Borrowing from Inskipp, who identified such issues in relation to trainee counsellors (1996:277), concerns for the personal adviser role could be:

- **Who should supervise?** On the course, should trainees be supervised by tutors or by externally contracted supervisors? On placement, if the placement employer has a stake in the future of the student, how can this meet (for example) BACP recommendations?
- **Assessment for qualification.** Should supervision, as a way of monitoring the ongoing development of competence and the “gateway” to the profession, be part of assessment? Does this then become something that is done to supervisees (creating a passive response) rather than something that is consultative? How will external assessors/supervisors make judgements unless there are shared standards? Will this involve, for example, an NVQ framework for supervision? Will this be too rigid?
- **Integrative courses.** If the initial and ongoing training for personal advisers is to integrate a range of professional expertise, where will the supervisors (who must be experienced) come from? Can this role only be undertaken by external practitioners who have an in-depth knowledge of the content of the new role and its training courses? Will there be issues around the model of intervention used if supervisor and supervisee are working from different theoretical backgrounds?
- **Training of supervisors.** How will supervisors be trained? How will standards be adopted to ensure quality? Does this change the nature of supervision from a largely private activity to one that seeks to meet functional and managerial outcomes? Supervisors have a responsibility towards clients as well as supervisees, they cannot ignore issues which may result in “client harm” or litigation – how will the boundaries, which may conflict, be defined?

Do these points suggest the development of supervision for the personal adviser role as a discipline in its own right (Inskipp, 1996)? If the personal adviser is to develop some expertise across a range of disciplines and be closely involved in the lives of their

clients, then a model for support and supervision appears to be a key area where “evidence based research into what works” is needed.

Evidence based practice: the need for support and supervision

Support and supervision is however, one of a number of development issues facing careers guidance and personal advice workers and their employers. As mentioned earlier, we have yet to establish a clear and shared understanding of how the role of the personal adviser will evolve. Clarity is beginning to emerge around how the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers will mesh with existing professional qualifications, but the nature and boundaries of the relationship between employer and employee in the emerging multi-disciplinary context are still unclear. This is a challenging area, as Iles and Auluck, in discussing the inter-agency work of social workers, comment:

A variety of team building techniques exist and there is considerable evidence of their effectiveness in improving team members' skills and team and organisational effectiveness. Such techniques, however, may not be transferable to multi-disciplinary and inter-agency teamwork, as these situations present new problems of coordination, communication and collaboration.

(1994:173).

Professional support and supervision have become a continuing feature of a developing approach to quality assurance in many careers companies. This can include peer assessment and review, provision of refresher interview courses with inbuilt observation opportunities, case reviews (often involving partners) and professional practice meetings. For example, within the Careers Management Confederation (CMC) of careers companies, the recent submission of portfolios, as part of accreditation against the Guidance Council standards, has encouraged the group to review further organisational practice in the area of support and supervision.

Hawthorn (1999) expressed the belief that the quality of guidance work is more likely to be assured through the commitment of individuals than through quality assurance systems and adherence to NVQ standards. However as recognised by Kurt Lewin when writing about organisational change (Johnson & Johnson, 1987), development relies on an effective interchange between structures, systems, climate, culture and individuals. A balance needs to be struck between a desire to develop a robust and rigorous support and supervision process, and the need to allow individual autonomy to decide which issues to bring to supervision. Within the constraints of action plan targets and quarterly milestones (the outputs) some careers companies have tried to encourage a concern for the process in order to counter fatigue and develop critical self-reflection. Sometimes however this may have been regarded both by operational managers and by practitioners as somewhat of a luxury.

Case Study - Concerns emerging from practice: experiences of the Careers Management Confederation (CMC) of careers service companies

At this point in the paper, it is perhaps worth expanding a little on the diversification of the client base. Young people working with CMC in a recent focus group commented that the service had shifted from those who were asking for it to those who were less clear of the benefits! The clients seen as part of the focusing agenda face a complex set of needs and circumstances. These may include financial problems, drug addiction, neglect, frequent job changes and/or abuse of a physical, mental or sexual nature. As a result they may experience feelings of hopelessness, anger, isolation and low self-esteem. All of which can turn to damaging perceptions of self and the society in which they live. Practitioners need to understand what is happening and what feelings are created by these young people's experiences. In what way do these feelings influence

perceptions of self and of life? What action does this lead to? And, into that maelstrom we seek to introduce the role of the personal adviser!

What follows are short summaries of four recent cases which provide further insight into the nature of the challenges personal advisers are currently facing.

Cameo One

Since leaving school Daniel had been a regular visitor to the careers centre and had built up a good relationship with his personal adviser (PA). His PA was aware that Daniel suffered from depression and that in the past he had seen a counsellor. At his last visit Daniel had seemed particularly low and mentioned how he had thought about taking his own life. The following week his PA received a call from Daniel, who seemed in a very distressed state and again made reference to committing suicide.

Cameo Two

Maria was referred to the careers centre by the Job Centre for a Severe Hardship claim. She was 16, 6 months pregnant and had been “thrown out of home”, but had managed to find accommodation on a boat with her dog. On her third visit to the careers centre Maria burst into tears and said that she had been thrown off the boat without her belongings or her dog.

Cameo Three

Philip has been meeting with his PA for a number of weeks and the adviser has noticed that his health appears to be deteriorating. He has already agreed to be submitted to a ‘Lifeskills’ programme and has been accepted. When his PA asks him if he is feeling well he confides that he is HIV positive and that he fears that he is now developing AIDS. The personal adviser suggests that it may be best to tell the Lifeskills provider but Philip is adamant that he wants no one to know.

