Supervision of Practice
and
Professional Development

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Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

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The papers in this collection were presented to a Community Work Unit Conference held at the University of Manchester on the 17th October 1998.

Keeping Track of Community and Youth Work is a series of papers, booklets and guidelines concerning relevant management and organisational issues and practice. Keeping Track of Community and Youth Work - 2, a “Tool Kit” of useful structures for supervision sessions, will be available in early 1999.

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Cover by Louisa McCabe

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Dedication

Keeping Track of Community and Youth Work

is dedicated to

GERALDINE WATTERS

Community Worker, Supervisor and Tutor
Co-Director of the Community Work Unit

One of the founders of the Community Work Unit who is sadly no longer with us. Geraldine was instrumental in setting up routes to qualification for experienced community workers at the University of Manchester. The principles on which she helped to establish the Community Work Unit are:

- recognising and valuing experience and encouraging participants to learn from each other
- targeting individuals not traditionally represented in the University
- basing learning in practice so that participants develop new projects to meet community needs while on the programme

Geraldine’s commitment to good work practice continues to inspire the Community Work Unit to effect real changes in our communities. Group support and learning from each other are still key features of the learning programmes run by the Community Work Unit and the team that makes them work.
Acknowledgements

The book celebrates the first Undergraduate Diploma in Community and Youth Work Studies programme at the University of Manchester. The Community Work Unit is well aware of the key role that supervisors have played in the development of the programme leading to the Diploma and of the participants receiving it.

Thanks to all of the supervisors who were involved in the development of the Diploma programme.

Many thanks also to all whom participated in the discussions at the Community Work Unit conference where these papers were presented:

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Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

Introduction

The papers included in this collection are based on a wealth of experience of different models of supervision in community and youth work. The Community Work Unit Conference on Supervision held at the University of Manchester in October 1998 at which they were discussed grew from a number of initiatives to promote good practice in supervision in which the Community Work Unit has been involved. Examples include the development of work practice supervision and assessment for the *Undergraduate Diploma in Community and Youth Work Studies*, our participation in a Leonardo Project looking at *New Models of Work-Based Learning* and representation on the National Youth Agency’s Working Group on *Placement Arrangements and Student Supervision*. Represented at the conference were community and youth workers, managers, training officers, tutors and supervisors, individuals who had been involved in external supervision, co-supervision, formal and informal structures, group and team supervision, student supervision and consultancies.

The Conference aimed to examine the similarities and differences between approaches and perspectives on supervision - not to come out with a blueprint, but to articulate some core principles and guidelines based on good practice and experience. The papers included here draw upon the experience of the Community Work Unit, the individual writers and the contributions of the Conference participants - which included different perspectives based on identity and experience. We hope that they will provoke further discussion and development of ideas and practice of supervision amongst community workers and youth workers as well as those from related fields.

Over the past three years, the Community Work Unit has been developing structures and procedures for monitoring the work practice development of participants on the *Undergraduate Diploma in Community and Youth Work Studies*, a professional qualification endorsed by the National Youth Agency. Most participants continue in their on-going work while coming on the programme - so that we have developed a series of *Work Practice Modules* enabling participants to focus on different aspects of their work practice. To assist their critical reflection, the modules include a requirement for weekly supervision from “Approved Supervisors”. Procedures for the recruitment and selection of “Approved Supervisors” have been developed with the support of a Leonardo funded Project. They include arrangements for matching supervisees with supervisors and the provision of appropriate support and training facilities.

The Leonardo *New Models for Work Based Learning* Project has involved us in a partnership with practitioners in Sweden, Germany and Ireland. The aim of the Project is to develop frameworks for supervision with models of training and support for supervisors that will be appropriate to each partner. Several international workshops have been held to examine definitions of supervision, the skills and qualities required of a supervisor and their relevance to the contexts in which we work. With the support of the Leonardo

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1 Handbooks for Work Practice Modules at Levels One and Two (Undergraduate Level) are available from the Community Work Unit.
Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

Project, we have developed a “Supervisors’ Handbook” and are piloting a course for supervisors starting in January, 1999.

