What can be gained through peer supervision?

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Aims: *This article reports on the practical venture we have undertaken as two trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) developing a peer supervision group to supplement professional supervision provided on practice placements. This personal and reflective journey aims to explore what can be gained through peer supervision.*

Rationale: *Professional supervision is a requirement for the profession of educational psychology (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012). Quality supervision ensures high practice standards for service users and maintains the development and well-being of supervisees (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). This article explores how peer supervision can help fulfil these requirements.*

Method: *Theory and research are discussed in relation to the development of our peer supervision group. Through an enquiry-based learning (EBL) approach (Kahn & O'Rourke, 2005) we identify the positive outcomes of our peer supervision group.*

Findings: *These gains are broadly grouped around 'development of skills and moving forward' and 'sharing, supporting and well-being'. The EBL process also recognised the importance of 'dynamics' in peer supervision. Critical discussion of these outcomes is exemplified through case work in practice.*

Conclusions and limitations: *This article presents personal experiences of our peer supervision group. We believe that the benefits we have gained from the process demonstrates the usefulness of peer supervision for the practice of trainees and recently qualified EPs, as well as more experienced professionals. It is hoped that by addressing power differentials and developing a sense of peerness, we can continue to gain from peer supervision in our TEP practice and beyond.*

Keywords: *peer supervision; supervision; trainee educational psychologist.*

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE emerged from our practice as two trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) in our second year of training. It is based upon our experience of jointly developing and using a peer supervision group. It is a critical reflection of our own practice where we consider relevant literature in light of anecdotal evidence and dialogue with peers, in order to address the question: what can be gained from peer supervision and why? Through the use of an enquiry-based learning (EBL) approach (Kahn & O'Rourke, 2005) we have recognised two broad outcomes of peer supervision: 'development of skills and moving forward', and 'well-being, sharing and supporting'. Our EBL exploration also indicated that group dynamics may explain the unique outcomes experienced during peer supervision. In the final part of this article we will explain this in terms of power equivalence and psychological sense of community.

Professional supervision

Why is supervision important?

Although this article is primarily about our peer supervision group, we feel it is important to first explore what preceded its development. With that in mind we begin with our initial reading and experience of supervision. Both of us as professionals had limited experience of supervision prior to starting a course in applied educational psychology. Thus, the process of developing our peer supervision group started with us considering the importance of supervision to our profession and to us as autonomous practitioners.

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It has been a substantial transition for us entering into a profession that affords the opportunity to explicitly reflect on our practice. Both of us have valued this aspect of being an educational psychologist (EP) and, moreover, are gratified that supervision is a requirement of our profession. The Health and Care Professions Council (2012) considers supervision as a subset of the standards of proficiency to effectively audit, reflect and review practice. Furthermore, the British Psychological Society (BPS) Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) provide a guidance document (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) dedicated to supervision. Quality supervision is described as that which assures standards of practice, outcomes for service users, and the well-being and development of the supervisee. Thus supervision is important as a requirement of our profession but also for the benefits to the supervisee and service users.

Clarifying terminology

One term that has arisen whilst reading into the topic of supervision is that of clinical supervision (e.g. Howard, 2008; Orchowski, Evangelista & Probst, 2010). This term encompasses supervision for numerous professionals such as health practitioners, social workers, and psychologists (Care Quality Commission, 2013). However, we have found that on our placements EPs refer to the term *clinical supervision* and the term *professional supervision* interchangeably. This disparity in terminology is intriguing and could perhaps be indicative of different training backgrounds or changes in the terms used over time. For our purposes we have chosen to use the term professional supervision as it is used in the specific supervision guidance provided by the DECP (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010).

Professional supervision is what we have experienced on placement with an experienced EP in our local authorities (LAs). We will devote some time to review professional supervision in terms of theory and research. However, as the main focus of this piece is peer supervision it seems logical to consider terminology in relation to this as well. We will use the term peer supervision for our group in general, but there will also be exploration of the different roles peers may undertake within the group. We were conscious that the terms for the roles should highlight the importance of equality in power, an aspect discussed later on in this piece. Thus the different roles within peer supervision will be referred to as *problem-owners* and *contributors*.