Cameo Four

Kathy is 17. Under a court injunction she is not allowed to have any contact with her father. Kathy’s PA bumped into her and her father one day in the town centre and her father said, “I’m not meant to meet my daughter, you won’t tell anyone will you?”.

The current situation

So, as can be seen from these brief stories, a structured approach to support and supervision is critical given the complexity of cases presented by clients. However, this needs to be introduced within the overall context of training and development offered by the organisation. The Careers Management Confederation want to develop a more structured approach to support and supervision, ideally in partnership with others, but also want to harness this to the overall process of individual and organisational development.

A recent audit of the Learning Gateway across the seven companies in the Careers Management Group (December 2000) demonstrated how real the issue of personal support and supervision is for those working in a personal adviser role. Staff felt that a more structured and systematic approach is needed – particularly as they are working directly with colleagues in partner organisations where considerable resources are already committed to support processes.

The following table is intended to provide a picture of where support and supervision is being delivered currently within the group.

Figure 5.1

| Key Areas | Specific Elements |
|---|--|
| Training | NVQ Guidance Supervision skills and understanding for line managers which explores roles and models and includes a checklist on the skills of supervision Case management skills Working with challenging clients |
| Clarifying expectations of individuals and roles – setting boundaries | Job Profiles and Work Plans Referral arrangements to other agencies Knowledge of key legislation Feedback from clients on their experience and perceptions |
| Safety of staff and clients | Health and safety guidelines |
| Supervision | Personal Adviser Pairing Learning Gateway Network Meetings Multi-agency case conferences |
| Understanding of Managers | Quarterly reviews Structured case studies demonstrating work with individual clients |
| Safety Nets | Core care counselling line for staff on work, personal, legal issues etc. |

So what are the key challenges ahead? Our conclusion is that there is a need to:

- Build on the commitment to evidence based practice that evaluates what works, in order to develop approaches that meet the demands of the new context.
- Learn in partnership. There is clearly scope for integrative approaches to support and supervision – perhaps on a cross organisational basis. Indeed perhaps the Action Learning Sets being developed as part of the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers will set the pattern for this.

At an organisational level, there is a need to:

- Establish a robust approach to supervision sufficiently outside the formal line management framework but integrated with other elements of development.
- Ensure this approach is differentiated on the basis of need, but based on an overall commitment to critical self-reflection and review.
- Address organisational culture – allowing sufficient time and concern for process issues, not simply outputs and targets. Also ensuring that we are genuinely open and receptive to change and learning from partners. The case studies outlined above have messages for individual personal advisers, for the organisation and indeed for those designing and specifying services. We need to commit adequate resources to tackle this effectively.
- Encourage genuine inclusion of the client's perspective in the process – what is their experience, and how should this impact on individual and organisational development? The views of clients have implications for the development of the

practitioner's skills, behaviour and knowledge, and, implications for the way the organisation delivers its services within the wider learning community.

- Have active involvement in the delivery and continuous improvement of the Personal Adviser Diploma and related training. The focus currently appears to be on the individual in practice rather than the individual within an organisational or a series of organisational settings. As the Connexions Service develops it is hoped that the interplay between the work of the individual and the organisation, its climate and systems, will be addressed. Perhaps this will be incorporated within the ongoing plans for management training within the multi-disciplinary context of Connexions?
- Achieve a consistent use of language – when is a coach not a supervisor, when is a mentor able to provide supervisory support?

Conclusion

The development of a model of support and supervision for personal advisers and the integration of this new area in training courses, is no less complex than that which exists for therapeutic counsellors. The promotion of a model of support and supervision requires the cultivation of a learning culture. This calls for organisations that deliver the Connexions strategy and service to continue to develop as committed learning organisations and for centres offering training to lead the way in initial training. Trainees and practitioners will not benefit from “quick fix, how to do it” courses, but from learning that extends knowledge and understanding in order to develop reflective practitioners (and supervisors) with the ability to operate beyond basic competence.

Above all else the limits of expertise and the definition of professional boundaries must be addressed, both for the role itself and any standards that are designed for support and supervision. And, whether or not any method for support and supervision achieves what is intended, depends on the way in which it is perceived by the key people involved. In other words this will be dependent on there being shared meanings which are communicated between the profession(s), service providers, their managers, practitioners, and those involved in training. An active commitment to collaboration is key.

References

BIMROSE, J. and WILDEN, S., (1994) *Supervision in careers guidance: empowerment or control?*, British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 20, (1) pp 373-383.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING, (1992) *Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors*, Rugby, British Association for Counselling.

CAREERS MANAGEMENT, (2000) *Learning Gateway Audit, December 2000*, Careers Management Confederation.

HAWKINS, P. and SHOHET, R., (1989) *Supervision in the Helping Professions. An Individual, Group and Organisational Approach*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

HAWTHORN, R., (1999) *Food for Thought – Arguing for Excellence over Standards*, Careers Guidance Today, November/December Vol. 7 No 5. Stourbridge, Institute of Career Guidance.

HULBERT, S., (2000) *Working with Socially Excluded and 'At Risk' Young People: Research into the need for, and appropriate form of, support and supervision for*

Personal Advisers working within the new Connexions support service, Stourbridge, UK, The Institute of Career Guidance.

INSTITUTE OF CAREER GUIDANCE, (undated) *A Code of Practice for Members of the Institute of Career Guidance*, Stourbridge, ICG.