The Community Work Unit was represented on the National Youth Agency’s Working Party set up to look at supervision and work placements as elements of professional training. The Working Party divided the task into looking at the requirements and responsibilities of the different parties involved in supervision of learner’s work practice, namely:

- the student/participant going through the training
- the course and the course organisers
- the placement supervisor/manager
- the placement provider: agency providing the placement
- the employer who may be employing these students in the future
- the community and/or youth groups accessing the facilities, services, groups being used as a placement

The need for each party to be clear about the aims, structures and procedures of supervision was underlined as a major issue in the professional training of community and youth workers. The National Youth Agency is considering the guidelines produced by the Working Party for publication.

The lack of established structures and procedures for supervision alongside a recognition of the key roles that supervision should play in the profession is a theme that has been running through the various initiatives in which the Community Work Unit has been involved. Supervision is seen by many in the field as crucial to both the training and professional development of workers and good practice in community and youth work. Yet there has been very little work carried out to establish good practice guidelines and a great deal of variation in the level and quality of provision and structure.

Some of the many possible arrangements for supervision and supervision sessions can include group discussions via team meetings, management committee meetings, working groups, or shared lunch breaks. While the benefits of supervision may occur in these varied structures, the papers in Keeping Track of Community and Youth Work - 1 primarily focus on individual, one-to-one supervision. The role of a supervisor may be shared in co-supervision or undertaken by a senior manager, an on-site manager, a colleague, an external supervisor, a tutor from a training organisation. Supervision sessions may be regularly scheduled or only arranged as the need arises, on-going or temporary. The supervisor may undertake the supervision as part of their work, be paid specifically to do the piece of work or be unpaid. For us at the Community Work Unit, the key ingredient in whatever arrangements are made must be a commitment to anti-oppressive practice.

The collection begins with an outline of the Community Work Unit approach to supervision which proposes some key principles and issues for consideration. The paper introduces some of the themes explored in more depth in the following papers. Leigh Cook outlines her “starting points” - the issues she takes into consideration when thinking about the kind of creative supervision that she would like to provide. John Best and Mary Kenny explore some of the issues related to external supervision - and provide the arguments that need to be made in order to secure funding, work time or support for the arrangements. Joyce Hatton and Karen Kime outline a model for analysing relationships in the arrangements for supervision - and propose peer supervision as a way forward for some individuals. Misbah
Khan and Addy Lazz-Onyenobi take us through some key definitions of supervision with a black perspective. *Deaf Friendly Supervision* by Paula Pope picks up the theme of cross cultural supervision and shares her learning from experience of supervising deaf workers. Finally, Gareth Jones and Alison Healicon explore the stages in transition from being a supervisee to becoming a supervisor.

The experience of supervision reflected in these papers is based on a commitment to community work aims and values and has been brought together to address the gap in good practice guidelines. The Community Work Unit recognises the importance of supervisors who respect and value the skills and experience of the supervisee, who are prepared to continuously develop their awareness and practice of anti-oppressive work, who are aware of the power dynamics in the relationship, who work to maintain equality - and who have critically reflected on their own role. We hope that these papers will assist the acquisition of appropriate resources and training for good supervision to take place.

Kate Sapin
December 1998
The Community Work Unit Approach to Supervision

Kate Sapin

The role, arrangements and methodology for supervision in community and youth work have yet to be firmly established in organisational structures, professional training or general practice. This paper is an attempt to pull together ideas that have been discussed by Community Work Unit course participants, supervisors, assessors and tutors in meetings, assessments, workshops and training sessions during the development of training materials, publicity, guidelines and handbooks. The Community Work Unit approach has been established through team work amongst experienced practitioners from a wide range of perspectives and is based on a shared understanding of good practice in community and youth work and in supervision. The following ideas on the aims and principles of supervision, the dynamics of a supervisory relationship, some key issues for supervisors to consider and some of the qualities required of a supervisor are proposed here to encourage further reflection and definition by other practitioners.

