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Leadership supervision for managers of educational psychology services

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature surrounds the development of effective supervisory practices for practitioner and trainee educational psychologists. To date, none of this has addressed supervision for managers of UK educational psychology services, despite evidence that they may be under increasing pressure to make difficult decisions, respond to changing economic and political contexts and experience greater scrutiny in relation to service performance. In this study, 10 principal educational psychologists (PEPs) took part in a focus group to explore the supervisory needs and experiences of service leaders. Emergent key themes revealed differential patterns of entitlement and support, with PEPs often reporting innovative practice in order to access supervision. Supervision often had a duality of purpose, with PEPs advocating and promoting service delivery, rather than seeking personal support, potentially eroding the notion of supervision as a "safe space." Implications for future practice are discussed and a potentially supportive leadership supervision framework proposed.

KEYWORDS

Leadership; management; principal educational psychologist; service delivery; supervision

Introduction

There is growing interest in the importance of supervision within educational psychology practice, both within the United Kingdom (UK) and internationally. This has led to the development of published supervisory competencies (cf. National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2010; Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) and supervision models (Atkinson & Woods, 2007; Annan & Ryba, 2013; Simon, Cruise, Huber, Sweridlik, & Newman, 2014; Woods et al., 2015; Gibbs et al., 2016) to support supervisory practice for both qualified and trainee educational psychologists (EPs).

While literature has explored the supervisory needs and experiences of both trainee educational psychologists (for example, Woods et al., 2015; Gibbs et al., 2016) and practitioner colleagues (for example, Thielking, Moore, & Jimerson, 2006; Annan & Ryba, 2013), there is almost no published literature that relates to leadership supervision within EP services; and no empirical studies were found through systematic searches. Within their seminal text *Professional Development and Supervision of School Psychologists*, Smith Harvey and Stuzziero (2008) offer a chapter on "Leading and Managing." However, the focus is

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predominantly on supervision *by* managers, rather than *for* managers. Additionally, suggested strategies for evaluating leadership and management tend to be via assessment (for example, 360 degree feedback (London & Smither, 1995); Leadership Behavioral Rating Scale (Johnson, 1998)), rather than dialogue around co-constructed needs and priorities. This position is not unique to leaders of educational psychology services, and indeed has been recognised within other professional domains, Sirola-Karvinen and Hyrkäs (2006) reporting that, "In international literature, clinical supervision for nursing managers and administrators is not widely acknowledged and the concept is not well known" (p. 602).

The potential benefits of supervision within leadership

Some of the early conceptualisation of supervision within EP practice came from other professional arenas. Within social work, Kadushin (1976) proposed a triadic model, defining three functions: administrative (essentially related to effective working and quality control); educational (development of practice) and supportive (managing affective and interpersonal factors). Subsequent practitioner models (for example, Atkinson & Shohet, 2006; Hawkins & Woods, 2007; Scaife, 2009) offered a similar underlying, tripartite structure. Alongside this, Proctor (2000) defined four Cs of supervision – competence, confidence, compassion and creativity – which should be focal within the supervisory relationship, in order to optimise benefits to the supervisee. Smith Harvey and Stuzziero (2008) proposed that research suggests that supervision contributes to skill maintenance, skill improvement and expansion, professional development, reduced stress and enhanced accountability. The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2015) Standard of Proficiency 3 states that practitioner psychologists must maintain "fitness to practice" which includes, as stated in 3.4: "to be able to manage the physical, psychological and emotional impact of their work" (p. 8). Supervision is an essential tool to support psychologists at all levels within a team to respond to this standard.

Some definitions of supervision offered within the literature imply supervision as a hierarchical activity between more, and less-experienced colleagues (Scaife, 2009; Palomo, Beinart, & Cooper, 2010; Woods et al., 2015), although notably Woods et al.'s (2015) definition is offered within the context of supervising trainee EPs. However, perhaps the most widely cited definition within school psychology literature offers a broader perspective:

> Supervision is an interpersonal interaction between two or more individuals for the purpose of sharing knowledge, assessing professional competencies, and providing objective feedback with the terminal goals of developing new competencies, facilitating effective delivery of psychological services, and maintaining professional competencies (McIntosh & Phelps, 2000, pp. 33–34).