ILES, P. and AULUCK, R., (1994) *Team Building, Inter-Agency Team Work & Social Work Practice*, in MAYBEY C. and MAYON B. (eds), *Managing Change*, (2nd edition), UK, Paul Chapman/Open University.

INSKIPP, F., (1996) *New directions in supervision*, in BAYNE, R., HORTON, I. and BIMROSE, J. (eds), *New Directions in Counselling*, London, Routledge.

JOHNSON, D. W. and JOHNSON, F. P., (1987) *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, (3rd ed.), New Jersey, Prentice Hill International.

McLEOD, J., (1998) *An Introduction to Counselling*, 2nd edition, Buckinghamshire, OU.

SCAIFE, J., (2001) *Supervision in the Mental Health Professions: A Practitioner's Guide*, East Sussex, Brunner-Routledge.

Chapter Six

Developing a framework of support for personal advisers

Andrew Edwards

The purpose of this final chapter is to draw upon and integrate some of the key ideas presented in the previous essays. It is fully acknowledged that readers may draw different conclusions from those presented in this section. This is to be expected, and even welcomed. Moreover, this final chapter does not aim to cover every issue relevant to this debate. Rather, it attempts to offer readers a framework, which can be used for aiding their own interpretation of the earlier material. Also, by basing the discussion around a set of questions, it attempts to focus the analysis on the issues that currently confront senior managers within local Connexions services. The intended outcome is for the discussion to yield ideas that may help services to frame their own models of practice, which have a resonance with established traditions in allied professions.

To what extent can existing approaches to supervision, mentoring and support be applied to the Connexions Service?

Each of the sectors represented in this paper, describe and explain approaches to supervision, mentoring and support that have evolved over recent decades in order to meet the particular needs of clients and/or practitioners within their given arena of professional activity. Crucially, perhaps, these approaches are still evolving at both a conceptual level as well as at the ‘coal face’. This ‘evolutionary process’ it seems, has not lost sight of two fundamental questions - ‘What does supervision mean and how do we do it most effectively?’ The essays amply demonstrate just how fully this debate continues to manifest itself as training methods are altered and professional roles and responsibilities are redefined in response to new government directives or changes in policy at a national, local, or indeed, professional level. This seems to suggest, therefore, that no existing system or approach can be crudely lifted from one sector and transplanted into another - in this case, the Connexions Service. Rather, it implies that Connexions services should expect to formulate (perhaps with the aid of national guidelines), their own approaches to supervision, mentoring and support, which fit their particular context and which will be grown and developed over time - both conceptually as well as pragmatically. However, time is short and Connexions services have to start somewhere and respond to the pressing need to create a working model that will provide professional support to personal advisers. Yet the pressure to meet immediate needs has to be counterbalanced with an approach or system that is principled and well underpinned and that will therefore stand the test of time. These are important considerations, for reasons that will be discussed later.

The second point of comparison that we note from earlier chapters is that the conceptual differences between traditions and approaches are sometimes quite marked - most notably in relation to the debate around managerial and non-managerial supervision. Differences also occur concerning the task of assessment and its impact on the relationship between supervisor/mentor and supervisee. Nomenclature also clouds the debate, since both of our key terms - ‘supervision’ and ‘mentoring’ are problematic in that they are used to describe similar and different features of the support process. Again, this emphasises the importance for the Connexions Service to define for its own purposes what nomenclature it wants to use and what meanings it attributes to the terms it chooses.

Equally, however, it is possible to see that the various sector descriptions in this paper contain much in common. The differences may be more cosmetic than real, since the

underlying principles that writers equate with effective practice seem capable of application irrespective of the model used. This may suggest the key point of reference between the explanations of practice outlined earlier, and the need for Connexions services to feel confident about designing structures and systems of support for personal advisers. In other words, while there are clearly no off the peg solutions, we may be able to elicit a set of key principles and ideas which inform the 'management' of existing support systems, and which can be reconfigured within a Connexions context.

Can we generate useful descriptors about supervision, mentoring and support that have meaning for the Connexions Service?

As the previous essays have demonstrated, the meanings attributed to the key descriptors under consideration (supervision, mentoring and support) vary quite considerably. This means that these concepts are interpreted differently, especially in relation to the role of supervisors/mentors and the nature of the relationship, which they should develop with supervisees. For example, Field and Philpott resist any static definition on the grounds that there must be different types of mentor relationship to fit particular situations, using a variation in styles, adopted to best meet the needs and purposes of professional development.

Even the very term supervision is contested. Reynolds notes the value-laden nature of the term, which carries a connotation of one person having authority over another's work, perhaps suggesting a fusion of monitoring and control, as well as of development and support.

These two examples illustrate some of the difficulties we face in working with the nomenclature and the underlying concepts. Does this mean, therefore, that the concept is simply too problematic or elusive to be defined with any clarity? Or, rather, can we identify a set of descriptors that are irreducible - in terms of establishing a conceptual 'bench mark'? The earlier essays help us to frame the answer to this question.

For example, Woods describes the concept as meaning "support that enables the professional (to have) space and time to reflect on the work they have done and to understand it more clearly... The purpose of supervision is for the worker to look again at areas of uncertainty or complexity in their work before deciding what action to take in the future."

Critical reflection is also highlighted by Reid and Nix, who describe support and supervision as being more than offering "comfort" in difficult situations. Rather, they see part of its purpose as enabling practitioners to "critically reflect on their expertise and effectiveness."