The principles of community and youth work in relation to change, anti-oppressive work and valuing and sharing skills and experience naturally affect the principles for good practice in supervision. The ethos of community and youth work clearly demands a supervisory relationship that is quite different from other areas of work where the relationship is usually hierarchical. Work with more routine or concrete tasks simply requires managerial functions for supervision, such as the monitoring of work plans and their completion. Other professions tend to utilise an experienced expert who sets boundaries and guides the less experienced learner in their practice, whereas community and youth work supervision needs to be based on equality - with both parties valuing the learning experience.

The aims of supervision of community and youth work could be defined as:

- to assist the supervisee to carry out good practice based on community work values, and
- to enhance the supervisee’s professional development.

The supervisees’ practice, learning and development need to be the priorities of any supervision, but supervisors also benefit from this educative process. Supervision can provide a non-judgmental, supportive and encouraging as well as thought provoking approach that inspires new insights into work practice on both sides. Expertise grows through critical reflection on and evaluation of work practice as well as the development of plans of action and strategies for the implementation of anti-oppressive practice. Discussions between the two parties enable full exploration of the implications of any decisions and two-way learning. In this way, supervision sessions provide support in relation to professional development in a safe (although not always comfortable) environment based on mutual respect.

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2 These issues are discussed further in the paper on “A Models of Supervision that Benefits Communities”. 

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The establishment of good practice principles to create an appropriate environment have been developed through practice. The following principles were discussed in a participative training session amongst experienced practitioners at the Community Work Unit.

### Some principles for good practice in supervision

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<th>A good supervisor will:</th>
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<td>• encourage the supervisee to analyse her/his work and to consider alternative approaches</td>
<td>• put the needs of the organisation above the needs of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assist the supervisee to identify learning needs and ways to address them</td>
<td>• put the needs of the supervisee above the needs of the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• be flexible and responsive to the supervisee’s needs</td>
<td>• collude with the supervisee in oppressive or unprofessional practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide guidance in developing solutions to problems from a new perspective</td>
<td>• ignore situations that leave the supervisee vulnerable to legal action, danger or disciplinary procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have access to appropriate support and networks of information</td>
<td>• act on information provided by the supervisee without prior notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have an understanding of the issues of power and powerlessness within the supervisory relationship</td>
<td>• rely on previous experience without carefully considering the factors involved in new situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have an understanding of the differences between the roles of manager and supervisor</td>
<td>• make assumptions about the supervisee’s motives</td>
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<td>• support AND challenge</td>
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Supervision can and should involve challenge as well as support. A supervisor provides a sounding board for the supervisee’s outline of the issues and problems at work - s/he can also inform, advise and question. The supervisee is supported by being encouraged to define and explore the issues and problems faced at work from their own perspective while the supervisor encourages the supervisee to develop strategies and solutions. The supervisor is able to contribute information and ideas about useful contacts and resources as well as practical solutions to problems and ideas for new developments. The supervisee is challenged to see problems from another perspective and to see the benefits of alternative ways of working. Through critical reflection, the supervisor encourages the supervisee to identify opportunities for learning from experience. Looking positively at mistakes and analytical evaluation of practice enable the supervisee to approach new

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3 The principles were discussed in training sessions with experienced practitioners – but rather than intending to be a comprehensive framework, they are included here as a starting point for discussion
situations and problems as they arise with increased confidence, knowledge and ideas about ways forward.

In order to carry out this work effectively – and to prioritise the supervisee’s practice and professional development - the supervisor is required to have certain skills, knowledge and understanding. For the relationship to maintain equality, key amongst these attributes is an ability to “hear” the supervisee’s outline of the work situation and her/his perception of what s/he is able to undertake. The supervisor may need to push these boundaries – but certainly has to be aware of and deal with any limitations that the supervisee believes to be true. Community and youth workers have identified some of the qualities they require in a supervisor as follows:

- a knowledge of issues concerned; a good understanding of the work
- a knowledge of the supervisee’s strengths and weaknesses.
- links with the supervisee’s work or study context
- a clear understanding of issues in good practice in supervision
- a knowledge of constructive intervention and challenging strategies
- a commitment to regular meetings and recordings
- active listening skills
- a commitment of time on a regular basis
- an ability to give constructive feedback
- an understanding and appreciation of equality and anti-oppressive issues and practice
- experience of youth and community work that is relevant to the supervisee’s situation
- an ability to operate in a professional manner
- an understanding of the needs and perspective of the supervisee
- a respect for the supervisee and her/his ability to learn and change.

