An Interpretative Phenomenological Study

Exploring Educational Psychologists'

Experiences of Facilitating Group

Supervision

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Abstract

This research explores the experiences of Educational Psychologists (EPs) who are facilitating group supervision for professionals from a non-educational psychology background. The aim of this research was to develop an insight into the unique experiences of the participants, in order to develop an understanding of how EPs can be supported in this increasingly common aspect of EP work.

The research involved semi-structured interviews with three EP group supervisors recruited through purposeful selection. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Research findings suggested that the experience of facilitating group supervision for other professionals seemed to be influenced by three main factors: the EP's perceived level of responsibility, the relationship with the group and the level of emotional investment in the role.

This research informs us that when the EP has a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, is able to build group relationships and where the commissioning agency's management and the supervisees have a value and understanding of supervision, the experience can be rewarding and enriching for the EP. Where the preferred supervisory style of the EP does not fit well with the work, the EP feels restricted in being able to practice safely or there is chaotic organisation, the work can evoke feelings of anxiety, frustration and inadequacy.

Conclusions reflect the range of emotional responses to the work and EPs will need support that is flexible enough to meet individual needs.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Aims and Rationale

Dunsmuir et al. (2015) report on the increasing number of Educational Psychologists (EPs) providing supervision for professionals from non-educational psychology backgrounds. This often involves the facilitating of group supervision, which is recognised in group supervision literature as adding a level of complexity to supervisory processes. The supervisor is required to have group management skills in addition to supervision skills and knowledge, too. Yet research on supporting and supervising the facilitator is scarce and is often focused on improving the experience for the supervisee rather than the supervisor.

This research study developed from an interest in the reported experiences of Educational Psychologists in a Local Authority who had been commissioned to facilitate supervision groups for other professionals. Whilst some EPs enjoyed the work and found it rewarding, I was aware of others who found the experience stressful and emotionally draining. I was interested in what it was about the work that could evoke such different responses in individuals. It seemed to me that if some EPs were finding this aspect of their work distressing at times and felt they needed additional support to cope with the emotional demands of the work, there was a need for further research into this field, in the hope of informing Educational Psychology Services on good practice to support EPs undertaking this work.

These thoughts also coincided with my interest in EPs receiving supervision in their work more generally. Supervision across the profession has improved but not all EPs receive quality supervision on a regular basis (Dunsmuir et al., 2015). This made me think that if EPs are branching out into new, and potentially challenging, areas of work, the role of supervision becomes even more crucial in supporting the emotional well-being of EPs and in ensuring their work is of a high standard.

This led me to look further into what, if any, professional guidance or research was available on supporting EPs who are group supervisors. I found the literature to be very limited.

I was interested in exploring the following research questions:

- What is it like for EPs to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?
- What can we learn from these experiences?

1.2 Background to the Research

In recent years, Educational Psychologists (EPs) working in the particular Local Authority in which this research is based have become increasingly involved in facilitating groups that enable non-EP professionals from social care and education to reflect on their working practice and to provide peer support for one another. The trend of commissioning an EP to lead these groups is growing and a number of EPs have taken on roles in this area of work.

The EPS has been commissioned to facilitate group supervision by managers within social care and education both as a means of providing formative and restorative support to these workers. It is hoped that regular access to the group will provide the worker with an opportunity to develop their resilience in the face of challenging frontline work in ever increasingly difficult circumstances due to budget cuts, and to develop their working practice abilities through the sharing of good practice. The professional groups have been wide and varied and include early years teachers, social workers, Children's Centre workers, foster carers, residential social workers, Intensive Family Support workers and Multi-agency Team managers. The work has expanded largely as a result of 'word of mouth'. As workers involved have expressed their views on the benefits of accessing this type of group, further groups of workers have requested access to similar provision. As the Educational Psychology Service transitioned to a traded service, it was hoped to expand the provision of

similar services to school-based staff, such as Teaching Assistants and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators.

There are variations in the name given to these pieces of work within this Local Authority. Some groups have been established as a means of providing peer supervision for workers and have tended to be known as 'Supervision' groups. Sometimes the facilitating of such groups has simply been known as 'EP support for … (foster carers, for example). More recently established groups have attempted to use the term 'reflective conversation group'. Essentially, the groups have shared a common theme in that they are opportunities for workers from the same profession to share good practice, reflect on their working practices and develop their practices through group discussion.

The format of the sessions has varied in terms of duration , frequency, group numbers and any specific techniques used, such as solution circles.

The EP has been allocated this work on the basis of personal interest. EPs have requested the opportunity to take on this work and I am only aware of one instance of an EP being asked to take the task on to balance workloads.

In most instances, the work has been completed individually by the EP involved, with any discussion around the work taking place in management supervision sessions. Some EPs have had the opportunity to meet periodically with a group of EPs all carrying out the same work, under the management of a senior EP. This has enabled the EPs involved to discuss their work with colleagues and a manager and common approaches to the work have emerged. However, it has been recognised across all groups that the individual relationship between the EP and the group is paramount to the effectiveness of the work and the EP therefore has been able to adopt an approach with which they are familiar and comfortable. The individual EPs have been responsible for any evaluation of the effectiveness of the groups they facilitate.

1.3 Positionality

I acknowledge my active role in the research process and my personal interest in the role of the supervisor and I therefore begin this thesis with an introduction to my positionality and my experiences of the subject area. This is intended to ensure transparency.

As a secondary school teacher I had no experience of supervision. Whilst training to become an EP, I had very brief training on peer supervision in the form of 'group consultation' and peer supervision did not seem to develop well amongst the student group. Once qualified, my experiences of supervision in the role were patchy. Despite eventual attempts to formalise peer supervision processes within the service, in my experience sessions were often cancelled either due to a lack of interest or workload pressures. My primary professional experiences of being supervised are line management supervision sessions and informal peer supervision, often during lunch breaks or other social times. I currently work in a service where peer supervision is offered frequently, in addition to management supervision, and attendance at sessions is a service expectation. I continue to access informal peer support throughout my working week.

During my time as an EP, I have always personally valued any work-related discussion with a colleague and found talking about my work or theirs helped greatly in reflecting on my work and improving my practice. I also have enjoyed supporting colleagues informally, whether emotionally or by sharing knowledge. I have enjoyed supporting and supervising trainee EPs, too.

As my career developed, I became involved in facilitating group supervision for other professionals, from a range of social care and education backgrounds. I am currently facilitating group supervision for a team from an education background. This fostered an interest in learning more about 'good practice' in supervision and the role of the supervisor. I attended an accredited supervisor training course with the British Psychological Society and I continue to be attracted to information and training events relating to supervision.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

- a critical literature review outlining theories, relevant research and professional guidance
- the rationale for the chosen methodology and details regarding the procedures followed
- a presentation and interpretation of the data along with a discussion of the findings in relation to key literature
- a presentation of the conclusions, limitations and recommendations for practice and future research

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Supervision of professional practice has been increasingly recognised as important over the past decade, especially within caring professions. Within the practice of educational psychology in the UK, research has shown that the level of supervision and the number of educational psychologists involved in that supervision has increased steadily (Dunsmuir et al., 2015).

Dunsmuir et al. (2015) report that there have been significant changes to the practice of educational psychology in the UK, due to changes in legislation which placed a greater emphasis on multi-agency working and changes in service delivery. Funding arrangements for public services have changed, resulting in the vast majority of educational psychology services being partly or fully traded. This change in funding enables service users to make their own decisions about which services they buy and from whom. Professionals from other areas of education or social care are increasingly choosing to purchase supervision from educational psychology services (Dunsmuir et al., 2015).

2.2 Search Method

Literature was located through the identification of key texts relating to 'supervision', 'group supervision', 'reflective practice', 'work discussion groups', 'reflecting teams', 'peer support', 'facilitating supervision', 'the role of the supervisor', 'facilitating reflective practice' and 'supervising the supervisor'. Search engines and journals relating to the work of educational psychologists along with other professionals in caring professions were initially used as any articles found were likely to be of most relevance. These searches did not generate a vast amount of material on initial searching at the outset of this research project. Subsequent searches were made periodically and new studies became

available along the way. In the meantime, searches identified material relating to mental health practitioners and nurses and whilst not directly related to Educational Psychology, they afforded data relating to the focus of this research study so were included and reviewed.

Books containing the keywords, as above, in their titles were searched for online and the references sections of those books and articles found in the search engines were reviewed for relevant material.

Research on supervision is challenging due to the numbers of complex relationships, contexts and variables that occur. Beddoe and Davys (2016) summarised the difficulties they had in finding literature on supervision when they wrote their initial book in 2010 (Davys and Beddoe, 2010). The material they could find focused on the rationale for supervision and the purposes of supervision, rather than the processes involved. They reported, however, that over the next decade, there was an expansion of literature and research articles which focused on providing guidance on carrying out supervision and on the reflection processes and relationships that are essential to making best use of supervision and professional reflection (Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) also report on the lack of research studies on supervision, although there has been a vast amount of books written on the subject. Research still remains largely based in counselling psychology and psychotherapy, predominantly in America. The research that has been done has focused on the experience of the supervisee, often trainees rather than experienced practitioners. In a time of greater demand, higher expectations and fewer resources Hawkins and Shohet (2012) feel that good quality research is becoming increasingly essential.

Much of the existing literature on supervision or reflective practice relates to models, principles and benefits (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). This research paper focuses on the experiences of the facilitator of group supervision/group reflective practice and there was very little in terms of books or research studies that are directly focused on this area. However,

guidance on supervision groups or reflective practice often includes guidance on the role of the supervisor.

2.3 The History of Supervision

Carroll (2007)'s review of the history of supervision traces its roots back to the time of Freud (psychoanalyst 1856-1939), as there is evidence that small groups met together to discuss and reflect on their work. Carroll (2007) credits Max Eitingon (psychoanalyst 1881-1943) with the formalisation of supervision in the 1920s when he made clinical supervision a requirement for those training as psychoanalysts. In the late 19th century, supervision was introduced as a supportive and reflective practice for social workers in America. Over the years, the use of supervision was extended to other helping professions and by the 1950s, supervision included counselling approaches as well as more psychodynamic approaches.

It was not until the 1970s that the style of supervision transitioned from counselling approaches to more of an educational process and the emphasis shifted from the person doing the work to discussion of the work itself. This change in emphasis made the concept of supervision more easily applied to helping professions and supervision increased in popularity. Supervision now became focused on the practice of the professional with a view to improving practice and this brought with it developments in supervision theory and practice. A divide emerged between 'counselling' and 'supervision'. Theories, research and models relating to supervision, however, remained primarily the domain of American universities from the 1970s to the 1990s, and were predominantly linked to counselling psychology.

In Britain, clinical supervision has been around for many years but it really came to the fore in the late 1970s and early 1980s and adopting many principles from the American models, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy made supervision mandatory for clinical practitioners, with a requirement that practitioners accessed a minimum of one and half

hours of supervision each month if they want accreditation with the organisation. This remains the case today.

In the past twenty years, supervision has become more widespread across other professions in Britain and around the world. This expansion of supervision has brought with it new ways of looking at supervision and new models as professions try to adapt the principles that emerged from psychotherapy and counselling to suit their own needs.

Within the field of educational psychology, placement supervision for trainee Educational Psychologists has been a long-established part of any training programme. However, studies such as those by Nolan (1999), Leadbetter (2000) and Pomerantz (1993) showed that, historically, the experience of receiving supervision for qualified EPs has been inconsistent. The importance of supervision for practising EPs has been increasingly recognised in more recent years and guidance on professional practice for EPs (discussed below) has raised the expectations of supervision for EPs. Dunsmuir and Leadbetter's (2015) study indicates that there has been a significant increase in the number of EPs receiving regular supervision.

2.4 What is Supervision?

> 'Supervision is a joint endeavour in which a practitioner with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships and the wider systemic context, and by doing so improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession' (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.60)

Supervision is not easy to define as it can look different depending on the context. However, at the heart of supervision is an opportunity for supervisees to review and reflect on their work, with a view to improved practice in the future. Practitioners bring their work practice for discussion and reflection to another person (supervisor) or to a group situation in group supervision. The aim is for the supervisee to learn from their experiences.

Carroll (2007, p.36) writes that if 'work is not reviewed, interviewed, questioned, considered and critically reflected upon' then supervision is not happening and the session must be viewed as something else, such as a counselling session. There have been debates within the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy about definitions and functions of supervision that focus on the supervisee's needs at the expense of overlooking the fact that ultimately, supervision was developed to protect the client and ensure they receive high quality services (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). This need to ensure practitioners deliver high quality services was especially relevant in the expansion of supervision to social work and mental health work.

Hewson and Carroll (2016) identify three core functions of supervision, with an underlying principle of practitioner learning:

- client care
- professional standards
- professional development

According to Hawkins and Shohet (2012), a supervisor has at least four stakeholders who need to be served jointly by the supervisor and supervisee:

- the supervisee (their learning and development)
- the supervisee's clients (the quality of service they receive)
- the supervisee's organisation (a need for a safe and 'value for money' service)
- the professions of the supervisee and supervisor (to protect its reputation and to develop the profession)

The supervision may also benefit the supervisory work of the supervisor but this is not a priority.

Supervision is now also widely recognised as a support mechanism for professionals working in challenging situations that leave them emotionally

drained. Hewson and Carroll (2016) define the purpose of supervision sessions as ensuring that the client workload is manageable and practice is appropriate so that they are able to work to 'best practice' standards, thereby providing a high quality service and keeping themselves and others safe. The emotional well-being of the supervisee is important as stress or a lack of commitment to the work can result in poor practice, so Hewson and Carroll (2016) feel that it is the duty of the supervisor to monitor and support the well-being of the client.

Proctor (2000) and Hawkins and Shohet (1985) identified three main functions of supervision which are now widely accepted as the basic functions of supervision in the UK: normative, formative and restorative, also known as administrative/managerial, educative and supportive. In other words, supervision should be supportive to the supervisee, develop their practice through learning and ensure their work is meeting professional ethics and standards.

Although there is little evidence-based research on the ways in which supervision facilitates learning, the impact on supervisee competency or the impact on outcomes for service users, the value of supervision is recognised in improving psychological practice (Dunsmuir et al., 2015).

2.5 EPs Supervising Other Professionals

The guidelines produced by the British Psychological Society's Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010) provide a working definition of supervision for EPs:

> 'a psychological process that enables a focus on personal and professional development and that offers a confidential and reflective space to consider one's work and responses to it' (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010, p.7).

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in EPs supervising other professionals, either individually or in groups. Dunsmuir et al.'s (2015) national online survey found that 28.6% of EPs (total respondents =

246) reported supervising other professionals working with children and young people. The respondents included those working in Local Authorities, private practice, universities, and the health service as well as Trainee EPs, with the majority of responses coming from EPs working in Local Authorities (82.9%).

Dunsmuir et al. (2015) carried out their survey in order to create a current snapshot of EPs giving and receiving supervision in the UK. The findings of this study relate to both experiences of receiving and giving supervision. With regard to this research study, the relevant data from Dunsmuir et al. (2015) relates to experiences of giving supervision to other professionals. The largest group of professionals receiving supervision from an EP is other EPs, Trainee EPs and Assistant Educational Psychologists, but 28.6% of EPs were providing supervision for school staff or other professionals.

A large percentage, 81.7%, of EPs supervising other professionals reported using an agenda or agreed structures. With regard to models of supervision, 21.4% of EPs reported that they did not use a model. Of those who did, the model used varied. Some used Scaife's (2001) General Supervision Framework (10.1%), some Page and Wosket's (2001) Cyclical Model (8.8) and the largest percentage of those using models used Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven-eyed Model (35.2%). 24.5% reported the use of other models. In addition to models, EPs reported psychological influences from problem-solving frameworks.

EPs reported a higher use of contracting (39.5%) when giving supervision than when receiving supervision (21.5%). However, this means that 60.5% did not use contracts when providing a supervision service. The content of supervision contracts included practical arrangements, evaluation processes, goal setting, model, ethical issues and roles/responsibilities. The data presented does not allow for a distinction between EPs providing supervision for EPs or other professionals. Of EPs providing supervision, the majority (88%) reported that records were kept, although there was variation between who kept the record: supervisee, supervisor or both.

Again, the data does not discriminate between supervision for EPs or other professionals.

Whilst this data provides useful information about the extent to which EPs are involved in supervision, Dunsmuir et al. (2015) acknowledge a positive respondent bias in that all respondents to the survey were involved in some form of giving or receiving supervision.

Midgen (2015) reported that the austerity measures that have been required in local authorities in recent years, along with the growth of academies, have had significant implications for educational psychology services across the nation, with many being forced into whole or partial trading of their services. Midgen (2015) reported that this has encouraged a climate of competition, bringing a risk to educational psychologists with regard to ethical principles of their work. Regulatory bodies, such as the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), have responded to this challenge by publishing guidance on ethical practice, including the *Ethical Trading: Guidelines for Practice for Educational Psychologists* (BPS, 2013), which highlights some of the dilemmas educational psychologists and leaders of educational psychology services may face.

According to the BPS guidelines, leaders of educational psychology services have a responsibility to work within an ethical framework. Whilst there are no specific references to trading supervision for other professionals, the guidelines are consistent with the BPS *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (BPS, 2017), the HCPC *Standards of Proficiency* (HCPC, 2016) and the DECP *Guidelines for Supervision of Educational Psychologists* (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010) in that EPs should be competent to deliver the service provided, should be supported in their professional development and any contracted activity should be monitored through supervision (BPS, 2013).

This raises questions about the trading of supervision for other professionals. It may be the case, for example, that the leader of an

educational psychology service secures the work through trading with other agencies but the work itself is then delegated to EPs within the service. Ethical consideration would need to be given to how the work is allocated to an EP: should there be a selection process related to skills and experience? Are all EPs considered to have the essential skills to carry out the work? More importantly, perhaps, is the ethical consideration that would need to be given to any potential conflict between the views of the educational psychology service and the commissioning agency. For example, if there is a view held in the service that supervision needs to take place on a monthly basis in order to be effective, what happens if a commissioning agency only wants to purchase supervision three times a year? Should the request be declined? In order to solve these ethical dilemmas, the educational psychology service would need to have reflected collectively on potential dilemmas to avoid a situation where the leader of an EPS places staff in a position where they do not feel safe in their practice.

2.6 Inter-professional Supervision

Inter-professional supervision is supervision which occurs between those who come from different professions. It is widely regarded as a choice in an attempt to best match the skills of the supervisor with the needs of the supervisee rather than for any practical arrangement (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Research suggests that inter-professional supervision is generally found to be positively evaluated but that the supervisory skills of the supervisor are significant in influencing supervisee satisfaction. The profession of the supervisor has been found to be of less importance than their personal attributes, focus and skills. In fact, difference between supervisor and supervisee has been found to be a positive feature in that it facilitates creativity, critical thinking and enriched supervisory experience (Bogo et al., 2011, Howard et al., 2013, Hutchings et al., 2014, Townend, 2005 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) concept of 'good enough supervision' in challenging times also supports the

argument that supervisory skills and processes are of greater significance than directly relevant clinical experience.

Davys and Beddoe (2008 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016) also found that inter-professional supervision can prevent the supervisees from being able to make assumptions about other supervisee's practice and this encouraged exploration and reflection. Although this study reports on the experience of supervisees from different professional backgrounds, it is likely that the same could be said of a supervisor working with a group of professionals from a shared profession that differs to that of the supervisor. The supervisor would be able to make inquiries about practice based on no prior assumptions. Supervisees in the Davys and Beddoe (2008) study reported that the lack of a common professional language meant that they had to explain themselves more and this helped them to clarify their thoughts (Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

Potential weaknesses of inter-professional supervision have also been identified and relate to the differences in basic knowledge and use of language, a lack of focus on specific ethical issues relevant to the supervisee's profession, and fear on the part of the supervisee in revealing weaknesses. There have also been concerns raised about power differentials, the potential for clinical isolation and generalisation of practitioner-specific skills (Bogo et al., 2011, Howard et al., 2013, Hutchings et al., 2014, Townend, 2005 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

Although inter-professional supervision is valued as offering an extensive opportunity for learning and critical reflection, with regard to accountability, it cannot provide safe structures for risk assessment and case management as would normally be found in a supervisory relationship (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). That is not to say that inter-professional supervision carries no ethical or professional responsibility at all. The balance of responsibility may shift from the supervisor to more of a collective responsibility, especially within a group situation. The inter-professional supervisor may have an expectation that the supervisees have an awareness of their own professional responsibility and accountability and Beddoe and Davys

(2016) argue that some of the functions of supervision change in the face of inter-professional supervision. They explain that in inter-professional supervision the role of the supervisor shifts from 'expert' to 'facilitator' and that this opens up the opportunity for critical reflection as opposed to a more managerial supervisory approach. The responsibility for what is safe and ethical practice becomes shared. The onus is on making sure that such issues are addressed but not necessarily within the supervision sessions. The purpose of the supervision becomes collaborative critical reflection, with the supervisee remaining the 'expert' in their practice. Beddoe and Davys (2016) suggest that despite its benefits, inter-professional supervision should not be entered into lightly to ensure that professional ethics, codes of practice and clinical competence are not compromised and should be offered to experienced supervisees rather than novices, especially where this is the only supervision on offer.

2.7 The External Supervisor

In the public sector, such as in social work or mental health, there has been a trend towards locating managerial supervision with a line manager but arranging for some form of opportunity for reflective supervision to be provided in another forum. (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Often this forum is located outside of the organisation, especially where the organisation does not have the capacity to meet the demand for supervision. External supervision is defined as supervision which takes place between a practitioner and a supervisor who do not both work for the same organisation. In the case of this research study, departments within the Local Authority have purchased the services of the EPs to facilitate supervision/reflective practice for their employees and as such, the EPs could be considered external supervisors.

Research has identified both advantages and disadvantages of external supervision. Advantages include the freedom to choose a supervisor and opportunities for the supervisee to critique their practice without interference of organisational agendas or fear of being appraised through

the process. Supervisees have also been found to be more likely to raise ethical dilemmas (Bradley and Höjer, 2009, Crocket et al., 2009, Davys, 2005, McAuliffe and Sudbery, 2005, Noble and Irwin, 2009, Ung, 2002 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Some of the disadvantages of external supervision include distance of the supervision from practice, lack of accountability and quality assurance, and loss of pressure for change (Bond and Holland, 2010, Bradley, Englebrecht and Höjer, 2010, Busse, 2009, Copeland, 1998, Flintoff and Flanagan, 2010, Ung, 2002 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016). For those supervisees who only access external supervision, there have been concerns raised about its adequacy to meet all the functions of supervision and it is recommended that other forms of supervision are needed, too. (Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

With regard to responsibility, Crocket et al. (2004 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016) found that external supervisors typically take one of three stances:

- those who see their responsibility as residing solely in the supervisory process and not with the practitioner's practice
- those who identified a responsibility to be alert to risks in practice
- those who shared responsibility between themselves and the supervisee

The employing organisation of an external supervisor should negotiate with the supervisor and supervisees what will and should be covered and make clear the supervisory responsibilities. Beddoe and Davys (2016) emphasise the importance of negotiated contracting so that all parties are clear about where responsibilities lie. The contract should include to whom the supervisee is professionally responsible/accountable and where the supervisee will access specific supervision on their casework. The manner and nature of any communication between the supervisor and the employing organisation should also be clarified in the contract.

In order that the employing organisation is able to know that the purchased supervision is competent and meeting the developmental needs of the

supervisee, supervisors have a responsibility to account for the progress of the supervision they provide (Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

The relationship between the supervisor and the employing organisation can be complex and there is a wide range of understanding about what supervision is (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). In many cases, the employing managers have no contact at all with the supervisor. There are benefits to practitioners sometimes when managers are not closely involved in the supervisory process, such as a reduced feeling of surveillance (Cooper, 2006, cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016) but loose arrangements can also result in a lack of communication and accountability. Beddoe and Davys (2016) advocate a 'three-way conversation' between supervisor, practitioner and practitioner line manager to bridge some of the gaps in the understanding of supervision and its relationship to safe practice. Although such conversations can be difficult as they are exposing and the paid supervisor will inevitably be subject to any political agendas of the employing organisation, Beddoe and Davys (2016) believe these conversations can build trust between the parties when handled well. Beddoe and Davys (2016) suggest that these conversations should take place at three key times: the initial contracting of the supervision, at the practitioner's appraisal, and as part of an annual review of the supervision.

2.8 Group supervision

Group supervision 'remains a complex form of supervision which offers rich and valuable learning to supervisees and, at the same time, requires skill, time and commitment'. (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, p. 124).

Group supervision has increased in use not only as a means of providing cost-effective and time-efficient supervision but also as it is recognised as having benefits in terms of peer support and enriched learning opportunities. For example, group supervision can provide opportunities to use techniques such as role-playing and live counselling demonstration, that cannot be achieved through individual supervision. Supervisees are

afforded an opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills and leadership skills as well as develop their professional practice (Proctor, 2008).

Whilst group supervision may be cost effective/efficient, it is generally considered to be more demanding in terms of the skills needed to facilitate the group and for the supervisees accessing the supervision and there is an added level of complexity for establishing purpose, functions, contracts and boundaries (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008).

What 'group supervision' looks like can vary enormously across contexts although research and guidance on good practice continues to emerge (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Within educational psychology services, a range of 'group supervision' practices can be found, including reflective practice groups, reflecting teams, Solution Circles, peer supervision and group consultation. The functions of group supervision are similar to those of individual supervision (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Hewson and Carroll, 2016, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008):

- to monitor the quality of work
- to develop a better understanding of themselves as practitioners
- to reflect on service delivery

However, the group supervision process will be affected by the goals of the participants or organisation. Group supervision has come under criticism for deviating from the principles of supervision and evolving into an activity that does not provide the critical reflection required to be 'supervision' and to evoke change in practice. Morrison (2001, cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016) argues that group supervision is not:

- a solution to poor performance, incompetence or dysfunctional teams
- an alternative to individual supervision and performance management
- a framework that is appropriate to all staff or all tasks

- a process that can be imposed on staff
- a format that will suit all individual supervisors
- a process at which good individual supervisors will necessarily be competent

Beddoe and Davys (2016) also have constructed a list of professional activities that they do not consider should be included in group supervision:

- caseload review
- case presentation
- debriefing
- team up-date briefing
- education
- support
- networking

2.8.1 Types of Group Supervision

Proctor (2008) and Page and Wosket (2015) have identified four types of group supervision, although they name them slightly differently:

Table 1: Types of Supervision Group

Proctor (2008)	Page and Wosket (2015)
Authoritative	Individual supervision in a group
Participative	Supervisor-led group
Co-operative	Facilitated group
Peer Group	Peer supervision

The type of group may be selected as most fitting for the group or in some circumstances, may be an imposed group style. Page and Wosket (2015) recognise that there is often a blend of different proportions. There are

strengths and weaknesses associated with each style depending on the stage of development of the group members.

Authors of the literature on group supervision vary in the type of group they focus on in their books but tend to focus on the supervisor-led or facilitated groups generally, with separate chapters on peer group supervision. The authoritative group style where individuals receive supervision within the presence of the group tends to be regarded as similar to individual supervision (Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008).

There is no agreement on the size of a group, although there should be more than two, and the larger the group, the more complex the group dynamics. The potential for group members to become marginalised or to be given insufficient time for their needs increases with group size, too. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy has an expectation of its members that those receiving group supervision divide the time recorded depending on the size of the group: for groups of four or less, the time should be halved and for larger groups, the time should be divided by the number of supervisees. Page and Wosket (2015) recommend a group size of three-four supervisees with one facilitator as being the optimum.

2.8.2 Peer Supervision

The literature on peer supervision reports on the experiences of peers supervising one another, without an external or lead supervisor (eg Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008). This approach to peer supervision is not directly related to this specific research study and so has been excluded from this literature review.

2.8.3 Team Supervision

Team supervision describes supervision that takes place in a group but differs from group supervision in that the group members work together as

a team outside of the supervision group. The distinction is made because teams can bring complex team dynamics and team issues to the supervisory process (Proctor, 2008). It brings an additional element of team development to the role of the supervisor that is not necessarily present in other group supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2015). Many of the approaches for group supervision remain relevant but Hawkins and Shohet (2012) have found that there are other issues which need attending to, such as deciding which professionals should be included in the team (eg clerical staff, trainees).

The primary difference for the supervisor is the need to address the team's relationships with one another:

> 'Often as individual supervisors we have noticed that supervisees are more stressed because of their difficult relationships with colleagues, than they are by their work with clients.' (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.198)

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) argue that these relationship issues are best addressed with all parties present in a group situation than in individual supervision and advocate an approach that acknowledges the need for different 'people' in teams to make the team function. The 'team' as a whole has a life of its own and can be considered in relation to interpersonal issues, team dynamics, organisational context or parallel processing of case work. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) suggest there is a risk when supervising individually that team issues are reduced to personal issues. A supervisor will be limited in the extent to which they can fully understand the complex team so the group should share responsibility for ensuring that team issues are addressed as well as attending to the individual and group needs. This can be achieved through checking how the team is functioning either at each meeting or at regular intervals. According to Hawkins and Shohet (2102), this checking is best done when things are going well and not when the team is in crisis.

2.8.4 Reflective Practice

> 'Reflective practice is accepted as being a key component of professional education and practice in health and social care, adopted by traditional models of professional education development as a fundamental foundation of professional development, essential for the integration of theory and practice'. Karban and Smith (2012 p.173 - cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016, p.69)

Reflective practice has its origins in the work of Schön (philosopher 1930-1997), who developed the term 'reflective practice' to describe the process of reflecting on professional practice. Hewson and Carroll (2016) view the reflective practice group as a different and additional fifth type of group to the other types of group supervision identified by Proctor (2008) and Page and Wosket (2015). They advocate an approach based on the concept of Michael White's work on reflecting teams in family therapy in the late 1980s/early 1990s. A reflecting team typically involves three steps:

1. a participant is interviewed about their presenting issue either by the supervisor or a group member
2. the group members have a discussion about what they experienced or reflected on whilst hearing the interviewee's story
3. the participant is interviewed again what about stood out for them when listening to the discussion of the reflecting team

The idea is that the participant will be able to unpick the situation and reflect on any assumptions they may be making, hence learning from the experience. Hewson and Carroll (2016) believe that reflective practice needs to go one step further than 'reflection' which does not necessarily result in change in practice, so they have added the 'consolidation stance' to ensure that learning takes place. For Hewson and Carroll (2016), reflective practice involves moving through and between three stages:

1. mindfulness
2. consideration

3. consolidation

Hewson and Carroll (2016) argue that groups can be an ideal forum for reflective practice, provided that the group members have an induction to the roles and there are clear group rules to ensure safety and effectiveness. This is important so that the reflecting team members follow the principles of 'safety first', being a 'mindful friend' and asking curious questions. The challenge of reflective practice in groups is that there are dual roles required by the group members: reflective supervision and group work.

Within the field of clinical psychology, reflective practice has been identified as being a core part of professional development and whilst reflection on one's practice can take many different forms, reflective practice groups are common, especially for trainees (Binks et al., 2013). The benefits for trainee clinical psychologists of reflecting in groups have been recognised through a series of studies (Hall et al., 1999, Ieva et al., 2009, Kline et al., 1997, Nathan and Poulson, 2004 - cited in Binks et al. 2013) although some potential pitfalls exist, too (Nathan and Poulson, 2004, Robson and Robson, 2008 - cited in Binks et al, 2013). The benefits and disadvantages are consistent with the advantages and challenges of group supervision outlined below.

2.9 Potential Benefits and Pitfalls of Group Supervision

The advantages and disadvantages of group supervision for supervisees and supervisors can be found in the literature on group supervision (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008). In summary, the advantages for supervisees include the value of learning from peers and sharing good practice along with the development of interpersonal skills through group interaction. Group supervision can have a supportive function in that supervisees are able to see that others share some of their anxieties and experiences. The range of experience within the group will be wider, bringing more opportunities for empathy. The supervisees are able to benefit from hearing feedback and contributions from the other members of the group in addition to hearing the

reflections of the supervisor (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Working in a group also widens the possibilities for using different supervision techniques and for the supervisees to learn about the management of group dynamics by observing the supervisor at work.