Booker (2013) used the term "leadership" to imply "the creation and articulation of a vision for the organisation or team" (p. 198). Smith Harvey and Stuzziero (2008) positioned "management" as empowering others to effectively accomplish tasks which may relate to the operationalisation of this strategy; as well as implementation of processes central to the functioning of the organisation, including financial control, monitoring and target setting (Booker, 2013). These nuances are mirrored by Oxford English

Dictionary (2018) definitions of a leader as "one who conducts, precedes as a guide," and a manager as "a person who organizes, directs, or plots something; a person who regulates or deploys resources."

The inherent complexity of defining these concepts from an operational perspective perhaps provides some insight into the extensive literature exploring the notion of leadership psychology within diverse contexts and from different perspectives (for example, Adair, 1983; Covey, 1989; Goleman, 2011; Paschen & Dihsmaier, 2014). Within its wider context, consideration of the psychology of leadership is beyond the scope of this study. However, with few exceptions (for example, Rowland, 2002; Booker, 2013), this is an overlooked area within educational psychology research more generally.

Rowland (2002) highlighted the pivotal role of PEP leadership to service delivery through empowering others, communicating effectively and developing strategies for efficient service delivery. Within the role of leading a team of EPs, the authors took the view that there is a continuum of behaviours; from those which could be characterised as leadership behaviours and skills through to those which are related to the systems and processes of management. The authors suggest that all leadership activities, including management activities, can be refined and sharpened through supervision. Within the context of this research, the term "leadership supervision" is considered from this perspective.

Within the literature, a dichotomy is identified between administrative and clinical supervision. Smith Harvey and Pearrow (2010) described how administrative supervisors "provide leadership, recruit and hire, delegate assignments, conduct formal personnel evaluations, design corrective actions, and take ultimate responsibility for services provided by supervisees" (p. 568), noting that this role might not necessarily be undertaken by someone from the same professional background. By contrast, clinical supervision would be facilitated by an EP and would focus on the more conceptual and educative supervisory processes, enabling professional growth. While it might be assumed that these dimensions link with the administrative and educational functions respectively (Kadushin, 1976), Gibbs et al.'s, (2016) empirical analysis of the supervisory experiences of trainee EPs by practitioners suggested that there were overlaps within these domains, particularly in relation to professional practice and ethics. However, it has not been established whether these processes would be so nuanced within supervision undertaken by a non-psychologist. Indeed, it could be speculated that increasing focus on income generation (Lee & Woods, 2017), efficiency savings (HM Treasury, 2010; Midgen, 2015) and performance indicators (Gibbs & Papps, 2016) might narrow the focus of discussions between line managers and PEPs.

Leadership supervision within educational psychological services

Midgen (2015) noted that budget cuts linked to the 2010 Government Spending Review (HM Treasury, 2010) led to the need for EP leaders to make important and difficult decisions about service delivery, particularly in relation to the development of traded services; and proposed that time was required to consider and monitor these. Within a period of transformation for the profession (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Gibbs & Papps, 2016; Lee & Woods, 2017) there are arguments to be made that in order to promote and sustain effective psychological service delivery, service managers need to have access to ongoing supervision, given that "Supervision is central to the delivery of high quality psychological

services" and "Good supervision supports professionally competent practice and ensures that legal and ethical responsibilities to clients are met" (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p. 2). This may be particularly important, given the complexity of the relationship between performance measures and management, efficient organisational working and outcomes for service users (Arnaboldi, Lapsley, & Steccolini, 2015). Booker (2013) challenged leadership practices within educational psychology services, but whilst presenting helpful questions for personal review, noted difficulties in accessing coaching, supervisory or even peer support, due to financial and organisational constraints.