Similarly, Reynolds highlights the importance of supervision within counselling practice as a space for thinking and a forum for learning, but which has uppermost as its focus the needs of the client. Likewise, for Bucknall, "supervision is aimed at 'helping workers to achieve effective outcomes which benefit clients.'" He describes the supervisor's role in this process as empowering the worker and "helping them to see the possibilities for change and to develop ways forward in the context of clearly identified outcomes."

Whilst emphasising that there are many types of mentor who can have different functions, Field and Philpott nonetheless acknowledge that "in all cases... mentoring is about providing the mentee with the resources and motivation to lead his/her own development."

Put together, these perspectives help us to identify some of the key characteristics of the 'support' concept - whether it is described as supervision or mentoring - or both! At the very least, it implies adequate space and time for:

- critical reflection to promote an understanding of the client's needs and resources
- envisaging outcomes and shaping future action which will benefit clients
- learning about self and emotional concerns
- exploring the relationship between theory and practice
- motivating an individual to lead his/her own personal development and growth.

What are the potential outcomes of supervision, mentoring and support that can benefit personal advisers?

Increasingly statements within the emerging Connexions literature indicate that proper support for personal advisers will be important, especially for those working regularly with young people with multiple needs. For example, in Module One of the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers, reference is made to several features of the personal adviser's work that will necessitate support, including "a mechanism ... to resolve problems that arise (page 29)." Again, acknowledgement is made of the need for professionals "to invest considerable time and energy in discussing potential moments of critical decision making and ethical issues (page 31)." Evaluation data drawn from personal advisers working in the first phase of Connexions services reinforces these kinds of expectations. (McBride 2001).

According to Bucknall, supervision is part of the social work culture and forms a central component of professional training. He maintains that social workers "appreciate and want good supervision," even if it does not always meet the ideal in practice. Similarly, counsellors work to a professional code (BACP), which requires practitioners to undergo supervision during training and throughout subsequent practice. Supervision (in various guises) forms a central part of a new teacher's induction into his/her educational role and the school's ethos and culture. It lasts throughout initial training and encompasses observation, collaborative teaching, assessment and target setting. As we see from Woods' essay supervision for those training in youth work and informal education is also central. From Reid and Nix, we see such support measures increasingly evident in careers service companies as they have introduced personal adviser job roles as part of their work with the Learning Gateway.

There are common trends here, which acknowledge that core professionals working in complex and emotionally charged situations with young adults need access to certain forms of personal support. From a preventative perspective, Reid and Nix refer to Hulbert's (2000:15) conclusions that supervision is also necessary to help reduce stress and prevent burnout. Yet the more immediate and less contested benefits of individual supervision, mentoring and support identified in these essays have much in common and resonate very closely with the anticipated needs of personal advisers.

For example, Reynolds describes supervision as offering a high quality learning situation in which the supervisee can be open about mistakes. Supervision can thereby help to reduce the supervisee's anxiety and create space for curiosity as a means of evolving new and creative approaches to his/her work with clients. The supervisee can also be helped to 'contain' their concerns and anxieties. Likewise, Woods sees supervision as helping the supervisee not with advice, but to see the problem more clearly and to identify the best solution for them.

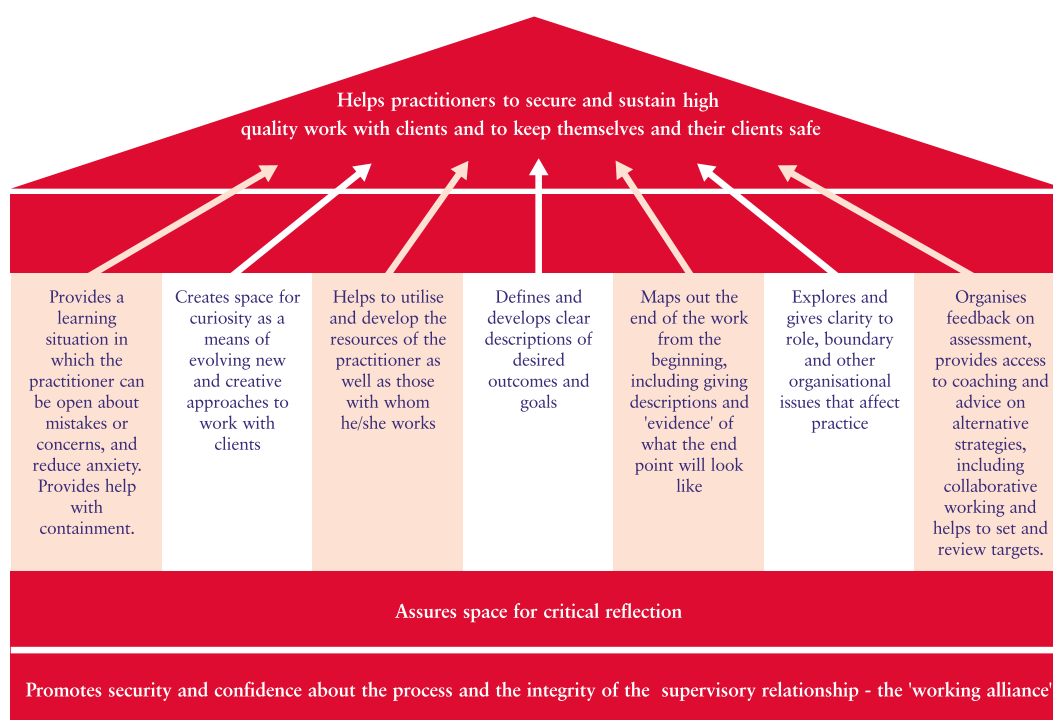
Bucknall sees various benefits of outcome focused supervision. He describes these in terms of focusing on “defining and developing clear descriptions of desired outcomes and goals of the work.” Mapping out the end of the work from the beginning, including giving descriptions and ‘evidence’ of what the end point will look like. This work occurs within a collaborative relationship aimed at helping the supervisee achieve the goals to which they and the supervisor are committed. Bucknall argues that the focus on outcomes and solutions helps to prevent the process getting bogged down or side tracked. It helps to utilise and develop the resources of the social worker as well as those with whom he/she works. This outcome is highly relevant to Connexions practice.