For the supervisor, the reported benefits include an opportunity to see their supervisees in a different way and to measure their own response to the discussion by measuring it against the group's response (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Additionally, there is potential for the supervisees to challenge the supervisor's thinking (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

The disadvantages focus primarily on time restrictions and the challenges of group dynamics. The group dynamics can become an obstruction to the supervisory process (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012) and there is a risk of collusion amongst group members, thus inadequately challenging thinking. Where the group members all come from one team (see Team Supervision above), the need for individuals to maintain positive working relationships can impact on the level of questioning and challenge. Group supervision usually means that not all members of the group are able to raise an issue each time, and whilst they may be able to learn from listening to others, they may not be sufficiently reflective of their own practice over the course of time.

2.10 Frameworks and Models of Supervision

> 'Supervision is a joint journey and works best when there is a shared model and framework'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.84)

There are a range of models of supervision, the majority of which have emerged from individual supervision in counselling and psychotherapy. In most cases, the principles and the model can be adjusted for group supervision. Some models are about the theoretical functions of supervision (eg Hawkins and Shohet, 1985) whereas others provide

descriptive processes for supervision sessions (eg Page and Wosket, 2001), so it is difficult to compare models.

Within Educational Psychology supervision, models of supervision used include Scaife's (2001) General Supervision Framework, Page and Wosket's (2001) Cyclical Model of Counselling Supervision and Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven-eyed Model (Dunsmuir et al., 2015). Proctor's (1986) Functional Interactive Model is also widely recognised by educational psychologists and Proctor and Inskipp (2001) have developed a Supervision Alliance Model specifically for group supervision.

Dunsmuir et al. (2015) found that of EPs who reported the use of models in supervision, the majority used Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) Seven-eyed Model, although it is not clear whether this data relates to group or individual supervision.

Models of supervision can be useful in establishing purpose and boundaries, roles and responsibilities and in giving structure and focus to the supervision sessions (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). However, when stuck to rigidly, models of supervision can be restrictive (Page and Wosket, 2015).

Whilst there are a range of models of supervision, they are all focused on the development of the supervisee and as such, can be described as developmental approaches to supervision. The challenge for the supervisor is to have a range of styles and approaches so that they can modify the style of supervision as the supervisees develop. This would be appropriate for group supervision, but adds an additional level of challenge in that individual group members may not all develop at the same rate. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) identify four stages of development in individual supervision:

1. Self centred
2. Client centred
3. Process centred

4. Process in context centred

This understanding of supervisee development can help the supervisor to accurately assess the needs of the supervisee but again, poses challenges for a group situation. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) also believe that a practitioner should not become a supervisor until they are functioning at the process centred level at least themselves.

A debate has continued on whether group supervision is able to carry out all the functions of individual supervision or whether individual supervision is necessary as well (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Hawkins and Shohet (2012) suggest that the form of supervision should reflect the nature of the supervisees' work. For example, group supervision would be most appropriate perhaps for professionals who work with groups. Group supervision can, however, be sufficient on its own where the practitioner is not involved in intense therapeutic work with individual clients. Page and Wosket (2015) and Proctor (2008) remind supervisors that there is not a competition between individual and group supervision; they serve different purposes and may be more or less appropriate depending on the circumstance.

2.11 The Supervisor

2.11.1 Supervisor Motivation

Some supervisors become supervisors as a natural progression through promotion or years of experience. Other seek to carry out the work for a range of reasons and the role suits some people more than others as it fits well with their inclination towards personal development and educational skills (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). 'Reluctant supervisors' who find themselves in the role can often avoid the task in terms of making time for supervision or can execute the role poorly. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) refer to hidden motives in becoming supervisors. Some supervisors seem to enjoy the role as it makes them feel better about their own practice, positioning themselves as the 'expert', whereas others seek to become

supervisors as a replacement for the lack of supervision they themselves receive and hope to benefit personally from the supervisory process . Hawkins and Shohet (2012) also find that supervisors who are still working in the profession themselves tend to be better as this helps them to relate more easily to the issues raised by supervisees.

There are many reported benefits to supervising the practice of others, including having an opportunity (or being called to) reflect on their own practice, refreshing one's own practice. The supervisor can develop their skills in helping others to learn and to develop.

In preparing for the role, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) recommend that supervisors reflect honestly on their motivations for becoming a supervisor, although any 'hidden' motives should not deter them from doing so. They should also reflect on their own experiences of supervision, as prophecy may well fulfil itself. If a supervisor is expecting the work to be either problematic or engaging, for example, it may well end up being so.

2.11.2 Supervisor Qualities

> '...supervisory ability is always embedded in relationship and can never become a mechanical process'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.172)

The importance of the supervisory relationship in determining the effectiveness of supervision is widely documented (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008). A good supervisory relationship affects supervisee reported levels of satisfaction with the supervision and this has led to the development of models of supervision where the relationship is key. Feelings of safety, trust and transparency are paramount so that a safe space is provided for the supervisee to explore their working practices and experiences, including uncomfortable and negative feelings, with a focus on future action in practice (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). However, there can be confusion about where supervision ends and therapy begins (Hawkins and Shohet,

2012). Whilst some supervisors are happy to play the role of a therapist, others feel uncomfortable and become anxious about the supervisee's 'personal' problems coming into the supervision session. For Hawkins and Shohet (2012), the focus of supervision should always be on work-related issues and on managing the work better. They advocate the development and application of a framework for supervision in order to maintain flexibility with structure and focus.

Scaife (2009) identified key practical factors in developing the supervisory relationship, which include clarification of boundaries, expectations, consistent delivery of supervision sessions and agreed arrangements for contact in between sessions.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) have developed a list of essential personal qualities needed in a good supervisor:

- Flexibility
- A multi-perspectival view
- A solid knowledge of the profession and orientation in which they supervise
- The ability to work transculturally
- The capacity to manage and contain anxiety
- Openness to learning
- Sensitivity to the wider contextual issues
- Can handle power appropriately
- Humour, humility and patience

One of the challenges of supervising is being able to help the supervisees develop their own styles of working and to let them generate their own solutions to the issues they raise. Supervisees are not required to moulded into a version of the supervisor. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

Page and Wosket (2015) include one of the desirable skills in a supervisor as that of commitment to the role, which they see as involving a level of passion for the work. Hewson (2008, cited in Page and Wosket, 2015) talks about the necessity of 'passionate supervision' which means that though the supervisor may be faced with difficult feelings in response to what the client brings to the session, the supervisor remains able to reflect on counter-transference without becoming detached, cynical or bored.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) and Proctor (2008) recognise that many of the qualities required to be a 'good' supervisor are likely to be present in a professional who is a competent practitioner in a helping profession but suggest that the skills are employed differently in supervision. A successful supervisor will be able to adapt those skills to the group supervision situation. Qualities such as empathy, understanding, unconditional positive regard, congruence and genuineness, warmth and self-disclosure, flexibility, concern, curiosity, investment and openness have all been identified as being qualities present in good therapists (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Some authors include the need for good counselling and/or coaching skills to be a competent supervisor (Bond and Holland, 2010, de Haan, 2012 - cited in Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

Proctor (2008) has attempted to make visible the often hidden 'group management' skills of the group supervisor. Proctor (2008) believes that a supervisor needs to have a clear understanding of the general tasks of supervision and their complexity but she argues that in managing a group, the supervisor also needs a set of group management skills that are distinct from the skills of a supervisor more generally. These skills include:

- self-awareness of one's style, strengths and limitations in facilitating a group
- an ability to engage the supervisees in each other's supervision
- an understanding of how groups can detract or contribute to the task of supervision

- an awareness of how non-verbal and sensory feedback will differ in a group situation

2.11.3 The Supervisory Style

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) have found that if a supervisor's training has been psychoanalytic in nature, they may tend to concentrate on understanding the unconscious process of the supervisee and their clients. If the supervisor is more of a behaviourist, they may tend to concentrate on client and supervisee behaviour and the methodology of the worker. 'One's style as a supervisor is affected by the style of one's practitioner work'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p73). However, they acknowledge that there may be an integration of several different styles. Whilst the supervisee and supervisor need to share a common language, they do not need to have had the same training or have the same style.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) also believe that a supervisor's style is influenced by their age, gender and cultural background, as well as their personality. These issues are unproblematic but need to be acknowledged, perhaps. Supervisors and supervisees both need to be mindful of 'blind spots, deaf spots and dumb spots' (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.74). In order to build rapport with the supervisee, the supervisor needs to be able to:

- see the world through the eyes of the supervisee
- attune to the supervisee
- be in touch with the feelings and sensations of the supervisee

Proctor (2008) shares this view that there can be a supervisor bias, leading the group to focus on a particular aspect of a case. Inskipp and Proctor's (2001) Supervisory Alliance Model and Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven-Eyed Model are designed to support the supervisor in encouraging multi-perspective reflection.

Carroll and Gilbert (2011 - cited in Hawkins and Shohet, 2012) argue that a supervisor should check with a new supervisee about how they learn (ie visually, kinaesthetically) and what can be done to best facilitate their learning. In a group situation, this could be difficult to achieve, although if a group member is presenting an issue individually, it would be possible to ask these types of question before beginning the reflection.

Any supervision group is context-specific and supervision groups vary in terms of composition, focus and challenges hence the style of leadership and facilitation required may differ depending on the circumstances (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). The supervisees may or may not be from the same profession and can vary in length and type of experience, ranging from novice to expert. This poses challenges for the group supervisor in establishing how supervision is best facilitated to meet the variety of need within the group.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) believe the supervisor plays a significant role in determining the style of the group through the modelling of their own style and behaviour in response to group members. They have developed a four quadrant model of styles of group supervision, consisting of:

- supervisor led
- group led
- task focused
- process focused

Group supervision can become 'stuck' in one of these quadrants and good supervision would see the supervisor steering the group flexibly through the quadrants, depending on the needs of the group and the stage of group development. Ideally, there would be discussion in the group about the different approaches and the group would decide on options. Overly prescriptive models may not meet the needs of supervisors who wish to preserve their own supervisory style (Ashmore et al., 2012).

2.12 Managing the Group

> 'When a supervision group is working well there are no stars (including the supervisor) and no dunces. Rather, each supervisee is known for his or her particular talents, idiosyncratic ways of viewing clients, and personal supervision goals'. (Bernard and Goodyear, 2009, p.257 - cited in Page and Wosket, 2015, p.142)

In facilitating a supervision group, the facilitator must be able to operate at three different systemic levels: the needs of the individual, the interactions within the group and the group's interaction within its professional context. The facilitator is required not only to attend to the dynamics which occur within the group sessions but also to attend to their own responses to these dynamics as facilitator. In practice, these levels are intertwined within the process and effective supervision relies on the facilitator's ability to move fluidly between them in sessions (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). Effective supervision of teams and groups needs competency in the complex processes which form part of groups and organisations (Page and Wosket, 2015). The group supervisor is required to manage several processes simultaneously. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Proctor, 2008). The supervisor must attend to:

- the individual's reflection
- facilitating the group's responses
- group dynamics and development
- the group contract and boundaries

In group supervision, the supervisor needs to be able to create a group climate that ensures the group members feel safe enough to open up about their difficulties and expose their vulnerabilities. The supervisor can achieve this not only through contracting, but also through modelling giving and being able to receive challenge and feedback (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Working with the group to establish a collective sense of endeavour through sharing goals and purpose also helps to develop a sense that the

group and supervisor are 'in it together' and cannot achieve their aims without one another.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) have found in their experience that groups tend to elicit stronger emotions than individual sessions and whilst this can be effective in bringing about change, the supervisor needs to be sufficiently able to manage the energy generated within the group. The supervisor needs to feel comfortable in group situations and to have an understanding of how groups develop and change over time.

Proctor (2008) reports that many supervisors feel uncomfortable about 'managing' the group in group supervision. Supervisors can feel that this is disrespectful to the group members, who as professionals do not need to be managed in the supervisory process, and it does not sit well with supervisors who believe their role is to guide the group in finding its own collective way forward rather than take charge of it. However, Proctor (2008) argues that the group sessions are usually time-limited and have an agreed agenda of expected outcome(s) of the time spent. She feels that management and/or leadership is 'necessary and inevitable' (Proctor, 2008, p.54) so that the group can achieve best practice supervision and in her view, the discussion is not about whether to manage but how to manage so that the group members share ownership of their supervision. 'Action or inaction is managing' (Proctor, 2008, p.58). Proctor (2008) acknowledges that many supervisors manage groups very well without realising they are doing so.

Proctor (2008) has found that whilst frameworks can help the group supervisor, there remain a number of potential challenges and when working with a group, communication needs to be even more clear, as conversations and decisions will have different effects on each group member. Some of the problems associated with group supervision include:

- how to bring a group 'back on course' when disharmony is interfering with work;
- how to decide which is paramount when the chips are down - empathy, respect or authenticity;

- how to make sense of puzzling interactions;
- how to interrupt Drama Triangles *(see Karpman, 1968)* and convert them into positive interactions;
- how to manage diversity when it is destructive to the task;
- how to address 'hot' issues of anger, fear and shame;
- what to do if someone is not practising well enough, or unsafely;
- when to admit that a group member wants to go, or that you want her to leave.

(Proctor, 2008, p.104)

For Proctor, these types of issues evoke emotional responses in the group and if these emotions are not acknowledged honestly and respectfully, the group can become dysfunctional. However, Proctor (2008) also compares the experience of supervising a group to that of parenting and states that sometimes a supervisor is doing a 'good enough' job but the group is wilful and may end up not functioning well regardless.

Tuckman's (1965) model of group development remains at the centre of contemporary understanding of group development processes. Tuckman (1965) described four stages of group development: forming, norming, storming and performing. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) suggest that, initially, a supervision group may focus on practical issues and contracting, in order to establish boundaries, rules and expectations. Following the establishment of the basic structure of the supervision group, there is often a period of testing out power and authority within the group. Rivalry and competitiveness can emerge as can attempts to challenge the authority, skills and knowledge of the supervisor. Once these two stages have passed, the group is able to settle down to work productively together but the group can move back and forth between the stages of development. Some of these stages of group development can knock the confidence of the supervisor (Proctor, 2008). According to Hawkins and Shohet (2012):

'Understanding the theories of group development and having insight into the group dynamics are not enough. The group supervisor must also know how to confront the group process and facilitate positive group behaviour'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.189)

Proctor (2008) reports that in her experience, unclear or unreviewed working agreements can contribute to the problems in group development whereas contracting and ground rules can help to alleviate some of the difficulties. The group supervisor should be aware of stereotypical and necessary roles within groups and have an understanding of how their own behaviour can contribute to these interactions. However, they should apply that knowledge flexibly to facilitate an understanding of what is going on in that particular group. At times, a focus on group formation may need to take priority over the task.

2.13 Contracts

The benefits of contracting in supervision is widely documented now (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008). The establishment of purpose, roles, responsibilities and boundaries is important in setting up group supervision and co-constructed contracting, with group members as well as any employing organisation, is recommended (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Contracts should include:

- ground rules
- aims of the group members
- aims of other stakeholders - organisational and professional context
- structure of the meetings - format and other practicalities, such as time, frequency, place
- role and expectations of the supervisor
- role and expectations of the group members

- how the group sessions will fit alongside other supervision received by group members
- how to manage any shared knowledge within the group of clients/cases raised by a member
- any assessment processes
- how the contract will be reviewed and developed
- boundaries - clarifying the distinction between therapy/counselling and supervision and confidentiality (what will be shared)

(adapted from Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.68, p.183)

Contracts are an important part of engaging group members but they do not translate into 'trusting participation' or a shared understanding of the purposes and aims of supervision (Proctor, 2008). Proctor (2008) prefers the term 'working agreement' as 'contract' has binding implications. She also believes that contracts need to be co-constructed with the group rather than pre-written and presented to the group. This is especially important for group members who are new to the experience of group supervision as they cannot be regarded as giving 'informed consent' for something they do not fully understand yet. Page and Wosket (2015) agree that positive ownership of the task and function of the group is crucial to the group's success and achieving participant 'buy-in' is an important part of the contracting stage.

For Proctor (2008), contracting for group supervision involves a series of working agreements, some unwritten, that are used to manage the different levels at which the group operates:

- the supervision contract
- the group's working agreement
- the agenda for the session
- the management of the time within the session
- the management of the reflective space

The supervision contract

The overall supervision contract is important in establishing the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisees and is set within the context of the organisation and its codes of ethics and conduct and expectations of professional development (Proctor, 2008). These are the non-negotiable elements of responsibility: confidentiality, record keeping, monitoring and assessing. The supervisor/supervisee may choose to go above the required minimum, eg keeping their own notes in addition to completing a formal record of supervision. Page and Wosket (2015) also recommend that at the initial stage of setting up a group, it is useful to be clear about what is negotiable and what is predetermined.

The working agreement

Proctor (2008) argues that this contract is of even more importance in group supervision for two main reasons. Firstly, the way in which individual group members respond to the rules of their organisation or work will vary and this can affect group dynamics in the supervision session. Secondly, the group needs to respond to those who do not adhere to the basic rules of the profession (such as not sharing ethical concerns about a client with their manager or not completing supervision records). The 'rules' of the group need to be re-visited periodically to avoid uncertainty and to prompt compliance. The group members will be looking to the supervisor to note how they respond to these situations, too, so the supervisor needs to be aware that they are modelling responses all the time (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Proctor, 2008)

Proctor (2008) suggests that rather than attempt to address all the elements of the working agreement at the outset, there should be some initial setting up of the way in which the group will address some issues but the group should get on with the process of supervision and as the group evolves over time, the agreements can be re-visited at appropriate times. The extent to which agreements are put in writing is negotiable. For example, it is probably not necessary to write a rule about good manners.

If agreements are made, they should be taken seriously. They should not be ignored or never referred to again so some thought should go into what exactly is formally recorded.

Time management and the agenda

Proctor (2008) has found that time at the start of the session is important in 'checking in' with one another and creating a 'buzz' in the group. Similarly, allowing time at the end of the session to review learning and process what has happened in the session adds a feeling of value to the group. The supervisor needs to manage the time to ensure these areas are addressed but not at the expense of the main task of the session. An agreed agenda for the session facilitates this approach quite easily.

Managing the reflective space

The supervisor plays a role in steering how the issue raised by a supervisee is handled by the group. In addition to any specific mode of supervision that may be employed (see above), the supervisor has the potential to lead the supervisee's thinking about the issue in a different direction and to manage the way in which the other group members respond and attend to the supervisee. Proctor (2008) sees this as 'the mini-contract', which can be negotiated with the supervisee in the session.

Whilst agreements and boundaries play a role in developing best practice in group supervision, Proctor (2008) warns against becoming too focused on protocols, rules and structure as this can hinder the supervisory process and can shift the focus from learning and development for the group members.

> 'The ability to keep focus can be equally demanding and perhaps more rewarding. It includes the skills of stating priorities and holding to them and calls for respect and discipline in the pursuit of agreed aims'. (Proctor, 2008, p68)

Supervisors will vary in their style of managing the group and each group of supervisees will interact in different ways. Each group is unique and the role of the supervisor is to support the group in achieving its aims and to ensure there is opportunity for individual learning in a group situation.

2.14 Supporting and Developing the Supervisor

2.14.1 Training

> 'The practice of supervision has moved forward considerably over the past few decades and has reached a stage where anyone serious about becoming a supervisor might reasonably be expected to undertake one of the many supervisor programmes available'. (Page and Wosket, 2015, p.228)

Supervision competency does not just naturally develop in professionals but is the result of the acquisition of additional knowledge, supervision skills and supervision values (Beddoe and Davys, 2016). There is an expectation that supervisors taking up the role in more recent years will have acquired some formal training although this is not always the case and there are many supervisors who have not been formally trained. Despite training being more readily available nowadays, there are still wide variations in practice (Page and Wosket, 2015). Beddoe and Davys (2016) argue that training is important as becoming a supervisor requires a shift in perspective which does not just develop through years of practitioner experience. The supervisor needs to start to 'think like a supervisor'. 'One day they are an 'ordinary' practitioner and the next day they have the role of supervisor and that carries with it an assumption of expertise' (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, p.64).

Authors agree that training and competency in supervision (individual) and in group management are two pre-requisites for the supervisor (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, Page and Wosket, 2015, Proctor, 2008). The facilitator should also have experience of being a supervisee and of being a group participant. For the group supervision to

be effective, the supervisees, too, must have a set of skills on entering into the experience: being a supervisee, a supervisor and a group member (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

In response to the increase in EPs being involved in supervision, Dunsmuir et al. (2015) report that training programmes for educational psychologists run courses for supervisors, at both initial and advanced levels. These courses offer the opportunity to develop skills beyond a basic level and to develop working knowledge of a range of models, such as those by Hawkins and Shohet (2006), Scaife (2001) and Page and Wosket (2001).

The guidance and recommendations for supervisors in therapeutic settings may also have useful implications for the practice of EPs taking on the role of a group facilitator. Page and Wosket (2015) suggest that supervisors need training in order to be able to practice confidently and competently and to give them some credibility. Basic training to develop skills, experience and theoretical knowledge is important in protecting the supervisee as well as the supervisor. Page and Wosket's (2015) experience of working with supervisors is that many new to the role underestimate the sense of responsibility that accompanies the work. Those who have considerable experience of supervising on an individual basis are not necessarily thought to be able to apply those skills to a group situation effortlessly either. Similarly, group supervision can be a common experience for trainees but that does not mean the supervisor can then easily supervise a group of experienced practitioners, nor can a trainee having experienced group supervision automatically know what it is like to become the supervisor of a group.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) describe supervision as a multi-faceted, complex process that requires additional knowledge, competencies, capabilities and capacities to those of a practitioner.

> 'Becoming or being asked to be a supervisor can be both exhilarating and daunting. Without training or support the task can be overwhelming'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.51)

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) argue that all supervisors should have a period of formal training. Research into whether or not supervisor training has a positive effect on supervision has been limited but the data that is available indicates a positive effect on quality of supervision following formal training (Stevens et al, 1997, Wheeler, 2003, Wheeler and Richards, 2007 - cited in Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). According to Hawkins and Shohet (2012), the best time to access training is during the first year of practice as a supervisor, so that the trainee supervisor has some experience upon which they can reflect. However, if there is to be no ongoing supervision for the supervisor, they recommend accessing training prior to commencing the work. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) warn against expecting a supervisor to carry out the role well with only a brief training course, though, as they believe that it is the quality of the support the supervisor receives in planning and reflecting on their supervision as they develop in the role that actually ensures high quality supervision. More experienced supervisors may benefit from extending their skills through interdisciplinary training.

Page and Wosket (2015) suggest that whilst the specifics of various training routes and approaches can vary, there should be five ultimate aims of supervisor training. The table in Appendix 1 outlines Page and Wosket's (2015) views on what would constitute 'good' supervisor training. Delivery of the training in modules enables the trainee supervisor to carry out 'action learning' (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). A year-long course would allow for supervisors to continue learning with the same people and they could establish a peer supervision group.

With regard to training to supervise groups, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) apply the same expectations of having received basic training in supervision before moving on to learn about the specific requirements of group supervision. Group supervision training should include exploring the differences between individual, team and group supervision as well as group dynamics, the stages of group development and the theory of team development.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) are wary of accreditation in training. For them, the experience of supervision training is more important than striving to achieve accreditation and they have some concern that the training could become more about ticking boxes to meet externally-imposed standards than a personalised learning experience. They argue that as supervision is based upon relationships, the learning and development of a supervisor should be based on co-constructed areas for development that emerge through discussion and reflection, rather than on meeting a list of desirable competencies.

2.14.2 Supervising the Supervisor

> 'Above all, supervision is a place where both parties are constantly learning and to stay being a good supervisor is to return regularly to question not only the work of the supervisees but also what we ourselves do as supervisors and how we carry it out'. (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012, p.58)

Page and Wosket (2015) think the ability to stay energised as a supervisor is dependent on the ongoing learning and development of the supervisor, which is best achieved, in their view, through supervision of the supervisor. Page and Wosket (2015) argue that individual supervision rather than group supervision works best for supervisors in the early stages of their practice as it allows for personalised supervision. A group situation may be fraught with challenges for the supervisor due to its exposing nature and the supervisor may not therefore be able to really benefit from raising issues that would facilitate significant learning. More experienced supervisors may have developed the trust and courage to expose their vulnerabilities in a group. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) believe the mode of supervision should reflect the work of the supervisee, so if working with groups, group supervision would be more appropriate. Proctor (2008) agrees and argues that group supervision skills are best developed through group supervision.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) feel it is essential that supervisors should receive ongoing supervision on their supervision:

> 'In the same way that supervision provides the critical linkages between theoretical learning and practice learning ... in the same way supervision on supervision provides the connectivity that links learning about supervision on courses with learning from the practice of supervision'. (p171)

Supervision on supervision provides a space for the supervisor to reflect on the supervisory relationship and the dynamics between the different functions and methods of supervision and how the supervisor may themselves have impacted on the experience of supervision for the supervisee (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). The supervisor's supervisor should help them to notice patterns that emerge and how they are applying what they have learned from supervision training to their work, thereby extending the supervisor's understanding of supervision. The supervisor should have an awareness of their own weaknesses and biases and should be able to respond to these in an open and non-defensive manner. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) suggest that one hour of supervision for every five hours of supervision practice would facilitate sufficient learning and development.

Page and Wosket (2015) recommend that supervisors also maintain their skills and continue to develop their knowledge and skills through attending regional and national training events, conferences or workshops and by reading relevant literature.

Page and Wosket (2015) talk about the potential benefits of therapy for the supervisor in order that they can prevent their own personal issues from interfering with supervision. Although this advice is given in relation to therapists, the point that Page and Wosket (2015) are making is that the supervisor should know what it is like to be 'the client' and this could be interpreted in the case of the EP facilitator as being in the position of participating in group supervision and bringing issues for discussion. The learning element for the supervisor here is that they should know what it is

like to want to 'hide' things from the supervisor. This adds credibility to the work of the supervisor, too, in the opinion of Page and Wosket (2015).

2.15 Guidance on professional practice

EPs have been required to be registered with the regulatory body, the Health and Care Professions Council, since 2009 in order to practise. Registrants must practise in accordance with the *Standards of Proficiency* (HCPC, 2015) and *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (HCPC, 2016). The British Psychological Society's Professional Practice Board revised its *Practice Guidelines* for practitioner psychologists in August 2017 (BPS, 2017) and its *Code of Ethics and Conduct* is currently being updated (BPS, 2017), though these guidelines are not statutory. The British Psychological Society's Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) published *Guidelines for Supervision of Educational Psychologists* in 2010 (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010). This guidance identifies best practice, frameworks and competencies for good supervision. The need to maintain technical and practical skills and knowledge and to know the limits of professional competence is stipulated in both the BPS *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and the HCPC *Standards of Proficiency*.

2.15.1 Supervising the EP

> 'Supervision is central to the delivery of high quality psychological services. Good supervision supports professionally competent practice and ensures that legal and ethical responsibilities to clients are met. The experience of good supervision is invaluable, yet is not always experienced. Of great concern is that in times of change, when support is most necessary, supervision may be regarded as a luxury and minimised due to economic and time demands (putting clients and workers at risk)'.
>
> Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010, p2.)

Whilst the BPS acknowledges that supervision is not a legal requirement, it is considered an essential part of good practice and all aspects of a psychologist's practice is appropriate for discussion in supervision, including the process of supervising others (BPS, 2017, p.13). A key factor in developing and maintaining an awareness of personal biases and self-reflection skills is 'the use of consultation or supervision and having a space where it is possible to open up thinking to the mind of another with a view to extending knowledge about the self' (BPS, 2017. p.12). The BPS's position is that supervision is 'not personal therapy and nor is it a form of, or substitute for, line management or appropriate training' (BPS, 2017, p.13). The BPS recognises that supervision can take many different forms and should be appropriate to the individual practitioner's needs.

Section 11 of The HCPC *Standards of Proficiency* relates to a practitioner's ability to reflect on and review their practice , including developing an understanding of models of supervision and their contribution to practice (HCPC, 2015, p.12).

The DECP guidance makes reference to the separate functions of line management and 'professional supervision', the term chosen to describe personal and professional development:

> 'It is important to recognise and identify that line management supervision and professional supervision exist within the working lives of EPs and that these are different in very important ways. There is, therefore, a conceptual need to separate the functions and tasks of line management and professional supervision , with an acknowledgement that an individual may hold both roles at the same time'. (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p.5)

The HCPC *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (2016) specify that an individual is responsible for the effective supervision of tasks that they have asked others to carry out (HCPC, 2016, p.7).

2.15.2 Skills, Knowledge and Competencies

The *Practice Guidelines* issued by the Professional Practice Board of the British Psychological Society states that psychologists undertaking supervision should ensure that they are sufficiently experienced, competent and appropriately trained to provide supervision, including in situations where psychologists are called upon to supervise non-psychologists (BPS, 2017, p.14).

'Psychologists may offer consultancy supervision to professional colleagues, organisations and stakeholders in line with their competencies' (BPS, 2017, p.14). This seems to draw a distinction between supervision and consultancy supervision and it may be that the work of EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals could be described as consultancy supervision.

The DECP guidance includes a framework for auditing core competencies in supervisors. The DECP recommends 'Supervision should be provided by someone who is able to give a high quality developmental experience'. (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p.6). With regard to the supervision of other professionals, the DECP advises:

> 'In order to protect themselves and to ensure they provide high quality supervision, it is important that EPs ensure they have acquired core competencies in supervision. It is also important that EPs are cognisant of and adhere to the Codes of Professional Ethics and Conduct which pertain to them'. (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p.11)

'For EPs, the ability to give and receive supervision is a core professional competence, yet one that is often neglected' (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010, p.13). The core competencies outlined in the DECP guidance framework are not statutory and they relate to individual supervision but Dunsmuir and Leadbetter state that they can be extended to other supervisory arrangements. The framework is intended to support self-evaluation and co-construction of areas of development for supervisors.

There are six aspects of supervisor competency that are addressed: training, values, context, knowledge, skills and evaluation.

2.15.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The DECP guidance sets out the expectations for initial clarification of the roles and responsibilities in any supervisory relationship, along with contracting, record-keeping, practical arrangements. Boundaries between line management and professional supervision need to be established, especially if the two processes are not being provided by the same person (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010).

> 'It is important for all participants to be clear about the nature and purpose of the supervision and also to agree details about the relationship between the supervision pair/group and other 'stakeholders'. (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010, p.12)

Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) also advise on the importance of clarifying what will and what will not be covered in the supervisory relationship and that agreements are made with regard to confidentiality and accountability. There should also be discussion at the outset about how any difficulties that may arise in the relationship will be dealt with.

> 'Where an EP supervises a person from another profession, it is vital that key lines of accountability in decision-making are clearly agreed and recorded. It is crucial that there is clarity with regard to liability, legal and case responsibility that normally remains within line management structures'. (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010, p.11)

The guidance provided by the BPS, DECP and HCPC in relation to supervision is founded in the context of one individual supervising another individual's work, and no prescriptive definition of what that supervision looks like is given. The DECP guidance on supervision refers to the Hawkins & Shohet (2007) model of the supervisory process which has three functions: managerial, educative and supportive supervision. It is the 'normative' or 'managerial' function of supervision that is often omitted in

the work EPs carry out in facilitating group supervision, peer support groups, reflective conversations, or solution circles for professionals from other agencies. With regard to liability, there is a level of responsibility that is therefore possibly removed from the EP supervisor, but many of the principles embedded in the statutory regulations and guidance on good practice still apply to this area of work for EPs: ethics, professional conduct, accountability, reflection on one's practice and ensuring one is appropriately skilled to carry out specific tasks are standards that apply to any work a practitioner psychologist undertakes.

As Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) say in the DECP guidance on supervision: 'The main focus of this document relates to supervisor competencies in individual supervision, though many of the principles can be extended to other supervisory arrangements' (p.13). The vast majority of the individual competencies listed in the Supervision Competencies Framework provided in the DECP guidance seem to remain appropriate in the context of an EP facilitating reflective practice, peer support groups or group supervision.

2.16 The Experience of Facilitation: A Review of Research Studies

The research studies included in this literature review were selected on the basis that they report on the experience of facilitation of group supervision. Although there are a number of recent research studies relating to EP involvement in supervising other professionals, these studies have not been included in this paper as they focus on peer supervision (Beal, Chilokoa and Ladak, 2017), the experience of the supervisees (Bartle and Trevis, 2015, Osborne and Burton, 2014, Soni, 2015), or supervision has been provided individually (Wedlock and Turner, 2017). The focus of this research paper is on the experience of the group facilitator and not on what can be learned to improve the experience for the supervisees. The following research studies were found to be of relevance to this study and so have been included in this literature review. They are presented in order of the date of research.

The experience of facilitation in reflective groups: a phenomenological study (Murrell, 1998)

Murrell's (1998) IPA study on the experiences of facilitating group reflective practice for three nurse teachers found that of key importance was the 'human' element of the facilitator, in that they were open to self-disclosure. They felt this helped to create empathy. The nurse teachers also reported a need for the facilitator to use a range of strategies in response to the needs of the group. The facilitator played a role in managing group dynamics so that an environment which was experienced as safe, trusting, with listening and sharing and that was enjoyable was fostered. Non-contribution of members was not judged. The preparation for the role by the facilitator and ongoing reflection of their work as facilitator was seen as essential by the nurse teachers. They reported the benefits of having a co-facilitator and fortnightly supervision for themselves. The role of facilitator was not considered to be something anyone could just pick up and run with and that a certain set of skills, as well as training and support, were necessary to be an effective facilitator.

The nurse teachers reported some of the challenges they had faced in the role of facilitator:

- it can be a demanding and intense interaction
- there can be uncomfortable feelings, including anxiety and insecurity on the part of facilitator
- inequalities of power due to the hierarchical structure within nursing can be problematic

This study, although not recent, is relevant to this research study in that it provides an insight into the experience of facilitating a reflective practice group and is an IPA study. However, the study is small in scale and the data does not relate to the experience of facilitating supervision for experienced practitioners, for those working in psychology or for those working with professionals from a different profession.

Lecturers' accounts of facilitating clinical supervision groups within a pre-registration mental health nursing curriculum (Ashmore, Carver, Clibbens and Sheldon, 2012)

Ashmore et al. (2012) undertook a study of the experiences of eight lecturers facilitating clinical supervision groups for nurses during their pre-registration training. This three-year prospective longitudinal study identified eight factors that contributed to the lecturer's experiences: attitudes to supervision, perceptions of the student experience, preparation and support, approaches to supervision, the 'good' supervisor, the lecturer as supervisor, the structure and process of sessions and the content of supervision.

The lecturer supervisors in this study reported enjoyment of the work and felt that both they and the supervisees gained from the experience of group supervision. They recognised that some students did not initially understand the purpose of the group or the role of the supervisor well and that they, as supervisors, had to help the supervisees focus on making best use of their time and to work through group processes.

The lecturers felt that some formal training for the role of supervisor may have been useful but they also felt that without training, they could work in their individual styles. Although they felt they had sufficient group management skills to facilitate the groups, rigorous and consistent supervision for the supervision would have helped to create a culture that valued individual supervisor style whilst ensuring consistent quality supervision for the students. The lecturers felt that they would have benefitted from more peer support to learn from one another and develop their supervisory approaches. The arranged peer supervision sessions (twice a year) were considered insufficient to meet the need.

The lecturers reported using facilitative approaches and referred to Heron (2001) and Rogers (1951, 1967). Few reported using models of clinical supervision and some were actively against the use of models. Proctor's (1986) model was the basis of this group supervision project but was barely mentioned by any of the lecturers. The lecturers reported that they did,

however, develop a structure to the sessions. The start of the sessions included reiteration of the ground rules, recapping on the previous session and prioritising items for discussion, for example.

The lecturers identified three key areas that they felt made a 'good' supervisor, namely knowledge, personal qualities and skills and experience. Knowledge included knowledge of supervision, codes of conduct, group dynamics and the challenges faced by the nursing students in their day to day work. The personal qualities and skills included empathy, problem-solving skills, trustworthiness, client-centredness and group management skills. Flexibility and a sense of humour as well as motivation for the work and a value of students were also reported to be important. The students in this study reported an almost identical description of a 'good' supervisor to that of the lecturers. Both descriptions were consistent with reports of desirable qualities and skills in nursing staff (Fowler, 1995 - cited in Ashmore et al., 2012).

The lecturers reported a need to balance the supervision with professional boundaries. They also felt it was important for the supervisor to have had experience of being a supervisee themselves and of working in similar areas of work to those they are supervising. The lecturers saw themselves as potentially better suited to provide this supervision (as opposed to practising clinicians in the student's placement) as they were independent, had a wide range of experience, had knowledge of supporting students working in a range of specialist areas and had greater availability. They did feel there was a risk that they were not as up-to-date as practising clinicians, however, depending on how recently they had been in practice. Some of the lecturers felt it was important that they did not have their own students in their group in order to reduce any potential for conflict of roles.

The lecturers also described a number of techniques they used to help develop group relationships, such as ice-breakers or turn-taking until the group was better established. The supervisors reported being less directive as the group evolved over time. The challenges faced by the group included having insufficient time to cover all issues. Some lecturers felt that

some of their students did not contribute to the sessions, too, and others raised issues but did not seem to want to take any action following discussion. The supervisors also experienced some difficulty with managing conflict between group members during the sessions. Non-attendance, silent members and poor motivation were acknowledged in the interviews but not discussed in depth. The lecturers felt that the sessions enabled the group members to raise issues that they may have felt unable to raise with clinicians in their placements and there was some similarity between the issues raised by the various groups. Some ethical dilemmas arose and the group signposted the student towards next steps, if the issue was felt inappropriate for discussion within the group.

In summary, the data indicates that the supervisors felt the need to guide the supervisees on the type of issue to discuss and how to work through the issues as a group that is supportive of one another. There was a need for the supervisors to balance putting some structure to the sessions, whilst maintaining their own individual style of supervision and the lecturers felt that a greater level of supervision for them as supervisors would have been beneficial in achieving this. The participants in this study referred to models of supervision but were loose in their application of models and some of the participants were actively against using any particular model in order to retain flexibility and individuality. However, the participants described an approach that Ashmore et al. (2012) felt reflected that of Proctor's (1986) model.

This study is relevant to this research paper in that it explores lecturers experiences as facilitators of group supervision. The depth of the study provides a clear insight into the experiences of the participants and whilst not related to educational psychology, provides data that is closely related to this research study as it focuses solely on the experiences of the supervisors. However, the data again relates to the supervision of trainees within the same profession and was analysed using thematic analysis, which differs from the focus of this study.

Facilitating reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training: a phenomenological study (Binks, Jones and Knight, 2013)

Binks et al. (2013) explored the experiences of seven clinical psychologists who had facilitated reflective practice for trainee clinical psychologists, with a view to studying how the facilitators made sense of any trainee distress, and how they made sense of their role as facilitator more generally. The facilitators in this study understood discomfort and distress as an intrinsic feature of the group experience for trainees and exploring this distress was perceived to be valuable in furthering the trainee's understanding of themselves and in developing their therapeutic skills for practice. This was viewed as 'emotional learning'. However, there were some facilitators who expressed concern for the trainee's wellbeing, especially where there was trainee non-engagement, and felt that perhaps the training course needed to address personal learning within groups more.

The complexity of group boundaries raised challenges for the facilitators. They recognised that the group members would need to gauge how much to disclose in the sessions, given that they were studying alongside the other group members and could potentially be work colleagues in the future. There was also some blurring of boundaries between reflective practice and therapy, which Binks et al. (2013) think could reflect the lack of theoretical literature on learning and the role of facilitator in reflective practice groups, but is also likely to be contributed to by the facilitator employing methods of working that are familiar from their everyday work.

This study is relevant to this research study in that it provides an insight into facilitators of group reflective practice managing emotional learning and boundaries and the experience of facilitating supervisees who need to maintain relationships outside of supervision. It is also an IPA study. However, the data again does not relate to supervising experienced practitioners or supervisees from another profession.

An investigation of factors involved when educational psychologists supervise other professionals (Callicott and Leadbetter, 2013)

Callicott and Leadbetter's (2013) research explored inter-professional supervision with a particular focus on the purposes and boundaries of supervision, models of supervision, the skills of the supervisor and the benefits and problems associated with inter-professional supervision. This is the only study that focuses on the experience of Educational Psychologists' inter-professional supervision.

The key findings from Callicott and Leadbetter's (2013) research was that inter-professional supervision was viewed positively, supervision skills were considered a necessary pre-requisite but were not thought to be exclusive to the profession of Educational Psychology, and that contracting was very important to aid a shared understanding of the supervision process and to highlight the ethical and legal implications of supervision.

Some participants felt that conflicting conceptualisations of supervision could impact on the supervisory relationship negatively and there was variation in how supervision was received. Callicott and Leadbetter (2103) reported that some participants felt that supervision was an 'entitlement' whereas others felt 'threatened' by supervision. Some participants felt they were being offered supervision to check up on them, particularly where supervision was obligatory. However, it seemed that supervisees viewed supervision more positively over time.

With regard to inter-professional supervision, supervisees valued working with someone outside of their profession but sometimes felt that this could result in reduced empathy and an added need for clarifying questions. Supervisors did not have managerial responsibility for the supervisees and so supervisees felt able to raise issues they may not with their managers. There was some concern about the need to share information when issues relating to management supervision arose. The EP supervisors reported a lack of clarity about the purpose of supervision and uncertainty about the legal ramifications of supervision. There were assumptions made, without

discussion or agreement, that their responsibility for the supervisees' practice would be reduced.

The participants in this study reported dissatisfaction with their experiences of contracting. Whilst there were informal agreements and discussions, many said they would consider written contracting in the future to provide more clarity about functions, roles, responsibilities and boundaries.

There was some tension in the supervisory relationship, in that some supervisees regarded the EP supervisor as the 'expert' and anticipated a greater level of guidance. The supervisors, however, felt their role to be that of facilitating reflection although the level of direction provided by the supervisor varied.

The participants discussed the importance of trust in the supervisory relationship and supervisors reported using strategies to develop the supervisory relationship, such as by providing reassurances of confidentiality, using unconditional positive regard, setting boundaries and ensuring consistency through the use of models. Approximately half of the participants reported the use of a model but participants were generally unaware of supervision models and reported greater use of problem-solving models.

Of the ten participants in this study, four were engaged in group supervision but it is not reported whether they were a supervisee or supervisor. Reported challenges of group supervision include group dynamics and contracting with the group and the group's line management. Reported benefits included the feeling of 'groupness' and social support.

The participants reported evaluating each session within the session and after a series of sessions, using a mixture of formal and informal methods. This information was sometimes shared with line managers. Some participants felt that evaluation processes should be clarified during initial contracting and were an important part of supervision.

The participants in this study thought that EPs were able to apply psychological theory, logic and counselling and consultation skills to the

role. EPs were also regarded as having a wide professional and contextual knowledge base. However, around half of the participants did not feel that these skills were exclusive to EPs and that other professionals also have these qualities. Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) conclude that the background of EPs does not necessarily mean they have the skills to be effective supervisors but that some within the profession, may have a particular set of skills which is appropriate for supervision. The choice of inter-professional supervisor should, perhaps, be made on an individual basis in the context of the needs of the supervisee rather than belonging to a certain profession.

Callicott and Leadbetter's (2013) article in the Educational Psychology in Practice journal gave a summary of the research but a reading of Callicott's (2011) thesis provided additional relevant information on training and support for the EP supervisors, which was not included in the journal article. Callicott (2011) found that some supervisors felt there should be training provided for supervisors, for example, on models of supervision. The supervisors in this study had received additional training either through university contacts or through the Educational Psychology Service. Some supervisors met to support one another, to reflect on their experiences and to ensure consistency in the supervision delivered. Where group supervision was delivered, two EPs worked together and found this to be supportive in relation to group processes. Additional reading on supervision was also reported to be helpful. With regard to bringing issues to their own supervision, only one supervisor felt the need to do so; the others were aware they could do so if necessary.

Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) conclude that inter-professional supervision has potential benefits but brings challenges for both supervisor and supervisees.

2.17 Implications for this Research Study

A review of the above research papers indicates a number of themes that appear to be important to the facilitator of group supervision:

- the importance of peer support and supervision for the supervisor
- the importance of training and developing knowledge of supervision models
- the importance of balancing structure with flexibility and individual supervisor style
- the necessity of additional skills relating to group management skills in order to be effective in delivering group supervision
- the importance of contracting in order to establish a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and boundaries, evaluation processes and the functions of the supervision
- the importance of guiding supervisees in understanding supervision processes and making the best use of their supervision time
- the importance of interpersonal skills such as empathy and trustworthiness which are considered to be attributes of individuals rather than any specific profession

From this review of literature, it seems that there is a gap in research on the experiences of facilitators of group supervision generally, but particularly in relation to EPs as group supervisors. Although Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) included the perspectives of EP supervisors in their study of inter-professional supervision, their study focused on both the perspectives of supervisees and EP supervisors and included both individual and group supervision. The literature review highlights the additional challenges of facilitating group supervision and Dunsmuir et al. (2015) report a current climate of an increase in EPs providing supervision for other professionals. Recent studies on EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals by Osborne and Burton (2014) and Wedlock and Turner (2017) focus on the experiences of the supervisees.

I felt it to be of importance to gain an understanding of what the work involves for EP group supervisors in order to contribute to the existing literature and to help inform educational psychology services on ways of supporting EPs or improving the experience for them.

The aim of this research is to gain an insight into the experiences of EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals through the exploration of the following research questions:

- What is it like for EPs to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?
- What can we learn from these experiences?

Reflection box:

In conducting this literature search, I was surprised at how difficult it was to find literature relating to the role of the supervisor. It seemed to me, that it is widely acknowledged in literature on group supervision how challenging the work can be for the group supervisor but yet, I found few studies on the supervisor's experiences of the work. Good practice guidelines seem to be derived from the needs and experiences of the supervisees and the focus on supervision for the supervisor seems to be on delivering better quality supervision for the supervisee. I was surprised that there were not more studies about the support that the supervisor may need in the role given how emotionally demanding and responsible the work can be.

This strengthened my interest in exploring the perspectives of the EP supervisors, given that I had anecdotally heard different emotional responses to the work. There is a wealth of information on what good practice looks like and factors that are important to effective supervision (ie contracting, clarification of roles and boundaries, the use of models) but I wanted to focus my research on hearing what EPs can tell us about their experiences of the work, not how they are carrying out the work. This focus has influenced my research methodology, outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline both my approach to conducting this research study and the process by which the research was completed. Firstly, the key motivating factors which led to my interest in completing research into the experiences of Educational Psychologist's facilitation of group supervision are summarised along with the ontological and epistemological approaches which underpin my chosen methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

In the next section, IPA and its associated philosophical and psychological theories are explored and the potential alternative methodologies that could have been used are discussed.

The limitations of interpretative phenomenological analysis as a research method will be discussed, along with a reflection on this study in relation to the validity and quality of qualitative research.

The research design and process of conducting this research study are then presented, outlining participant recruitment, the interview process, ethical considerations and data analysis methods. The exact procedures that were followed will be presented and reflected upon in relation to ethical considerations and the fundamental principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

3.2 Approach to research

Willig (2013) explores how the researcher influences and shapes the research process, both as an individual person (personal reflexivity) and as a researcher of theory (epistemological reflexivity). She argues that it is important to have this element of reflexivity in qualitative research as it allows for examination of how the researcher is implicated in the findings of the research. She claims that a researcher using qualitative research

methods cannot be detached, neutral and unbiased; instead the researcher brings their personal biases to the study. Reflexivity enables the researcher to consider how their prior knowledge and experiences and their reactions to the data facilitate particular insights and understandings of the data or findings. Willig (2013) likens the experience of conducting qualitative research to psychoanalytic psychotherapy in that the therapist's emotional responses to the client form a significant part in shaping an understanding of the client.

Willig (2013) goes on to say that reflexivity also plays an important role in reflecting on how the researcher's views on the subject matter may have been altered through the process of conducting the research study. Issues such as gender, ethnicity, age and personal experiences of the subject matter can be relevant to the way in which the data is collected and interpreted and reflecting on this provides an opportunity to explore how any personal factors relating to the researcher may be influencing the research study. Willig (2013) recommends addressing and commenting on these issues throughout the research process in a manner that is clear, honest and informative.

With Willig's (2013) advice in mind, I will summarise the personal experiences I have had in relation to facilitating reflective practice groups as an EP and consider any ways in which this may have shaped my thinking prior to this study. The reflection boxes included throughout this paper provide reflections on issues, as and when they arise.

3.3 Myself as a Researcher-practitioner

In order to identify any underlying assumptions and preconceptions I may have subconsciously applied to the choice of interview questions, I carried out some self-reflection both independently and with my research supervisor. The key points reflected on are as follows:

- What have been my personal experiences of facilitating supervision groups as an Educational Psychologist? How might these experiences influence my preconceptions about findings?
- Why am I interested in carrying out this particular research project? What knowledge do I hope to gain and to what purpose?
- What is my relationship to the participants and how might this influence my findings?
- How might my personal experiences influence analysis and what can be done to ensure the quality of research?

As an EP, I have facilitated a number of different supervision groups for professionals from a Social Care or Education background, including teachers within school settings. In each case, the managers of these professionals recognised that their employees were carrying out work that meant there was potential for some impact on the employee's mental health or emotional wellbeing. For example, Behaviour Specialist Teaching Assistants who are heavily involved in managing crisis situations for children or teachers on a day to day basis in schools, or professionals going into homes to support a family that is under threat of having children removed from the home if home circumstances do not improve. The managers of these groups of professionals sometimes took the initiative in recognising a need for colleagues within the team to support one another through reflective practice or 'peer supervision'; on other occasions, the management requested support from the Educational Psychology Service in response to the team requesting support or reporting high levels of stress and/or to high levels of sick leave within their agency. The Educational Psychology Service in which I worked was approached for some initial commissioned work to act as facilitators of group supervision and once word spread that reflective practice was found to be helpful, other agencies requested EP involvement and a greater number of EPs became involved with this type of work.

With respect to my work, the group sizes varied and the attendance levels varied in that some professionals were offered the opportunity to attend, others were instructed by their managers that they must attend all sessions. In relation to this research study, the opinions I formed of facilitating supervision groups are relevant, in that I will have developed an understanding of what I think group supervision is or is not, what I think are contributing factors to the challenges and gains and what I think supports an EP in the role (see below). The questions included in the interview schedule reflected the particular areas that I was interested in exploring.

My personal views on facilitating group supervision were influenced by training I had completed on supervision and in particular, a course I attended that enabled me to become an accredited supervisor with the British Psychological Society. This course was completed after I had been facilitating supervision groups for some time and made me more mindful of issues relating to contracts, boundaries and clarity about the role of the EP as facilitator with regard to liability. Subsequent research into guidance on good practice (as outlined in the Literature Review in Chapter 2) led me to understand that, at the time of conducting this research, there were guidelines relating to these issues for EPs acting as supervisors for individuals from other professions on a one-to-one basis (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010) but I was unable to find research or literature relating specifically to EPs acting as facilitators of group supervision or reflective practice. A search of literature on reflective practice or group supervision in other professions found articles mainly relating to health professionals and again, I was unable to find guidance on good practice. However, Callicott and Leadbetter's (2013) research on Educational Psychologists supervising other professionals again highlighted the importance of boundaries around facilitating group supervision for the EPs interviewed in this study.

My experiences of facilitating groups and of having informal workplace discussions with colleagues who were also facilitating groups led me to form the view that the experience differed greatly from EP to EP. Some EPs had a keen interest in supervision and reflective practice and seemed to enjoy the role thoroughly; others thought that they would enjoy the role

but did not and ended their involvement with the groups as they found it too stressful or they felt unsafe in the role. Some colleagues enjoyed the role and continued with it despite having reservations about some aspects of the work. This variation in experience, more than anything, caused me to be interested in researching this subject matter. Whilst I believed that the experience would be somewhat dependent on the interaction and relationship between the EP and the group with whom they were working and the expectations of the EP in respect of the role, I also believed there may be some external contributing factors to the EPs experiences (ie attendance at the sessions would be likely to influence the cohesiveness of the group) and I wanted to learn more about the ways in which what superficially seemed a similar role (ie three EPs facilitating groups from the same professional background) differed so much for the EPs involved and why that might be.

3.4 Purpose of Research

Through conducting this research study, I hoped to contribute to current knowledge about the issues for EPs involved in supervisory roles for professionals from non-EP backgrounds and to establish whether there is anything that can be learned from the reported experiences that would help to inform EPs taking on such roles and Educational Psychology Service managers about the benefits and challenges for EPs and Educational Psychology Services involved in offering this service to clients. Although the recent research by Dunsmuir et al. (2015) indicates there is a widening trend for EPs to be involved with such work and provides some data on the number of EPs involved in a range of supervision, there are no figures I am aware of that record how many EPs are currently facilitating group supervision or reflective practice across the country. For the purposes of this research study, it would not have been practical to try to and carry out a data analysis of this. At a presentation I gave to a small group of Educational Psychology Service Principals in 2012 at an annual conference for area Educational Psychology Services, I learned that some Principals

felt they had little or no knowledge of research or guidance on good practice on this subject but that they would welcome some insight into the experience of EPs carrying out this work. This encouraged me further to pursue this topic.

3.5 Epistemology and Ontology

3.5.1 Ontology

The ontological assumptions that structure the research impact on the epistemological and methodological approach to the research. In other words, the researcher should explore the stance they intend to adopt on the subject matter before deciding upon the most appropriate method for researching the topic. The ontological position I adopt in relation to this study is that the experience of facilitating group supervision will be subjective to the Educational Psychologist who is living the experience, as it is a personal experience involving the relationship between the facilitator and the individuals within the group, as well as with the group as a whole. Each Educational Psychologist will be facilitating the reflective practice for a different group of people; even where the professions of the groups are the same, the individuals making up the group will differ and the attendees will bring their own personal knowledge, expectations and experiences to the group. Similarly, each Educational Psychologist will have their own unique set of knowledge, background and personal experiences that will come to bear on the manner in which they facilitate the group and their beliefs about reflective practice will contribute to their experiences of facilitation. The Educational Psychologist's reported experiences will be dependent upon a wide range of other affecting factors, too, including the practical arrangements of the sessions. These factors are likely to influence how the facilitator experiences the activity. I am of the opinion that the experience is likely to be unique for each EP and their experience will be constructed by them according to their experiences and views of the world. This is consistent with a social constructionist stance.

Additionally, I would anticipate that the Educational Psychologists participating in the study may vary in their experiences of reflecting on their facilitation of the group, in that some may be actively involved in peer supervision themselves and be accustomed to reflecting on their experiences, thereby making it easier for them to talk about their experiences in an interview; others may not be in the same position and the interview may be the first time they have reflected on their experience.

I am also of the view that my personal qualities as the researcher may influence the way in which the participants report their experience to me. For example, I am an EP with a professional working relationship with each participant. The participants are potentially going to be making assumptions in the interview process that I have awareness of the systems within which they operate, they will know I have had personal experience of facilitation, they may approach their responses to the questions in a slightly different way to a researcher with a non-EP background or to an EP who is not known to them personally. This view also contributes to my belief that it is not possible to study the experience of facilitation in an objective way.

3.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the philosophical position that a researcher takes on how to achieve an understanding of what is to be known. Whereas realist approaches to research aim to achieve an objective view on what there is to know about a subject, relativist research methods seek to achieve an understanding of what the world is like from the perspective of an individual.

The topic of this research project is the facilitation of supervision groups by Educational Psychologists. The epistemological position of the researcher in respect of the topic being investigated informs the methodological approach to the research. In this instance, having personal experience of facilitating supervision groups as an Educational Psychologist formed the basis of my view that, in order to explore the experiences of other Educational Psychologists who are facilitating supervision groups, a relativist approach would be most appropriate. The research questions

focus on the individual experiences of those Educational Psychologists and that is best captured through interview. Prior knowledge of colleagues' views on facilitating supervision groups had given me the insight that the experiences varied from Educational Psychologist to Educational Psychologist and I was interested in finding out why this was the case. What was at the root of these different experiences for Educational Psychologists? This, again, suggested that a research method which enabled in-depth analysis of the issues involved in facilitating supervision groups would be most appropriate. My epistemological position was that in order to understand the potential gains and challenges of carrying out this work, the views of those currently in the role would be invaluable in providing some insight into their everyday lived experiences.

These ontological and epistemological positions of the subjectivity and uniqueness of the experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups lend themselves to adopting a phenomenological approach to the research design. This would enable the similarities and differences of the individual's experiences to be elicited, whilst attending closely to the narrative of the lived experience given by each participant. An interpretative approach seeks to develop an understanding of the meaning of an experience based on its construction within a social context and acknowledges that this interpretation will occur with reference to the researcher's position. As reported by Larkin et al. (2006), it is never possible to achieve a truly first-person account and the account is always constructed by the participant and researcher together. The purpose of the research is to develop a 'coherent, third-person, and psychologically informed description, which tries to get as 'close' to the participant's view as is possible'. (p.104).

The approach to the research that I have therefore taken is a relativist approach, based on an understanding that there is not one 'reality' to know, rather that the 'reality' for each EP will exist in the context of their interpretation of their world and the meanings that they place on their experiences. This study focuses on how three EPs experience the phenomena of facilitating supervision groups. It is assumed that the knowledge achieved through this study will be an interpretation of the

meaning that three EPs attribute to their experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups. The aim is not to discover what is real or not real about the experience as this cannot be known (Larkin et al., 2006). The aim of this study is to elicit an 'emergent reality' of the phenomena through a process of interpretation by the participant as they complete the interview and by myself as the researcher through analysis of the data from the interviews. It is hoped to develop an understanding of the participants' experiences of the phenomena as far as possible given the subjectivity of the research design. This research study also acknowledges the active role of the researcher in the research process.

3.6 Consideration of Approaches

This section considers alternative research methodologies and outlines why I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis as the most appropriate form of data collection and analysis for this research study.

Quantitative research methods would not be appropriate to answer this research question as subjective experiences are not measurable through quantitative means. Within the Educational Psychology Service that is the focus of this study, only a small number of Educational Psychologists are actively involved in facilitating supervision groups at this point in time, thereby limiting the pool of potential participants. This sample size is too small for quantitative approaches and the researcher would not be enabled to examine in detail the everyday lived experience of facilitating reflective practice groups.

There are a number of qualitative research methods that could have been used to answer the research question, including grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, focus groups, thematic analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis.

I considered using a grounded theory or thematic analysis approach, which would have provided some useful insight into the issue under study, but the small sample size would have made it difficult to draw valid conclusions and

would lose some of the uniqueness of the experiences of the participants. Additionally, the research question lends itself to the exploration of individual experiences, as the nature of the work, as outlined above, makes the experience unique for each Educational Psychologist, in that the group of attendees varies in professional background and in how the group is commissioned and supported in accessing the supervision.

Narrative research focuses on analysing an individual's story of their experience and is concerned with what the participant chooses to say or not say and how the experience has helped them to form a view of themselves. This was not the primary interest of this particular research study and the guided interview may have encouraged data on the EP's self-concept rather than a report of their experiences of being a supervisor. The guided questions of the interview were considered a necessary part of eliciting data on specific aspects of the lived experience of facilitating supervision groups; for example, exploring what the participant has found to be rewarding or challenging, how, or indeed if, they have felt supported in the work, what they have learned from their experiences and so on.

Focus groups may have been able to provide some insight into the shared experience of facilitating supervision groups but I felt there were potential difficulties with using a focus group for this study. Firstly, I was aware that there would be a very small number of possible participants and that they would all be known to one another, as professionals working within the same Educational Psychology Service. There was a risk that the Educational Psychologists would not feel able to express their views openly and honestly under these circumstances, particularly any relating to negative experiences . There was the potential for a negative impact on the relationship between colleagues. Focus groups are perhaps better suited to obtaining an overview of thoughts from a greater number of people; they do not allow for in depth exploration of individual experiences.

3.7 Rationale for Selecting IPA

'IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience' (Smith, 2011). The phenomenological hermeneutic approach, along with the idiographic positioning of the participant, enables the phenomenon, or experience, to be considered in the context in which it occurs and in relation to the previous experiences brought this current situation by the participant. It also allows the researcher to explore any preconceptions or fore-structuring they may bring to their interpretation of the data and the fashion in which they attribute meaning to the participants' dialogue. IPA's analytical procedures enable the experiences to be examined in detail individually to provide a rich picture of the lived experience for that person before moving on to consider more general claims about the experience.

When planning the research design for this project, I considered the aim of the research and the research questions, as well as the research methods used in similar research projects, namely those studying the experiences of receiving or facilitating supervision. The context of this research question indicated that interpretative phenomenological analysis would be the most appropriate methodology for the study. In addition, the small number of participants available to contribute to the study and the uniqueness of the specific circumstances in which they were facilitating group supervision suggested that approaching each participants' experience as an individual case study and then drawing them together to explore similarities and differences would help to establish whether any theoretical statements can be made in response to the emerging factors. IPA would enable me to elicit 'fine-grained accounts of patterns of meaning for participants reflecting upon a shared experience' (Smith et al., 2009, p.38).

This research is focused on understanding what it is like for an Educational Psychologist to facilitate a supervision group and my experience led me to a belief that the variation of experience could be vast. Each Educational Psychologist/participant would bring to the study a complexity of the

experience as each participant has a different context in which they are facilitators but also have diverse backgrounds before qualifying as Educational Psychologists, and their previous experiences of facilitating and attending supervision groups will vary. Additionally, some may have had specific training in supervision.

The processes within interpretative phenomenological analysis involve interpretation at different levels including the reported experience (what has happened to them in this role), the language used to report the experience and how the experience makes them feel about themselves professionally. Larkin et al. (2006) report that IPA positions the interpretative analysis in a wider social, cultural and theoretical context, to explore what it means to the participant that they have described their feelings and made claims about to the phenomenon in a particular way; in other words, how has the process of reflection on the phenomenon helped them to make sense of their experience?

The aim of the research study is to use the data generated to help other Educational Psychologists carrying out a similar role to reflect on the implications of my findings for their own work. It is hoped that the findings will also help to inform Educational Psychology Services about the experiences of Educational Psychologists facilitating supervision groups for other professionals, about the gains and challenges of the work and how 'good practice' in carrying out this work may be developed. In this case, I selected IPA as it would enable me to examine more closely the experiences of EPs facilitating group supervision in relation to their professional knowledge and previous personal or professional experiences.

3.8 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an increasingly popular approach to qualitative research used to explore how people make sense of their life experiences (Chamberlain, 2011, Smith, 2011). Data collection is typically through the use of semi-structured interviews where there is an interview schedule but deviation from the schedule to follow the train of

conversation is permissible to elicit the aspects of the experience that is important to the participant.

IPA is a relatively new research method, stemming primarily from Jonathan Smith (1996) when he wrote a paper in Psychology and Health arguing the case for an approach which enabled the researcher to capture the lived experience of the participant in a qualitative way. IPA was developed as a research method largely in health psychology but has since been extended to be a common feature in research in other professional fields, including educational psychology.

3.8.1 The History of IPA

IPA as a research method is not a single approach. It has its origins in three keys areas of philosophy, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, and it encompasses the core beliefs of each approach, but the particular emphasis given in the IPA research can vary and phenomenologically-based models of analysis continue to evolve.

3.8.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology refers to the study of experience, a quest to find out what life is like for a person and what matters to them. It considers the ways in which the person makes sense of their experiences of the world and it provides the researcher with information about a lived experience.