The initial impetus for this research came from the authors engaging in a supervisory relationship, which fulfilled both the first author's academic and professional interest in supervision and the second author's desire to seek supervision for her leadership role from an educational psychologist external to her service. Initially discussions identified that models of supervision traditionally applied within educational psychology practice (for example, Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife, 2009) were not particularly well-suited to leadership supervision and thus alternative models were sought. Indeed, the "best fit" seemed to be a model of effective leadership, management and supervision from social work practice (Gray, Parker, Rutter, & Williams, 2010) which developed from Adair's (1983) model of effective leadership into a framework for exploring and challenging practice. The usefulness of this operational framework, used by the authors within supervisory meetings, will be explored later within the context of this study's findings.

Anecdotal reports from professional colleagues led the authors to speculate that opportunities for service managers to receive supervision might be limited and that supervision received might be administrative rather than clinical (Smith Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). With this in mind, and given the absence of empirical research in this area, the authors set out to explore the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: To what extent do PEPs feel their supervisory needs are currently met?

RQ2: What are PEPs' experiences of receiving:

(a) Administrative supervision?
(b) Clinical supervision?

RQ3: What factors enable and inhibit leadership supervision?

Method

Research design

The epistemological position adopted for this research was social constructivism. McNamee (2004) highlighted the difference between social constructivism, where the focus is on the internal, cognitive processes of individuals; and social constructionism, which considers the discourse, or social activities between people. Keaton and Bodie (2011) acknowledged that within social constructivism, objects exist after they enter communicative space. At the outset, the authors did not know to what extent a shared

concept of leadership supervision would be held by PEPs, given its lack of attention in previous literature. It was hoped therefore, that through the collective process of defining it, based on the context-bound understandings of the individual participants, it could be co-constructed. For this reason, the research design employed a qualitative design to explore the supervisory experiences and needs of a regional network of PEPs,[1] through use of a focus group method (Barbour, 2007).

Sample

Participants from associated local authorities who regularly attended the network meeting were contacted via email. Members were asked whether they would be prepared to attend the focus group, which was scheduled to follow a regular meeting. This ensured that participation was voluntary, as members of the group who did not or could not participate, were free to leave at the end of the meeting.

Participants

Ten attendees participated in the focus group. Participant information was collected using a one-page pro-forma containing questions about their leadership role and local authority context. This indicated that the majority (seven) of participants were female, with nine of the group identifying themselves as White British and one as White European. Five of the participants were PEPs, two were Acting PEPs, two Deputy/Assistant PEPs and one a Senior EP. Eight of the 10 had been in their current post for one to five years, with the other two participants in post for less than a year and five to 10 years respectively. In terms of the services represented, six were rural, three mixed and one urban; with two traded, seven partially traded and one non-traded. Data about the wider subject pool are not available, as it would not have been ethical or appropriate to seek data from non-participant colleagues.

Data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to collect data relevant to the three research questions. This was emailed to all potential participants, along with the recruitment information, in advance of the meeting.

The focus group lasted one hour and six minutes and was facilitated by the authors, who took it in turns to present the questions. At intervals between 30 minutes in and the finish, four group members had to leave to attend priority appointments, meaning that six focus group members remained at the end. All focus group data were recorded and fully transcribed. This yielded a 20-page transcript of 10, 232 words and 159 separate utterances for coding. Of this, 89.6% of words were spoken by the participants. All participants contributed on at least two occasions (range 2–20 utterances; median = 10). Seven participants spoke 90% of the participant content; and four participants spoke 62% of the participant content.

Data analysis

The transcript was analysed jointly by both authors, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. An abridged version of the process can be seen in Figure 1. Phase 2 of the process was undertaken using the computer software package, Nvivo, which enables both the live coding of transcripts, but also ensures that all relevant data extracts are collected under each code, in accordance with Phase 3. An inductive approach to data analysis was used, consistent with the epistemological position and the authors' desire to link the identified themes strongly with the data. Additionally, it would have been difficult to use a deductive approach, or an *a priori* coding framework, given the dearth of previous literature relating to leadership supervision within educational psychology.

Consistent with the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), some of the data extracts were coded more than once.