In addition to improving practitioners’ work with clients, Reid and Nix identify other benefits that can accrue from supervision. These include the opportunity to clarify and explore such issues as the suitability of different methods of intervention, role boundaries, expertise and organisational issues. Field and Philpott stress the educational value of ‘discursive mentoring’ where the mentor becomes more than a ‘buddy’, but also a facilitator of reflection. Outcomes from this work enable the learner to discuss practice, to receive feedback and to negotiate development targets. This model envisages a more active role for the mentor who can supervise and assess practice, suggest alternative strategies and set and review targets.

Figure 6.1 attempts to conceptualise these outcomes in diagrammatic form. The diagram is predicated on the assumption that perhaps the most central purpose of supervision is to help the practitioner learn how to work more effectively with his/her clients. The ‘pillars’ indicate the type of work that needs to happen within supervision, mentoring and support in order for this primary aim to be established. There is also a deliberate change of emphasis as the diagram reads from left to right (softer, towards harder-edged outcomes). Finally, the whole process rests upon two key foundational notions, which should be outcomes but also the most basic of principles - that at the very least, practitioners need confidence in the integrity of the process and assured time for critical reflection to take place.

Figure 6.1

Potential outcomes and benefits of the support process



What models of supervision, mentoring and support are likely to be most relevant to Connexions services?

There is no single answer to this question. Connexions services are developing very different structures, and within these, some existing member organisations will already have their own traditions of supervision, mentoring and support which they wish to continue and develop. Field and Philpott's point is also relevant, in that models for support need to fit the needs and circumstances of individual situations, making 'off-the-shelf' approaches less than satisfactory. It is therefore important to identify the respective advantages and disadvantages that different models offer. The information presented in Figure 6.2 attempts this task by providing some key examples of a general nature. Readers could potentially undertake this as an activity for internal discussion and planning, enabling them to formulate responses that more accurately reflect their own context and circumstances.

Central to this debate, however, is the 'philosophical' divide between managerial and non-managerial supervision. Contrasting approaches to practice are described in the previous chapters and readers may wish to compare the models used in social work, youth work and in counselling for example. Woods agrees that the "values and principles that inform both managerial and non-managerial supervision are the same," but she points to the tensions that line managers must reconcile if operating between the two roles. Woods presents a clear case for non-managerial supervision, noting that "the worker/supervisee might see the supervisory relationship as being more about management control and that the manager thinks that 'getting the work done' is more important." This highlights a real tension within managerial supervision, which is the extent to which practitioners will feel able to self-disclose and explore, and whether the relationship is secure enough to do so. The risk must be that in the absence of such assurances, practitioners may be rather more concerned with favourable self-presentation.

However, one difficulty with an exclusively non-managerial approach is that it fails to acknowledge that line managers often have a legitimate need and interest to be involved in supervision issues, particularly where supervisees are undergoing induction or engaged in the probationary stages of training and professional development. Managers will also want to engage with personal advisers in relation to the decision making process – concerning for example, who is the most appropriate professional to engage and/or lead with a young person. Personal advisers will need access to 'immediate' supervision on some occasions, and line managers may be the only person in a key position to offer advice and 'counsel' in such instances.

There is a risk here in polarising the debate between managerial and non-managerial supervision which may not be that useful given that there are other models of supervision, mentoring and support available. For example, in Figure 6.2, this writer outlines what might be called a systemic approach. This acknowledges that individuals will require different forms of supervision, mentoring and support, according to their stage of professional development and practice, and for varying purposes. Secondly, it stresses the importance of having a structured and systematic approach to support which is flexible enough to respond to changing practitioner needs, whilst also attending to the organisation's 'rights' and 'responsibilities' in relation to developing its staff and in ensuring that clients' needs are being met to an appropriately high level of service.