Although the supervisor is not expected to be “the expert” on all aspects of community and youth work, supervision seems to work best with a reasonably confident and experienced worker who is able to be honest about any gaps in her/his understanding or knowledge and who has also often encountered parallel situations. Many community workers and youth workers find it difficult to identify a suitable supervisor. Alternatives can include co-supervision with peers and networking with specific groups. Clearly there is a need for more training and resources in developing expertise and the provision of appropriate supervision.

Effective supervision will need supervisors to be flexible and sensitive to individuals - and at various times, workers may need a supervisor with a specific perspective or particular type of experience.

4 These points have been adapted from notes from consultation meetings with supervisees and supervisors at the Community Work Unit arranged around the NYA Working Group on Placement Arrangements and Supervision.
5 Joyce Hatton and Karen Kime in their paper on “A Model of Supervision that Benefits Communities” describe how peer supervision to address this gap in provision.
6 Alison Healicom and Gareth Jones’ paper on “Transitions from Supervisee to Supervisor” outlines some of the ways in which supervisory skills and experience can be developed.
7 The papers on “A Black Perspective on Supervision” and “Deaf Friendly Supervision” address some of the issues involved in providing appropriate support and direction. “External Supervision” tackles some of the questions around appropriate “matching.”
"An anti-discriminatory approach to supervision would be one in which all supervisees are treated scrupulously equally.... An anti-oppressive approach would be one in which the whole style and perspective of the supervisor communicates a fundamental belief in the potential and ability of each supervisee.”

(Brown and Bourne, 1996; p.37)

In line with community work and youth work aims and values, the supervisory relationship and interactions should be based on anti-oppressive practice. This will require a supervisor who can encourage a supervisee to have a high level of commitment to practice and professional development. Some supervisees may need to be challenged and supported in order that they accept and understand the need for:

- a change in approach to develop their practice
- a change of pace, work style or arrangements to meet work commitments
- (in the case of supervision of trainees or course participants) a “life-style” change in order to meet or complete the course requirements
- prioritising particular work to address an issue that has arisen
- challenging colleagues’ established ways of working
- challenging the deep rooted and generally accepted practices in an organisation.

For this reason, (to quote John Best) supervision may need to take the supervisee “out of the comfort zone” and into the world of committed community work practice.

During supervision, conflicts may arise between work practice or work situation and the aims or values of community work. For example, a worker may recognise a need for work to be carried out in relation to homophobia - but find that s/he is blocked from undertaking this work by a line manager who says that the organisation’s policy is to maintain a low (unseen and unheard) profile on this issue with young people. An external supervisor may be able to assess the conflict between community work aims and the organisation’s policies more accurately because s/he is not part of the organisation. The supervisor can keep in mind the impact on the lesbian and gay young people and work with the supervisee to explore strategies for dealing with the conflict. The need to prioritise development on the issue if no work has been going on may be more obvious to an “outsider” who has seen positive work in other agencies and is not blinkered by the existing practices.

Through supervision, problems can be approached positively. The supervisor conveys the message that “this situation can be dealt with”. For example, dealing with a problem with time management could involve diary exercises for more effective scheduling, examining work in relation to the job description to determine whether some of the activities are actually a requirement. The supervisee could consider looking at other ways of working which take less time – or identifying and prioritising the aspects of the work that are the most effective and/or most enjoyable. Often using and developing additional support or delegation are sensible options. The implications need to be explored fully before decisions are made. The process of analysis therefore can resolve a number of problems. Problem resolution often brings up the issue of confidentiality. Supervisees tend to be nervous about revealing a lack of confidence in carrying out certain aspects of their work or gaps in how they fulfil their obligations unless assurances of “confidentiality” are provided. The supervisor can encourage the supervisee to request training or support at work rather than hiding their needs – and work to develop work plans that mean they do
meet work requirements. The need for secrecy becomes less important. As pointed out earlier, the situation can be dealt with!