Systematic coding of the transcript located 201 content references within 45 initial codes (referred to as "nodes" within Nvivo). Once the codes had been identified and refined, the authors wrote them out on to post-it notes and organised them physically into themes (Phase 3). These were then reviewed in accordance with the overall data set, which was refined into 35 codes (Phase 4) and named (Phase 5). The fact that both authors, coming from different professional perspectives, were involved in the entire data process made for plentiful deliberation and debate in the generation of initial codes; identification, review and naming of themes; and the construction of the report

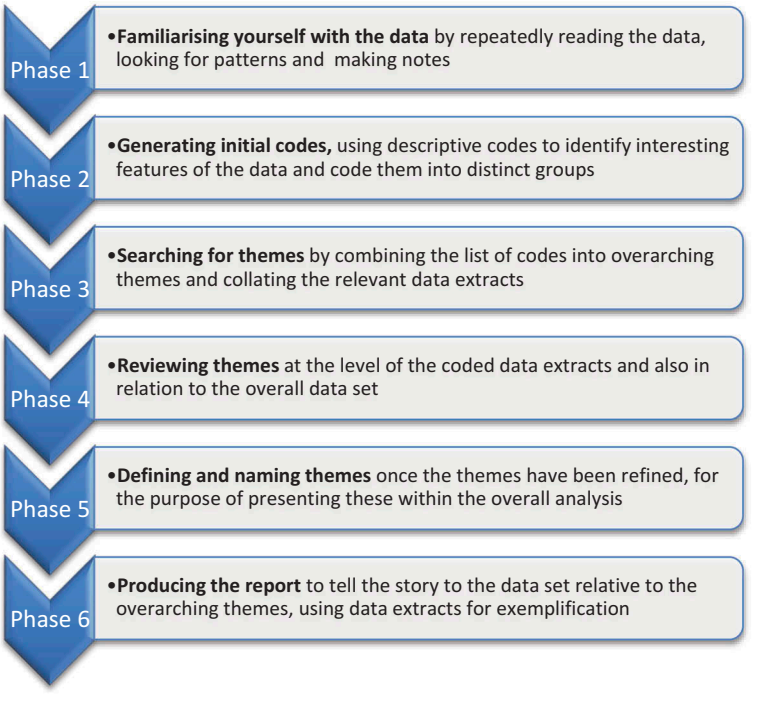

Figure 1. Six-phase process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

(Phase 6), potentially strengthened the validity of the analysis. Themes were also sent by email to all of the group participants for member-checking and validation.

Ethics

University approval was granted prior to the commencement of the research. All recruitment information was sent out two weeks prior to the focus group to allow potential participants time to consider the details. A number of meeting attendees exercised their right not to participate, reinforcing the notion that participation was entirely voluntary.

Findings

This section will present a summary of the emergent data from the focus group discussion. Because participant views in relation to the interview schedule (see Appendix) were often wide-ranging; and narratives about leadership co-constructed and iterative, the data are not fragmented within this section, but will be revisited in relation to the research questions later in the discussion.

Thematic analysis yielded six main themes, which along with their associated codes, are shown in Table 1 below. In accordance with the final stage of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process, these themes will now be used to guide the narrative, with data extracts, in the form of quotes, used for exemplification. In selecting representative quotes, the authors aimed to illustrate the range of perspectives represented by members of the focus group. Participant codes (for example, P1, P2, etc.) are provided for each of the quotes.

In terms of *Access and entitlement*, participants acknowledged how they had to prioritise, locate and protect supervision: "as a PEP you have to seek that out yourself and be proactive about it. It's not going to come to you or be offered, that's my experience anyway" [P1]. Participants felt time pressures, not only in terms of accessing supervision but in having sufficient preparation time to maximise its benefits, P7 noting:

> And there's something about the… you know, actually physically having the time and it not being sort of trumped by other things which are more urgent but also in terms of time for preparation and you know, the quality of supervision; because sometimes, you know, when people come up to supervision for me and I just think, you know if I'd had half an hour before this it would have been much better than this, I'm just doing this on the hoof now.