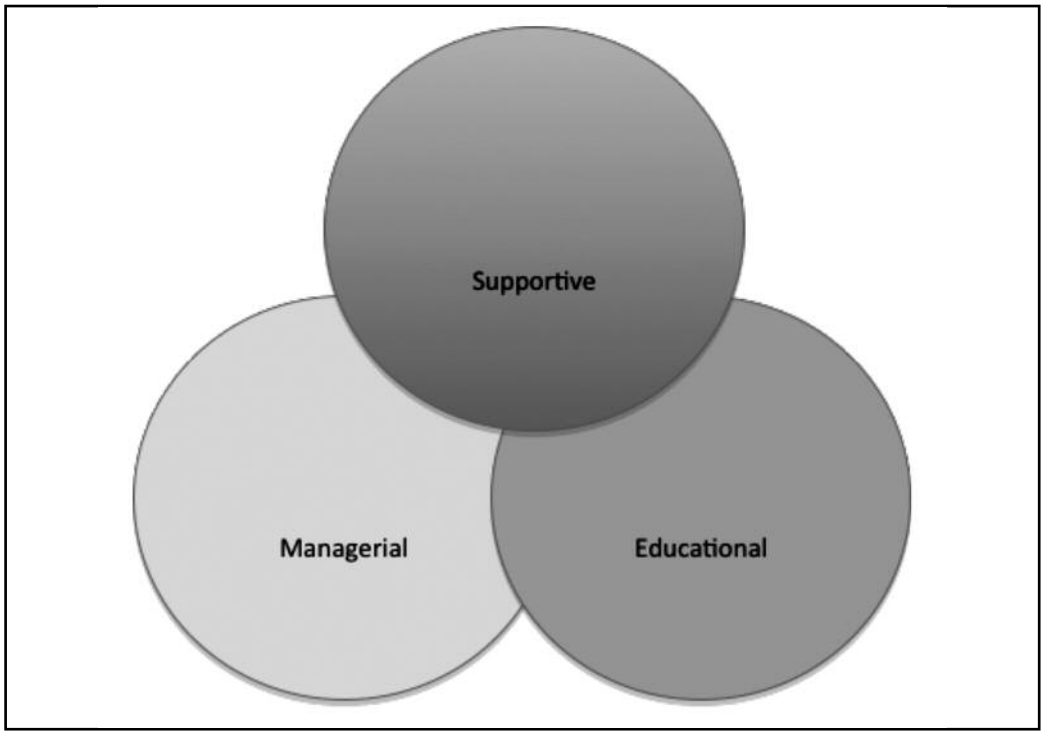
Exploring models of professional supervision

The DECP (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) describe quality supervision as that which benefits well-being and development of supervisees. Later in this piece we hope to exemplify that these same benefits have been found through use of our peer supervision group. We also hope to explore in more depth the gains we have experienced by considering how and why peer supervision has been useful. In considering the gains of peer supervision, we reviewed existing explanatory models of professional supervision to support our reflection and understanding.

There are many models describing the function of professional supervision. Models by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Proctor (1986) both depict supervision as having three distinct functions which also partly overlap. Figure 1 illustrates the model by Kadushin and Harkness (2002), which identifies the three functions as: managerial, supportive, and educational. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) describe the managerial function of supervisors as promoting and maintaining the standards of practice through ensuring that supervisees adhere to policy and procedure. The supportive function is defined as the relational aspect to supervision. The educational function is depicted as enhancing the development of the supervisee.

Beddoe and Davys (2010) describe the tension between these functions. Tension may occur within professional supervision between maintaining a safe space for the

Figure 1: Adapted from the Kadushin and Harkness (2002) model of supervision, to illustrate the different functions of professional supervision.



supervisee to share information and the pressures of the supervisor's managerial role. One of our professional supervisors will sometimes explicitly state which part of her role she is taking on. For example, on the issue of report turnaround she responded with both a managerial answer, which was three weeks, and also a supportive answer, which acknowledged workload pressures. On reflection, the explicit labelling of the 'different hats' she has to wear may have aided the compromise we then reached. Whilst this professional supervisor balanced the overlap in functions, had there been a lack of clarity in her role or an increase in external pressure to adhere to procedure, tension between the managerial and supportive functions may have occurred.