Husserl (1927), a philosopher rather than a psychologist, is attributed with the first attempts to examine human experiences as they occur naturally, in the hope that developing a greater consciousness of experience in that person would generate an understanding of what that specific experience may be like for others too. He wanted to discover a way in which the person could be enabled to identify the key features of their experience and argued for an approach that would encourage the person to stop and reflect on an experience as it was occurring. Husserl used the term 'intentionality'

to describe the relationship between the process of consciousness and the object of focus and he developed a phenomenological method of study to try to identify the core features of a human experience (Smith et al., 2009). He advocated a method which involved the researcher stripping away their own assumptions and preconceptions to be really able to focus on the ideas presented by the person living that experience but to then draw out what may be the common features of the lived experience; in other words to identify the 'essential' features of the experience under study.

Husserl's (1927) work has been the most influential in IPA but his methods were extended and developed by others. A critique of Husserl's approaches in the world of psychology is that as a philosopher, he was primarily concerned with an individual's consciousness of their own experiences, whereas psychologists are often focused on examining the experiences of others (Smith et al, 2009). However, Husserl's work has heavily influenced the IPA approach of reflection on an experience.

Heidegger (1962), a student of Husserl, took a more existential approach and argued that the person's experience cannot be examined in isolation and needs to viewed in the context of the world in which the person exists and operates. In contrast to Husserl, he argued that it is not possible for a person to suspend their prior assumptions entirely and that the 'objects, relationships and language' of their world need to be reflected in their descriptions of their experience (Smith et al., 2009). In other words, a person's experiences will be influenced by the time and context in which they have the experience. The experience can only be defined in relation to others and to external factors and reflects only how that person experiences the situation at that specific point in time.

This perspective on phenomenology was shared by others, such as Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Satre (1948). Merleau-Ponty argued that whilst we can study and empathise with another's experience, we can never fully share it as our own specific circumstances, ie the context, will be different. Satre argued that the person is continually developing in relation to the world in which they exist and therefore, no two experiences can be similar

enough to draw conclusions about communality of experience. Satre believed that emotions about an experience stem from the context in which they occur. Satre's work is important in relation to IPA in that it shows how people and their experiences are set in the context of their personal relationships, moral beliefs, personal agendas and environmental factors (Smith et al., 2009).

3.8.3 Hermeneutics

In addition to phenomenology, IPA is underpinned by the theory of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation, with its origins in the interpretation of texts, specifically biblical texts. Hermeneutic theorists are concerned with understanding how someone interpreting a text is influenced by the context in which they are interpreting the text and how that may influence their interpretation of the meaning intended by the original author.

Schleiermacher (1998) wrote about 'grammatical' and 'psychological' interpretation of text and how the writer may ascribe their own meaning of the text, based on the context and personal circumstances in which they are writing (psychological) and the actual content of the text (grammatical). Schleiermacher argued that it is important to understand the position of the writer as well as the content of the text as this has an important impact on the analysis of the data. Smith and Osborn (2003 - cited in Smith et al., 2009) refer to the 'double hermeneutic' within IPA, with the researcher trying to make sense of the participant, who in turn is trying to make sense of their experience/the phenomenon. The researcher is described as having a dual role with respect to the participant; on the one hand, the researcher has something in common with the participant in that they are both humans trying to make sense of the world, on the other hand, the researcher is not the participant and so can only access the participant's experience through the participant's narrative of it (Smith et al., 2009). Ricoeur (1970) describes two distinctive interpretative positions of the researcher as being 'a hermeneutics of empathy' and 'a hermeneutics of

suspicion'. The hermeneutics of empathy refers to the researcher's efforts to understand the experience from the participant's perspective, whereas the hermeneutics of suspicion describes the researcher's attempt to apply psychological or philosophical theories to discover the hidden meanings that the participant may be attributing to their experience. Smith et al. (2009) prefer to use the term 'hermeneutics of questioning' rather than 'suspicion' and view the researcher as using questions to make sense of the assertions of the participant. With regard to presentation of the research, this effectively shifts the emphasis from reporting back the participant's experience to interpreting the meaning of what the participant has shared, and thus places value on the interpretative skills of the researcher. Smith et al. (2009) identify a key difference between the hermeneutics of questioning and Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion. Smith et al. (2009) believe the focus of questioning should stem from the content of the narrative of the participant, questioning for clarification and meaning purposes, in an attempt to 'stand in their shoes' (Smith et al., 2009, p.36) and not from applying existing theories as a lens through which to examine what the participant has reported, as in Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion.

With regard to IPA, this is viewed as positioning the interpreter of the data as having some ability to apply psychological theory to the views expressed by the author and to make connections across the range of data studied that the original author of the data could not, perhaps offering the interpreter the possibility of being able to come to know the author better than he/she knows themselves. (Smith et al., 2009).

Heidegger's (1962) theory of 'dasein', the impossibility of disconnecting a lived experience from the world in which it occurs, supports the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to examining personal experiences through interpretation. Heidegger was concerned with identifying not only that which can be seen overtly, but also that formerly subconscious data which is brought to light through reflection (Smith et al., 2009). According to Heidegger, the role of the interpreter is to try to make sense of these 'hidden meanings' as they emerge.

However, it is important that the interpreter is aware of any biases that they may bring to the interpretation and for Heidegger, it was a given that the interpreter themselves would bring their own personal experiences to bear when making sense of the reported experience of another. Gadamer (1960/1990) was also of this view and stated:

> 'The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings.' (cited in Smith et al., 2009 p.26)

From the perspective of IPA, the prior personal experience of the interpreter presents a potential barrier to interpretation. Smith et al. (2009) argue additionally, that the order of reflection is important in IPA. It is not possible to know in advance which of one's prior experiences will form a preconception until interpretation has taken place, following which one can reflect on what personal experiences may have created preconceptions that have been challenged by the interpretation. Smith et al. (2009) believe this issue of the order in which analysis of personal preconceptions must take place has been largely overlooked in IPA literature and go on to say:

> 'Indeed a consideration of Heidegger's complex and dynamic notion of fore-understanding helps us see a more enlivened form of bracketing as both a cyclical process and as something which can only partially be achieved'. (p.25)

Smith et al.'s (2009) citation of Gadamer gives a particularly clear explanation of the interpretative processes involved in IPA:

> '...interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation.' (p.26)

The phenomenon being studied therefore influences the interpretation, which in turn influences the 'fore-structure' (preconceptions), which then again influence the interpretation and meanings attributed.

The hermeneutic circle is a concept which is central to hermeneutic theory and which is used to recognise the various levels of the relationship between the part of anything and its whole. In order to understand the whole of something, one must consider the parts; in order to make sense of the parts, one must consider the whole; an example of 'the part' being a single word with 'the whole' being the sentence in which the word occurs, or the 'the part' being the interview with 'the whole' being the research project. This is relevant to IPA in that it emphasises the need for a circular, non-linear process of interpretation. IPA distinguishes itself from other qualitative approaches to analysis in that it is iterative, with data being reconsidered and reinterpreted throughout the process, in contrast to other approaches that work through a series of distinct steps in a linear fashion.

3.8.4 Idiography

IPA's grounding in idiography, the study of the particular, is in contrast to many qualitative approaches in psychology, where common themes across experiences are sought in order to draw conclusions or make connections across experiences, thereby facilitating generalisation to a population. 'Nomothetic' research has come under criticism for reducing individual experiences to a statistic, thereby losing a richness of data, through its focus on norms, averages and validity. The individuality of the participant is irrelevant; it is the commonality that matters.

Whilst Husserl (1927) is credited with having the greatest influence on the development of IPA as a research method, he was concerned with using the knowledge of individual experiences to develop an understanding of the 'essence' of the experience, which is not consistent with the idiographic element of IPA.

IPA seeks to address idiography through its intense scrutiny of the data generated by each individual participant. Idiography is concerned with the specific, unique experience of the individual participant. IPA does not aim to generate findings which can be generalised; rather it seeks to examine in depth, the perspective of a particular person in a particular context. Sample

sizes tend to be small and can be a single case study. The idiographic approach is perfectly suited to this close and detailed analysis of the meaning of something for one particular person but how can this be useful in extracting the significance of the research? Smith et al. (2009) argue that despite the uniqueness of the individual's experience, Heidegger's (1962) theory of 'Dasein' means that this person's experience only occurs in relation to the context so we can make inferences about what another person in that same context would be likely to experience. Research that has focused on one participant as a case study has been found to be of value in challenging assumptions about experience or in adding to existing theory (Becker, 1992, Bromley, 1986, Campbell, 1975, Platt, 1988, Sloman, 1976 - cited in Smith et al., 2009). IPA enables general statements to be made whilst preserving the voice of the individual, and uses small numbers of cases to add value to existing psychological theories.

3.9 Research Questions

This research study aims to explore the following research questions:

- What is it like for an Educational Psychologist to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?
- What can we learn from these experiences?

3.10 Research Design

The research design for this study was guided by the research question and the aims of the research, my position as a researcher and the literature relating to the subject matter.

This study aimed to explore the experience of EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals within one Educational Psychology service. The service is located in a shire county and was a traded service so supervision was purchased by other agencies from the Educational Psychology Service. EPs had the opportunity to opt into carrying out this

work but where there were no volunteers, an EP might be approached by the Principal Educational Psychologist with a request to undertake the work. The work was managed within the service either through line management processes or through a working party set up to plan and oversee the work. As far as I am aware, there was no selection process in terms of formal application for the role. I am not aware that there was a policy in place in terms of an EP being required to have a minimum amount of experience as an EP to undertake this work but of the EPs carrying out this work, all had several years of post-qualification experience.

I planned to use semi-structured interviews with the participants so they could communicate their experiences. The interview transcripts would then be analysed using IPA with the aim of exploring, describing and interpreting what the participants reported and how they made sense of their experiences. The interviews would take place at a time when the participants were currently actively involved in facilitating group supervision and EPs who have carried out this work in the past but were not currently doing so were not approached to participate in the study.

3.10.1 Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview was used, rather than a structured or unstructured interview, to ensure that the content of the interview generated data relating to the research study and to aid with consistency of interviews. The semi-structured interview is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology (Willig, 2013). The semi-structured interview is compatible with a range of analytical methods, including IPA. Willig (2013) states that the researcher should demonstrate a consciousness of their own social identity and how that may impact on the interview. The success of a semi-structured interview relies on the rapport that is developed between the interviewer and interviewee and an established professional relationship between the participants and the researcher can both aid or hinder this rapport. For example, familiarity may help to put the interviewee at ease and there may be previously established

professional trust between the parties. However, the interviewee may feel less comfortable discussing any aspects of their work/experience that they perceive may highlight an inadequacy on their part. This interpretation of the interview as a 'relationship' is consistent with the idiographic and hermeneutic underpinning theories of IPA.

Within the interview itself, the requirement for the researcher to contain their own thoughts can also disrupt the normal flow of conversation between the two parties and indeed this is something I experienced when conducting the interviews in this study. I was used to having a 'conversation', both of a professional and a personal nature, with these particular colleagues and this at times, seemed to create an awkwardness in the interview when I did not respond to comments made in a manner that would be more familiar within a normal conversation (ie agreeing with a point made). Although the semi-structured interview can seem to be a comparatively easy data collection method in terms of practical arrangements, the quality of the data collected will be dependent upon sufficient preparation on the part of the researcher. Willig (2013) reminds the researcher to give careful consideration to the following:

- who to interview
- how to recruit participants
- how to record the interview
- how to transcribe the interview
- what questions to ask
- what approach (ie formal/informal) to take in the interview

A semi-structured interview provides the participants with the opportunity to speak openly about their experiences and for the researcher to listen to the description of that experience. The questions act as prompts to encourage the participants to talk but they also have some control over the direction of the conversation. The researcher must devise questions that allow for a response to the research question but that also provide sufficient

opportunity for the interviewee to be able to offer an insight into aspects of their lived experience that may not have been foreseeable to the researcher.

In this study, the interviews were shaped by the questions asked but the questions were open enough to allow the participants to share or withhold any information they wanted to. The participants were all professionals, familiar with interview techniques and research methods and who will have conducted their own research as part of their training to qualify as Educational Psychologists. They are all familiar with being asked to contribute their thoughts on current issues relating to their work through regular participation in consultation processes in team meetings and service meetings and through participation in ongoing continuing professional development activities. The participants will also be familiar with using guided conversations and consultative processes in their day-to-day work to elicit the views of their clients. I felt, therefore, that the participants would have a level of professional confidence in participating in a semi-structured interview and would have a clear understanding of what this participation would mean in terms of volunteering to contribute to the research study, although this was of course made explicit in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) and through discussion with each interviewee prior to conducting each interview (see below).

3.10.2 Question Construction

The interview schedule was developed after reading literature on IPA studies and previous research papers that had used an IPA research design. This involved developing an understanding of the type of questions that are most conductive to eliciting a detailed account of the participant's personal experience of the phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). Open-ended questions are desirable in order to enable the participant to talk at length and to avoid presumptions or steering the participant towards a particular response.

The semi-structured interview schedule comprised of twenty questions, with associated prompts (Appendix 4). This is a greater number of questions than advised but some of the questions on the interview schedule were devised to elicit information about the practical arrangements of the group supervision they were facilitating and who their supervisees are, in order for me to establish similarities or differences in the arrangements. I felt this was important as the circumstances under which group supervision takes place can impact on how it is experienced. For example, whether the attendees attend on a voluntary or mandatory basis or whether it has been agreed with the commissioning agency that a specific approach will be used (ie Solution Circles). Later questions then related to eliciting a picture of the EP's experiences as a facilitator.

As the interview schedule was semi-structured it provided opportunities to alter the order of the questions in response to the flow of conversation, to alter the wording of the question or to deviate from the schedule in order to follow up on comments made by the participant and try to follow their lead in establishing the essence of their experience as they raised issues that were important to them.

Reflection box:

Smith et al. (2009) estimate that an interview schedule of six to ten questions, with prompts, would generate between 45 and 90 minutes of conversation. My interviews typically lasted 30-40 minutes and I wondered whether this may be due to the fact that the participants were familiar with giving their opinion and had reflected on the topic before so that they could give clear, concise responses without the need for much clarification or encouragement to expand on their answers. As part of their role as EPs, the participants are experienced in summarising key points so these interviews may differ from interviews with people who are not in a regular habit of reflection.

As a novice interviewer, it may also be the case that once I felt a response

was complete I moved to the next question and had I waited (albeit with an uncomfortable pause!), the participant may have added something further. Due to existing relationships with the participants, they may have assumed that I had knowledge of the topic or some aspects of the work they referred to (ie Solution focused approaches) that also led them to give shorter answers.

I was aware that within this Local Authority, the term 'group supervision' is used by some EPs and groups and 'reflective practice' by others and that the sessions often blended discussion of case work and elements of professional practice. I made a decision to use the term 'group supervision' in writing up this thesis for consistency purposes but the interviews contain references to both 'reflective practice' and 'group supervision'.

3.11 Participants

Four participants (of a possible five) agreed to take part in this research study but in the event, one participant failed to commit to a time to be interviewed and so was not able to be included. The participants were selected purposefully on the basis that they were known to be EP facilitators of group supervision for professionals working in fields other than Educational Psychology. Non-EP facilitators of group supervision were not included in the study as the purpose of the study was narrowed to inform knowledge about EPs involved in this work. The supervisees of the group supervision were not included in this study as the purpose of the research was to become informed about the experiences of the EP as facilitators. The participants approached were known to be facilitating group supervision at the time of the research study in the hope that they would have current experience on which to reflect.

There was no selection in terms of length of time for which the participant had been facilitating group supervision or with regard to the professions of those for whom they facilitated. Participants were selected from one EP Service as one of the aims of the study was to explore whether there was anything that could be learned about the phenomena that would help to

inform the Educational Psychology Service within which the participants work about the experience of facilitating group supervision groups. It was felt, therefore, that the participants should ideally be working within the same service so that any feedback to the service would be related to their own employees. Additionally, there is variation across services in terms of support and supervision for EPs and in trading arrangements. By containing participants to one service, it would increase the possibility that they were experiencing similar working practice arrangements, such as management supervision and funding.

The participants were invited to participate in this study through an email sent to them individually rather than a group email to protect their identity. Although the participants were known to me, I did not approach them in person or on the telephone in case they felt under pressure to participate. One reminder email was sent where a response had not been received, as I know how busy EPs can be. A second lack of response was interpreted as an indication that they did not wish to participate and no further follow-up emails were issued. The participants were given information about the aims of the study and why they had been contacted.

A feature of the research design is that all participants were known to me professionally as former colleagues and this may have impacted upon their responses, in that the participants of the group supervision, the commissioners of the group supervision and the Educational Psychology Service were also known to me to some extent. To minimise the effect of personal relationships, I assured the participants of the study at the start of the interview that their responses would be annonymised and their identity protected as far as possible in transcribing the interviews.

Reflection box:

Through transcribing the first interview, I realised that even with annonymising names/places, there was potential for the participant to inadvertently disclose information that could help to identify them, as EPs

who know me would be likely to know the Educational Psychology Service in which I had conducted my research. Any details given by the participant, such as referring to a previous job they had done, could have potentially identified them. As a consequence, I transcribed the interviews and tried to change any details that did not affect the account of their experience. However, analysis of the data revealed that some of the personal circumstances of the participants were relevant to understanding their experiences and discussion around this took place in my research supervision sessions.

A sample of three participants falls short of the recommendation of Smith et al. (2009) that between four and ten interviews are conducted for doctorate level research studies using IPA but is within acceptable limits, given the small pool of availability. Profiles of the participants provided in this study have not been created bearing in mind the need to maintain annonymity. However, they were all female, with at least five years of post-qualification experience. Two participants facilitated group supervision for supervisees from the same profession. One participant had a group of supervisees with a different professional role to the other two groups. The supervision had been facilitated for the group by the EP for at least one year. Appendix 5 provides further information regarding the participants and the groups they supervise.

3.12 Method of Data Collection

3.12.1 Pilot Interview

The potential pool of participants was small with only a maximum of five EPs currently facilitating group supervision for other professionals. Of the five invited to participate in the study, only four responded to the invitation and only three were interviewed. It was intended that a pilot interview would be conducted with one participant. However, following the first interview, the participant asked if it would be possible to include their

interview in the research data as they welcomed the opportunity to share their views on the subject matter. The participant did not feel any amendments needed to be made to the interview schedule and the interview proceeded smoothly so following discussion with my research supervisor, it was agreed that their data would be included in the main data of the study.

Reflection box:

On transcribing the interviews, I did not feel that this initial interview differed to the other interviews conducted. Overall, as a novice researcher, I felt that more experience of interviewing would have perhaps allowed for greater digression from the interview schedule to explore comments made by the participants but this was not a specific issue for this first interview so I believe that the data gathered is equally as valid as the data from the other two interviews. A greater pool of potential participants may have enabled me to develop my interviewing skills prior to undertaking the actual interviews for the study. 'Interviewing is a critical part of the process and it can require considerable time to develop expertise' (Smith, 2011, p.23).

3.12.2 Interview Procedure

The purpose of the interview was to explore the personal account of the participant's experience of facilitating group supervision. Prior to the interview, I reminded the participant about the nature of my study and why I had invited them to participate (namely that I was aware they were currently facilitating group supervision). I gave brief information on how I became interested in this topic and what I was hoping to achieve through the study.

As I knew each of the participants as a former colleague, I tried to put them at ease through an initial general 'catching up with each other' chat which was unrecorded.

I then gave them brief information about how the interview would be conducted (I had a set of questions to guide the conversation and that I would be recording the interview for transcription purposes) and I gave them an information letter to read and a participant's consent form to sign. I reminded them that they could withdraw from the study at any point, without explanation, and tried to ensure they did not feel obliged to participate as they knew me personally.

During the interview, I generally asked the questions on the interview schedule in order but as the conversation sometimes covered areas earlier than planned, I occasionally referred back to their earlier comments and asked whether they had anything further to add on that subject. I also used some follow-up questions, largely for clarification, but stayed close to the interview schedule so that the interviews were similar in content covered, even if the questions were not always asked in the same order. I did not want to close down any additional information that the participant offered. I tried to show empathy when participants discussed aspects of the work they found challenging and made non-verbal and brief verbal comments (such as 'okay', 'right') to demonstrate listening and encouragement during the interviews but tried to refrain from expressing any of my own views relating to the experience of facilitating group supervision or knowledge of the service, which the participants would all have known that I have. I did help with reminding some of the participants with information when they were stuck (for example, one participant was struggling to remember the name of an educational institution).

At the end of the interview, I checked with the participant that they felt the interview was a fair representation of their experiences and their views on EPs as facilitators of group supervision and that they were still happy for it to be transcribed and used as part of my research study. I also checked if there was anything that we had not discussed that they would like to talk about. I reminded them that, where they had referred to colleagues or agencies by name, I would annonymise the information as best I could.

The interviews were carried out at a location and time that was convenient to the participant.

The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone which is kept in a locked safe place. The recordings were listened to and transcribed only by myself.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought for this research study from the Ethics Board at the University of Sheffield. In planning the research study, I was mindful of the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (2010) and the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and discussions were held with my research supervisor to reflect on potential ethical dilemmas.

As this study is a small case study based on the experiences of EPs within one Service, it was particularly important to ensure that the participants were able to feel confident that their responses would be confidential and that they could not be identified. The potential risk of harm to the participants, otherwise, was considered relatively small as they were professional adults, all familiar with conducting and participating in research studies.

Each participant agreed voluntarily to participate in the study and they were reminded at the point of interview that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

3.14 Transcription

Each interview was transcribed as soon after the interview as possible and I made notes on my initial thoughts on the interview process following transcription, in an attempt to capture the data that may not be evident through reading the transcription. For example, during the interview, I felt that participant B was a little uncomfortable when questioned about recording processes and participant C seemed to be a little embarrassed

when asked about training or experiences that prepared them for the role. Each interview was transcribed word by word. Prosodic aspects were not included unless it signalled a hesitation in being able to provide a response to the question.

Reflection box:

Following transcription of the first interview, I wondered whether the questions were too many and too closed. I reviewed the interview schedule again and discussed this with my research supervisor. It is likely that not as many questions about the practical arrangements of the reflective practice were necessary but I felt, on re-reading the transcript, that there were many interesting points raised by the participant in answering these seemingly straightforward questions. I wanted to ask about some of these arrangements to explore how EPs facilitating group supervision experienced these issues and how they set about creating and defining the role, as well as what the role has been like. So I decided to leave the interview schedule un-amended for the subsequent interviews.

I also reviewed the design of the questions and felt that once the practical questions were dealt with at the start of the interview schedule, the remaining questions relating more to the experience were sufficiently open to allow the participant to take a lead in the conversation.

During the process of transcription, I could often think of a better question to ask or noticed that a follow-up opportunity to explore an issue in depth was missed. I tried with the subsequent interviews to focus on opportunities to open up the discussion more but I think this is a skill that takes considerable practice.

3.15 Analysis of Data

In order to analyse the data from the three semi-structured interviews, I followed the steps recommended by Smith et al. (2009). In addition, initial

thoughts following each interview and each interview transcription were noted.

The process of analysis involved six stages as outlined below:

Table 2: Stages of Data Analysis

1. Reading and re-reading I decided to analyse the interviews in the order in which the interviews took place. The first interview was read, re-read and listened to again. Initial reflections on the issues raised as well as the interactions during the interview were made. Detailed notes and commentary on the data were made and initial attempts to interpret the meaning the participant was attributing to their experience were noted. Notes had been made immediately following the interview on initial thoughts on the interview process/interview and these were added to at this stage. Attempts to reflect on researcher contributions and 'bracketing' were made at this stage, too.
2. Initial noting This stage of the process involved more detailed noting of the issues raised during the interview in an attempt to identify what was of importance to the participant and to try to elicit the underlying reasons why this might be of importance to them. This stage of analysis involved focusing on: • descriptive comments - the content of the interview • linguistic comments - the language used to describe • conceptual comments - what are the meanings underlying the data that is reported in this context
3. Developing emergent themes This stage focused on analysing specific parts of the transcription to develop an understanding of the phenomena as described by the participant.

4. Searching for connections across emergent themes

This stage involved analysing the transcript for core themes that are emerging, based on my interpretation of what was said. Themes which were felt to have a similar meaning and those which seemed to have an opposite meaning were grouped together (abstraction). The next step of the stage involved looking for 'super-ordinate themes' by examining the frequency of themes (numeration) and by grouping similar themes (subsumption) where an emergent theme encompasses other themes within a broader theme . This stage also involves attaching priority levels to the themes, ie what seems to be most important, what is of lesser importance.

5. Moving to the next case

The other two transcripts were then analysed following the same steps so that each participant's account of their experience was analysed as an independent set of data. This enables any new themes to emerge and avoids trying to fit the data into previously identified themes.

6. Looking for patterns across cases

The emergent themes from the each transcription were brought together to observe whether there were any connections across cases. The superordinate themes for the group of three participants were identified.

The full transcripts have not been included as an Appendix in order to protect the identity of the participants. However, an extract of the analysed transcript for each participant can be seen in Appendices 5-7.

Reflection box:

The first process of analysis of the data was modelled on Smith et al.'s (2009) steps, as outlined above. However, throughout the writing of this thesis, I have re-visited my analysis many times. The superordinate and subordinate themes have remained fairly constant throughout the process but I found that the language I used to describe my interpretation of the

data changed many times throughout the construction of the data analysis and discussion chapters. This reflects the circular process of conducting an IPA study in that my understanding and interpretation of the data evolved through re-visiting the material time and time again. This means that some of the notation on the transcripts reflects initial thoughts but does not necessarily mirror the final interpretations I made of the details in the transcripts.

3.16 Quality in Qualitative Research

It is intended that this research project will meet quality criteria for qualitative research. In order to achieve this, I have tried to ensure that there is transparency of process and reflection, and evidence provided for interpretation and assertions. I read a number of research papers on the quality of qualitative research and IPA in particular, and have tried to address the recommendations (see below). I sought supervision from my research supervisor to review the data analysis and to consider how my thoughts, ideas, feelings, biases and interpretations have contributed to the processes and write-up of this study.

3.16.1 Quality in IPA

Smith (2011) reports on the increasing popularity of IPA as a research method and this has led to a rise in critique of the method in qualitative research (Chamberlain, 2011; Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). The criticism, however, has been aimed not at IPA as a research method itself but at the poor execution of IPA as a methodological approach, with Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) reporting a surge in 'poorly constructed, primarily descriptive projects that do not reflect good quality IPA'. (p756). They feel that IPA remains a 'misunderstood and misapplied methodology'. (p.759). Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) feel that there are often too many participants and attempts are made to draw comparisons between

groups of participants. Interview schedules can be too constraining and there can be insufficient evidence in the data to support identified themes. Researchers sometimes try to generalise findings, too. The general advice from Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez (2011) is that 'less is more' and they recommend including fewer participants, fewer questions in the interview schedule and fewer superordinate and subordinate themes in the analysis of data. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) believe that a greater level of supervision in research could help to address some of these issues. Larkin et al. (2006) report that 'IPA can be easy to do badly, and difficult to do well' and that it requires a number of balancing acts by the researcher (p.103).

Chamberlain (2011) also considers whether the codification of method in publications on IPA have 'legitimated the use of the (proper) method without much reflection, and somewhat uncritical use without consideration of its value for, or need for adaptation to meet the needs of, specific research projects' (p.48). He argues that the codification of IPA is at the root of confusion with other research methods and that without heuristical interpretation, the distinctive analysis within IPA cannot be identified in studies. The skills of the researcher in reflecting and analysing are important in producing a quality IPA study. Larkin et al. (2006) also report that IPA's focus on obtaining an insider perspective does not mean it is sufficient to collect and represent voices. Chamberlain (2011) questions whether it is even possible to explore a phenomena as the data is open to different interpretations by different researchers.

In response to the criticism of IPA and its validity as a research method, Smith (2011) outlined a quality criteria for 'good', acceptable' and 'unacceptable' IPA studies. Although critics such as Chamberlain (2011) have argued that this criteria should apply to all qualitative research and is therefore not exclusive to IPA, in the absence of other measures for quality IPA research, I have attempted to ensure that this research study meets the quality criteria as specified by Smith (2011). The table below reflects on how this study has been conducted to try to meet the criteria for 'good' IPA research:

Table 3: Criteria for a good IPA paper (Smith, 2011)

Recommendation	**Comments regarding this study**
1. The paper should have a clear focus.	*This study looks specifically at the experiences of EPs facilitating group supervision as one specific aspect of their role in the service.*
2. The paper will have strong data.	*Although the interview process and questions could be improved upon, the participants were able to provide clear and detailed information about their experiences.*
3. The paper should be rigorous.	*Extracts from all the participants are used to support the themes, which is particularly important when there are a small number of participants.*
4. Sufficient space must be given to the elaboration of each theme.	*The emergent themes are expanded upon.*
5. The analysis should be interpretative not just descriptive.	*Interpretative commentaries are provided throughout the process of data analysis.*
6. The analysis should be pointing to both convergence and divergence.	*Whilst patterns are noted, the individual differences of experience are also reported.*
7. The paper needs to be carefully written.	*Efforts have been made to produce a coherent narrative to demonstrate the understanding the researcher has developed of the phenomenon.*

Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) remind researchers that the research should generate knowledge that is useful. With regard to 'worthiness' of the study, Dunsmuir et al. (2015) have identified an upward trend in EPs

facilitating group supervision for other professionals but the literature review (Chapter 2) indicates a lack of research into the experiences of EPs carrying out this aspect of their work. I feel that the lack of research is more to do with this being a relatively new area of work that is not common to all EPs, rather than the topic is of little interest and therefore not worthy of study. I hoped that the findings could be of interest in informing EPs new to taking on such a role about what the experience might be like and the benefits and challenges they might experience. The findings could also be of interest to Principal EPs in considering whether there is something to be learned about supporting EPs in the role. Additionally, EPs currently carrying out this role can reflect on how their own experiences may have similarities or differences to the experiences of others.

Consequently, this research study may be able to contribute to the development of EP 'good' practice in facilitating group supervision. This will be discussed further in the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 4 - Interpretative Analysis and Discussion of the Data

4.1 Introduction

Existing literature on group supervision tells us that there is an increase in the number of EPs who are providing supervision for other professionals (Dunsmuir et al. 2015). This research study has attempted to obtain an understanding of what it is like for an EP to facilitate supervision for a group of other professionals. This study was based on a critical review of the literature (Chapter 2) and the use of IPA as a methodology (Chapter 3) in order to explore the following research questions:

- What is it like for EPs to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?
- What can we learn from these experiences?

The following discussion involves an interpretative account of the research findings, following the procedures outlined by Smith et al. (2009). An interpretative dialogue between the data from this research study and existing literature relating to supervision, group supervision in particular, will also be presented. This discussion is my interpretation of the three participants' expressed experiences of facilitating group supervision for other professionals. The discussion is a reflection on the experiences of these three individuals only and cannot account for the experiences of all EPs engaged in this work. Limitations and transferability of the study will be discussed in Chapter 5.

At the time of writing, I am not aware of any research that focuses specifically on the lived experiences of EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals. As outlined in Chapter 2, I am aware of some studies (Ashmore et al., 2011; Binks et al., 2013; Callicot and Leadbetter, 2013; Osborne and Burton, 2014, Murrell, 1998, Wedlock and Turner, 2017) that include some data relating to the role of group supervision facilitators and of EPs involved in group supervision. This chapter will consider the research data from this study alongside current literature. Some new literature will

be presented for consideration in the concluding chapter, as is sometimes the case in IPA studies, when the research data brings something new to the discussion (Smith et al. 2009).