Acknowledging these pressures, PEPs had found creative and efficient ways of accessing remote supervision, including email and Skype.

Related to supervision access was the *leadership approach to supervision within the service context*. Part of this was felt to be about PEPs leading by example: "And I think if we don't model good practice, that then becomes a team ethos doesn't it – that you drop supervision" [P3]. Within this theme, having been presented with descriptions of administrative and clinical supervision from academic literature within the focus group prompts, participants explored the type of supervision they were receiving. This sometimes depended on the context for the leadership role: "it varies and the needs of the individual PEP will often be… be based upon their role as well" [P8]; and also from whom they received supervision:

Table 1. Themes and codes emerging from thematic analysis of the focus group transcript.

Main theme	Codes
Access and entitlement	Access to supervision
	Availability of clinical supervision from line manager
	Entitlement to supervision
	Preparation for supervision
	Prioritising supervision
	Remote supervision
	Time for supervision
Affective factors	Being open and honest
	Isolation of PEP
	Meeting PEP supervisory needs
	Personal support
	Relationship within supervision
Leadership approach to supervision within the service context	Adherence to professional standards
	Administrative versus clinical supervision
	Context for leadership role
	PEP modelling good practice re supervision
	PEP involved in supervision policy
	Peer supervision
	Qualifications in supervision
Political context for supervision	Agenda of line manager within supervision
	Decision making about information sharing
	Feeding back positives
	Impact of socio-legislative factors
	Impact of supervisory conversations on service development
	Trying to influence change through supervision
The purpose and focus of leadership supervision	Maintaining a psychological focus
	Problem solving within supervision
	Supervision as a reflective space
	Supervision focus
	Support for Human Resources (HR) issues
Who is supervision received from?	Buying in supervision
	Informal support from PEP colleagues
	Position and experience of supervisor
	Retired PEPs as supervisors
	Working with senior management colleagues

"My service manager is also an educational psychologist so I do have clinical supervision and that is available, you know, and it's good quality" [P7]. For others, accessing clinical supervision was more of a challenge:

> I think as a principal EP working in a local authority… the administrative supervision comes to you doesn't it? Because it's part of your manager's role within kind of corporate policy to provide that line management supervision; so it's there and it's there regardless whereas the clinical supervision… as a PEP you have to seek that out yourself [P1].

Generally, participants found professional standards protective in giving them a mandate to access supervision. Some reported that undertaking British Psychological Society supervisor training had required them to organise supervision with another PEP, meaning that they had specifically protected time for it.

The purpose and focus of leadership supervision was explored within the focus group discussions. Participants valued supervision as a reflective space and an opportunity for problem solving. Many of the issues discussed were related to service development or Human Resources (HR), although the latter was not always a straightforward topic within supervision:

> I have used my line manager around the HR thing and been quite open with them about that, but equally there are things… I don't… I don't want to go to him every supervision with problems really, so there are some things obviously I keep to myself, it's about… I have to weigh up what I share and what I don't share [P2].

This utterance also reflected how PEPs also acknowledged their feelings about the duality of supervision, particularly with line managers, in that it was not just about offloading problems, but also presenting the service in a positive light.

This also linked to the theme of *affective factors*. PEPs had found that the role could sometimes be isolating. Contrasting the administrative and clinical functions of supervision, P2 proposed, "I think there's a third which is more the emotional thing where you want to sound off, you don't want anybody to tell you what to do, it's just letting me… you want to be supported." Participants acknowledged the benefits here of support from PEP colleagues, P10 reporting "So because we're kind of local we do get together quite a lot and we have a lot of emails, I email P2 occasionally, you know, and we just kind of keep things informal really."