Community and youth workers often emphasise the need for confidentiality without thinking through the reasons for this practice. The boundaries of who can be told what information need to be as wide as possible because community work should be based on sharing information, making changes and positive action. Confidentiality can get in the way of change through prohibiting access information that others may wish or need to act upon. If a supervisee is concerned that certain information is kept quiet, s/he can be encouraged to identify the reasons why others should not be informed, to question why these are valid reasons and to take up the issue with appropriate individuals and services - rather than maintain an uneasy silence about problems or conflicts.

Supervision can be a real tool for change – the basis of community and youth work. The need for supervisors with a range of perspectives and experience makes it important for community and youth work practitioners to develop their supervisory skills and ensure that supervision becomes embedded within their organisations. We hope that these papers will assist reflection on the needs, aims and principles of supervision – as well as their application to practice.
Creativity and Imagination at Work: Starting Points for Supervision in a Local Authority Department

Leigh Cook

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you’re destined for.
But don’t hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you’re old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn’t have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won’t have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you’ll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.\(^8\)

These words are for the people who sense the creative potential in a supervision or mentoring relationship and who are willing to disclose, share and support on this intriguing, experimental journey.

Meeting the Leonardo Project partners in Sweden earlier this year\(^9\) was a moving and learning experience for me. The commitment to others informed a sharing generosity of spirit which gave me strength and hope to bring back to my workplace in a local authority department. Reflection on the individual and partnership work being developed in Ireland, Germany and Sweden has given a new dimension and dynamic to my work here in England.

While supervision is a requirement within my work role, I have no clear picture of its situation within an organisational framework that could support and monitor its effectiveness as a learning resource in the workplace. We need to find ways to embed supervision as a developmental system to promote anti-oppressive awareness and practice as part of a local authority policy. I like to imagine the world of work as a place where this could become a reality and I work with some others who seem to share this optimism.

\(^9\) The Community Work Unit Leonardo Project partners met to share experiences of supervision and ways of looking at supervision relationships.
There is no shortage of examples of unrecognised co-supervision and group supervision occurring everyday in community and youth work settings - and there are plenty of “on-the-hoof” informal crisis meetings. We also need to address the recognition and development of the potential for supervision to be a supportive, developmental, informative and empowering organisational process.

We have to keep the flame burning in the inhospitable winds of local authority workloads, defence mechanisms and the overwhelming “mirroring of issues” where instead of progress or development, issues are endlessly reflected back and forth. To empower, inform and encourage equal participation in learning, we need to start with ourselves: our professional selves and our own creative and imaginative beings.

My own most recent Line manager Supervisor places great store by the effectiveness and importance of regular supervision woven around dialogue, negotiation and consensual agreement. This is one starting point for me. As a Supervisee this time is a landmark in my sights and the journey always involves preparation, organisation and reflection. While I do not feel oppressed as a woman, what cannot be removed is the hierarchical weight of management in the interaction.

The fact of hierarchical oppression is counter-balanced by very specific practice which involves where and how we sit, listen and talk with each other; how recordings are made; knowing who sees the recordings; knowing what needs to be communicated further and agreeing on how things might be done and sharing information which illuminates the bigger picture for me - or which challenges my work practice. My responsibility is to engage and to act on my part of the supervision contract and I welcome this in the light of an empathic and informed Supervisor.

A small team of youth workers and mentors who work daily with young people leaving local authority care falls within my line management responsibilities. The inter-agency setting for the work of this small team includes liaison with other local authority departments, meeting European Social Fund targets and reporting to an inter-agency Steering Group. The team’s day-to-day work experience is comparable to any social work setting where young people display trauma and disaffection following abuse and rejection. The work can feel very lonely and can bring feelings of isolation, but it also brings moments of insight and great reward and these are usually given through the young people.