Figure 6.2

Models of supervision - advantages and disadvantages

| | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|--|
| Managerial supervision | <p>Economical in relation to time and resources</p> <p>Unifies a diverse range of supervisory tasks</p> <p>Ensures that one person retains an overview of the supervisee's needs</p> <p>Ensures that one person takes responsibility for supporting the development of the supervisee over time</p> | <p>Confusion of interests and roles - especially where assessment and personal development are part of the supervisory role</p> <p>Reluctance on the part of the supervisee to fully disclose issues, needs and concerns that could be construed as weaknesses by a line manager, or indeed, which involve their line manager</p> <p>External agenda issues - such as accountability pressures to meet external targets or the supervisor's inclination to follow their own agenda - these pressures can interfere with the personal development needs of the supervisee</p> |
| Non managerial and/or 'specialist' supervision | <p>Relationship unconstrained by worries over disclosure - inspires greater confidence of trust, openness and security</p> <p>Ensures that the supervisee's agenda can be fully attended to</p> <p>Provides the supervisee with access to expertise and broader/deeper perspectives on issues under review</p> | <p>Relationship can be complicated if formal assessment and/or appraisal falls within this role</p> <p>Supervisor cannot resolve issues or problems over the supervisee's work role and responsibilities</p> <p>Line manager may have a limited grasp of the supervisee's issues and concerns</p> <p>May create extra time pressures and be accorded less status as an activity than managerial supervision</p> <p>May present additional resourcing issues for the organisation</p> |
| Group supervision (led by a specialist) | <p>Economies of scale - especially a benefit to the organisation</p> <p>Opportunities to learn in depth and perhaps with a greater degree of criticality than may be possible in peer led groups. This might especially be the case where an 'expert' leads group supervision.</p> <p>Gains insights from other people's experiences and ideas</p> | <p>May offer limited scope to explore 'cases' of particular or immediate interest</p> <p>Frequency of meetings may reduce impact</p> <p>Time constraints since this does not necessarily replace the need for individual supervision</p> |
| Peer group supervision | <p>Provides an opportunity to gain insights from other people's experiences which can be adapted and applied to the supervisee's own practice</p> <p>Provides a context for professionals from different specialisms to learn from one another. Contingent upon the system being carefully set up and organised, with agreed structures and processes etc.</p> <p>Gives the supervisee insights into supervision issues which can enrich their own self-development and orient their own future work roles</p> | As above |
| Integrated 'systemic' approach to supervision | <p>Ensures that the system of supervision is embedded into operational policies, ethos and procedures</p> <p>Builds a system of supervision around the respective needs of the client, practitioner and organisation</p> <p>Incorporates a developmental perspective which aims to tailor supervision to the needs of the individual practitioner</p> <p>Enshrines supervision within a culture which respects the importance of the activity for personal and organisational growth</p> <p>Can encourage senior practitioners to value supervisory work as an important opportunity for professional development</p> | <p>Rests upon the commitment of the organisation to embed a system into its core values and working practices</p> <p>Requires a higher level of co-ordination and organisation than more informal approaches</p> <p>Systems need regular monitoring and corrective mechanisms</p> <p>Over prescribed systems could appear over bearing and threatening</p> |

Further, Figure 6.3 illustrates how the ‘spread’ of tasks and activities associated with supervision, mentoring and support can be ‘managed’ over time by people occupying quite different roles and responsibilities. These are not watertight compartments either, which means that some tasks that appear in one column could appear in another. For example, *creating a conducive environment for learning* would occur under several roles, since if different roles were employed over time, each would share this same responsibility within the context of their work with the supervisee.

Figure 6.3

Examples of tasks and activities linked to roles

| | Managerial supervision Line-manager | Non managerial supervisor/mentor 'specialist' and/or critical friend' | Buddy mentor 'Experienced colleague' | Group supervision (led by a specialist) | Peer group supervision |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| Induction | Agreeing an induction programme Reviewing induction process | | Ensuring that the supervisee feels physiologically and psychologically welcome Inducting into physical working environment and the micro culture of the organisation | | |
| Initial training Probationary period | Setting parameters of work role and responsibilities Setting goals and targets for work, learning and development Creating a conducive environment for learning Coaching in key skills Observing practice Assessing practice Feedback on practice | Creating a conducive environment for learning Providing space for critical reflection linked to the supervisee's agenda <hr/> Coaching in key skills Observation of practice Assessing practice Feedback on practice | Ongoing informal support - as a sounding board Inducting into the mores and norms of the profession | Creating a conducive and collaborative environment for learning Coaching in key skills Providing space for critical reflection | Creating a conducive and collaborative environment for learning Sharing experiences of practice, and for seeking fresh insights and strategies |
| Early years of practice | Providing guidance on work role and responsibilities Performance monitoring and assessment Checking progress Goal setting Appraisal | Providing space for critical reflection linked to the supervisee's agenda | | Providing space for critical reflection Sharing experiences of practice, and for seeking deeper insights and strategies | Sharing experiences of practice, and for seeking deeper insights and strategies |
| Ongoing professional development and practice | Negotiating development opportunities | Providing space for critical reflection linked to the supervisee's agenda | Mentor support for professional development activity | Providing space for critical reflection | |

Note:

The line separating the tasks in column two (non-managerial supervision), merely indicates that some models include assessment-related tasks within this role and others do not, e.g. Woods.

Importantly, this diagram illustrates the necessity of deciding where assessment will happen. Figure 6.3 indicates that it could sit with either the management supervisor or the non-management supervisor - but not both! It is also unlikely that organisations would operate a system using all roles at the same time. Another key decision therefore, hinges upon the use of individual or group supervision. There is clearly a

balance to be struck between the ideal level of provision and resourcing it - in terms of staff time, costs and the implications for operational practice.

The use of communications technology may be a crucial factor in this equation. Video conferencing and group telephone discussions offer options for reducing the logistical impediments to groups or individuals meeting together.

The 'systemic' model proposed in Figure 6.3 underlines the importance for each organisation to 'embed' its approach to supervision, mentoring and support deep within its structure. It thereby creates a culture where the needs and opportunities for support are clearly understood and valued, and where a balance can be struck between the 'system' and the individual autonomy of the practitioner. It also recognises that 'support' needs can be met with on a developmental basis utilising a range of approaches, rather than resting on a 'one size fits all' model.

Can we anticipate what are likely to be the main needs of personal advisers in respect of supervision, mentoring and support?

The answer to this question has to remain partly speculative, since limited research evidence is currently available from the Connexions Service. Even so, we should be able to make an intelligent guess based on the experiences of practitioners in related fields who work in not dissimilar roles and contexts with young people. We can also make some assumptions based on the underlying ideas about the personal adviser's work role presented in the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers. Taken together, Figure 4 below identifies what some of these needs might be.