Emerging very strongly was the theme relating to the *political context for supervision*. One example was P5 exploring the nuances of the relationship between the line manager and PEP and possible competing agendas:

> And I think things like that are always a little bit loaded… and that's in a sense when you're part of an organisation… where your supervision comes from is always going to have that bias attached to it somehow… and you've got to make sense of that… you know, you've got to… have enough kind of insight to be able to say to yourself 'well, this advice or this… it's got a context to it and I need to understand it in that context, you know, what are the drivers for this person who's telling me this?' That's kind of how I see it really. So it's… like I feel envious of anyone who's got some kind of unbiased clinical supervision because I don't feel like I get that at all at the moment.

PEPs often felt responsible for promoting the service in a positive light, which sometimes meant withholding information or being circumspect about how this was presented. P2 offered:

> I have… used my line manager around the HR thing and been quite open with them about that, but equally there are things… I don't… I don't want to go to him every supervision with problems really, so there are some things obviously I keep to myself.

In other cases, supervision was seen as an opportunity for service public relations (PR) in one case with the encouragement of the line manager:

> …at the end of the meeting, the director said to me "Have you got any good news to tell me [P8]?" And I thought 'oh yes!' Because we'd had an hour and all the issues that had been… I had to discuss, we needed to problem solve or get an agreement for… because of those, all the good news stories have been missed off.

The participants were aware both of the potential impact of conversations with line managers on other members of the service and of trying to effect change through supervisory conversations.

> I'm also trying to influence at the same time… and so you're kind of going with issues which you feel like you want to present in a way which… are going to move things on or change things in the way that you'd hope, so it's got a very political dimension to it really [P5].

The final theme *"Who is supervision received from?"* revealed that participants had found creative ways of accessing supervision, which included buying in supervision, peer networks and seeking support from retired colleagues who were now external to the context. There were advantages to all of these, through sharing experiences and information, although there were also limitations in terms of supervisors not fully understanding the service, or in some cases changes within the socio-political context, where for example, the supervisor had not been actively practising since the introduction of the new Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). Some PEPs felt that the position and experience of the supervisor within the service influenced the importance of external supervision. This was particularly true for one participant:

> My service manager is also an educational psychologist so I do have… clinical supervision and that is available, you know, and it's good quality and it depends on the level of preparation, you know, so a lot of it can end up as… kind of administrative supervision but actually, if I've got something I want to discuss and I have prepared adequately, I will get clinical supervision [P7].

However, it was acknowledged that where this was not the case, PEPs would need to use their initiative to locate clinical supervision:

> I do like the administrative supervision and I value that and I think I get a lot of that in a sense. I would like a greater balance. I would like a greater sense of having that clinical supervision where I can talk with another current principal [P3].

Discussion

In considering the implications of the findings, the discussion will revisit the three research questions presented at the end of the introduction, before exploring limitations of the current study, directions for future research and possible considerations for leaders of educational psychology services.

In relation to the question, *to what extent do educational psychology service managers feel their supervisory needs are currently met?* it was evident from this research that PEPs are finding creative ways to access the supervisory experiences they feel they need, in some cases outsourcing support both formally and informally. PEPs undertaking supervisor training felt the experience galvanised them into forging relationships with other PEPs, often involving media which enabled remote support, such as Skype and email.

While the supportive function of supervision is acknowledged in a number of theoretical models (cf Atkinson & Woods, 2007; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife, 2009), this may be more difficult for PEPs to access, given their position as service leaders and perhaps the concern that disclosure of difficult or sensitive information might compromise service colleagues. Discussions within the focus group suggested that PEPs sometimes felt isolated and not always that they could be open and honest within supervision. Feelings of isolation have been reported in other professional domains, in studies of leadership supervision (Johns, 2003) and emotional support (Lee et al., 2010).

In terms of PEPs' experiences of receiving supervision (RQ2), these often varied relative to the service context, position of the PEP in relation to other support services and the previous experience of their line manager. One significant finding was that the administrative-clinical

dichotomy seemed insufficient to describe PEPs' supervision experiences, as did the notion of there being a supervisor and supervisee. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given changes to the structure of educational psychology service (EPS) delivery (Fallon et al., 2010), increasing marketisation (Lee & Woods, 2017), spending reforms (HM Treasury, 2010) and the need for greater accountability (Gibbs & Papps, 2016) there was evidence that supervisory conversations with line managers often have a political agenda, with PEPs keen to showcase or develop their service.