The purpose of an IPA study is to try to learn from the reported experiences of the participants. Despite the uniqueness of the groups being supervised, and the unique qualities of each participant, there are a number of factors which seem to be relevant to the experience that have emerged from the data. Analysis of the transcripts using IPA identified three over-arching themes: the EP's perceived level of responsibility, the relationship with the group and the level of emotional investment by the EP. Contained within these three over-arching themes were seven super-ordinate themes: the EP's interpretation of the role, the stance the EP took in relation to the group, group cohesion, a shared understanding of supervision, the impact on the EP's own emotional well-being, the level of investment made by the EP and perceived gains for the EP.

Each EP reported a different experience of the work so the super-ordinate themes were not found in the data from all three participants. There were some super-ordinate themes that were common to all participants but the theme may not necessarily have been experienced in the same way by each participant. Each of the superordinate themes was constructed from a subsumption of related subordinate themes which are presented in the table below.

Table 4: Overarching, Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Overarching themes	**Superordinate themes**	**Subordinate themes** **(A,B,C indicates the participant that contributed to the theme)**
Perceived level of responsibility	EP interpretation of the role	Supervisor style (A,B) Clarifying roles and responsibilities (A, B, C) Solution-focused approaches (C) Therapeutic approaches (A,B) Specialist work (A) Core skills (C) EP previous experiences (A,C)

	EP stance within the group	EP's professional background (A) The EP as team member (C) The EP as group manager (A,B)
The relationship with the group	Group cohesion	An established group (A,B, C) Organisation (A,B) Interpersonal skills (A,B,C) Flexibility (C) Trust (A,B,C) Transparency (C) Negotiation (C)
	A shared understanding of supervision	Value placed on the work: group members (A,C) Value placed on the work: EP (A) Value placed on the work: commissioning agency (A,B)
Emotional investment	Impact on EP emotional wellbeing	Feeling valued (C) Feeling supported (A,B) Prior expectations of the work (A,C) Perceived competency (B) Positive feelings about the work (C) Negative feelings about the work (A)
	The level of personal investment	Passion for the work (A,C) Personal vulnerability (A) Skills, knowledge and training (A) Self-reflection (A) Emotional containment (C)
	EP gains	Personal development (A,B,C) Professional development (A,B,C) Enjoyment of the work (A,B,C) Expected outcomes (A,C)

Appendix 9 presents a thematic map of the co-relations between themes.

Each of the over-arching themes including the superordinate themes will be discussed in turn.

The commonality and discrepancies between the super-ordinate and over-arching themes relating to each participant's experience have been identified through interpretative processes as well as from direct commentary in the interviews. This reflects the hermeneutic cycle feature of IPA. Extracts from the transcripts will be provided to support the interpretations made, in order to meet the criteria for a 'good' IPA study (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

To aid the reading of the key findings from the data, I have attributed names to the three participants: Participant A: Amy, Participant B: Harriet and Participant C: Susan.

Whilst there are some similarities in the experiences described by the three participants, interpretative analysis of the research data identifies three separate reported experiences.

'I experienced quite a lot of frustration and anxiety about being in the position of supervising people who don't take supervision very seriously..'

For Amy, the experience has been one of frustration and anxiety as she struggles to balance her ethics and expectations of the work with the chaos, disorganisation, and lack of commitment to and value of the work that she has found. She is considering whether she wants to continue with this type of work, despite her passion for reflective practice and supervision and previous enjoyment of this type of work.

'It's really more of a free-for-all'.

Harriet reports the impact that disorganisation has had on her ability to form a cohesive group and to establish routines and structure to the work. For her, the work feels 'ad hoc' and whilst she has enjoyed listening to the discussions in the sessions, she gives a sense of the work not having got off the ground yet. Harriet feels that if the situation is to improve, the

commissioning agency should make it more of a priority and the EPs should be more assertive about establishing good practice.

'It's great. I love it. It's a fabulous way to end the week'.

Susan's reported experience of this work is markedly different to that of Amy's particularly, but also to Harriet's. Susan is very positive about the benefits of the work for her and the group. She feels valued in her role and feels that she is making a difference to the working practices and emotional health of her group. The work makes her feel positive about herself and her skills. She thoroughly enjoys the work and feels it is an area of EP work that should be expanded.

The discussion below will look at some of the factors that may be contributing to these different reports of the experience in order to try to gain a better understanding of what can support or hinder EPs in facilitating group supervision for other professionals.

4.2 Overarching Theme: The EP's Perceived Level of Responsibility

Analysis and interpretation of the data suggests that the EP's experience of facilitating group supervision depends quite significantly on the level of responsibility the EP perceives in their role. The perceived level of responsibility is an important theme as it is such a significant part of Amy's reported experience, even though it is not something reported by Susan and Harriet, who both feel 'protected' by the clarification of roles and responsibilities. Amy felt so strongly that she was restricted from being able to practise safely (to her own standards) that she says that she is considering giving up this area of work even though it is something she normally enjoys and has a particular interest in:

> *...I'm seriously thinking I don't want to do this for another year. (334-335)*

Amy's sense of responsibility for the impact on the young people at the centre of the group member's work is referred to a number of times in her interview:

> *I'm worried about what's gonna happen if something goes pear-shaped on my watch (338-339)*

She does not feel that the group members always have the structure or support in place to practise safely and concludes:

> *consequently, I'm not safe (354)*

Amy also talks about how she feels that she is in a position of responsibility without having the authority to meet that responsibility as she sees fit:

> *...I don't feel I have enough authority in the situation to be able to say 'Actually, you can't do that, um, cos that's not safe' or 'Actually, you need more support to do that so I really, the anxieties arrive ... (340-343)*

Harriet does mention working with her group on 'keeping people safe' (240) but she is referring only to her group members and not herself as a facilitator. Harriet gives little indication of the level of responsibility she perceives for the group but Susan and Amy seem to have very different experiences in this respect. Susan talks positively about her experiences of the work and the data from her interview focuses largely on the benefits of the sessions to her and the group members.

Amy interprets her role as that of clinical supervisor using therapeutic approaches. For her, this seems to result in a high sense of therapeutic responsibility for her supervisees and for the work she is doing. Susan interprets her role more as a facilitator of the group and sees herself as working with the group to achieve practical solutions to dilemmas the group experiences. She does not express a sense of personal responsibility for the work and places responsibilities for outcomes of the sessions collectively with the group. These reported differences in experience are interesting in view of the fact that the three participants spent time together to define the roles and responsibilities within their work and to establish a

common understanding amongst them. It seems, however, that the EPs still approach the work in different ways and feel different levels of responsibility in the role.

Crocket et al. (2004, cited in Beddoe and Davys, 2016) report that external supervisors typically take one of three stances with regard to responsibility for the supervision (Chapter 2). Interpretation of the data from the interviews leads me to position both Harriet and Susan as 'those who identified a responsibility to be alert to risks in practice'. They acknowledged a need to keep a 'listening ear' out for anything that would be of concern but did not express a sense of responsibility beyond that. Amy, however, expresses concern about some of her supervisees' emotional well-being as well as their practice. This leads me to think she is better described as 'those who shared responsibility between themselves and the supervisee'.

Analysis of the data suggests that these differences in experience may be reflective of the background and experiences of the EPs and how this influences their perceptions of the role and the stance they take in relation to the group.

4.2.1 Superordinate Theme 1 - The EP's Interpretation of the Role

4.2.1.1 The Supervisory Style

This theme relates to the EP's view of their role as facilitator of the group and has links to the professional background and experiences they have had and the approach they take to supporting the group in the session.

Both Amy and Harriet refer to using their knowledge of therapeutic approaches when talking about the approaches they take within the sessions and how they see their role as an EP in supporting their group members. They both facilitate sessions for group members from the same profession, where the professionals' work is therapeutic in nature and this may have influenced the approaches taken by the EPs. The professionals in the group are working in the arena of relationship-building with their

clients and this may have influenced the type of issue they raise in the sessions, thereby generating a group discussion that is focused more on unconscious processes than practical issues.

Both Amy and Harriet talk about using the sessions to help the group reflect on what they might be bringing to the relationship with their client and how this might be reflecting what the client is feeling. They both feel that the work they are doing is about helping the group members to see the transference and counter-transference that might be going on in those relationships and how the clients' situations may resonate with their own experiences. Amy comes from a background where unconscious processes and relationships have played a significant role in her career and she reports consciously using her skills and knowledge in the sessions:

> *...always, I would be conscious of the interpersonal dynamics between them and the client that they're working with and also between them and me. So I'm definitely using my therapeutic skills there to facilitate an understanding of what they're bringing and how they might... and how I might be able to help them with the issue that they bring to me. (262-269)*

Amy goes on to give an example of a specific time she tried to help a group member see the transactions:

> *...she was heartbroken and very worried about the ending process because endings had been so significant in this young person's life. So, it was, she, she wasn't willing to explore her own experience of endings so I gently probed that way but we didn't go there so, but we focused instead on how endings could be.... (277-283)*

Harriet does not directly report an awareness that she is using therapeutic approaches but has adopted a similar understanding of what she would like to achieve with the group and talks about her attempts to try out activities with the group that she has learned from a therapeutic course she has taken. Harriet also reports attempts to help her group members look at the significance they are attaching to an issue they have raised:

Yeah, just, well, talking about what it was for them that they could see that they did or didn't like and how that made them feel. (234-236)

Harriet attaches importance to attending to the processes going on within the sessions:

...attending to process rather than content, so how is everybody feeling about this? Where does everybody want it to go? Rather than just the content being important. (265-268)

Amy's position with regard to the role seems to be similar to that of a clinical supervisor and she talks about consciously trying to be mindful of Shohet and Hawkins' (1985) Model of Supervision, which is widely associated with clinical supervision:

...they talk about the helicopter skills, that you're hovering over and looking at all the many different dynamics that might be needed by the supervisee. So, so, I'm very conscious of those. (253-257)

Amy also refers to other models of supervision that have emerged from clinical supervision:

...the different skills that you're using when you're in a supervisory role, so you're looking to be supportive, you're looking to inform, I can't remember all the terms... (242-245)

In this part of the interview, Amy is trying to recall Brigid Proctor's (1986) triangular Model of Supervision.

Amy explains her understanding of the function of the sessions in therapeutic terms, too:

...so for me, the point of it is to offer them a safe space to reflect on themselves, on the relationships they're building with the young people, and how those relationships might be impacting on them so that they can bracket off what it their stuff so they can be present for the young people. (76-81)

Amy and Harriet both seem to interpret the role of the EP as that of a clinical supervisor facilitating reflection on unconscious processes and both run the sessions with this in mind: an opportunity for the group members to reflect on relationships and processes.

Susan also shares the view that in supervising groups, the conversation and issues raised often relate to interpersonal relationships. In talking about maintaining confidentiality of specific cases in the sessions, Susan remarks:

> *..it doesn't feel difficult at all because what we'd be talking about is quite often it'll come down to relationships, relationships with schools, how to work with a Head, a Head that thinks in a certain way, how to move things forward with a parent who's at loggerheads with the school and so on and so forth. (390-396)*

Although Susan shares some of Amy and Harriet's views that the work can be about exploring emotional responses for the group members, she seems to take a different view of the EP's role in the work. Susan's identity as an EP working in this role is more that of a facilitator working with the group to help them focus on practical outcomes and on strategies for building positive relationships with others, rather than providing a transactional overview of the group's relationships with their clients. The focus so far with this group has been on practical outcomes, such as developing a protocol for the group when responding to phone calls and to produce a document to share with management about what the work of the group entails:

> *So for instance, we've done things on managing their own stress, on safe working guidelines, on answering the telephone, ummm... home visiting, things like that so them or something they're finding difficult and we'll focus in on that for half the session and then use the other half for reflection. (43-49)*

Susan reports that she does not have a particular model that she uses for the sessions but admits that sessions are generally solution-focused in nature:

No, I guess it tends to be a solution focused as a whole but it doesn't, it doesn't always fall like that. (214-216)

The use of solution-focused approaches seems to steer Susan away from therapeutic approaches and the support offered around emotional containment appears to be more of an empathetic approach:

...there's an openness that we all struggle with different things and that's actually part of the process, is talking about how we deal with, I don't know, parents that are pushing your buttons or difficult cases and so on. (109-113)

This comment by Susan again suggests that there is a tendency towards a solution or practical outcome in the discussion: 'how we deal with'.

Amy, too, talks about her approach being similar to that of solution circles:

I guess it's not, it's not far off a solution circle kind of approach. (143-144)

It is possible, therefore, that the group membership may have influenced the style of supervision adopted by the EPs. In interpreting the data, it felt to me that the three EPs had different aims for their work, with Susan using problem-solving approaches to achieve solutions and practical outcomes and Amy and Harriet working with their supervisees to achieve a better understanding of relationship processes, but I wondered if Susan would have adopted a different supervisory style in response to a different supervision group? Perhaps the direction the reflective conversations take in the sessions is more closely linked to the professions of the group members than any specific approaches adopted by the group's facilitator. Those professionals in a therapeutic role may be more naturally inclined to focus on feelings and transactions in how they present and talk about dilemmas and casework than those who have no knowledge or experience of therapeutic approaches.

In my view, it is an important feature of the interview data that Amy and Harriet both reported an interpretation of the purpose of the work as that of facilitating 'peer supervision' - their role was to facilitate the group so that

the peers could learn from one another - but seem to facilitate this differently to one another. Although Harriet reported low levels of success in getting the work off the ground, her experience seems to be the closest to this interpretation of the work - her group members take a lead in how they want the sessions to go and Harriet reported feeling almost redundant in the sessions. Both Amy and Susan, by contrast, seemed to take more of a lead role in shaping the sessions but they adopt different supervisory styles in this. Susan's work resonates with the definition of supervising a 'team' rather than a 'group', as her group all work together as a team outside of the supervision sessions (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). The supervisory style within Susan's group is that of 'participative' or 'supervisor-led' (Proctor, 2008). Amy, however, seems to be using more of an 'authoritative' or 'individual supervision' style and attempting to apply this to the group situation, whereby the individual who raised the concern would receive what is recognised in the literature as 'individual supervision' within a group setting (Page and Wosket, 2015; Proctor, 2008).

The supervisor style is recognised as being important in enabling the group supervisor to bring their individual style to the supervision (Ashmore et al. (2012). Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) found that it is not the profession but rather the personal qualities of the supervisor that supervisees value so it seems important that EP supervisors are not too tightly constrained by agreements, contracts and models of supervision. However, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) found that if a supervisor's training has been psychoanalytic in nature, they can tend to concentrate on understanding the unconscious processes of supervisees' relationships. Amy's position towards her supervisees can be understood in this context although Hawkins and Shohet (2012) found that a mixture of styles is often used. Amy refers to the use of solution-focused approaches as well and may be combining approaches.

4.2.1.2 The EP's Previous Experiences

The data suggests that the EP's prior experiences play a role in determining their interpretation of the role and their perceived level of responsibility. Amy and Susan both had substantial prior experience of facilitating reflective practice and/or group supervision.

Amy's background and previous employment is strongly embedded in therapeutic approaches. In contrast, although Susan had plenty of prior experience of facilitating and participating in group supervision/reflective practice, her experiences were not connected to therapeutic approaches. She talked about her experiences of facilitating reflective practice or group supervision whilst training to become an EP:

> *And I did some work with another EP from another Authority about supervising (teaching staff). So we did some work together so I shadowed an EP. So that was about peer supervision. That was very much using a solution-focused model. (241-245)*

Harriet is drawing less on past experiences to shape her perceptions of the role as she reports having had little previous experience. However, she refers to applying approaches from recent therapeutic training she has undertaken:

> *Using ideas from courses that I've been on and wondering whether it would be good for a discussion, like that drawing idea. (124-126)*

It is possible to see how these experiences and background could shape the approach the EP takes to the role they are doing now. Amy with her strong background in therapeutic approaches and previous experiences of clinical supervision has taken an approach to the work that focuses on unconscious processes and relationships. Harriet is drawing on her more recent interest in therapeutic approaches and is applying learning from some recent training courses she has attended. Susan, however, has a considerable amount of experience in facilitating group peer supervision with a strong emphasis on solution-focused approaches and has adopted this approach in her current role.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) report that supervisor style can be influenced by the supervisor's professional background and the supervisory style adopted by the participants in this study seemed to be determined by the EP's previous experiences both as an EP and in previous employment, in Amy's case. Binks et al. (2013) found some blurring of the boundaries between therapy and supervision (Chapter 2) and in reflecting on Amy's comment: *'...she wasn't willing to explore her own experience of endings so I gently probed that way...' (280-282)*, I wondered whether this may be happening for her. Binks et al. (2013) question whether this blurring occurs in their clinical psychology study as the facilitator employs methods of working that are familiar from their everyday work and perhaps the professional background and training of an EP cannot help but influence their individual style of working.

Interpretation of the data also led me to consider the relevance of previous training to the level of perceived responsibility. Amy herself makes a direct link between her previous experiences and her feelings of safety in this role:

> *...I guess my training as a (previous profession) was always to take the possible worst case scenario and work back from that to make sure you've done everything you need to keep yourself and your client safe or your supervisee safe so, so, um, yeah. (443-448)*

Amy's reported anxiety perhaps indicates that she has developed extensive knowledge of what 'good' supervision looks like and what 'safe practice' in supervision looks like through her previous training and employment, and finds her current situation to be in conflict with this. However, she also considers the potential influence of her own personality traits:

> *...maybe I, I get my knickers in a twist about it, and I worry about it too much... (440-441)*

Although Harriet and Amy have adopted a similar supervisory style, I wonder if Harriet does not report the same feeling of responsibility as Amy as she has not had the rigorous training that Amy has had on supervision? This is a new area of work for Harriet and she reported having had no

training or prior experience. Page and Wosket (2015) report that many new to supervision underestimate the sense of responsibility that accompanies the work but this does not seem to be consistent with Harriet's experience.

4.2.1.3 Defining the Work and Establishing Boundaries

Amy, Harriet and Susan all work for the same Educational Psychology Service and have supported one another in this aspect of their work. The data from their interviews indicate that the three EPs met to discuss the work with a particular emphasis on defining and naming the work in order to clarify roles and responsibilities. All three participants reported that they decided collectively to call the work 'group supervision'. I am aware that it had previously been called 'reflective practice', 'reflective conversations' and 'group supervision' by various colleagues carrying out similar roles in the past within this particular Educational Psychology Service. The fact the participants met as a group to discuss this suggests that there was a desire or need to put some clarity and boundaries to the work. However, despite meeting as a group, the three participants seem to have taken away a different understanding of the work and the data suggests there is still some confusion over the naming and defining of the work.

Susan was uncertain when asked about the actual name of the work:

> *Ummm... just trying to think. I think we do call it group supervision. But we have been very clear about what the group does and what it doesn't do. And what my actual role is and what my role isn't. I'm personally not precious about the word supervision. I know that some people are. So we have an agreed remit of the type of things I will do and the type of things I won't do. (32-39)*

Harriet also seemed a little unclear about the name of the work when asked what the work was called:

> *Group supervision. (26)*
>
> *Peer supervision, I think it's called actually. (28)*

Amy explained the debate that had taken place on this:

> *Well, that's something we've been debating. So, in the summer, sort of last year, we were calling it reflective practice. We have, we as in the three supervisors or reflective practitioners and the management of (Service) met to discuss this, and it was decided that it should be called supervision, to indicate that it's a very, more supervisory responsibility and boundaries around it. (48-55)*

When it came to talking about what the participant perceived the function of the work to be, Amy and Harriet shared a view and were clear that the purpose was to facilitate peer support. Amy stated:

> *It's definitely more about facilitating peer support. (66)*

Harriet agreed:

> *To facilitate the (group) talking to each other about issues that they have either come across or they're experiencing as problematic. So for them to learn from each other. (31-34)*

Later in her interview, Harriet makes a poignant point about the naming of the work when asked about ethical dilemmas that may have arisen:

> *No, no, but I think that's because a step has been taken out of the, in that it's become peer supervision, facilitating peer supervision rather than us supervising workers so that shift on emphasis means that the confidentiality and the, sort of like, the other things that have been uncomfortable has made a big difference. (246-251)*

She explains further:

> *It's subtle but it's definite. (254)*

This contradicts a comment made by Harriet earlier in her interview:

> *...if there is something that I think needs to be raised with the management, then I will let them know that that's an area of concern for me and would they be happy if I raised it with management. (76-80)*

Amy has a similar interpretation of the 'supervisory' element of their work:

> *...we bear some responsibility to supervise them in, as in if we hear anything that is, that we're concerned about, we would pass that on. (59-61)*

This seems to contradict Amy and Harriet's report that the work is about facilitating 'peer supervision'. Harriet says later in her interview:

> *...we (the three EPs) spent some, that group spent time thinking about what supervision is and where were the boundaries cos we weren't actually supervising them, we were facilitating them supervising each other. (129-132)*

It is interesting to note that whilst both Amy and Harriet described the purpose of the group as facilitating peer supervision, they both seemed to have interpreted their role in this as bringing analysis of unconscious processes to the discussions (see above). Susan acknowledged the need in her group for a safe space to talk but again, focused on practical outcomes, namely developing a description of the work the group does and its emotional benefits for the staff for the group's management and on moving towards developing common approaches to the work within the group. Susan also refers to having discussed the principles of supervision with her group in order to establish what her role is (88-89).

Additionally, in referring to themselves or the work throughout the interviews, the participants showed some disparity between what had been agreed ('group supervision') and how they interpreted their role. For example, Susan corrected herself when talking about her experiences:

> *...every single group I've supervised, you know, talk about supervised, facilitated the supervision and reflective practice of... (498-501)*

Amy, when asked about what she enjoys about 'facilitating supervision' commented:

> *Yeah, I love facilitating reflection... (451)*

...I really think to be a reflective, to be a supervisor.... (523-524)

This suggests that despite the agreed remit of the work, there is still some variation and inconsistency in how the participants refer to the work and that the EPs involved have all taken away from the discussion a different interpretation of what the work is called and what it involves. Although the participants had agreed on 'group supervision' as a name for the work, 'supervision' and 'reflective practice' remained interchangeable throughout the interviews for Amy and Susan but not Harriet.

Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) found that, in addition to the supervisees in their study conceptualising supervision differently, the EP supervisors themselves reported a lack of clarity about the purpose of supervision and uncertainty about the legal ramifications of the supervision they were providing (Chapter 2). The clarification of the role and its boundaries were reported to have been discussed with the management of the commissioning agency and in Susan's case, directly with her group, too. The interview data from Amy and Harriet indicated that the initial remit of the work was to facilitate group sessions but also to provide individual sessions in between group sessions, if requested by a group member. Susan reported being available to offer advice in between sessions but did not refer to individual supervision sessions. This requirement for Amy and Harriet to offer individual sessions seems to be adding complications to the EP's interpretation of their role. The literature on group supervision outlines the different levels of responsibility and liability for individual supervisors and for group supervisors (Chapter 2). In this case, the work seems to have been put into one pot, and Amy reported carrying out more individual supervision sessions than group sessions as this seemed to suit her group members more. Additionally, Amy reports that individuals have raised concerns about the practice of their colleagues in these individual sessions (385-386), which again could lend itself to discussion of issues that may not arise in a group setting. So in carrying out more individual sessions, Amy may be increasing her perceived level of responsibility. This may be contributing to Amy's anxiety about her ability to practice safely.

With regard to the EP's perceived level of responsibility, it seems that it would be difficult to know where responsibility lies if the work is not clearly defined. Despite meeting to reflect on the work, there is still variation in the approaches and experiences for these three EPs and it appears that the EP is able to shape the work as they see fit. Without the contracting that is advised by all the literature on supervision, both individual and group, the work is open to interpretation by all parties involved. However, my interpretation of the data, also leads me to believe that even with discussions about the boundaries, roles and responsibilities to clarify the work, other factors play a role in determining the level of responsibility the EP may perceive, namely the EP's interpretation of the role based on their previous experiences, knowledge and understanding of supervision, and the nature of the discussions in sessions that may be more focused on unconscious processes or practical outcomes.

This raises the question: Is there a shared understanding of what is meant by 'group supervision'? The participants in this study were invited to participate on the basis that they appeared to be carrying out the same role: facilitating group supervision for a group of professionals from another area of work. However, the reported experiences suggest that whilst it may superficially appear that the EPs were carrying out similar work, the way in which the work is interpreted by the EP can be vastly different. Although all three participants viewed themselves as facilitating 'group supervision', the data indicates that they have all conceptualised the work and their role in the work in different ways. So how accurately do the words used reflect the work that is actually being done? If an EP reports that they are supervising a group, that EP will have a concept of what they are doing that not only may differ from the concept of another EP, but may also actually differ from the reality of the work they are carrying out. This has important implications for work that is commissioned from an EP service as there may not be a shared understanding of what exactly is being purchased/provided without explicit discussion or a shared understanding of what supervision is.

The data from this study raises interesting questions about the language used when talking about supervision. There are many books and articles

on supervision, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and there are clear descriptions provided by Proctor (2008) and Page and Wosket (2015) about the different types of groups and models of group supervision. 'Group supervision' is a term that can mean different things to different professionals and the three participants in this study met to discuss and clarify what exactly they were being asked to do in their roles as group supervisors. This included discussion about the naming of the work - should it be called 'group supervision', 'reflective practice', 'peer support'? The team decided upon 'group supervision' and discussed their roles and responsibilities within that. Whereas Amy and Harriet do not report having a similar discussion with their group, Susan did comment that she had discussed her roles and her responsibilities directly with her group (88-89).

Despite the efforts of these EPs to define their work, the data from this study suggests that there is still a lack of clarity in the language used to talk about supervision. For example, Susan was unsure what the work was actually called and both Amy and Susan used different language throughout their interviews: 'supervision' at times, 'reflective practice' at other times. Although it can seem that the terms are interchangeable, both Amy and Susan corrected themselves at times during their interview so there must be some differences for them in the concepts of reflective practice and supervision. Harriet was more consistent in referring to the work as 'group supervision'. In conducting this research study, I as researcher, was aware that there had been discussions within the Local Authority in which the participants are employed about the language used to describe the purchased supervision provided by EPs to groups of other professionals. It had been agreed within a working group focused on supervision that 'reflective practice' or 'reflective conversations' would be used to describe this work, as it was felt that this would avoid any confusion for the commissioning agency managers or the supervisees that there would be any 'managerial responsibility' for their professional work. As I had moved to different employment, at the time of the interviews I was no longer certain what the participants were calling their work, hence it became one of the interview questions. This meant that in constructing the

interview schedule, I was unsure whether to refer to the work as 'group supervision' or 'reflective practice' and the data indicates that the participants, too, continue to be uncertain about that the work is called. My confusion over how to refer to the work these three EPs are doing is consistent with their own confusion about the naming of the work.

Susan's comment: *'I'm personally not precious about the word supervision. I know some people are.*' (35-37) is interesting in that the literature suggests that defining the work and the roles and responsibilities involved is important not just for the supervisees so they can be clear about what supervision they are receiving, but also for the commissioning agency so they know what they are paying for and are providing for their employees, and for the supervisor so that they are not straying into therapy or managerial supervision if this is not what has been agreed. For Susan, the naming does not seem important perhaps because she has clarified her role with her group: '*So we have an agreed remit of the type of things I will do and the type of things I won't do'. (37-39)*

It could be argued that the actual naming of the work is of little importance, as long as roles, responsibilities and boundaries are clarified with the commissioning agency and the supervisees, but the data from this study suggests that there is still confusion about where the responsibility of the supervisor lies. For example, Harriet says that she does not have responsibility for the group: *'...because a step has been taken out of the, in that it's become peer supervision, facilitating peer supervision rather than us supervising workers... (246-249)* but also says '*...if there is something that I need thinks needs to be raised with the management then I will let them know.... (76-78)*. Amy reported that the work had been called 'reflective practice' the previous year but that following discussion with the manager of the commissioning agency, the work had been re-named 'supervision' *'to indicate that it's a very, more supervisory responsibility...'(54-55)*. Despite this agreement, the three participants seem to have taken away a different understanding of the level of their responsibility. This causes me to reflect on how, even with (verbal)

contracting, the role is still open to interpretation by the individual supervisor.

4.2.1.4 Specialist Work or Core Skills?

Whether or not the participant views the facilitation of group supervision as something that is a routine part of EP work and is something all EPs could do, should they choose to do so, or is a specialist area of work that requires additional levels of training, skills and knowledge, seems to be a contributing factor in the EP's level of perceived responsibility.

The participants were asked whether they thought all EPs could do this work or not. Again, there was a difference in opinion between Amy and Harriet and Susan in whether they thought all EPs could facilitate reflective practice or group supervision.

Susan's view was that the core skills needed to do this type of work are present in all EPs:

> *Well I think that a lot of the skills that you need to supervise a group are core skills for being an EP. So things like empathy, listening, co-operation, flexibility... (285-288)*

However, Susan goes on to say that whilst all EPs have a core set of skills, in her opinion not all EPs would necessarily facilitate group supervision well:

> *No, I think, I think they probably could but I think it's a little bit ummm... If you want to do it, I think you will do it well. I think it's ... but, you know, if you were forced to do it, I think that there's some people that would do a very very bad job of it cos they could be overly-directive or ummm, not, I think if you don't respond to the group that you're working with in a way that's supportive of them then it's not helpful at all. (302-310)*

In Susan's view, the particular training course might also influence how well equipped the EP was to facilitate group work that involves reflecting on relationships:

> *...I think some training courses do that side of things very well and I think some training courses are far more focused on process than actually relationships and I think that if you do a training course where it's focused on relationship building and those skills then I think that you are prepared really, really well. (290-297)*

Amy and Harriet, however, feel that facilitating group supervision is not something all EPs can just take on as a routine part of their work. Harriet states that she does not think all EPs have got the ability to facilitate group supervision:

> *Because I think that it's not the knowledge of the EP that's important, it's the facilitating of conversation. And making sure that everybody feels as though they've had the chance to say what they wanted to say and also that they can say what they want without it being a judgemental thing or a right or a wrong thing. (158-164)*

Harriet seems to be saying that the particular set of interpersonal skills of an EP plays an important role in being suited to the role. In Harriet's view, these are the essential skills of the EP in the role and all EPs do not necessarily have those skills.

Amy disagrees with Susan's view that most EPs have the basic core skills required:

> *I think that people within Psychology often have the, an approach, but they don't all have those skills. So I think it's not something that is a routine skill of all Educational Psychologists. (297-299)*

Amy's view is that a certain type of personality may be attracted to psychology as a profession but that this does not necessarily equip them to facilitate group supervision or reflective practice, nor do they routinely acquire the skills whilst training.

Amy does, however, share Susan's view that EPs should volunteer for the role:

> *So I think it's important to, um ... yeah, to make sure that people don't feel pressured into doing this kind of working and can choose to do it or not if they don't want to. (310-313)*

The literature on group supervision suggests that specific skills beyond the core skills of practitioners are required in order to facilitate supervision well, but even more so for group supervision, where group management skills are also required (Beddoe and Davys, 2016; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Page and Wosket, 2015; Proctor, 2008). Susan was of the opinion that the work is not specialist but is better suited to some EP personality types than others. Amy and Harriet, however, both felt that there are skills and knowledge (relating to interpersonal skills, the facilitation of conversations and knowledge of supervision models) beyond the usual skill set of EPs required to do the work well. This again, for me, identifies a difference in how the EPs interpret the work: for Amy and Harriet , it is more of a 'specialist' area of work but for Susan, it is something that could be part of an EP's routine work. I wondered if the feeling of doing 'specialist' work contributes to the sense of responsibility for that work?

4.2.2 Superordinate Theme 2 - The EP's Positioning within the Group

Throughout the interviews, a positioning of the EP within the group emerged, although not explicitly stated in the interviews. The data from Amy and Harriet's interviews suggests that they are 'managing' the group whereas Susan's language suggests she sees herself more as part of the group. It is important to note at this point that Harriet and Amy were required to form a group from a group of individuals, so they are in a position of 'managing' a group organisationally whereas Susan was required to begin work with an already established team of co-workers. This is likely to have impacted upon the EP's position towards the group.