The differences in function is interesting in terms of considering how supervisors may adapt in response to issues raised in professional supervision. However, the above example about report turnaround could have been influenced by the supervisee in the exchange. In sharing concerns about workload and being able to meet LA expectations, has the supervisor been guided into providing a supportive function? This suggests reciprocity may be important in supervision, where the responsibility for getting the optimum professional supervision is placed on both parties. In peer supervision, where an experienced supervisor is replaced with more equal contributors, shared responsibility could be even more important.

Discussions of professional supervision amongst TEPs

When attending university, discussion amongst TEPs about placement was almost guaranteed. One of the first questions when meeting with a fellow TEP was, and still is, inevitably, 'How is it all going?' We reflected that this talk with other TEPs was valuable in

exploring our different experiences on placement, and was also important to reassure one another of our competency and progress.

Professional supervision itself was also a topic of discussion between TEPs. Many members of our group reflected that their professional supervision often consisted of need to know information in terms of policy and procedure. The general consensus was that this factual information was important in carrying out their work, but often meant the majority of professional supervision sessions were taken up by this managerial function (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). This led some TEPs within the group to seek help and support from each other in addition to their professional supervision. Help consisted of discussing specific cases for ideas of what to do next, and emotional support in terms of how they were coping with the demands of placement. We reflected that there was clearly a need for this informal ad hoc support, but were aware that it also depended on someone being around possibly in a moment of crisis. This became a motivator for us to organise a regular peer supervision group to ensure that a consistent space to share was available on a more formal basis.

Peer supervision

This section of our article relates more specifically to the development of our peer supervision group and the psychological theories that influenced it.

Experiential learning

One of the authors found particular affinity with Kolb's experiential learning model which is based on the idea that individuals have particular learning styles (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001). The styles and corresponding learning that occurs are not the salient point here, but rather the idea that one can get 'stuck' in a particular mode. Supervision can be viewed as a way of getting 'unstuck' through the educational part of its function (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Indeed, one of the authors of this piece is of the view that that a problem-owner could explore an issue that they were 'stuck' on, and the contributors of the group would help them to get 'unstuck'.

Self-awareness and competency

Theories of importance for the other author were those relating to self-awareness and competency. Figure 2 shows the quadrants of the 'Johari' window and that some aspects of self can be unknown to an individual (Luft & Ingham, 1982). Supervision may be useful in discovering an aspect of the unknown if those involved are willing to open up to feedback from others (op cit). White (2007) discusses the 'Johari' window alongside the idea of unconscious and conscious competency. His article is related to team learning and he begins with the idea that adults learn through being unconsciously incompetent, then consciously incompetent, then unconsciously competent, and finally consciously competent (op cit). He then goes on to discuss the relational aspect of the 'Johari' window in terms of developing individual and team learning. This resonates with us in terms of using supervision to identify unknown areas of self.

Our peer supervision

When we refer to *peer supervision* we are describing our personal experience of peer supervision which we acknowledge may differ from those of others. All ten of our second year trainee EP cohort were invited to join the group. We regularly reminded the cohort of the supervision group and its purpose both in person and via email. Two members of our cohort decided that they lived too far away to attend, and one felt that she did not need additional supervision. All others trainee EPs trialled being a part of the group. Some only came on occasion when they had something specific to discuss, however, only four of us took part regularly. Our group met weekly or fortnightly during study leave for between an hour and 90 minutes. The significant time pressure of

Figure 2: An adapted version of the 'Johari' window (Luft & Ingham, 1982).

	Known to self	*Not known to self*
Known to others	Area of free activity	Blind area
Not known to others	Avoided or hidden area	Area of unknown activity

the training course was the primary cause of cancelled or sparsely attended sessions. It was, therefore, vital to the sustainability of the group that participants considered it a valuable use of time. The continuation of the peer supervision group across the year suggests that it is.

We used a proforma (see Appendix 1) to record our supervision sessions in a way that was meaningful to us. The proforma is loosely structured to maintain flexibility but, significantly, includes a designated section for psychological theory and relevant policy. The inclusion of this is paramount to our peer supervision group's success, as explicit consideration of psychological theory is important to our professional development. For experienced EPs, psychology can become somewhat implicit and, as such, can be missing from professional supervision. Our proforma facilitated this criticality within peer supervision.

Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL)

Peer supervision is a supportive and collaborative process, and thus we wanted a methodological approach that was appropriate for these values and context. EBL seemed an ideal choice of method to reflectively explore and review our peer supervision group. It has been described by Kahn and O'Rourke (2005) as an approach suited to collaborative team working and is adaptable to suit group size and task.

An EBL approach has been encouraged by our doctorate training provider to promote co-operative learning within our cohort. At first structure was provided through specific tasks and facilitation by a tutor, but as our training continued greater independence in leading the process was expected. Implications for our personal development have been development of our skills for open enquiry and a process we could apply as we have here with this joint learning and practice venture.

EBL is a flexible process where lines of enquiry are followed up, existing knowledge is explored, and next steps for learning are established (Kahn & O'Rourke, 2005). We used EBL as a reflective tool to explore what we have gained from peer supervision though the following steps based on our experiences of EBL and adapted from the writing and case studies of Kahn and O'Rourke (2005):

1. An initial discussion to define our question and explore our terminology.
2. A discussion about the question in relation to our existing knowledge and experiences of peer supervision.
3. Drawing out any questions or queries to cover gaps in our knowledge.
4. Assignment and completion of individual learning tasks to answer our questions and queries.
5. Sharing findings and further discussion to decide on main outcomes of peer supervision from our practical experience and reading.

Benefits of peer supervision

We identified two broad outcomes for those that took part in our peer supervision group: 'development of skills and moving forward' and 'well-being, sharing, and supporting'.

Development of skills and moving forward

A primary role of supervision is the improvement of individual practice (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Roy, Genest Dufault & Châteauvert, 2014) and this remained an important feature of our peer supervision. Through EBL we identified a range of skills that we felt developed through peer supervision (Figure 3). The development of these skills, along with the sense of collective knowledge available in peer supervision, enabled us to move cases forward and become 'unstuck' in challenging situations (Kolb et al., 2001). These skills will now be discussed.

Reflection and criticality

Researchers from a variety of contexts including social work teachers (Roy et al., 2014) and psychotherapists (Goldberg, 1981), have found that criticality and reflection are two of the most significant outcomes of peer supervision. As peer supervision requires self-disclosure and inherent vulnerability for the problem-owner (Goldberg, 1981), critical comments from the contributors need to be sensitive (Lombardo, Milne & Proctor, 2009). Appropriate challenge is a difficult skill, but one that we feel is important for our professional role. Peer supervision provides a safe environment in which

Figure 3: Skills developed through peer supervision.



to develop and experiment with this. Several researchers have commented upon the need for trust in any supervisory relationship (Lombardo et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2014), where problem-owners need to feel 'simultaneously challenged, yet supported' (Orchowski et al., 2010, p.62).

We found that verbalising our thinking on a topic gave us an opportunity to reflect, not only on what had happened, but also the impact of this on our professional development. This 'double loop learning' is considered particularly valuable for those, such as ourselves, that are at the start of their career (Orchowski et al., 2010). Whilst we agree that reflection is useful to us as trainees, we wonder whether more experienced professionals may also benefit from this. Like Orchowski et al. (2010), we found that the exploration of a specific dilemma, whilst others commented, questioned and challenged, allowed for greater mindfulness about our developing values.

Consultation and group work

Whilst peer supervision literature tends to emphasise the outcomes for the problem-owner, we found that the process also developed the skills of the contributors who were listening and responding to the problem-owner.

Caseloads on placement can limit opportunities to observe the practice of other professionals; however, this occurs naturally during peer supervision. The problem-owner may focus upon their current difficulty, but contributors can watch their peers ask successful questions that deepen a discussion or open up new avenues of thought. On several occasions a question observed in peer supervision was experimented with on placement. Peer supervision can thus become an opportunity to observe and practice consultation skills (Yeh et al., 2008). The benefits of being a contributor has also been recognised in the research from Baker et al. (2013), in which student nurses reported being surprised at what they gained from listening to the concerns and challenges of their peers.

Autonomy, ethical decision making and problem solving

During professional supervision with an experienced EP, there is a risk that, when we feel most desperate, we might engage with 'a "tell me what to do" attitude' (Orchowski et al., 2010, p.62), in which our supervisor's thoughts and views are privileged above our own. This reliance, although at times reassuring, can hamper autonomy (Yeh et al., 2008). In comparison, the acceptance within our peer group that no one individual is able to *solve* our challenges supports autonomy and individual responsibility. This autonomous attitude is vital for us in our professional capacity where we need to not only make ethical decisions, but also justify them as independent practitioners.