It has also been noted that the need for supervision, mentoring and support will vary according to the individual personal adviser and the stage of development, which he/she has reached in this, or similar work roles. It may therefore be possible to anticipate how an individual's needs will change over time and to take account of this in planning provision. A limited range of examples has been given - the list is not meant to be exhaustive. Neither will all of these headings apply in every case. However, the list is presented in such a way as to illustrate the incremental nature of the issues that are likely to concern personal advisers. It begins (at the top of the list), with the concerns that are likely to confront new entrants or 'trainees', working downward to the issues that will become more relevant to established practitioners.

From the Connexions Diploma programme, we can already see that in the earlier stages of training and role development, personal advisers may need particular help with a range of issues. Some of the more complex are likely to include:

- Dealing with inadequate referrals - forming the 'right' response when under pressure to accept an inappropriate or incomplete referral.
- Undertaking an accurate and comprehensive assessment of a young person's strengths and needs - in order to make informed decisions as to whether they should engage with this young person or refer on to a 'specialist'.
- Engaging with parents or carers - analysing the advantages and risks of involving a young person's parents or carers.
- Boundary management - identifying boundaries, working within them and learning to maintain them effectively.
- Being sure about their mandate for action - seeking clarification about whether their work is consistent with the Connexions principles and guidelines pertaining to ethical practice.

Figure 6.4

Potential issues for supervision, mentoring and support

| Two ✓✓ suggests that this is likely to receive strong emphasis | Induction | Initial training (e.g. Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers) | Post experience training | Case work with clients |
|---|-----------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Understanding the purpose and mission of the Connexions Service | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | | |
| Feeling confident about being appointed to work as a personal adviser | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | | |
| Feeling secure and supported | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓ |
| Feeling valued and respected | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Feeling confident about discussing issues and concerns | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Understanding the responsibilities and boundaries of their role | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Knowing who they will be working with and fitting into a team | ✓✓ | ✓✓ | | |
| Knowing how they will be supervised, mentored and supported | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Learning about training - its opportunities, challenges and demands | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Learning about clients' needs | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Understanding how to operate assessment and referral systems | | ✓✓ | | ✓ |
| Developing the skills and strategies to work effectively with clients | | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Knowing whom to turn to in finding help and advice when confronted with difficult and challenging situations | | ✓✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Reflecting on practice - exploring feelings, mistakes, worries and concerns, issues, resources, strategies for change and effective working etc | | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Understanding the decision-making process concerning if and when to engage with a young person and significant others | ✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Understanding how to use evidence to inform practice | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| Learning how to network and collaborate effectively with other professionals and agencies | | ✓✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Learning how to develop advanced practice | | | ✓✓ | ✓✓ |

What are the essential values and principles by which both the supervisor/mentor and the supervisee need to adhere in order for the process to be effective?

Fundamental to the whole process of supervision, mentoring and support is the issue of *trust and confidence*. Practitioners who are being supervised, need to have confidence that the process has value and integrity, that it will help them in their work with clients, and help them to deal with the wide range of personal and professional issues that inevitably arise from working in emotionally challenging situations. In addition to

having faith in the process, *trust* and *confidence* is also crucial so far as the supervisory relationship is concerned, whether this follows a managerial or non-managerial model.

Bucknall noted how effective supervisors 'ground' the supervision in an '*agreement*', which is negotiated by both parties. In the context of social work, where line managers typically supervise, this form of agreement may be all the more important in order to negate some of the potential drawbacks of managerial supervision. But even where non-managerial supervision is the dominant model, the principle of grounding the process in a written agreement has obvious benefits, especially if assessment related activities are involved. It may not be unreasonable, either, to add to this agreement (about process, roles and procedures), statements relating to *ethics* - how this relationship will work and the values that will underpin this 'working alliance'.

A further point relates to the principle of *entitlement*. If support structures are going to be embedded within the organisational structure and culture, personal advisers may expect to know what form(s) of supervision or mentoring this entitles them to. The level of entitlement might usefully be framed within an organisational policy or job description - or both! This helps to clarify expectations about working practices and relationships, which serves to promote confidence and reduce suspicion and uncertainty.

What are some of the issues that each Connexions service faces in establishing a system of supervision, mentoring and support that will meet the needs of young people, personal advisers and the organisation?

At the time of writing, it is not known what guidance will be offered to Connexions services by the Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU). Neither is it known whether the expected guidance will be advisory only, or contain a higher level of prescription. Either way, the urgency to address the support needs of personal advisers becomes ever more pressing.

The various essays in this paper have illustrated both the need for supervision but also the difficulties involved in doing it well. Even established models of supervision, such as those described in social work, can sometimes fail to work as intended, and Bucknall identifies a number of factors that can cause the process to degenerate. Significantly, this has led him to posit the value of solution focused supervision, which helps the supervisee and supervisor remain focused on agreed goals, and committed to achieve the desired outcomes from practice that will benefit their clients. Bucknall also demonstrates that supervision, mentoring and support needs a methodology that works - it is not enough simply to have created a policy and agreed procedures.

Connexions services will also have to address a range of other issues as they develop an approach towards support that best suits their context, their staff and the needs of their client groups. In summary, these issues will include the following:

- Consulting with practitioners and reviewing relevant evidence of supervisory practice from the Connexions pilots, Learning Gateways, and similar initiatives that have involved the work of personal advisers.
- Formulating a fresh organisational policy, which moves towards developing a robust and flexible system that embeds the support process at the heart of operational practice. Establishing within this policy the level of entitlement which personal advisers should expect.
- Ensuring that the policy is properly resourced, and carefully implemented and managed.