Amy and Harriet describe a sense of distance from the group through their use of 'I' and 'they'. Amy reported that she has worked more with the group members on an individual basis as this is what has been requested of her by the group, despite the remit being to facilitate group sessions:

> *But because quite actually what I've ended up doing an awful lot of one-to-one work with them... (67-68)*

This would move Amy's position further away from a group facilitator and more towards a provider of clinical supervision and would detract from a sense of being part of a group situation.

Harriet reflects on her role within the group:

> *They run it themselves really and I thought that I would have to do more in it but actually I don't. (171-173)*

Harriet's interview gives a sense that she is a practical co-ordinator for the sessions but does not take a strong role in the sessions themselves. She refers to ideas she has put forward for putting a loose structure to the sessions or wanting to try out different ideas but it is not what the group wants so she seems to follow their lead in the sessions. This is in contrast to Amy and Susan's interviews, where there is a sense that they both actively shape the sessions albeit using different approaches (therapeutic and solution-focused respectively).

Amy's references to reflecting on which type of model of supervision or which stage of a model of supervision would be appropriate in the conversation with a client (discussed above) again suggests a separateness in the sense that she is applying therapeutic approaches and it seems the group or individual is 'receiving' supervision from Amy. This can be seen in Amy's comments on her thought processes in the sessions:

> *Does this person need attention to themselves? Do I need to be paying attention to the work and helping them explore that or develop their skills? Do they need some support to, you know, develop their self-confidence? (257-261)*

The EP's comments on how they evaluate the effectiveness of their work gives further examples of their stance towards the group. Amy said that she discusses the work with her EP colleagues but did not report a process by which she reflects on this with the group itself:

> *I guess I reflect on it with my colleagues. (129-130)*

Harriet uses attendance at the sessions to measure whether or not the group members find it a valuable use of their time:

> *Yeah, well, it's really effective for the one individual who comes back and puts lots in. And, I think, group-wise, I kind of like monitor that with who comes back, I suppose. (89-92)*

Susan has developed a process by which she involves the group members in evaluating whether or not the sessions are meeting their needs:

> *We also have had ... each year we have an opportunity for them to let me know what their feelings of, about the sessions are. And so I've got evaluations from them, as well. (53-56)*

This, again, suggests some differences in how Amy and Harriet and Susan position themselves within the group. Susan reflects on the work with her group, whereas Amy and Harriet reflect on the work with one another but separately from the group.

Susan tends to use 'we' more and talks more about the group acting collectively, with herself as part of the group. Susan's language also reflects a sense of her adding her own experiences to the group discussions. For example, she says:

> *...whereas in <u>our</u> sessions there's an openness that <u>we</u> all struggle with different things and that's actually part of the process, is talking about how <u>we</u> deal with, I don't know, parents that are pushing your buttons.... (109-113)*

Susan is including her own professional challenges in the group's discussions. Throughout Susan's interview, she refers to the team as 'we'

rather than 'they'. Below is an example of how Susan gives the sense that she very much sees herself as a group member:

> *Yeah, what we normally do at the end of each session is we talk about what we want the next session to be like, So sometimes, that'll be, this is a real issue for us at the moment so next time we'd like to .... (197-201)*

There are further examples in Susan's interview of her referring to herself as part of the team. Harriet and Amy's interviews do not indicate a similar use of 'we' or 'us' and they both tend to use 'I' or 'they' more:

> *although I've tried to put structure on it, they don't really want that... (Harriet, 16-17)*

> *...they have a space to really sit down and explore their emotional reaction... (Amy, 74-75)*

4.2.3 The EP's Perceived Level of Responsibility: Summary

In summary, the level of responsibility that an EP can feel in the role of group supervisor varies. Without clear contracting and agreements around roles, responsibilities and boundaries, the work is open to interpretation by the EP, the supervisees and the commissioners. This lack of clarity can contribute to increased feelings of responsibility.

Even when an initial discussion has taken place about the role, without clear contracting, there is potential for the work to evolve into something different to the agreed remit, such as providing individual supervision if the group does not develop well.

In addition, the EP is likely to bring their own supervisory style to the role, which is influenced by factors such as previous supervision experience, previous employment, training and preferred supervisory methods. Although 'group supervision' may be used to describe a professional activity, EPs can develop different approaches to the role of group

supervisor. The profession of the supervisees may also influence the supervisory style adopted by the supervisor.

Where the EP develops an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the work, they can become anxious and worried. Where there is a shared understanding between the EP supervisor and the supervisees on the roles and responsibilities associated with the work, the experience can be rewarding and enjoyable for the EP. This suggests that there is a need to clarify roles and responsibilities at the outset of the supervisory relationship through contracting, for example, but also to ensure that all parties have a shared understanding of what the 'group supervision' will look like. Of equal importance, perhaps, is the need for the EP, the EP's manager and the commissioning agency to reflect together on whether the supervisory arrangement is consistent with the EP's concept of practising safely in the role to reduce anxiety and worry.

4.3 Overarching Theme: The Relationship with the Group

The data from the participants in this study suggested that their experience was influenced by the extent to which they were able to form a relationship with the group. My interpretation of the data suggested two main reasons for the discrepancies in experiences: the cohesion of the group and whether or not there is a shared understanding and value of supervision.

4.3.1 Superordinate Theme 3 - Group Cohesion

The experiences reported by the participants seemed to be influenced by the cohesion of the group and this appears to be affected primarily by whether or not the group was already established as a group of co-workers or whether part of the EP's role was to try to bring together a group of disconnected individuals to form a group. The EP's success in bringing the group together was impacted upon by factors such as practical organisation and frequency of meeting. Susan's experience differs from that of Amy and Harriet (outlined below) and group cohesion and organisation are not

themes that emerged from her data. However, Susan does report on how structure around her sessions help to maintain the flow of the group, which suggests a polarised experience for the participants, with Susan experiencing strong group cohesion and routines, in contrast to Amy and Harriet's experiences of disorganisation, 'chaos' and poor group cohesion. This, again, is likely to be significant to Susan's more positive feelings about the work.

4.3.1.1 An Established Group

Amy and Harriet referred frequently throughout their interviews to the challenges they faced in trying to bring together a group of individuals who have never worked as a group before. Amy explains:

> *...well, they're self-employed and they're disconnected from each other so they don't form a natural cohesive group.(170-172)*

However, Amy also reflects on the fact that she has been in this situation before and has been more successful in forming a cohesive group:

> *Mind you, having said that, previously I've run supervision groups for (profession) who are all self-employed but there seems to be no, ... they don't seem to have, umm, a desire to meet together .... (172-176)*

Amy goes on to clarify the challenge this poses for her:

> *So it's quite hard, it's quite hard being a supervisor and trying to bring those very different groups of different individuals together to do the work. (187-190)*

Amy also comments on the fact that when there is inconsistency in group attendance, the group gets stuck in building relationships and establishing ground rules:

> *...it was a different group both times so they were both more of introductory sessions so it was about getting to know each other, putting down a few ground rules. I suppose one of my frustrations*

with the whole process is that there's no, there's no continuity with it... (151-157)

Harriet also refers to the impact of inconsistent attendance:

I think it would make it a lot better for the EP running it but also for the group if they were actually, if it was actually compulsory. I know that sounds really bad but it just ruins the flow. And so last year we had a couple of groups and then the other one that was booked didn't happen and then this year, it's taken six months for groups to get going and so the flow and the ideas, and the cohesiveness of the group is not there. (288-296)

Susan, however, is facilitating a group where the group members work together as a team on a daily basis. This seems to be significant in that she has not had to struggle with the formation of a group:

...this group I have now is, it's so well organised. It's a real 'We start on the dot and we finish on the dot' and there's always four of us and we've always negotiated, what we're gonna do, whereas in the past, some of the groups I've, I've supervised or facilitated have been far more fluid than that. (269-275)

4.3.1.2 Organisation

The organisation of the group played a large role in determining the EP's ability to form the positive and trusting relationships that Amy, Harriet and Susan identified as being important to good quality sessions. For Susan, whose group was well-established, this was much easier to achieve than for Amy and Harriet who encountered practical difficulties in getting the group together consistently, in order to establish routines and relationships. Harriet felt this was purely due to practical challenges for the group but Amy's previous experiences of forming a group for supervision purposes lead her to believe that practical difficulties could be overcome if the group members valued supervision enough. Susan's experience was markedly different to those of Amy and Harriet. Susan's group was well-organised

and a good routine had been established. The group valued supervision and reported that their emotional wellbeing was being positively influenced by the sessions. Susan's group had requested supervision and attendance was consistent.

By contrast, Amy and Harriet have had poor or inconsistent attendance at their group sessions so it has been hard for them to move the group beyond the group formation stage. Harriet wondered whether this meant that her supervisees, who are required to attend the sessions in their own time and at their own expense, may not feel they are getting enough out of the sessions to attend again (197-199). Amy and Harriet's experiences are consistent with the work of Hawkins and Shohet (2012) and Proctor (2008) in that there is a need to develop the group and forming the group is the first stage of Tuckman's (1965) model of group development.

Susan's challenges with regard to practical organisation have consisted of trying to find a space where the group's discussion will not be overheard, giving them the sense of a safe space to talk, and making sure there are hot drinks available and so on (355-361). Amy and Harriet have had greater organisational challenges, in terms of actually getting the group to meet as a whole. Harriet comments on the challenges of getting group members to attend the sessions:

> *Well, it's very ad hoc, due to the organisation that they work for. So they don't have to come to the group sessions but they're advised to. (8-10)*

Harriet also talks about efforts she has made to try to make attendance more convenient for the group, by changing the location of the meeting for example (206-212).

Amy has experienced similar difficulty in establishing attendance at the sessions for her group:

> *...one of the problems is attendance because they are all private sort of self-employed individuals so we set up a group, that should have*

met this week, but of the four people who could have come, five people who could have come, only one turned up. (37-42)

For Amy and Harriet, the disorganisation within their groups means a higher level of organisational demand for them. It is more time-consuming for them in terms of making practical arrangements and it is harder to establish relationships within the group. Amy explains:

It's hard work, it takes a lot of admin to get them organised cos they are so disparate. (485-486)

Harriet agrees:

...I think it can be quite hard to run a group, especially when it's so fluid. (335-336)

Perhaps an important point to note is that Amy and Harriet are expected to meet with their group three times a year whereas Susan meets with her group six times a year. The higher frequency of meeting is likely to contribute to a faster pace of relationship building and greater continuity in processes in Susan's case. Susan and her group have been able to develop the routines, structures and relationships required for effective supervision. If a supervisee experiences effective supervision, they may be more likely to buy into the process and continue attending.

Proctor (2008) reports that many supervisors feel uncomfortable managing the group as they may feel that professionals do not need to be managed or that the group should find its own way forward with guidance from the supervisor. I wondered whether Amy and Harriet's approaches, which they describe as non-directive, reflections on unconscious processes, may have made it more difficult for them to manage the group? There may be discrepancies between how Amy and Harriet view their role and the skills or actions that may be required initially to support the formation of a group (Proctor, 2008)? Ashmore et al.'s (2012) participants reported becoming less directive as their groups evolved over time.

This data has also caused me to wonder how EPs may be restricted in developing group relationships by arrangements that are beyond their

control. For example, if funding only allows a service to buy supervision from the EP at a frequency of three sessions a year, this may limit what the EP can achieve with that group. It may not be realistic to expect a group to form working relationships if they only meet three times a year. Decisions may be made on the basis of funding, or EP availability to do the work, rather than 'good practice' principles. Perhaps where a 'group' needs to be formed, the frequency of contact will need to be greater, at least initially, in order to enable group formation.

4.3.1.3 Interpersonal Skills

All three participants commented on the interpersonal qualities required by the EP in order to carry out the role well. The importance of flexibility, establishing trust and negotiating with the group feature throughout all three interviews. More important, however, is the flexibility required in order to meet the different needs of the individuals within the group. All participants talk about recognising that the group members come with different experiences and expectations of the sessions and that the content of the session needs to be negotiated with the group each time.

Susan explains that flexibility on the part of the facilitator is even more important when there is a lack of consistency within the group:

> *...whereas in the past, some of the groups I've, I've supervised or facilitated have been far more fluid than that. One week you might have fifteen and the next week you'd have two and we weren't all sure exactly what it was that they were hoping to get from the group so flexibility is essential. (273-279)*

When asked about advice they would give an EP starting this type of work, Susan and Harriet both emphasise the importance of flexibility.

> *So I think if you have a very fixed idea of this is what reflective practice is gonna look like, and it's gonna look like this every week, with any group of people that I'm supervising it's not gonna work. So*

I think that sort of level of flexibility and that ability to be reflexive about what you're doing is essential. (Susan, 310-315)

...be open-minded, so don't go with a really fixed idea of what you're gonna do. (Harriet, 322-323)

Amy does not explicitly refer to the need to be flexible, but interpretation of her comments about using the different models of supervision in response to the different needs of the individual group members and her comment on gauging how far each group member is willing to engage with the processes (531-534) indicates that a level of flexibility would be required on the part of the EP.

At the same time as identifying a need to be flexible, the EPs refer to using or seeking to use a structure around the sessions so that they are effective in terms of moving the discussion forward (ie the use of Solution Circles or models of supervision) and it seems that there is a need for the EP to balance the need for structure with the need for flexibility. All three participants' experiences are similar to those of the participants in Ashmore et al.'s (2012) and Murrell 's (1998) study, in that as facilitators, the EPs in my study attempted to balance the need to put some structure to the sessions whilst trying to maintain their own individual style of supervision by adopting flexible approaches to the work and applying models only loosely.

All three participants refer to an openness with the group in their attempts to balance responsibilities associated with the work (such as reporting back on attendance or record-keeping of the sessions) with an honesty and transparency with the group members. They all talk about checking back with the group before any feedback or information is shared with the group's management.

Susan provides a good example of how important it is to her to be honest and open with the group when she talks about a case that was brought for discussion with which she had prior involvement. Susan felt that to keep quiet and pretend that she knew nothing would be dishonest:

Now I guess if I'd gone for the strict confidentiality rule then I would've had to have pretended that I'd got no idea what it was but it was so clearly that I did..... (374-377)

Then it would have been, for me, it would have been false for me to pretend I didn't know what the case was. (379-381)

Susan and Amy express high regard for their group members. They feel the work their group members do is important and they recognise the stress and challenges that their group members face in their day-to-day work (Susan: 11-12, 121-128, Amy: 327-332, 356-360, 455-460). Their interviews contained an indirect expression of empathy for their group members and the approach taken by the participants is that of being as honest and flexible as possible in order to provide some support for the group. Susan directly reported that 'warmth and empathy are absolutely paramount' (257-258). All three participants felt that part of their role is to provide a safe, non-judgemental space for their group members to talk about their work.

4.3.2 Superordinate Theme 4: A Shared Understanding of Supervision

Interpretative analysis of the data suggests that the participant's relationship with the group was affected by the value placed on supervision and the group's understanding of how the process worked, although the three participants did not experience this in the same way. Harriet reported frustration with the practical organisation of the work and felt that the group's management could place greater value on the work, thereby making it more attractive and convenient for the group to attend sessions. Harriet comments:

...they're not paid for the time they come to the supervision so it's completely out of their own time. They don't get petrol money for it. So I find that part hard. That it's not given the space to do it, that actually they're not given the kind of like, value, in that sort of sense

so if they're busy or they're short or tight on money, why would they come? (188-194)

As described above, Susan and her group produced a document outlining the work of the group and how important it is to the group's well-being to be shared with the group's management in order to justify continued expenditure on buying Susan in to facilitate the sessions. In contrast to Amy's experience, this suggests that Susan has not experienced a lack of value of supervision in her group. In fact, she reports quite the opposite. Group members always attend the sessions, except for one team member who has opted out of the whole process based on her feelings about keeping her work fully confidential:

In this particular group I've got now, nobody has ever missed a group, ever. (148-149)

Susan also receives positive feedback about the importance of the supervision from group members:

...a couple of them have said, basically, they would have been off on long-term sick had it not been for the fact that they've got a session coming up, ... (79-82)

Susan also reflects on the emotional benefits for her as well as the team (see below) and shares that they purposefully arrange to have the sessions on a Friday afternoon so that they all end the week on a positive note. This suggests a shared enjoyment and value of the sessions for Susan and her group.

By contrast, the disparity between the value the EP placed on supervision and the value placed on it by the group members or the commissioning agency's management was a significant theme for Amy. Whereas Harriet attributes the difficulty she has experienced with attendance largely to the practical challenges of getting the group together on a regular basis, Amy feels that some of these practical difficulties could be overcome if the group members valued the supervision sessions more. She speaks of a lack of commitment of some group members to the concept of supervision:

...it's not working because they won't commit, the individuals won't commit themselves to an ongoing process enough to enable a group to form. (159-162)

Amy feels that this is partly because the group is not a natural group of co-workers but also suggests that not all group members place the same value on supervision:

...they don't seem to have, umm, a desire to meet together or any sense of the importance of supervision. Or at least, some of them do, and they're often the ones who ask for individual work. I think, I think one of the things we've been discussing was, the vast variation in the skills that the (profession) bring to the project and some have psychotherapy and counselling training and are very reflective and others really aren't. And they are more (profession) and very practical and really don't like all this touchy-feely reflective stuff. (175- 185)

Amy's comment on how she has experienced anxiety and frustration in trying to supervise those who 'don't take supervision very seriously' (324-327) demonstrates the frustration she has experienced in trying to work with a group of individuals that she feels do not place sufficient value on supervision, an activity that she describes as 'there for good professional practice' (58). Amy's response when asked about experiences and training she had prior to the role (195-229) provides a good insight into the value she personally has placed on facilitating and receiving supervision and in developing her skills as a supervisor.

Amy feels that some of this tension could be relieved by providing training for the group members on supervision and its functions:

I do think it's really important for people who haven't had a, you know, a very strong psychology or psychotherapy background, they very often don't understand what supervision is about or why it might be important. And, so I suggested we needed to train them to help, you know, offer some training that explained.... (501-508)

Confusion or a lack of clarity about the function of the supervision can also impact on the supervisor's ability to form relationships with the group. Callicott and Leadbetter (2013) found that conflicting conceptualisations of supervision amongst supervisees had the potential to negatively affect the supervisory relationship. Ashmore et al. (2012) reported that some supervisees did not understand the purpose of the group or the role of the supervisor and needed guidance on how to make best use of the supervision time and how to manage group issues. This seems to resonate with Amy and Harriet's experiences, where they felt that some of the supervisees (and the commissioning agency) did not have a clear or shared understanding of supervision. Again, this could be hard to develop with a group if there is limited contact. Susan reported that her group had requested supervision and there seems to be a shared value and understanding of supervision between Susan and her supervisees. Susan has reported a sense of value to her work and she receives positive feedback from the supervisees (see below). The supervisees are committed to the process which enables Susan to develop routines and structure and to build relationships with and within the group.

Amy and Harriet both reported that they felt the commissioning agency did not place sufficient value on the supervision in that the supervisees were not paid for their time or expenses to attend supervision. Amy expressed additional frustration that she was in a position of trying to supervise some group members who did not understand or value supervision enough to commit to the process. Whilst Amy has taken positive action to address this by developing some training for the supervisees, it raises questions in the current climate of EPs being increasingly sought after to provide supervision for other professionals (Dunsmuir et al., 2015). Even Susan's more positive experience with her group raises questions about the purpose of EPs being asked to provide supervision. Susan reported that she was asked to engage in this work as many of the team were taking sick leave and commented that some of her group members have said they would have taken sick leave had it not been for the fact that they had a session coming up (79-82). Whilst Susan recognises this as a compliment

to the quality of her work, I cannot help but wonder how Susan would feel if the group members continued to have high levels of sick leave despite her supervision? And I wonder how Susan might feel if she ever needed to cancel a session? Morrison (2001), as cited in Beddoe and Davys (2016), argues that group supervision can deviate from the principles of supervision and states that it should not be a solution to poor performance, incompetence or dysfunctional teams. Whilst there is no suggestion that Susan's team is dysfunctional or incompetent, it does make me question the motivation behind the request for supervision from the Educational Psychology Service, as providing support for stressed teams does not take into consideration other potential factors that are causing the stress and can place the problem with the individual rather than the employing organisation (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

With regard to the function of the supervision, all three participants seemed to describe the work, as above, as relating to the supportive and formative elements of supervision but yet acknowledged having a duty to 'report back' on attendance. Harriet and Amy also reported a duty to report back on any issues that they were concerned about. This identifies an interesting contradiction, in my view. The success of supervision, both individual and group, is widely acknowledged as being dependent on the development of a trusting relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee(s) (Beddoe and Davys, 2016; Callicott and Leadbetter, 2013; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Murrell, 1998; Page and Wosket, 2015; Proctor, 2008; Scaife, 2009). Building trusting relationships so the supervisees have a safe non-judgmental space in which to talk about their work was an important aim for all three participants. It felt to me that it would be difficult for the EP to offer a 'safe space' if there is a duty placed on them to report concerns about practice or ethical issues to management. Beddoe and Davys (2016) suggest that in inter-professional supervision and supervision that is provided by an external supervisor, there is joint responsibility for any ethical issues raised and there should be clarity of the processes to be followed. However, they argue that the group supervision process cannot provide enough safe structure for risk assessment and case management.

Despite the challenges, it seems that the supervisees have felt that they have been accessing a 'safe space' as Amy and Susan both reported that their supervisees expressed feelings of being unsupported in their work and perhaps they would not have raised these issues directly with their management in a different supervision forum. This suggests that it has still been possible for the EPs to form positive supervisory relationships with their supervisees and in Susan's case, she reports a mutually-respectful relationship where both she and her supervisees can see the benefits to their emotional health of working together. Susan reports that there is always full attendance at her sessions. Amy's supervisees have sought out individual supervision with her which suggests they find the supervisory relationship to be a positive one, they are just less keen on the group sessions. This, for me, raises questions about the feasibility of bringing together a group of individual professionals to form a supervision group if they perhaps feel their supervisory needs are best met through individual supervision.

With regard to developing a shared understanding of supervision, the literature on group supervision tells us that it is important to be clear about the purpose, format and anticipated outcomes of supervision, especially when the work is being provided by an external or inter-professional supervisor (Beddoe and Davys, 2015). In this way, the supervisor, the supervisees and the commissioning agency can all be clear on what exactly is and is not being provided, how it will be monitored or evaluated for 'value for money' purposes and how outcomes will be measured. The literature on group supervision provides a vast amount of guidance on ways in which a shared understanding of supervision can be developed at the outset of the work and as an ongoing process over time (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Page and Wosket, 2016; Proctor, 2008; Scaife, 2009).

The literature on supervision contracting recognises that clearly defined contracts can help to specify the aims and outcomes of supervision but contracting does not always happen. Even when it does, this does not necessarily mean that all parties have a shared understanding of supervision, as discussed above. If the purpose of EPs supervising other

professionals is to facilitate reflection on working practices in order to strengthen practice, I wonder how this can be achieved by meeting three times a year? Even with more frequent sessions, each term for example, this still leaves several weeks between sessions so perhaps in some instances the purpose of EP supervision is more for emotional support for professionals? Even with that remit, it is well-documented that the effectiveness of supervision, albeit purely supportive (and not formative or managerial) is highly dependent on the strength of relationships with the supervisor and within the group and the trusting relationships needed in order to develop meaningful supervision may not be developed well with infrequent contact and variable attendance at group sessions, as discussed above. In the current climate, there is a focus on supporting the mental health of children and young people in schools and more mental health-related roles are being developed within schools. For example, Osborne and Burton (2014) researched EPs providing supervision for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. In terms of mental health, significant change can occur in the space of a few weeks and it is important to bear in mind Beddoe and Davys (2016)'s views that group supervision may be something that can be added to other forums for supervision but may not be sufficient to meet all the supervision needs of a professional from another agency.

A potential strength of EPs supervising other professionals working with families/parents or going into schools is that the EP is able to form a link between non-educational professionals and education-based professionals and this seems to be a feature of the work of the three participants in my study. The EPs are able to bring to the discussions knowledge of the education system, knowledge of the types of support that can be provided in school and a psychological understanding of what can help the young people at the heart of the cases be successful in education. In this sense, the EPs are able to use the supervision sessions to make links and bridge the work of educational and non-educational professionals in supporting the child or young person. However, authors of the literature on supervision may not consider this to be the purpose of supervision.

4.3.3 The Relationship with the Group: Summary

In summary, the data from this study indicates that the EP's ability to form interpersonal relationships, thought to be essential to effective supervision, can be negatively affected by organisational difficulties and can add to the stress levels of the EP. Variable attendance impedes the development of the group. There are additional challenges for EPs assigned to groups that do not come together as a group outside of the supervisory arrangement.

The EP and the supervisees can feel unsupported when the commissioners do not commission sufficient time for the supervisory relationships to form and to facilitate meaningful supervision. It is important that all parties develop a shared understanding of supervision and its processes. Training for the supervisees and their managers may be helpful in developing a commitment to the process that would enable the EP to develop effective supervision processes. As stated by Beddoe and Davys (2016), a supervisor should be chosen for their supervisory qualities and not to suit practical arrangements.

Where the group is well-organised and there is a shared value placed on the supervision, supervisory structures and relationships can be formed and the experience can be rewarding for both the facilitator and supervisees.

4.4 Overarching Theme: Emotional Investment

The data from the participants suggests that the reported experience of the work is influenced by the amount of emotional investment they report in relation to the gains they feel personally and the sense of success they feel in terms of either engagement with the group or in terms of outcomes from the sessions. The level to which the EP feels supported and valued in the work also emerged as important themes in understanding the reported experience.

4.4.1 Superordinate Theme 5: The Impact on EP Emotional Well-being

The impact on the EP's emotional well-being is a major theme for both Susan and Amy but they both experience this in polarised ways. For Susan, the experience of facilitating her group is positive, something that leaves her feeling uplifted and positive about herself and her skills. Susan clearly finds the work worthwhile for her personally. There is a positive impact on her own emotional well-being and she does not report concern about the responsibility for the work. It is an area of work for Susan that makes a nice change from the other EP work she does and that she looks forward to. Although Harriet discussed the organisational challenges she has faced and how hard she has found it to form a cohesive group, she has a relaxed attitude towards the work and seems happy to 'go with the flow'. She enjoys the times that work well but does not express anxiety or a strong sense of responsibility for times that work less well. Conversely, for Amy, the experience leaves her feeling anxious and frustrated to the extent that she is not sure whether she wants to continue with the work or not. Amy has different expectations to her colleagues in terms of structure, support and commitment. This may be contributing to her feelings of anxiety and frustration and she feels 'unsafe' in the role. For Amy, the personal gains are outweighed by the worry she feels about the work. Harriet and Susan do not have backgrounds that include clinical supervision training and perhaps concern themselves less with feeling safe in practice as a consequence.

Interpretative analysis of the data indicates a number of factors that seem to be important in the emotional responses the participant has to the work, although the factors were not common to all participants. These factors include how supported the participant feels in the role, how valued they feel by their group members, how competent they feel in the work, their prior expectations of the work and whether or not they feel they are able to make a difference for the group's working practices.

Interestingly, Susan's prior expectations of the work, based on her previous experiences, had led her to anticipate the work being a source of anxiety for her:

> *I think I expected it to be hard. And I expected myself, I expected to get bogged down in worries and frustrated that I can't solve all the problems for everybody. And actually, remarkably, I've never found that. (323-327)*

> *...and I was really worried that I would umm...take it all to heart and worry about it all the time and actually I didn't. (329-331)*

Susan explains that the sessions have instead benefitted her emotional health:

> *I found that the group for me has a very containing function for me as a facilitator as well as for the members within the group. So that's a surprise for me.... (331-334)*

> *...it's always something that I come out of and feel great... (344-345)*

> *It's a fabulous way to end the week. (351-352)*

Amy reported a keen interest in this type of work but also anxiety and frustration and it seems that her experiences with this particular group has caused her to re-think if this work is something she wants to continue with.

> *I love group supervision, but within this context, it's not working... (159)*

Amy has found it difficult to tolerate the level of disorganisation within the group and its management:

> *I was very excited about getting involved with the project because I think it's an amazing project. I expected it to be better organised than it has been. (319-322)*

> *...that's the kind of chaos that frustrates me. (518-519)*

Amy expresses concern that the 'chaotic structure' of her group's organisation is impacting on the young people at the centre of the work and

this is having an adverse affect on her own emotional wellbeing. In her interview she uses language related to negative emotions, such as 'anxiety' (325, 343), frustration' (155, 325, 518), 'worry' (338, 441, 442, 469) and 'concern' (396, 421, 469)

Having a sense of control over the work seemed to be important in how the participants experience the work. In interpreting Susan's positive experience of this work, which seems to be quite different from the reported experiences of Amy and Harriet, I am struck by her sense of control over the work. She has taken measures to clarify the purpose of the supervision with her group and she has a clear understanding of how she wants to approach the work and where her personal boundaries and responsibilities lie. She has a strong sense of what the work is and what it is not and this helps her to manage the work with confidence. She is clear about the structures and routines she applies to the sessions and she is aware of the techniques she uses to maintain a positive feel to the work: solution-focused and strength-based approaches. She has a clear sense of where to seek support if necessary. This means that for Susan the work has become part of her working routine and her interview gives the sense that she is 'in charge' of the work.

Susan's sense of control over her work does not seem to be replicated in Amy and Harriet's experiences, where they report contradictions in their interpretation of the role, a lack of control over their ability to form a cohesive group and a lack of shared value of the supervisory process by their group members. Amy reported feeling conflicted between being put in a position of responsibility without having any authority to meet that responsibility as she would like (340-343). Not being in control of the work seems to be a contributory factor to Amy's anxiety.

4.4.1.1 Feeling Valued

Analysis of the language Susan uses in her interview suggests that this is a theme that is important to her. She uses positive language to describe how

the sessions are received, such as 'valuable' (79,90), 'helpful' (140), 'useful' (75) and 'appreciate' (262).

Susan feels that she is currently making a difference to the working practices and emotional wellbeing of her group, expressed through her comments on developing agreed working practices within the group (43-49) and through her comment on how some of the group members have told her that they would have taken sick leave had they not had a session with her coming up (79-82). The group has made her feel that as an EP she adds weight to the group's work (137-140). Her work in writing up feedback for the group's management also made her feel that she was achieving something important with the group:

> *Which they felt really, really useful. (74-75)*

Despite Amy's concerns, she, too, feels she has been able to make a difference to the working practice of her group (378-379), (500-501).

One difference that is important in the participant's experiences is the way in which the work was established. Susan's group seems to have requested the support from an EP as a team, whereas for both Amy and Harriet, the group's management have offered the support to their teams as something that they are expected to take advantage of but the individuals are not a team that collectively made a request for support. This may have had an effect on the motivation of the group members to attend the sessions, with those having requested Susan's support more likely to want to attend the sessions. The consistently full attendance at Susan's group helps her to feel that the group find the sessions worthwhile, as their attendance is voluntary. Harriet has to make a conscious effort not to take poor attendance personally:

> *...you take it personally that actually the last group wasn't great or wasn't helpful or didn't meet their needs. (197-199)*

Susan also talks about using a strength-based model in her sessions that enables her to give positive feedback to the group members on 'how they have acted in certain situations' (264-266). She is conscious of looking for

positives to feedback and feels that EPs doing this role should work in a way that is supportive of the group (266-267). The use of a strength-based model, combined with Susan's use of solution-focused approaches, may be helping to keep the sessions focused on positives and may be contributing to Susan's sense that her work is well-received:

> *...a lot of the people I work with appreciate feedback on what they're doing... (261-262)*

Susan reports having had consistently positive previous experiences, too:

> *And I think that everybody that I've worked with in all the different roles, have really, really appreciated the sessions. (318-320)*

> *...I've never ever been part of a group or facilitating a group where we haven't managed to make a difference. (342-344)*

Harriet does not refer directly to feeling valued but interpretation of the data from her interview suggests that she herself does not place a value on her work. Harriet questions her competency at times and worries that poor attendance at sessions may reflect poor quality of the sessions (197-199). The questions posed in the interview seemed to add to Harriet's feelings that she was not doing a particularly good job of this role. For example, when asked if she evaluates the work, she replied that she did not and then added:

> *That's terrible, isn't it? (86)*

Harriet also talked about the importance of delivering individual sessions with the group members as this helps to maintain her confidence in the work:

> *...it is really good to have the individual along with the group and to sort of, just keep your confidence going really... (332-334)*

4.4.1.2 Feeling Supported

With regard to support in the role, there is some variation in the experiences of the three participants. Susan reported that the Educational Psychology Service's usual management support structure was sufficient to meet her needs. If she had any concerns, she would discuss them with her line manager as part of the usual supervision sessions.