This suggests greater duality within the perceived purpose of supervision, with concerns about service PR likely to influence how information presented within supervision is presented and managed. It also goes some way to eroding the notion of supervision for PEPs offering a "safe base" (Palomo et al., 2010). In this research, data would suggest that even administrative supervision could be potentially compromised by the need to advocate for the EPS and professional colleagues, in light of spending cuts and market forces.

In exploring the final research question (RQ3), it is notable that, aside from the availability of clinical supervisors, some factors inhibiting leadership supervision appeared to mirror issues identified by EP practitioner supervisors in a survey by Atkinson and Woods (2007). These included time, competing pressures and service capacity. It could also be argued that the lack of recognition within the literature that supervision is important for, or even essential to PEPs, means it has no clear mandate and consequently can be easily overlooked; particularly in the face of competing pressures and limited availability (Booker, 2013). Currently, published guidelines on supervision for EPs (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) focus on the role of the PEP in delivering supervision, but make no mention of receiving it. Whilst participants in the study acknowledged that these guidelines as well as Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2015) Standards of Proficiency were useful in protecting their supervisory rights, it may be helpful for the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) to take a stronger stance on leadership supervision particularly in light of funding pressures and ethical challenges facing educational psychology services (British Psychological Society, 2013).

Limitations

A number of limitations to this study should be acknowledged. Significantly, the research comprised only a small sample of 10 PEPs and participants represented only one region of the UK, bringing into question the wider generalisability of the focus group data (Robson, 2002). The participants constituted a self-selecting sample, potentially suggesting an interest in PEP supervision or a predisposition to believing it important. Colleagues not represented may have had a more ambivalent view about its relevance to EPS leadership.

It is questionable whether the focus group was too large; Coolican (2014) suggesting no more than six members as typical. Indeed, the authors discussed whether or not to run two parallel focus groups prior to the meeting, although because some of the PEPs indicated that they would need to leave before the end, it was decided to proceed with a single focus group. Another issue here would have been that the contrasting professional contexts and experiences of the authors may have influenced the discussions in different ways. Participant attrition during the focus group itself, with numbers gradually falling from ten to six, between 30 and 60 minutes into the focus group, provides another limitation. Furthermore, although not confirmed at the time of the focus group, it is anticipated that most, if not all of the participants knew each other previously and would have ongoing relationships via the

regional PEP group, which may have affected information sharing and individual contributions. However, on this final point, relationships within the group may have been advantageous in facilitating a cooperative forum for co-constructing and exploring some of the issues. Indeed the authors noted no issues of conflict, extreme views or reluctance to share amongst participants (Robson, 2002). Instead, afterwards some PEPs reflected that the experience of participating in the research had been professionally beneficial.

Future directions and next steps in developing PEP supervision

Given the limitations, there are a number of avenues worthy of further exploration. Firstly, it would be useful, especially given the small sample size, to extend the scope of the research to establish a more comprehensive picture of PEP supervision practice across the UK. This could be achieved through using the findings from this research to develop a questionnaire survey which could be distributed to all PEPs, in order to gather a more comprehensive data set. This could incorporate items which yield both quantitative and qualitative data, to provide overall patterns across the UK, alongside highlighting innovative and effective practice examples.

In the absence of published guidance on PEP supervision, it may be helpful to explore the development of frameworks and protocols to facilitate this further. Within the introduction to this paper, the authors describe how the framework provided by Gray et al. (2010) emerged as the most useful framework, of those located, for structuring supervisory discussions. Gray et al.'s (2010) work followed significant reform within social work practice. Acknowledging the increasing bureaucratic and regulatory pressures on social work practice, the authors noted that "The focus, therefore, tends to be on performance management and measurement rather than professional judgement and practice" (p. 21). For this reason, Gray et al. (2010) proposed the idea of communities of practice, to develop the link between leadership and authentic practice and promote a culture of learning and development. Gray et al. (2010) used Adair's (1983) leadership model (see Figure 2) to produce, "essential features" (p. 27) for each of its three domains: Achieving the task; Building and maintaining the team; and Developing the individual (see Figure 3). Although these are defined within social work practice, the authors of this paper feel that the questions posed within each domain are also pertinent to EPS leadership.