Working through individual challenges collectively is thought to develop problem-solving skills (Baker et al., 2013). We found that our variation in experiences and knowledge allowed us to generate and critically explore alternatives. Interestingly, the literature has recognised the value of having 'multiple brains' (Baker et al., 2013, p.640) to consider a problem. Goldberg (1981) further supports this argument by suggesting that the variation in approach and experiences may 'invigorate and proffer a rich arena for professional growth' (p.34). Nevertheless, Goldberg (1981) also states that there may be a limit to this, warning that peers with directly opposing values may struggle to develop a helpful dialogue. This relates to Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes (1999) concept of *types of talk*. Whilst being too similar and uncritical may lead to group to *cumulative* talk, disagreeing completely leads to *disputational* talk, which involves a lack of shared understanding and constructive criticism. *Exploratory* talk requires that there be enough similarities in thinking to agree on some points, but enough differences to move the conversation forward. Thus far, our peer supervision group does not appear to have come across divisive differences in approach, epistemologies or values; however, this may be due to our shared experiences of

training during our formational first year in the profession.

Example from practice

Case Study 1 exemplifies how the education and development from peer supervision lead to greater criticality and problem-solving within our practice.

Lombardo et al. (2009) describe the sense of frustration, discomfort and deskilling that can be a part of the process of professional development. To support this, peer supervision groups need to feel like a safe context in which to share anxieties and self-doubts (Goldberg, 1981). As such, it is of central importance that peer supervision groups encourage sharing and attend to the emotional well-being of the individuals in the group.

Well-being, sharing, and supporting

This outcome has been prevalent throughout the process of developing this peer supervision group. Even our motivation for developing this group came in part from the initial informal seeking of additional support within our TEP cohort.

Sharing and supporting

Research into other peer supervision groups have also recognised sharing and supporting as an outcome (e.g. Baker et al., 2013). In Baker et al. (2013), the authors consider the usefulness of peer supervision as a tool to support nursing students completing their dissertations. In this article the authors appear to emphasise the value of peer supervision as a way of relieving the time demands of the academic tutors, who are considered a

Case Study 1: Supporting development of skills and moving forward

The context of this case study was a piece of work on placement around helping a school to revise their behaviour policy. I had a consultation with the school Head Teacher who outlined that there were concerns about the policy, the consistency of its application, and a reluctance of some staff to change.

I felt a little lost in terms of considering what to do next, only that ideally I would like to ensure the views of all parties were taken into account in terms of getting everyone on board. This followed the principles of the systemic solution oriented approach in terms of: no buy in, no change (Rees, 2008). However, I was still a concerned with how this would all fit with amending the behaviour policy.

At peer supervision with another TEP we explored my involvement and she offered up some other ideas and possibilities. These were about what currently underpinned the existing behaviour policy, which was assertive discipline. We discussed other options such as restorative justice as well as getting others on board by considering the psychology of change, and community psychology for involving everyone.

From our discussion I felt that I had a clearer path where I could intertwine my ideas of gathering the views of all parties: staff, school and parents, with what people valued about behaviour. Did this match assertive discipline or were collective values more conducive to other approach? I had clear questions and not just for myself but alerting the school staff to the realisation that their values may differ and the impact this would have upon the consistency of one single uniform policy.

Thus from my peer supervision session I had developed my thinking and ideas, an outcome identified through our analysis as development of skills and moving forward. The implications for this are not only my own development as a trainee but on my work with a school in developing their behaviour policy.

limited resources, without 'adversely affect[ing] dissertation outcomes' (p.637). With the time pressures present on placement we can also view our professional supervisors as a restricted resource, with reasonable limits to the time dedicated to professional supervision. Peer supervision can be a way of remedying this situation by providing more time to reflect.

Peer supervision has also been found to have positives outcomes from the *sharing and supporting* provided. Indeed the study by Baker et al. (2013) found the theme 'progress and moving forwards' from their evaluative data of a peer supervision group. Goldberg (1981) also suggested that peer groups support the *growth* of contributors. These findings seem to imply that peer supervision is providing a supportive and educational function (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002).