Amy also feels well-supported by her line manager but states that she does not feel well-supported by her group's management (437). For Amy, it is important to have a line manager who is reflective so they can reflect together on what is going on in the group (419-420). She also feels that being able to talk to someone else doing as similar role (peer support) is important (490-493).

Harriet also found taking time with her EP colleagues to discuss the work helpful:

> *...listening to others and what they did and what they brought to it was really useful. (143-144)*

Harriet reported low levels of support from anyone other than these two EP colleagues:

> *That's the support, otherwise, there's none. Unless you went and asked for it. (278-279)*

Harriet feels that this is an area that could be improved upon but feels that the EPs doing the work should take more responsibility for seeking support or asserting what support they feel they need in the role:

> *...I think there should be a little bit more kind of, like you asked us to do this, this is what we need in order to do it, a little bit more pro-active and a bit more assertive about good practice really. (305-308)*

Harriet also feels that the EPs doing the work would benefit from meeting more regularly to reflect on how the work is going (296-299).

With regard to support in the role, the data in this study indicated that the participants varied in terms of the level and nature of support they felt would

be useful to them in the role. This led me to reflect on the supervision literature generally, in that it is recognised through supervision models that different supervisees will seek different forms of support at different times, perhaps depending on circumstances but also depending on the novice to expert transition. This is important in relation to the literature relating to 'supervision on supervision'. Depending on the context of the supervision and the particular needs of the supervisor, the level and nature of support required could vary greatly. For example, Harriet reported that she would have found it helpful to have more peer support from colleagues also facilitating group supervision so that she could learn from their experiences. This is consistent with the findings of Ashmore et al. (2012) whose participants reported that more peer support would have supported individual style whilst ensuring consistency in the quality of supervision provided. It seems that the supervision for the supervision would need to be flexible and tailored to the individual's needs. I wonder how this ties in with Page and Wosket's (2015) view that individual supervision is better for group supervisors when starting out and more experienced practitioners can have their needs met in group supervision? Perhaps those new to the role of group supervisor would benefit from having individual supervision with someone experienced in the facilitation of group supervision? What would that look like for EPs? Who would be the experienced group supervisor? I also reflected on Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) opinion that group supervisors should have their own group supervision, to know what it is to be the group supervisee and to learn from the group supervisor's modelling of responses to the group. How would that work for EPs, especially where another agency is paying for the service?

4.4.2 Superordinate Theme 6: The Level of Personal Investment

Interpretative analysis of the data identified this theme as particularly significant for Amy, who reported high levels of training and experience but seemed to be frustrated that she could not work in a way that she wanted to with the group, due to a combination of the lack of shared understanding of

supervision and the 'chaotic structure' (333) of the organisation within which the group members work. Amy appears to be feeling that she has invested a significant amount of time over the years in developing her supervisory skills and she was keen to be involved in supporting the group members in their work, both because she valued their work and she recognised that they needed support in that role (10-15).

Amy also refers to the investment the EP makes in terms of putting themselves into a position of 'vulnerability' in order to reflect on the unconscious processes taking place within the session and in order to recognise that they are expecting the group members to make themselves vulnerable in the sessions:

> *...to be able to be reflective of yourself so that you can, use yourself as a barometer of what might be going on in the group. (236-239)*

> *...I think you have to have the courage to do it yourself and be willing to put yourself in that position of vulnerability with another person that you trust so you know what you're asking of the other person. (525-529)*

By contrast, Harriet and Susan did not seem to think they had a level of training or skill beyond their usual EP training and did not report any feelings of personal investment in the work. Murrell's (1998) study reports on the personal qualities facilitators felt to be of importance in building relationships with the group members and the role of facilitator was not considered something anyone could carry out. Training and support were felt necessary to be an effective facilitator. This view is shared by Amy and Harriet but not Susan (discussed above), suggesting again that the level of personal investment in the supervisory process and the amount of support and training felt necessary can vary from participant to participant.

4.4.3 Superordinate Theme 7: Personal Gains for the EP

This theme considers how the participants feel they benefit from carrying out the work. Harriet and Amy volunteered for the role and Susan reported being asked to do the work on this occasion, as no-one else volunteered.

4.4.3.1 Passion for the Work

All three participants expressed an interest in the work during their interviews. Amy and Susan reported personal enjoyment of supervision/reflective practice themselves and previous positive experiences of facilitating groups. Susan said that she had liked and missed the work (20). The work is new to Harriet but fits with her personal interest in reflection, as evidenced by the further Continuing Professional Development course she is studying. This is an important factor in the reported experiences of the EPs because all three talked about the work with passion and a commitment to the role, despite the challenges that Harriet and Amy faced. All three participants also reported that some EPs are better suited to the work than others and that EPs should not be forced to do this work as they would be at risk of not delivering high quality work (see above).

Amy was aware that she had raised many concerns about the work during her interview and was keen to ensure her passion for the work was also acknowledged:

> *Yeah, I love facilitating reflection and love seeing other people find their own way through... (451-452)*

Amy also reports pride in being part of a project that she values and expresses her admiration for the work of her group members:

> *...you may think from all the negative things I'm saying that I don't but I do... (admire the group) (456-458)*

She enjoys the relationship that develops with the group and finds that the discussion can take a direction she does not always anticipate (452-453).

Harriet also enjoys the work, despite the challenges she has faced with her group:

> *I've enjoyed listening to the things they're thinking about actually (laughs). And how amazing it is that sometimes they intuitively do stuff which is really, really helpful to the young people without really knowing that, why that might be. (178-182)*

As discussed above, Susan reports that she 'loves' the work and has only positive comments to make about her experiences:

> *I think what I really love about it is it's just such a positive thing to do. (339- 340)*
>
> *...it's such a rewarding process... (471-472)*

Susan also feels that some EPs can lack an understanding of the work and lack confidence in taking on this work and this is disappointing for her as she feels EPs could make more of a contribution in this field:

> *...I just think it would be something, it would be nice if more people had an opportunity to do it and understood what it was. (480-482)*

Amy, too, would encourage other EPs to take on this work, even though she herself has doubts about continuing:

> *I would encourage them cos I think it's a great thing to do. (486-487)*

4.4.3.2 Personal and Professional Gains

The participants were asked how the work may have benefitted them or the Educational Psychology Service that they work for. All three participants were able to identify personal gains for themselves as well as a positive impact of the work for the service. Susan and Amy highlighted the benefit of extending the Educational Psychology Service's links with other agencies and all three participants felt that doing this work helped other agencies to see that EPs have a range of skills beyond assessment to offer the Local Authority and other services.

Although comments were made about the benefits to the Educational Psychology Service's image and links with other agencies, the important element of perceived EP gains in this research project is the balance between personal benefits perceived and the level of emotional investment or effort put into the work. In other words, do they feel the work is 'worth it'?

Amy feels that her self-reflection is aided by the work:

> *...and challenge my own concerns and worries ... (468-469)*

Amy seems to be reporting that she is able to reflect on why she feels worried or concerned about specific aspects of the work and this is useful in extending her understanding of herself.

Susan's experiences leave her feeling not only uplifted following a session but also feeling positive about herself:

> *...I get a lot of positive feedback from it and I always feel that I've done a really good job. So from an emotional wellbeing point of view, it's very good. (427- 430)*

In addition, to the emotional benefits, Susan also finds the work a welcome break from her normal routines (472-474). She feels that the work contributes to her professional development as an EP (477-480), a view shared by Amy (466-472).

Harriet reported that the experience has made her feel more confident in being able to focus on the processes of discussion in sessions rather than just the content (263-268). In other words, Harriet has become more confident in applying some of her learning from her professional development courses.

4.4.3.3 Expected Outcomes

The participants showed some variation in their expected outcomes of their contribution to the role, which seemed to impact on the level of satisfaction they experienced in relation to the work. The expected outcomes were not articulated in response to any direct question but rather emerged through

the comments made by the participants, and again, this is connected to the EP's interpretation of the role. For example, Susan's talk about the work carried out in the group sessions seemed firmly embedded in practical outcomes, such as developing an agreed protocol for answering the telephones. This may make it easier to achieve a sense of success: when the protocol is written and agreed, it can be evidence of achievement within the group. By contrast, Amy and Harriet are focused on 'enlightening' the group members about unconscious processes which could be harder to measure in terms of outcomes, thereby impacting on Amy and Harriet's sense of achievement with their groups.

Susan's use of problem-solving models could also make it easier to draw a conclusion to a discussion. Moving towards a better understanding of a situation is harder again to measure for Amy and Harriet so the approaches used within the sessions are likely to impact on the sense of progress with the group for the EP.

4.4.4 Emotional Investment: Summary

As discussed above, on the surface the three participants could be seen to be doing the same work. However, the emotional challenges of the work can be markedly different. This would suggest that assumptions cannot be made that the experience of facilitating group supervision for other professionals will be similar for all EPs. The work can be hugely rewarding for some but can have a significant negative impact for the EP if the work is incongruent with their expectations or concepts of good practice.

In summary, it seems that we can learn from this research study that where the EP has a sense of control over the work, the EP can find the role rewarding and emotionally beneficial. They can feel valued and that they are making a difference to the professional lives of others. Where the EP does not feel supported or safe in practice, the work can bring worry, feelings of inadequacy or a sense of ineffectiveness. EPs can have mixed feelings about the work, feeling both passionate about supervision but vulnerable in the role.

EPs can vary in terms of the training and support they feel is necessary in the role and it may be that the more training on supervision an EP has had, the more they question the safety of practice. This brings a risk that those perhaps most qualified for the role of group supervision facilitator do not want to take on the work if they do not feel they have sufficient control over the execution of the role.

With regard to professional gains, facilitating group supervision for other professionals can not only enhance the skills and knowledge of the EP but can also develop a greater understanding of what the EP service can offer and develop strong links with other agencies.

Reflection box:

Following analysis of the data from this study, I reflected on my own experiences of facilitating group supervision over the years and found that three participants reporting three different experiences resonated with my initial interest in conducting this research study. As stated in Chapter 1, I had previously experienced EP colleagues reporting different view points on their work. One colleague found the work so emotionally challenging that she stepped down from the role after one year. At the time, the explanation she gave me was that the nature of the cases discussed in the sessions were distressing for her to listen to. She was supervising a team of workers in social care. However, at the same time, I had other colleagues doing the same role who enjoyed the work and found it rewarding. This generated my interest in exploring why the experience may be so different for EPs.

With regard to the data generated by Amy, Harriet and Susan in this study, I am able to relate to all of their experiences at some level. I, too, have experienced the challenges of trying to form a cohesive group from a collection of individuals who had little interest in attending group supervision sessions and who did not share an understanding of supervision with each other or with their management. It proved to be difficult to organise on a

practical level and to establish any kind of structure to the sessions as each group member wanted to get something different out of the session. Some individuals were quite open to reflecting on their work and the ways in which they could make changes by reflecting on their own responses to situations. Others wanted to use the session to air frustration with their work or with their management. Some had a mistrust of their co-workers and did not feel they were in a safe space.

Initially, I began the work with no supervision training or knowledge of models. As I had an interest in the subject, I attended training courses and read relevant books and articles. Like Amy, I found that the more I knew, the less safe I felt in practice due to a lack of contracting, boundaries and discussion about roles and responsibilities. Increased knowledge for me meant increased anxiety about what I was doing. However, this feeling of being unsafe only applied to some situations.

Like Susan, I had experience of meeting very regularly (monthly) with a group of professionals and there had been clear discussion with them and their management about the purpose, processes and responsibilities of the work, although no formal contract was in place. This made me feel safer in practice and meeting so regularly with the same group of people over a number of years meant that I was able to develop positive relationships with the group and to feel a sense of achievement, progress and value in my work. We developed routines and after the first few months, where attendance was inconsistent, the group started to work productively as a group and group members themselves placed a value on the sessions that meant attendance was always full.

There was an initial need to establish ground rules and there were occasions when team issues spilled over into the sessions and caused a setback in the team relationships. I do not recall feeling the same level of emotional containment for myself that Susan reports and felt that the sessions were something I needed to prepare well for to ensure they ran smoothly. There were times when the group membership changed due to employees joining and leaving the team. This often meant there was a

need to take a few steps back to re-visit the purposes and processes of supervision.

Interestingly, I felt that after working with this group for three years there was a risk of becoming over-familiar and comfortable with one another in the group that may have reduced the level of challenge posed. The purpose of the group was to provide support not challenge although as Caroll (2007) says, supervision is not taking place if challenge is insufficient. The group came to a natural end before this 'collusion' could become an issue.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the main conclusions from the research and to discuss the potential limitations. I will also consider how the findings may inform recommendations for EP practice and for future research.

5.2 Conclusions

This research study aimed to gain an insight into the experiences of EPs facilitating group supervision for other professionals in order to increase knowledge and understanding of what factors may influence their experiences. This research is of importance as the majority of literature on group supervision focuses on the perspectives of the supervisees and there appears to be a lack of literature on the experiences of facilitators working within the field of educational psychology. Calicott and Leadbetter's (2013) study is the only research that considers the perspectives of EPs but the study focuses on supervisors and supervisees together. Dunsmuir et al. (2015) identified that there is an upward trend of EPs facilitating supervision, both individual and group, for other professionals and I felt it was important to explore the experiences of EP facilitators to add knowledge to current knowledge of the experiences of group supervision facilitators working in other professions.

These findings are relevant not only for EPs, but for other facilitators of group supervision. This research is based on the interviews with three EPs and as such, it is not possible to make generalisations about how other EPs might experience the role of facilitator of group supervision for other professionals. This is a small sample and yet there are still significant differences in the reported experiences. However, it was possible to draw some conclusions about the factors that affect EP experience: the level of responsibility they feel in the role, the extent to which they are able to form

a relationship with the group and to develop group cohesion and flow, the extent to which there is a shared understanding and value of supervision and the emotional responses that the work evokes in the EP. This research study has taken me a step further in understanding why the 'same' work can feel so different for different EPs. The differences in experiences of the three participants varied greatly and it seems that the role of facilitator of group supervision cannot be understood outside of the specific context and circumstances, not only of the EP facilitator, but also of the group they are supervising.

5.3 Key Findings

5.3.1 What is it like for EPs to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?

The data from this research study indicates that the participants' experiences of facilitating group supervision for other professionals varied. The work can be rewarding and enriching for the EP and can support their own emotional well-being. The EP can feel valued and appreciated by their supervisees and the work can be an enjoyable change from the routine work of EPs. The EP can feel they gain from the work in terms of challenging themselves personally, through self-reflection, and professionally as they develop knowledge of, and links with, other agencies. The EPs felt that the EPS could benefit through showcasing the skills EPs have to offer other than assessment. The process of facilitating sessions can also provide emotional containment for the EP and positive experiences of facilitation can support an EP's confidence in working in new ways or give them a sense of making a difference to the work of other professionals.

At other times, the role can cause worry, anxiety and frustration. EPs who experience organisational challenges can feel frustrated as the lack of consistent attendance at sessions can have a negative impact on the flow

and cohesion of the group. This is particularly relevant where the group does not normally work together as a team and where there is a lack of understanding or value of supervision by the supervisees or the commissioning agency. EPs can experience the role as 'hard work' when they struggle to bring together a disparate group of individuals for the purpose of group supervision. EPs can take it personally if attendance is poor and this can affect their confidence as facilitator. Amy and Harriet felt that facilitating group sessions was more challenging than providing individual supervision sessions. Individual sessions helped to boost Harriet's confidence in contrast to the group sessions that caused her to question her competence at times. A lack of commitment by the supervisees to the supervision process sometimes impacted on the EP's ability to organise group sessions. Amy felt that training for supervisees could be useful in developing the supervisees' understanding of the functions and processes of supervision and in encouraging commitment to the process.

EPs can feel tension between their expectations of the role, their concept of supervision or their supervisory style and the supervisory arrangement in which they are working. Where an EP has had a considerable amount of training on supervision and has developed a concept of what 'good' or 'safe' supervision looks like, they can become anxious and worried if the supervisory arrangements do not enable them to practise in a way that makes them feel protected and supported. The level of responsibility EPs feel in the role can vary.

The EPs shared an understanding of the interpersonal skills required to be an effective supervisor. Trust, openness, honesty and transparency were identified as being important along with warmth, empathy and the creation of a safe, non-judgemental space for supervisees (Beddoe and Davys, 2016, Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). Flexibility was identified as essential to effective group supervision, both in terms of practical arrangements but also in terms of responding flexibly within sessions to meet the varying needs of the supervisees. Models of supervision and problem-solving models were used but the EPs felt that models should only be applied

flexibly. Being overly-directive and having a fixed view of what supervision is or is not was regarded as unhelpful in developing relationships with the group. Strength-based approaches were identified as being helpful in supporting the emotional well-being of supervisees by Susan.

With regard to support in the role, EPs can vary in the level and nature of support they feel they need in the role. All participants felt supported by their EP colleagues and EP managers but Amy and Harriet felt the commissioning agency did not do enough to support the supervisory arrangement. Harriet felt that there should be more frequent opportunities for peer support so the EP facilitators could meet to reflect on the work and learn from one another (Ashmore et al., 2012). Harriet felt that the EPs themselves should be more pro-active in stating what support they need in the role.

As found by Ashmore et al. (2012), the supervisor participants in my study reported high levels of enjoyment and an interest in supervision generally. They have a passion for supervision and feel it is an area of EP work they are able to make a positive contribution to, based on their skills, knowledge or previous experiences but there has not been a clear path of training or preparation prior to taking on the work. Susan felt that all EPs have a core set of interpersonal skills that would enable them to facilitate group supervision for other professionals but that passion for the work would be important in ensuring high quality supervision (Page and Wosket, 2015). Susan also felt that EPs can lack confidence in taking on the role of group supervisor as they can lack an understanding of what the work involves. Amy and Harriet did not agree that all EPs have a core set of skills and felt that it is more the individual interpersonal skills of the EP and/or their knowledge of supervision models and processes that would make the EP suitable for the role (Callicott and Leadbetter, 2013).

In response to the research question 'What is it like for EPs to facilitate group supervision for professionals from other organisations?', it seems that there may be some similarities in experience but that ultimately, the

experience can be very different for EPs and can evoke strong, but different, emotions in EPs.

My interpretation of the data from the three participants identifies some features of the reported experiences that may be contributing to these differences in feelings about the work, and these are discussed below in considering what can be learned from this research data.

5.3.2 What can we learn from these experiences?

As researcher, my interest in conducting this research study was to explore why EPs who are doing the same work can report such different feelings about it. Analysis of the data from the participants in this research study suggested that the way in which an EP experiences their role as facilitator of group supervision for professionals from other organisations is influenced by three main aspects of the work:

- the level of responsibility they feel in the role
- the extent to which they have been able to form a relationship with the group
- the emotional investment by the EP

5.3.3 Conclusion

The factors that seem to be important in enhancing the experience for the EP include:

- group cohesion, stable attendance and a frequency of contact that enables the EP to develop relationships with group members
- a shared understanding and value of supervision by the supervisees
- a shared understanding and value of supervision by the commissioning agency's management
- clarification of the role and responsibility of the supervisor

- clarification of the purpose of supervision (ie managerial, formative, restorative)
- a good fit between the remit of the work and the EP's individual supervisory style
- the EP having some control over the supervisory arrangements
- flexible support in the role

5.4 Implications for Practice

Supervision of professional work, especially within caring professions, has become increasingly important in recent years, both as a mechanism for supporting professionals emotionally and as a way of ensuring high quality services are delivered (Hewson and Carroll, 2016). Within the practice of educational psychology in the UK, there has been a significant increase in EPs supervising other professionals, either individually or in groups, as reported by Dunsmuir et al. (2015), with almost 29% of EPs respondents reporting that they are supervising other professionals working with children and young people.

Although each participant in this study had unique experiences of facilitating group supervision, some key themes and discussion points emerged from the interpretative analysis of the data. When considering these alongside the literature, some recommendations for practice can be tentatively suggested for EPs, educational psychology services and commissioners with a view to improving the experience for EPs carrying out this work.

5.4.1 Implications for the EP

This research study indicates how 'messy' the area of supervision is, in terms of developing a shared understanding of what supervision and group supervision means and a shared language with which to describe the work.

It is even more important, therefore, that the EP has a clear discussion with their manager, the commissioners and the supervisees about the service that they are providing. A written contract is vital to ensuring clarity around the functions and aims of the supervision and the responsibilities of the EP supervisor. This is essential to developing a shared understanding of where the group supervision fits alongside other supervision, such as line management, that the supervisees may be receiving. There should be written agreement of the processes that will be followed regarding any ethical dilemmas or concerns that arise. Practical issues, such as expectations for attendance, frequency of meeting and so on, can also be included in the contract, along with evaluation processes.

The EP also needs to take responsibility for their decision to take on the work. They need to consider whether they have had sufficient training or have knowledge and skills to ensure they adhere to the BPS and HCPC guidelines that EPs are competent in the services they provide. The EP needs to ensure that they have adequate supervision in the role, especially where there is no policy or routine practice for this within their EP service. The purpose of the supervision is not only to ensure that the EP is delivering a high quality service but should also provide them with the space to reflect on and learn from their work as a group supervisor. The EP needs to consider their views on supervision and make sure that they do not take on work that is at odds with their expectations of the role.

It seems that having a sense of control over the work is important, as is having sufficient opportunity to develop the group and to establish routines and 'flow'. It is important for the EP's emotional well-being that the EP's practice is a good fit with the way in which they conceptualise their role as supervisor and there is a clear and shared understanding between the EP, the group members and the commissioning agency of the purpose and boundaries of the work and that sufficient time is given for both the supervisees and supervisors to be able to develop effective supervision.

Flexibility in terms of what the supervision looks like is important so that the supervisor can apply their individual supervisory style, based loosely on

models of supervision and other psychological approaches from EP work. The literature on group supervision tells us that group supervision is not a format that will suit all supervisors; some supervisors prefer to supervise on an individual basis. This is important as the work may be agreed at a managerial level and then delegated to the EP but may be restricting for them in how they are able to establish the supervision programme so that they feel comfortable in the role. For example, if an EP has a concept of supervision that it should take place on a frequent basis in order to be meaningful, tasking them with a group that meets only three times a year may cause them anxiety.

5.4.2 Implications for EP Services

This study demonstrated that in using the term 'group supervision' there are many variations of what that means for different people and in what the group looks like, in the aims of the group supervision and in the practical arrangements for the group. It should, therefore, not be assumed that one EP facilitating group supervision is doing the same work as another, although there may be core elements to the work. The emotional responses to the work can be hugely different and each EP will need the service managers to recognise that. The work can be rewarding work but it can also evoke feelings of frustration and anxiety. The literature on group supervision and professional guidelines tells us how important it is for supervisors to have the opportunity to reflect on their work and to address any potential biases. With regard to support in the role, the EPs varied in terms of what they would feel necessary so a flexible approach to meet the individual supervisory needs of the supervisor would be useful. The work can enhance the skills of the EP and can broaden the work of the service, as well as developing strong links with other agencies. However, without the training, support, control and time required to support the EP and the supervisory arrangement, there is a risk that well-qualified and experienced EPs will be reluctant to take on the role of facilitator. Feeling safe in

practice is important and work commissioned should be negotiated with the EP rather than delegated.

As for the individual EP supervisor, the EP service should also ensure that there is a clear, written contract in place with the commissioner so that all parties are clear about the service that is being purchased/provided. The EP service will also need to consider the commission in terms of ethical and safe practice for the EP. For example, is the commissioning agency requesting supervision on a basis that is frequent enough for the EP to form a strong working relationship with the group? And is the work being requested ethical in terms of developing the group's reflective skills or is it a solution to team issues, such as staff shortages? The EP service leader should take responsibility for ensuring that it is ethical to place one of their employees in the position of supervisor.

There is evidence from this study, although not focused on in the data analysis or discussion as the study is about experiences and not practical issues, that some of the 'good practice' guidance is not in place for these three supervisors. Examples of good practice include supervision for supervisors and training to become a supervisor. Based on the guidance, it seems that it would be prudent for EP service leaders to give consideration to whether or not the EP has skills and experience in group supervision before allocating the work. They will also need to consider what training and ongoing supervision will be available for the EP supervisor and in traded services, whether the commissioning agency or the EP service will be paying for the supervision time for the EP supervisor. A service policy on good practice such as that outlined by Wedlock and Turner (2017)'s study would be desirable. Wedlock and Turner (2017) report that the educational psychology service within which their study takes place has the following in place:

- a supervision strategy group, led by a Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist
- a two-day within-service training programme which is offered every two years

- supervisors are required to attend refresher training
- twice-yearly supervision facilitated by a Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist
- an expectation that a contract is drawn up at the outset of a supervisory relationship and which is periodically reviewed

This practice would be consistent with the recommendations of Leadbetter and Dunsmuir (2010) but I would argue based on my own research study and that of Ashmore et al. (2012), that twice-yearly supervision for supervisors may not be sufficient.

5.4.3 Implications for Commissioners

This study suggests that it is essential that the commissioner and the potential supervisees have a clear understanding of supervision, models of supervision and supervisory processes, so that the supervisees are able to engage with and benefit from the supervision. The commissioner needs to understand the importance of relationships in effective supervision and ensure that they are able to commission sufficient time for meaningful supervision to take place.

The commissioner needs to consider where this form of supervision sits alongside any other supervisory processes in place in that service, such as line management. The function and aims of the supervision needs to be clearly defined in writing with the EP service and the EP supervisor. This is essential with regard to the discussion of case work and where responsibility lies for all parties. The commissioner also needs to consider how they will evaluate the supervision and what is required from the EP in terms of feedback.

The commissioner needs to agree attendance expectations with the supervisees and reflect on whether this should be paid time in the case of self-employed workers. It is vital that the supervision arrangements support the supervisees' ability and motivation to access the supervision. The

commissioner could also support the EP supervisor with organisational issues, such as providing a location for the sessions.

5.4.4 Implications for the Profession

In considering the data from this study, the increase in the numbers of EPs involved in facilitating group supervision and the literature on group supervision that claims an additional set of skills and experiences are required when working with groups, it seems that this might be the time for the DECP to extend its' 2015 guidance on Professional Supervision to include a section on group supervision specifically.

It may also be time for EP training courses to review their training programmes to consider whether there is any scope for including more experience and competencies relating to the facilitation of group supervision for other professionals.

There could also be an accreditation system for qualified EPs who engage in group supervision and develop a set of skills and competencies associated with the role.

5.5 Limitations

The limitations of IPA studies have been considered and discussed in Chapter 3 (Methodology). This section will discuss the potential limitations that are specific to this study.

The number of participants falls short of Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendations of at least four participants in doctoral level research. At the outset of this research, I had an expressed interest from four participants but one chose not to participate at the interview level. I chose to select my participants from one Local Authority as the supervision, support structures and funding status of educational psychology services can vary so much that I felt it would enable me to better explore the variations in experiences for EPs who all came from the same service

context. My initial interest in this research stemmed from the fact that colleagues in this educational psychology service had expressed different views on facilitating group supervision to me informally and I was interested in exploring why the 'same ' work feels different to different EPs. I felt that this would be better achieved by not including EPs from other services in my study. However, this could be addressed in future research as a wider study.

The participants in this study were self-selected in that they responded to an invitation to participate. This can result in a participant bias in that respondents may feel they have something important to say on the subject. I would argue that this is the case for Amy, who was intended to be a pilot study participant but who asked for her data to be included. In view of the data that Amy has contributed to this research, I feel that this is an important point to be acknowledged. This could affect the transferability of the results from this research.

As is consistent with an IPA study, I have played an active part in this research, especially in the interpretation of the data. I feel that there have been both advantages and disadvantages to my professional relationship with the participants. I feel there was an established level of professional trust that may have enabled them to be more open and honest about their experiences but at the same time, there were times during the interviews when we shared a common understanding, not only in terms of language used but also in terms of the participants knowing that I, too, have facilitated group supervision and for the same group of supervisees as Amy. This may have impacted on my ability as researcher to ask important clarification or follow up questions in the interviews as I sometimes felt that I 'knew what they meant' and they knew that I would understand the language they were using so perhaps did not explain themselves as fully as they could have done. It felt at times that we were 'short-cutting' to the point. This means that we understood one another well and could have a conversation on a certain professional level but also meant there could be missed opportunities for 'innocent questioning'. I do feel that some of the comments made in the interviews, however, such as comments about the

lack of support from the commissioning agency, may not have been made if we did not have a previous trusting relationship.

Additionally, having reviewed the interview data a number of times throughout the analysis process, I feel that more experience of interviewing others about lived experiences would have been beneficial. I could identify better follow-up questions with hindsight and would have liked to ask more questions about their feelings rather than their actions. In an IPA study the focus is on trying to get as close as you can to another's experience and I feel the inclusion of follow-up questions such as 'How did you feel about that?' rather than 'What did you do about that?' would have helped to generate data that provides a richer insight into the participants' experiences.

In my role as researcher, I have sought to develop an awareness of my positionality in relation to the research knowledge and how my positionality orientates me to what is said. As part of my quality assurance processes, I have reflected on my data analysis and interpretations with my research supervisor and EP colleagues who do not know the participants to try to ensure that I have interpreted the data in a fair way. I have included extracts of the interview transcripts with this research and I have outlined the procedures and methods of analysis.

In this research, I have not presented my data analysis to the participants but I did ask them whether or not they felt they had been able to express their views sufficiently in response to the interview schedule and whether they had anything further or different that they wanted to add. Following the conclusion of each interview, the participants all reported satisfaction with the interview and felt that the questions posed had addressed all the points they wanted to make.

Finally, there are limitations to the literature review due to the scarcity of directly relevant material, which meant that I attempted to select literature that was closely related to the topic being researched. The selection processes have hopefully captured the key literature but there may be other

literature and research studies that have not been included in the literature review.

5.6 Further Research

This study has focused on the experiences of a small number of participants from one educational psychology service, which makes transferability of results difficult. Future research into the experiences of a wider number of participants would enable a wider range of experiences to be captured and for transferability of findings to be investigated. In this study, there was variation in the membership of the groups, in that Susan was working with a 'team' and Amy and Harriet were reporting on their experiences of forming a group. I would be interested in comparing Susan's experiences with other EP's facilitating group supervision for an already established team of professionals.

It may be interesting to explore the experiences of EPs in services such as that in Wedlock and Turner's (2017) educational psychology service to see how the experiences compare when there are more training and support structures in place for the EP supervisors.

A longitudinal study of EP's experiences when working with a group for a number of years would also be helpful in exploring how the experience could change over time. Carver et al. (2014) completed a longitudinal study of the experiences of trainee mental health nurses as they received group supervision for three years during training. It would be interesting to explore how the experience may change for the EP supervisor in response to supervisee development.

With regard to IPA studies and the criticism they have come under in relation to their quality, it may be useful to explore the language used in interviews, especially in relation to follow-up questions. Although guidance on the construction of questions is readily available, there are subtle differences between saying: 'Tell me more about....' and 'Tell me how you

felt about...' It would be interesting to explore how slight differences in the wording of follow-up questions could generate a different set of data.

Reflection box:

The process of conducting this research study has been personally rewarding as I feel I have not only developed my understanding of research processes, IPA in particular, but I have also encountered many challenges throughout the process. I found it especially challenging to provide an honest and open account of the participants' experiences whilst trying to protect their identity. In the true essence of IPA studies, I have found myself re-visiting my interpretations of the data on a number of occasions and checking and re-checking that I am representing the participants' views fairly and accurately.