- Considering how to use and/or change existing support systems to bring them in line with new policy.
- Establishing which model(s) of supervision, mentoring and support best suit its context.
- Exploring the value of group supervision, which could include related professionals with other specialisms working in the same organisation, context and/or team. Peer support methods should be considered in the same way.
- Linking supervision and support to training, especially for new entrants undertaking the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers.
- Finding creative and imaginative solutions to recruiting supervisors or mentors - including from other partner agencies.
- Imagining how people in these roles can be developed, including the possible adoption of a supervisor accreditation scheme, such as that employed by the BACP (Wheeler 2001).
- Evaluating supervisory practice - to monitor, review and improve skills and processes.
- Ensuring that clients' needs are kept uppermost in the process.
- Using innovative approaches to supervision - especially flexible communications technologies.

Clarity about work roles and responsibilities will also be important. As noted earlier, questions about professional boundaries and working practices are likely to be major concerns, especially for those new to the personal adviser role and/or undergoing training. Particular attention therefore needs to be given to framing job descriptions - since these should make clear for practitioners where the boundaries of their responsibilities lie.

Quality assurance systems will clearly also be important, in that they frame in more detail the standards of operational practice that should be adhered to.

But perhaps the most important challenge for Connexions services, will be to create and nurture a culture of professional development that provides a high quality of support for individual personal advisers, while encouraging independent thought, professional autonomy and personal growth.

References:

CONNEXIONS SERVICE NATIONAL UNIT, (2001), *Managing Referrals, Assessment and Engagement with Young People*, CSNU, Sheffield.

McBRIDE, K., (2001) *Notes from ICG conference on support and supervision*, Birmingham, 5 April 2001.

WHEELER, Sue., (2001) *Supervisor accreditation - it is time to apply*, *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal*, March 2001, Vol. 12 No.2.

Contributors

David Bucknall

David Bucknall is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Canterbury Christ Church University College. He has worked as a Research and Development Officer and as a manager of children's residential services in a Social Services Department. He has been a social worker and Team Manager working with children and families. He is particularly interested in the application of solution oriented approaches to practice, especially to the practice teaching in social work, an area in which he has published. He is currently engaged with a social work office in an action research project aimed at improving outcomes for children and their families utilising outcome focused practice.

Andrew Edwards

Andrew Edwards is the Director of the Centre for Career and Personal Development, at Canterbury Christ Church University College. He is also an Associate Fellow of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling. He has long held an interest in mentoring and has contributed to published research in this field.

Kit Field

Kit Field works as a Principal Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University College, where he is currently the Deputy Director of Continuing Professional Development. Kit has published widely in the field of Modern Foreign Languages, Mentoring and Subject Leadership. His background includes teaching French and German, and acting as the Deputy Director for the Secondary PGCE programme.

Claire Nix

Claire Nix is the Development Manager for the Careers Management Confederation group of careers services. Her remit within the group is extensive and wide ranging, including a responsibility for overseeing training and staff development.

Chris Philpott

Chris Philpott graduated as a Music teacher in 1979, and pursued a career as a Music and Performing Arts teacher for sixteen years. More recently Chris has worked as a PGCE tutor on the secondary programme. He is a Principal Lecturer in Education with responsibility for the training of teachers on the Key Stage 2/3 programme. Chris has published in the fields of music education and mentoring.

Hazel Reid

Hazel Reid is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Canterbury Christ Church University College. Hazel teaches in the Centre for Career and Personal Development and is currently undertaking doctoral research in the area of supervision.

Helen Reynolds

Helen Reynolds combines two careers. She is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Canterbury Christ Church University College where she teaches in the Department of Post Compulsory Education. Helen is also a qualified psychotherapist and manages her own practice in addition to working part time for the National Health Service as a counsellor attached to a GP's surgery.

Janet Woods

Janet Woods is the tutor for supervision at the YMCA George Williams College and has had experience of supervising students, professional workers/managers, and supervisors.

Index

A

Audit Commission, 10

B

British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP), 35,42, 51, 59

C

CCETSW, 9
Child Protection, 10
Coaching, 9
Connexions Service, 5, 8, 27, 29, 47, 49-59
Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU), 58

D

DES Circular 9/92, 19
Department of Health, 9
Department of Health Framework (2000), 11
Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers, 51, 59

E

Evidence based practice, 10, 40, 44

G

Guidance Council Standards, 44

H

Hillgate Group, 19

I

Informal educators, 26-31
Institute of Careers Guidance, 29, 40

L

Learning Gateway, 45
Learning Programme for Serving Headteachers, 20
Looked after children, 11

M

Maslow's hierarchy, 22
Mentoring:
buddy, 19, 23
concept, 18
development in schools, 19
functions, 18-19
hierarchy of types, 21-23
Multi-agency teams, 30

N

National Standards for Qualified Teachers, 20
NVQ standards, 44

O

OfSTED, 19, 21

P

Personal Advisers, 5-6, 42, 51
Psychodynamic theory, 10, 32
Public Service Agreements, 11

Q

Quality Projects Initiative, 11

R

Reflective practitioner concept, 26
Role conflict, 42-43

S

Scaling questions, 13, 15
Social Exclusion Unit, 5
Solution focused practice, 12
Supervision:
boundaries, 36
client welfare, 34
critical space, 32, 36
format, 9
functions, 33-36
group, 29
outcome-focused approach, 8-16
managerial, 27-29, 53
monitoring, 34
non-managerial 27, 53
social workers in training, 8-16
values and principles, 27

U

Universal service, 5