An interesting aspect of the research we have explored is differing views on the value of peer supervision. Baker et al. (2013) provided evidence from their research that peer supervision was not detrimental to outcomes for the trainees involved. This idea that peer supervision may be perceived as not beneficial was surprising to us. However, the agenda may be important here in that Baker et al. (2013) seemed to be suggesting that the peer supervision in their research was being evaluated as a substitute for academic tutors. Here we find an important difference in that the support we were seeking from peers was definitely additional and most certainly not a substitute for professional supervision.

Our experience of peer supervision has been a positive one. However, research by Counselman and Weber (2004) found that there were resistances involved in peer supervision such as dynamics of competition and feeling of shame. Goldberg (1981) also suggested that individual personalities could change the group dynamics and 'impact on the intimacy, the disclosure and the sharing' (p.34). Thinking back to influencing theory, the idea of the 'Johari' window and how much people are willing to share, is important in terms of this relational aspect to the group (Luft & Ingham, 1982). Perhaps our awareness of this relational aspect has made it easier for us to share.

Well-being

All of the research discussed under the heading of *sharing and supporting* could also encompass that of well-being. Terms such as 'growth and refurbishment' (Goldberg, 1981, p.28) and *support* could be interpreted as promoting the well-being of trainees. A practical example may help to demonstrate this further (see Case Study 2).

The dynamics of peer supervision

Through reflection we have recognised that the concept of group dynamics runs throughout the peer supervision process. This section is devoted to establishing how peer supervision dynamics differ from professional supervision dynamics and what the implications of this might be.

Who do you consider a Peer?

Sense of peerness

We previously discussed how the outcomes of professional and peer supervision may differ. Nevertheless the key difference between the two types of supervision is (somewhat obviously!) that one occurs with peers and the other with supervisors. In everyday language the term *peers* refers to a collection of people grouped by certain characteristics (such as age, legal status or experience). This definition does not seem to fully explain our experience, that despite shared identity as TEPs, we have not felt that trainees in other cohorts are true peers.

The sense of *peerness* we share with trainees in our group did not extend to trainees in other years, despite us often sharing supervision-like conversations with them. During conversations with third years, there existed an underlying expectation that they would frame the conversation and would provide advice from their experiences. Conversely, in discussion with first

Case Study 2: Supporting well-being through peer supervision

Initial context was that during a particular time this year I was feeling quite overwhelmed by the task of balancing my work. This was inclusive of placement demands and research demands. I had become dejected and unable to envision how I would keep everything going and complete tasks.

During peer supervision with another TEP I felt that we implicitly drew on many aspects the CLEAR model of supervision - Contract, Listen, Explore, Action and Review – which can be used more explicitly to structure and guide supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007). My peer gave me the time to discuss my worries, something I attribute to the listen part of the CLEAR supervision model (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007). She then was explicit in her psychology and suggested we look at the issues from a solution-oriented stance in listening to my problem and then considering solutions. We *explored* different possibilities, many of which I dismissed in my misery. However, my fellow TEP persevered in encouraging me to focus on the positives and I came up with my *action*: To create a mood board of all the outcomes I am aiming for to keep my end goals in my mind.

After leaving I felt reassured by having discussed my concerns with someone. I felt I had really been listened to, and chose my own next step from the possibilities. I considered that the relationship I have with the TEP made it easier for me to share my concerns in an open and honest way. The benefits were a renewed focus for me and I later formed a plan of small steps to address each of my demands, thus impacting on my practice.

years, we took on this role. Although it may be expected that those with greater experience will share knowledge with less experienced colleagues (i.e. Roy et al., 2014), we have concluded that colleagues with significantly more or less experience may not be *true peers*.

The peers within our supervision group are at the same level of the course, however, we have different professional backgrounds, experiences on placement, individual interests, skills, and knowledge. Despite this variation, we share a sense of peerness, and the feeling that we are going through something together. Literature seems to suggest that this is due to two important factors: the feeling of equality and power-sharing, and the development of a psychological sense of community (e.g. Lombardo et al., 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Roy et al., 2014).