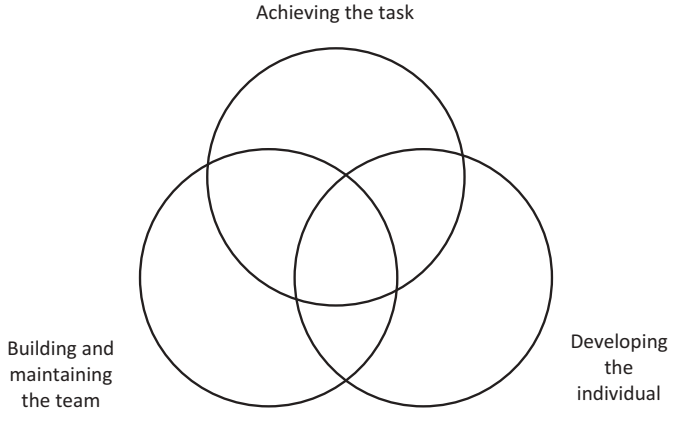

Figure 2. Adair's (1983) leadership model.

Achieving the task
• How effective are our business planning processes? • Are we clear about our objectives as a team and our priorities for service development? • How effective are our quality management processes? • How is the team performing against performance measures, quality standards and business objectives? • How effective is our case management in supervision? • How effective is our multi-disciplinary working? • Is the team engaged in service development? • Are people who use services engaged in service development planning?
Building and maintaining the team

• How effective are our recruitment processes?
• What will be our needs in the short medium and long term in terms of skills and staffing levels?
• What stage of development is the team at?
• To what extent does the team have:
  ▫ Trusting relationships between its members and positive regard?
  ▫ A climate where problems can be raised and practice challenged?
  ▫ Responsive and flexible leadership?
  ▫ A good range of personalities and roles?
  ▫ Procedures and ways of working that allow it to work effectively including resolving conflicts?
  ▫ Good relationships and established working relationships with co-providers?
  ▫ Good relationships and established working relationships with people who use services and carers?
  ▫ Good relationships and established working relationships with the rest of the organisation?
  ▫ Continuous team development and improvement?

Developing the individual
• How effective is induction and probation? • How effective is supervision in developing practice? • How effective is our management of training? • How effective is our CPD? • How effective is our appraisal? • How effective is qualifying and post qualifying training? • Is there shared training with co-providers? • Are individuals committed and motivated?

Figure 3. Features of Adair's (1983) model, as defined by Gray et al. (2010).

It is proposed that Gray et al.'s (2010) prompt questions potentially provide a useful framework for structuring supervisory discussions of both an administrative and clinical nature. It is acknowledged that the stimuli may need adjusting, in order to make them

directly relevant to an educational psychology practice context. However, developed within a rapidly changing sector, they potentially offer PEPs enough opportunity to reflect on the wider local and national contexts, in exploring possibilities for developing the service. In the first instance, it might be useful to canvass PEP views on the use of Gray et al.'s (2010) framework, in order to develop a more bespoke and potentially useful model for practice.

Finally, is important to acknowledge that although the participants in this research were predominantly PEPs, it is also useful to think more broadly about the concept of "leadership" within a psychological service. Booker (2013) highlighted how the notion of a head of service may be outdated and the focus should be on developing the leadership capacity within the service, a sentiment echoed by Midgen (2015), who called for a greater distribution of ethical responsibility in service delivery. It would be useful to expand questioning to leadership teams, rather than individuals, in order to establish a wider picture of supervisory practices to support senior and principal EPs.

Note

1. PEPs is used here to describe service managers, as participants in the study used this terminology. It is acknowledged that other terms are frequently used (for example, Service Lead, Lead EP) by managers of educational psychology services.

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