I have developed a greater understanding of what is involved in facilitating group supervision through the literature review and through hearing what the participants had to tell me about their experiences. I am hopeful that I will be able to apply this new knowledge to my current role as a group supervisor of professionals from a different profession and to be able to contribute to the educational psychology service's understanding of the potential benefits and challenges for EPs in providing group supervision for other agencies. I hope to be able to work with service managers to be able to develop a service policy on best practice in regard to supporting EPs in the role and in providing high quality supervision.

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Appendix 1: Page and Wosket's (2015) outline of 'good' supervisor training

Aim of training programmes (generally)	**Application to training to supervise a group (according to Page and Wosket, 2015)**
Gain an understanding of the various theories, models and approaches relating to supervision of counsellors and psychotherapists in order to develop a knowledge base for supervisory practice	Develop a good working model of groups and how they function in order to contain and manage group processes so that they do not interfere with supervision.
Develop and practise a range of intervention and feedback skills relevant to the function of supervision.	Peer group supervision should be used as part of training as a supervisor to try out the roles of facilitator/supervisor and receive feedback from their peers.
Increase awareness of personal and professional strengths and areas for development.	There should be ongoing supervision (individual or in groups) of group supervisors so they can recognise and work with parallel processes that may be occurring.
Enable supervisors to develop their own informed style and approach to supervision, integrating both theory and practice.	Trainee supervisors should be required to present an essay defining their own supervision approach and the theoretical elements which inform it with links to their own practice.
Develop awareness of equality, ethical and professional issues in order to enhance the professional identify of the supervisor and instil good standards of practice.	There should be ongoing supervision (ideally in groups) of group supervisors so that they are exposed to a range of dilemmas and issues and can keep abreast of current thinking.

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Educational Psychologists' Experiences of Supporting Other Professionals through Group Supervision

As part of my doctoral training at The University of Sheffield I am exploring the experiences of Educational Psychologists who provide support to groups of professionals from other backgrounds.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project. Before you decide if you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if you have any questions or would like further information. Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Purpose of the Research Project

The aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of what it is like for Educational Psychologists in this service to facilitate reflective practice or supervision groups for other professionals. I am hoping to interview a number of Educational Psychologists who have recently facilitated reflective practice or supervision groups to explore their experiences. It is hoped that the information obtained will help to promote 'good practice' by Educational Psychology services in supporting staff who undertake this area of work.

You have been invited to participate in this research project as you meet the criteria for the sample population. It is anticipated that the research project will involve a small number of Educational Psychologists as the number who carry out this work in this service is small.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason.

If you decide to take part, I will contact you to arrange a convenient time, date and location for a single interview to take place. The interview should last approximately one hour. The interview will be semi-structured; I will have some questions but you will also have the opportunity to share information you feel is important. You will not be obliged to every question.

Confidentiality

All the information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Only anonymised information will be shared with others.

The interviews will be audio recorded to help with the analysis of data. These audio recordings will not be used for any other purpose without your written permission. All the data (both audio and written) will be kept in my possession and destroyed after completion of the research project.

The findings of this research project will be written up in a thesis as part of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology. It is possible the findings are included in a paper for publication in the future. A summary of the results will also be shared with colleagues working in the Educational Psychology Service to aid with the development of good practice.

This project has been ethically approved by the University of Sheffield's School of Education.

If you have any concerns regarding any aspect of this research project you can contact me directly (***** ******). If you wish to make a complaint at any point you can contact my research supervisor (contact details below).

I shall contact you shortly to find out if you would be interested in taking part in this research project. Thank you again for taking time to read this information sheet.

Gael Hawley
Educational Psychologist
(Contact details)

Research supervisor:
(Contact details)

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Educational Psychologists' experiences of supporting professionals from other agencies through group supervision

Name of Researcher: Gael Hawley

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Contact number for researcher: ***** ****** ☐

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. ☐

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research. ☐

5. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies: Participant and research file

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and participant information sheet. A copy of the signed and dated consent form will be placed in the project's main record, which will be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

1. Can you tell me about the group you facilitate supervision for?

2. How did you come to take on the role?

3. Can you tell me how the sessions are organised (ie frequency, duration)?

4. What do you call the group supervision?

5. What do you understand as the purpose of the group supervision (ie to provide EP support or facilitate peer support?

6. Can you tell me how the group supervision was set up?
   Who commissioned the supervision?
   Do they monitor the supervision in any way?

7. How have you managed issues such as confidentiality and record keeping?

8. Do you have a way of evaluating the sessions? How do you know if the supervision is effective?

9. Do you use any particular model in the sessions?

10. Can you tell me about any experiences, training or preparation you had prior to taking on the role? Have you undertaken any relevant training since?

11. What skills or competencies do you think an EP needs to be able to facilitate group supervision effectively?
    How do you think EPs acquire these skills?
    Do you think all EPs have the ability to facilitate group supervision?

12. What did you expect the group supervision to be like? How did it differ to your prior expectations?

13. Can you tell me what you have enjoyed most about facilitating the supervision?

14. What have been the challenges of facilitating this supervision? How have you overcome these?

15. Have any ethical issues arisen during the sessions?

16. Can you think of any ways in which facilitating group supervision has benefitted you or the service?

17. Can you tell me about any support you have had in this role specifically?

18. Can you think of any ways in which the experience of facilitating group supervision could be improved for the EP? How could the Service support EPs in this role?

19. Is there any advice you would offer another EP about to start facilitating group supervision?

20. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you think has been an important part of your experience?

Appendix 5: Table of Participants

Participant	Profession of group members	Employment status of group members	Established team/new group?	Frequency of group sessions	Duration of group sessions	Attendance
A	Therapeutic support for children	Self-employed contract with Local Authority	Group formed for purpose of supervision	3 times per year (and individual sessions as requested)	One and a half hours	Voluntary
B	Therapeutic support for children	Self-employed contract with Local Authority	Group formed for purpose of supervision	3 times per year (and individual sessions as requested)	One and a half to two hours	Voluntary
C	Support for parents	Employed by Local Authority	Established group of co-workers	6 times per year (and telephone/email contact as requested)	Two hours	Voluntary

Appendix 6: Example of Transcript - Participant A: Amy

Emergent themes	Line Number	Transcript	Exploratory Comments (What the participant has said) (Researcher's interpretation of what is being said/reflections) (Comments on language used by the participant)
	228	write up a thesis about your views on supervision,	Has expressed views on supervision previously
	229	that kind of thing.	
			The EP has a great interest in the work and has invested a lot of time in gaining relevant skills and experience. They have had many past positive experiences of facilitating and being a participant and they seem to be very frustrated that they are not able to put those skills to use or to feel they are making progress with this group. There is a sense of disappointment that they were looking forward to the work and it hasn't been what they had hoped for.
	230	I: Yeah. And what skills or competencies do you	
	231	think an EP needs to be able to facilitate group	
	232	supervision effectively?	
	233	A: Um, um, oh gosh.	
	234	I: Tough question!	
	235	A: Yeah, yeah, I think it's really important to be, to	
Importance of	236	have good, good interpersonal skills, to be able to	Importance of interpersonal skills

interpersonal skills in facilitating group			
Need to be reflective yourself	237	be reflective of yourself so that you can, use yourself	Importance of self-reflection Is this a desirable quality?
Need to look at your own reactions in the sessions to reflect on what is going on for the clients	238	as a barometer of what might be going on in the	Importance of recognising processes within the group
	239	group.	
Knowledge of theory of supervision is important	240	You need to know the theory of supervision and	Importance of knowing relevant theories
	241	know the difference, I'm trying to think, I've forgotten	Important for anyone taking on the role to do it well?
Knowledge of models of supervision is important	242	the names but the different, er, the different skills	
	243	that you're using when you're in a supervisory role,	Different skills applied in the work
	244	so you're looking to be supportive, you're looking to	Need to be supportive
Flexibility (tailoring to clients' stage of development)	245	inform, I can't remember all the terms, I'm tired at	Need to inform Awareness of the different supervision models but not a conscious plan to use certain approaches - knowledge and experience have become ingrained in her work Awareness that there are many functions of supervision
	246	the end of the day.	
	247	I: Are you referring to the triangle thing?	
	248	A: Yeah, there's the formative, the normative and	Refers to a model of supervision Awareness of the different functions of supervision and different approaches that can

			be used
	249	whatever the other one is but there's also the	Applying knowledge of theory to their reflections on the work
	250	helicopter skills. Um, ... what's the name of those	Refers to a model of supervision
	251	people who did the, wrote the book on supervision?	
	252	I: Shohet and Hawkins?	
	253	A: Yep, that's it, that's it, that's the one and they talk	
	254	about the helicopter skills, that you're hovering over	
Range of supervisory skills needed	255	and looking at all the many different dynamics that	Describes model of supervision Psychodynamic approach to the role
Consciously using knowledge of models of supervision	256	might be needed by the supervisee. So, so, I'm very	Different approaches needed by different supervisees Need to be flexible in response to needs of supervisee
	257	conscious of those. Does this person need attention	Conscious of those: important to be aware that different skills are needed at different times?
Flexibility Self-reflection in the role	258	to themselves? Do I need to be paying attention to	
	259	the work and helping them explore that or develop	
	260	their skills? Do they need some support to, you	
	261	know, develop their self-confidence? Or, a million	Reflects on the needs of the client presented in session Evidence of training and knowledge Flexibility of approach - different skills needed at different times - need to read what the client needs and select a suitable approach to supervision Important to the participant that a supervisor has this knowledge so can meet the needs of

			the client?
Range of supervisory skills needed	262	different possibilities. So within that, always, I	
Psychodynamic approach	263	would be conscious of the interpersonal dynamics	Interpersonal dynamics between client and their client relevant to supervision session Awareness of using a psychodynamic approach
	264	between them and the client that they're working	
Application of therapeutic skills to facilitation	265	with and also between them and me. So I'm	Interpersonal dynamics between participant and client relevant to supervision session
	266	definitely using my therapeutic skills there to	Uses therapeutic skills to understand the client Awareness of using past experience in this role
	267	facilitate an understanding of what they're bringing,	Therapeutic language: 'what they're bringing'
	268	and how they might.....and how I might be able to	Wanting to help the client with issues
	269	help them with the issue that they bring to me. So	
	270	I'll give you a really good example, that one of the	
	271	issues that I dealt with last year, the supervisee was	
	272	bringing a case of a young boy that she was working	
	273	with who clearly, obviously they all have, significant	
	274	attachment issues and she was having to end the	
	275	work because the funding....the, her managers had	
	276	told her she could no longer work with him, that he	
Emotional containment for client	277	didn't need her any more, and she was heartbroken	Emotional support for client 'heartbroken': empathy for client?
	278	and very worried about the ending process because	
	279	endings had been so significant in this young	

	280	person's life. So, it was, she, she wasn't willing to	Psychological interpretation of case work: participant's or client's interpretation? Or shared understanding developed through session?
Psychodynamic approach	281	explore her own experience of endings so I gently	Client not wanting to reflect on their own experiences Psychodynamic approach
Sensitivity to clients' emotional wellbeing in sessions	282	probed that way but we didn't go there so, but we	Gentle probing of issues in the session 'gently probed that way': Further evidence of a therapeutic approach? Not making clients uncomfortable in the session
	283	focused instead on how endings could be....how a	
	284	more, what a more positive ending could be and	Solution focused approach
	285	how she could, she had to work within the context	
Awareness of context within which clients work	286	that she'd got but how she could make that a	Awareness of the context in which clients work
	287	positive experience in contrast to the very negative	Helping clients with practical solutions to situations
	288	endings that this young man had experienced	
	289	previously. So, yep, so that's an example of teasing	
Using therapeutic approaches in sessions	290	out what was going on.	Teasing out underlying issues in casework in sessions 'teasing out': Further evidence of a therapeutic approach?
	291	I: Yeah.	
Emotional containment for clients	292	A: Yeah, and what her frustration and anger was	Helping clients recognise and manage their emotions
Non-directive approach	293	about and then helping her find a way forward.	Helping clients find ways forward Solution focused approach

			The EP feels that to do the work well, an EP needs to be able to apply models of supervision to help the client understand what is going on in interactions. The EP needs to be able to adjust their approaches in order to reflect the level of development the client is at. The EP needs have good interpersonal skills and a good insight into themselves to be able to reflect on what is going on in their responses to the client to help the client reflect on what is going on for them in their interactions. The EP talks about not using specific models etc but clearly has an approach based on their knowledge of models of supervision and their therapeutic experiences. They also talk about a conscious awareness of their thought processes. This seems to imply they take this work seriously and give it considerable thought and time for reflection - not just an activity they squash into their week.
	294	I: Yeah, okay. And how do you think EPs get	
	295	those sorts of skills that you've described?	
	296	A: That's a good question. Err, I don't think they	
	297	naturally, well they get a little bit on their courses. I	EPs get a little training on qualifying course
	298	think that people within Psychology often have the,	
Not all EPs have the skills necessary to facilitate reflective	299	an approach, but they don't all have those skills. So	Not all EPs have the skills for RP/supervision

practice			
	300	I think it's not something that is a routine skill of all	RP/supervision not a routine skill for EPs Does this imply further training is needed or a certain personality type? In that case, how does this participant see themselves as an EP - as having a particular interest or a particular set of skills? Why do they think not all EPs have the necessary skills?
	301	Educational Psychologists.	
	302	I: That was going to be my next question. Do you	
	303	think all EPs have the skills to facilitate...	
Not all EPs have skills to facilitate reflective practice	304	A: No, no, I don't. Well, I do think all EPs have the	
	305	skills to facilitate groups but that's different to being	All EPs can facilitate groups
Facilitating groups is different to facilitating reflective practice	306	able to facilitate reflective practice. So it's a	Being able to facilitate a group is different to being able to facilitate reflective practice. There is something unique about RP/supervision
Reflective practice doesn't suit all EPs	307	particular kind of group and I don't think it suits	Reflective practice does not suit all EPs.
Not all EPs want to facilitate reflective practice	308	everybody and not everybody wants to do it.	Not all EPs are interested in facilitating RP/supervision groups
	309	I: Yeah.	
	310	A: So I think it's important to, um .... yeah, to make	
EPs shouldn't be pressured into taking on	311	sure that people don't feel pressured into doing this	EPs should not be pressured into taking on specific supervision/RP

such a role			
EPs should be able to choose to do the work	312	kind of working and can choose to do it or not if they	EPs should opt for this kind of work
	313	don't want to.	

Appendix 7: Example of Transcript - Participant B: Harriet

Emergent themes	**Line Number**	**Transcript**	**Exploratory Comments** **(What the participant has said)** **(Researcher's interpretation of what is being said/reflections)** **(Comments on language used by the participant)**
	123	B: I've been part of a group and been supervised I	The EP has had experience of being supervised.
	124	suppose. Using ideas from courses that I've been on	
An interest in sharing their knowledge and skills with the group	125	and wondering whether it would be good for a	EP trying to use techniques from their own training.
	126	discussion, like that drawing idea. In terms of	
	127	supervision this year (EP colleague) has provided	A colleague has provided input on supervisees.
	128	some input around what a supervisee looks like and	
Peer support	129	then we spent some, that group spent time thinking	The group of EP supervisors spent some time thinking about what supervision is and what the boundaries are.
	130	about what supervision actually is and where were the	
Clarity of roles/responsibilities - keeping themselves safe in the work	131	boundaries cos we weren't actually supervising them,	A distinction was made between supervision and facilitating peer supervision.
	132	we were facilitating them supervising each other.	Not supervising the group, facilitating them supervising each other. An understanding of what supervision is

			and isn't and what a supervisee looks like is important in clarifying roles and responsibilities - to keep the EPs doing the work safe in their practice?
			The EP seems to think they are approaching the work in a chaotic way but they are actually using their skills and knowledge from relevant training to try to put structure to the sessions and to give useful tools to the group. But they seem to be unaware they are doing this and it feels unplanned and unstructured to them - possibly the result of the chaotic feel of the organisation of the sessions?
	133	I: Ok, and how did you come to take on the role, did	
	134	you volunteer for that?	
An interest in doing the role	135	B: Yeah, I think so, yeah.	EP volunteered to do the work.
	136	I: What skills or competencies do you think an EP	
	137	needs to be able to facilitate group supervision	
	138	effectively?	
Need to be organised	139	B: Well, you need to be organised. Cos I don't,	EPs doing the work need to be organised.
	140	honestly, I don't think that without having done either	
Need experience related to the role	141	work in other arenas or being on different courses,	Similar experience or relevant courses help to prepare the EP for the role.
	142	because actually it's the process that you need to pay	The EP needs to pay attention to the processes.
Need to attend to processes in the	143	attention to, and so, listening to others and what they	Learning from the experiences of other EPs has been useful.

sessions			
Learning from peers who have done the role is useful	144	did and what they brought to it was really useful.	
	145	Umm..... I'm not answering your question, am I?	EP finding it difficult to answer the question.
			It helps to have done some training in therapeutic approaches or have some experience in this area of work. (The EP is referring to therapeutic courses they have done outside of their EP job). The EP's training and experiences have helped in doing the role. The EP doesn't think they could manage this work without having done this. The EP has also found it helpful to learn from others who have experience of this work - peer support.
	146	I: When you say others, ...other EPs and how they've	
	147	done it in the past?	
Learning from peers who have done the role is useful - peer support	148	B: Yeah, what they found useful, has worked in other	Has found it useful to hear what other EPs have done and what they found worked in their previous experiences.
	149	services, that was really useful. And what they had	
Processes are important in the sessions	150	done in terms of a process. Splitting it up and making	Found out what other EPs used as a process for the work, how they structured it for example.
			It is important to have peer support to learn from colleagues' experiences.
	151	it a bit more structured, that sort of thing.	

	152	I: Ok.	
	153	B: And what skills do you need? I don't know.	EP doesn't know what skills an EP needs to be able to facilitate peer supervision.
			There is a sense that this EP volunteered for the role because they were interested in it but that they are not particularly confident about what they can personally offer to the role. Their answers were hesitant.
	154	I: That's fine. There's not necessarily a right or wrong	
	155	answer, I'd be interested to hear what you think about	
	156	that. Do you think all EPs have got the ability to	
	157	facilitate group supervision?	
Not all EPs have the ability to facilitate group supervision.	158	B: No. No, I don't actually. Because I think that it's not	Not all EPs have the ability to facilitate group supervision.
	159	the knowledge of the EP that's important, it's the	It's not the knowledge of the EP that is important. The important skill is being able to facilitate conversation.
Being able to facilitate a conversation is more important than knowledge.	160	facilitating of conversation. And making sure that	
	161	everybody feels as though they've had the chance to	EP needs to be able to make sure everybody feels they have had the chance to say what they wanted to say.
Group management skills are important.	162	say what they wanted to say and also that they can say	
Being non-judgmental is important	163	what they want without it being a judgemental thing or	EP needs to be able to make sure everybody feels can say what they want

			without being judged or being right/wrong.
	164	a right or a wrong thing.	
	165	I: And that's something you don't necessarily think all	
	166	EPs do or do well?	
Not all EPs have the ability to do this.	167	B: No. No.	Not all EPs have the ability to do this.
			Not all EPs would be good in this role as the important aspect of doing the role well is their facilitation of conversations not their knowledge.
	168	I: And what did you expect the group supervision to be	
	169	like?	
Lack of support by the commissioning agency in delivering the work was a surprise	170	B: I thought it would be more structured than it was. I	Thought the group work would be more structured.
	171	thought that, um.... They run it themselves really and I	The group run the sessions themselves.
	172	thought that I would have to do more in it but actually I	Thought they would need to be more active in running the group sessions. The way this was said suggests that the group want to talk to one another and don't necessarily feel they want to hear the EP's thoughts.
	173	don't.	
Not feeling their contribution to the sessions is valued by the group			**The EP doesn't always see the role they play in facilitating the group - feels the group runs itself. Again, reflecting their lack of confidence or not feeling valued by the group members?**
	174	I: So is that how it's different to your expectations?	

	175	B: Yeah.	
	176	I: And can you tell me what you've enjoyed the most	
	177	about facilitating the supervision?	
Enjoyment of hearing about the group's work	178	B: I've enjoyed just listening to the things they're	Has enjoyed listening to the thoughts of the group.
	179	thinking about actually (laughs). And how amazing it is	
Admiration of the clients skills	180	that sometimes they intuitively do stuff which is really,	Has enjoyed seeing how the group intuitively are helpful to the young people without knowing why those things might be helpful.
	181	really helpful to the young people without really	
	182	knowing that, why that might be.	Enjoys learning about the group's work and listening to their reflections and thought processes.
			The EP seems to find the work genuinely interesting - they enjoy spending time with the group and in watching the group processes etc. There is an admiration for the skills of the group members and the EP seems to find the discussions that take place in the groups interesting.
	183	I: Yeah. And what have been the challenges of	
	184	facilitating the supervision?	
	185	B: Well understanding that people might not, well, why	Understanding why people might not come to sessions has been a challenge.
	186	they don't turn up. So understanding they're not	
Lack of value placed on supervision by commissioning agency	187	coming because they're working (far away). That it's	Group members might not come if they are working far away.

	188	not, they're not paid for the time they come to the	The group members are not paid to attend the supervision.
	189	supervision so it's completely out of their own time.	
	190	They don't get petrol money for it. So I find that part	The group members do not get expenses paid to attend.
	191	hard. That it's not given the space to do it, that actually	The supervision is not valued by management so the group might not go the expense or take the time to attend.
	192	they're not given the kind of like, value, in that sort of	
	193	sense so if they're busy or they're short or tight on	
Group members should be paid for the time they attend supervision	194	money, why would they come?	Empathy for the circumstances of group members.
			Feels the supervision should be given higher status by the group's management?
	195	I: And how does that, them not attending, how does	
	196	that present challenges for you?	
Cohesiveness of the group affected by attendance	197	B: Well, the flow of the group really and also you take it	Attendance affects the flow of the group.
Non-attendance can cause the EP to doubt their competency	198	personally that actually the last group wasn't great or	Can take it personally if there is poor attendance, thinking the group didn't find the last session helpful.
	199	wasn't helpful or didn't meet their needs.	

Appendix 8: Example of Transcript - Participant C: Susan

Emergent themes	**Line Number**	**Transcript**	**Exploratory Comments** **(What the participant has said)** **(Researcher's interpretation of what is being said/reflections)** **(Comments on language used by the participant)**
	254	I: Ok, and what skills or competencies do you	
	255	think an EP needs to be able to facilitate group	
	256	supervision effectively?	
Need to have warmth and empathy.	257	C: I think warmth and empathy are absolutely	Need to have warmth and empathy.
Relationships important.	258	paramount. I think it is about relationships so that	It is about relationships.
Clients need to feel safe, supported and listened to.	259	people are feeling safe and supported and listened	Clients need to feel safe, supported and listened to. Are these things the participant values or has been told by the clients they value?
	260	to. They're the things that are absolutely key. I	These things are absolutely key.
			The EP feels the work is about relationships rather than knowledge. Again, providing a safe space where the client is listened to and feels supported is the key to successful work.
	261	think there's a lot of umm... a lot of the people I work	
Positive feedback to EP by the group on approaches they use.	262	with appreciate feedback on what they're doing and	The clients appreciate feedback on what they are doing. The EP gets positive responses from the clients when they give feedback.

The clients enjoy hearing the EPs thoughts/psychological perspective on situations.	263	I think that that isn't necessarily a sort of consultative	Not necessarily a consultative model. It's ok for the EP to express their opinion in the sessions.
	264	model, it's, they like to hear feedback about, you	The clients like to hear feedback about how they have managed situations. The clients enjoy hearing the EPs thoughts/psychological perspective on situations.
	265	know, about how they've acted in certain situations	
The EP looks for positives to reflect.	266	and looking for positives and I think that that	The EP looks for positives to feedback.
A strength-based model is really important.	267	strength-based model is really , really important. So	A strength-based model is really important.
			The EP is drawing a comparison here between their consultative case work, where the focus is on finding ways forward in the case, and the work done in the group which is about providing positive strokes to the group members to support their emotional well-being. Helping them to recognise personal strengths in the face of challenging case work. This reflects a therapeutic approach to the work rather than the solution-focused approach which the EP has referred to at times. It seems that although a solution circle etc may be used in the discussion, the EP is mindful of the need to build the

			confidence of the group member to support their emotional well-being. This suggests that there is potential to get stuck in negative discussions in this work but the EP consciously tries to remain focused on the positives. The EP seems to recognise a vulnerability in the clients and shows a desire to protect the clients.
Being flexible is essential, especially with a less well-organised group.	268	I do think that being incredibly flexible is essential	Being flexible is incredibly important.
	269	too because , not so much with this group, this	
Facilitating this group has been easy due to its routines and commitment of the group members.	270	group I have now is, it's so well organised. It's a real	The current group is well organised so there is not so much need to be flexible.
	271	'We start on the dot and we finish on the dot' and	The sessions are punctual.
	272	there's always four of us and we've always	The group is consistent.
Negotiation with the group about the sessions/focus of the group.	273	negotiated, what we're gonna do, whereas in the	The group always negotiates what they are going to do in the sessions.
	274	past, some of the groups I've, I've supervised or	
Previous groups have not been so well attended, resulting in greater fluidity.	275	facilitated have been far more fluid than that. One	Previous groups have not been so well organised.

	276	week you might have fifteen and the next week	Attendance varied.
	277	you'd have two and we weren't all sure exactly what	
It was not clear what everybody was hoping to get from the group (previous groups).	278	it was that they were hoping to get from the group so	It was not clear what everybody was hoping to get from the group.
			Groups that are committed and organised make the work much easier for the EP as there is continuity in the group and a shared value of the work. It helps when there is a clear and shared agreement of what everyone wants to get out of the sessions. The EP has had past experiences where they have been limited in what they can achieve - frustration with specific groups where there is poor organisation and a lack of direction??
Flexibility is essential when the group is less well organised.	279	flexibility is essential. But I also think keeping the	Flexibility is essential when the group is less well organised.
Consistency in routine and practical arrangements of the sessions helps. Taking a strategic approach helps.	280	same time, and the ability to work strategically and	Keeping the same time, working strategically and listening to what the group want from sessions helps.
Listening to what the group want from the sessions helps.	281	to listen to what it is that they are hoping to get from	
Sometimes the group	282	the group. Sometimes we know, sometimes we	Sometimes the group doesn't know what it

doesn't know what it wants from the sessions, sometimes it does.			wants from the sessions, sometimes it does.
	283	don't know.	
	284	I: Ok, and how do you think EPs get those skills?	
	285	C: Well I think that a lot of the skills that you need to	
A lot of the skills needed to supervise a group are core skills for EPs.	286	supervise a group are core skills for being an EP.	A lot of the skills needed to supervise a group are core skills for EPs.
EPs should all have empathy, listening, co-operation, flexibility.	287	So things like empathy, listening, co-operation,	Like empathy, listening, co-operation, flexibility. Participant assumes all EPs have these skills?
	288	flexibility, I think those are skills that EPs have	EPs have these skills through the training.
Good training courses should cover the core skills needed.	289	whether it's through training, and you'd like to think it	Participant hopes EP training would develop these skills.
	290	was all through training, and I think some training	
	291	courses do that side of things very well and I think	Some training courses do this well.
There is variation in the skills EP training courses seek to develop. Some are more focused on process, some on relationships.	292	some training courses are far more focused on	
	293	process than actually relationships and I think that if	Some training courses are more focused on process than relationships. There is variation in the skills EP training courses seek to develop. Some are more focused on process, some on

			relationships. How does the participant know this?
	294	you do a training course where it's focused on	
	295	relationships and relationship building and those	
Training courses that focus on relationships and relationship building prepare EPs really well for supervision.	296	skills then I think that you are prepared really, really	Training courses that focus on relationships and relationship building prepare EPs really well for supervision.
	297	well.	
	298	I: Do you mean the training course to qualify?	
	299	C: To qualify, yeah, yeah.	
	300	I: And do you think all EPs have the ability to	
	301	facilitate group supervision?	
An EP's interest in doing the role would affect how well they do it.	302	C: No. I think, I think they probably could but I think	All EPs probably could facilitate group supervision.
	303	it's a little bit umm... If you want to do it, I think you	If you want to do it, you will do it well.
	304	will do it well. I think it's ... but, you know, if you	
	305	were forced to do it, I think that there's some people	If some people were forced to do the role, they would do it badly.
Being forced to do the role could lead to it being done very badly, even if an EP has the core skills to facilitate group supervision.	306	that would do a very very bad job of it cos they could	
Need to guide the group towards their own ways forward with issues	307	be overly-directive or ummm, not, I think if you don't	Being overly-directed is an example of doing the role badly.

(non-directive approach).			
Need a flexible response to the group's needs.	308	respond to the group that you're working with in a	Not responding to the group's needs in a supportive way is unhelpful.
	309	way that's supportive of them then it's not helpful at	
Reflective practice can vary in what it looks like, even from session to session with the same group of people.	310	all. So I think if you have a very fixed idea of this is	It won't work if you have a very fixed idea of what reflective practice is going to look like and if you expect it to be the same every week. This would not work with any of the groups of people the EP is supervising.
	311	what reflective practice is gonna look like, and it's	
	312	gonna look like this every week, with any group of	
	313	people that I'm supervising it's not gonna work. So I	
Need a level of flexibility.	314	think that sort of level of flexibility and that ability to	Need a level of flexibility.
Need to be reflexive about what you are doing.	315	be reflexive about what you're doing is essential. So	Need to be reflexive about what you are doing.
	316	if you've got those things then I think, that yeah, that	
	317	you should be able to do it. And I think that actually	An EP should be able to facilitate group supervision if they are flexible, reflexive and don't have fixed ideas about what reflective practice is.
EPs can facilitate reflective practice really well.	318	it can work really, really well. And I think that	The sessions can work really well.
The sessions have been appreciated by all clients.	319	everybody that I've worked with in all the different	In all the EPs experiences of facilitating reflective practice, the clients have really appreciated the sessions.
	320	roles, have really, really appreciated the sessions.	

			Although EPs have some core skills in common, a lack of interest in the work or an overly-directive, inflexible approach could result in poor execution of the role.
	321	I: And what did you expect the group supervision to	
	322	be like and how did it differ from your expectations?	
Had expected the role to cause some worry and frustration and to be hard work.	323	C: I think I expected it to be hard. And I expected	Expected the role to be hard.
	324	myself, I expected to get bogged down in worries	Expected to find it worrying.
	325	and frustrated that I can't solve all the problems for	Expected to be frustrated that they cannot solve everyone's problems. EP's insight into themselves caused them to expect some worries and frustrations around the role - perhaps know themselves to worry a little too much and to become frustrated when faced with problems they cannot solve?
	326	everybody. And actually, remarkably, I've never	'remarkably': surprised to find things were not as anticipated.
	327	found that. I was particularly worried when I was	Experienced worry in a similar role in the past.
	328	facilitating the (teaching staff) sessions. Cos I've	
	329	been a (teacher) and I really worried that I	Had done the same role as the clients they were supervising so worried about the situations the clients raised.
EP's insight into themselves caused them	330	would umm.... take it all to heart and worry about it	Thought they would take it all to heart and worry about what they heard in the

to expect some worries and frustrations around the role but this hasn't happened.			sessions.
	331	all the time and actually I didn't. I found that the	Expected the same thing to happen this time but it didn't.
The group has a containing function for the EP as facilitator as well as the group members.	332	group has a very containing function for me as a	The group has a containing function for the EP as facilitator as well as the group members. Containing function - the EP means containing emotions?
	333	facilitator as well as for the members within the	
	334	group. So that's a surprise for me that it can be...it's	
	335	not something that I go away and worry about ever,	
The EP has been surprised that they can do this role and not worry about it.	336	so, yeah, that surprised me.	The EP has been surprised that they can do this role and not worry about it.

Appendix 9: Thematic Map