Although an unpleasant thought, due to our emotional closeness as a cohort, we have had to consider the possibility that those trainees who have chosen not to engage in our group may not feel the sense of peerness that we do.

Equality and power sharing

Orchowski et al. (2010) argue that the large power differential present between professional supervisor and supervisee can lead to hesitancy from the supervisee, who may worry that voicing anxieties may demonstrate weakness. The evaluative role that professional supervisors need to play during placement creates a power gap that influences how confidently a trainee can share (e.g. Baker et al., 2013). Conversely, in our peer supervision group we feel that it can be easier to share real anxieties with peers who may have had similar experiences. Nevertheless, we would also argue that power is rarely entirely equal, and group dynamics will affect any conversation. It is apparent that a productive dialogue involves recognising power inequalities.

Our flexible structure did not include explicit contracting. Nevertheless when a peer presented the 'problem' they wanted to talk about, they would describe how they would like to be supported. These 'requests for possible assistance' (Roy et al., 2014, p.36) gave the power to the problem-owner.

The 'learning alliance' (Lombardo et al., 2009, p.212) needed for peer supervision is non-judgemental, trusting, and maintains a sense of mutuality and respect (Goldberg, 1981; Lombardo et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2014). We have found that these qualities can be greatly enhanced by the power equivalence possible between peers.

Psychological Sense of Community (PSoC)

In addition to equalities in power, psychological sense of community (PSoC) may elucidate the sense of peerness experienced in our group. McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggest that a community is not described solely by its structures and practices, but also by the experience of being in a community. They describe a PSoC along four dimensions: membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Research has even suggested that PSoC can be an important factor in the prevention of loneliness, even across geographical distances (Nowell & Boyd, 2010), addressing a challenge for TEPs working in different local authorities across the region. Roy et al. (2014) recognise the importance of this shared experience when referring to their peer supervision-like group as a 'learning community' (p.33). The links between our peer supervision group and a psychological community are described in Figure 4.

Extending peerness

The lack of peerness we experience in interactions with less or more experienced TEPs is likely to be extenuated further by clear differences in power in hierarchical relationships, for example between a trainee and their tutor, or between a senior and maingrade EP. To make peer supervision a successful tool beyond our small group of willing second year TEPs, peerness needs to be extended by addressing power differentials and developing PSoC within training programmes and educational psychology services.

There appears to be an underlying assumption within the research that peer supervision is valuable, primarily for professionals early in their careers, and indeed we are finding this useful (i.e. Orchowski et al., 2010; Roy et al., 2014). However, we would argue that peer supervision should not be restricted to newly qualified professionals and TEPs. Indeed, we may go as far as to suggest that experienced professionals may have become less critical of their practice. Additional opportunities need to be available to examine their practice, explicitly discuss psychology, and be open to new approaches and knowledge. After overcoming the challenge of identifying a true peer group, the development of peer supervision for experienced EPs, may play a central role in continual professional development.

Figure 4: Features of Psychological Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) compared with peer supervision experiences.

PSoC	Experience in peer supervision
Membership	Shared characteristics as Year 2 TEPs.
Influence (bi-directional)	Flexible peer supervision structure to enable individuals to choose how their concerns are addressed. Skills development and emotional experiences of contributors changes with this choice.
Fulfilment of needs	Various needs could be fulfil through peer supervision including development of professional skills, having emotional experiences 'heard', and becoming 'unstuck'.
Shared emotional connection	Despite variation in placements, we share a sense that we are 'going through it together' with similar challenges to identity.

Conclusion

Professional supervision and peer supervision have been important in supporting us during our training thus far. Through this piece of work we have established a peer supervision group, which has benefited us through gains in our development and in terms of our well-being. Relating this to supervision theory, these gains mirror the education and supportive functions described by Kadushin and Harkness (2002). However, the gains that we have experienced do not detract from the professional supervision we have received, and we do not view peer supervision as an alternative to professional supervision. We recognise our professional supervision as a privileged and limited resource. Nevertheless, this has been a motivator for us to develop additional ways of supporting one another. We have found peer supervision to perfectly complement our professional supervision and hope to continue this within our training and beyond.

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Appendix 1: Peer supervision proforma.

Peer Supervision Record

Date:

Discussion points:

Relevant theory and policy:

Actions:

Who?	What action?

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