I truly believe that facilitating the supervision of this team of workers is the role which tests my performance as a person and a worker more than any other in my work. To share supervision which allows each of the workers to prepare, to organise, to inform a dialogue, to negotiate strategies, to meet challenges, to establish limits and boundaries and to return with a sense of support and purpose to their painstaking work, pulls on the range of my personal and professional skills and knowledge. This approach to supervision is a starting point for me also.

We need to find ways to offer appropriate supervision to the black, lesbian, disabled, working-class and/or female worker who has a right to non-oppressive practice. The gap in adequate supervision facilities is a sometimes a matter of resource-shifting. Informing
and empowering such workers, who are being asked in turn to demonstrate and develop the empowerment of others, is a priority. As a white, female line manager to a black male worker, I bring in with me not only the local management issues, but also the whole white hierarchy of the local authority department. This too is a starting point for me.

Links with the Community Work Unit at the University of Manchester have given opportunities to widen my own network through meeting with others in the region who are intent on promoting the development of good practice in workplace supervision. The supervision of participants on work practice within the organisation is short-term and always revealing. The organism which is called the local authority department changes shape almost imperceptibly and is almost always felt rather than seen; the communities are usually where the “felt” changes are displayed. The theorist, the action-researcher, the supervisor and the supervisee find ways forward as we learn together. We reap what we sow - and I need to get back to the digging.
Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

External Supervision

John Best and Mary Kenny

This paper explores a number of issues related to external supervision, namely: reasons for requesting external supervision, the identification of an appropriate external supervisor and the relationship between the external supervisor and line management. We will be drawing on our own experience and contributions made during the workshop at the Community Work Unit conference. Our experience includes considerable experience of offering supervision to community and youth workers outside of their line management structures. We have provided supervision linked to supervisees' learning and development in relation to gaining qualifications in community and youth work as tutors for the Diploma in Community and Youth Work Studies at the University of Manchester Community Work Unit and as consultants for the Greater Manchester Community Work Accreditation Unit. John also has extensive experience of external supervision for workers in both statutory and voluntary organisations throughout Greater Manchester.

Our understanding of external supervision is that provided by a supervisor who does not work in the same organisation as the supervisee. The supervisor may be paid by the organisation to carry out this specific piece of work or may be unpaid, paid directly by the supervisee and/or involved in peer supervision with the supervisee. Although arrangements may be ad hoc, we believe that to be most effective, external supervision should be formal in the sense that the need should be acknowledged and the arrangements facilitated by the supervisee's organisation. Supervision should also be formal in the sense that meetings should be regular and an agenda should be agreed as in any other effective supervision arrangement.

The aims of external supervision are:

- to enhance the professional development of the supervisee
- to provide a supervisor with qualities that can address her/his particular, sometimes short-term needs, e.g. shared experience or identity for role modelling, experience of specific types of work for consultancy, an alternative perspective for challenging preconceived notions
- to enhance the supervisee's practice by ensuring that s/he is not constrained by the organisational culture in developing strategies
- to address any gaps in the perspectives, experience and/or expertise within the employing organisation
- to assist the organisation's development of new work and initiatives
- to provide critical but supportive feedback to the supervisee on their own attitudes and approach to their work

External supervision, although a form of non-line management supervision, is different from supervision provided by colleagues because of the perspective provided by the supervisor’s independence from the worker’s organisation.
Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

“The strength of this position was to take an objective view so that (the student) could safely feed back on practice, management and relationships within the agency without fear of compromise.” (Stanners, 1995: 183)

External supervision is often seen as a personal benefit to an individual worker who has specific personal or work-related needs. However, by meeting the needs of that worker, external supervision can also contribute considerably to the development of the immediate line manager and the organisation as a whole.

When we discussed the benefits of external supervision at the workshop we facilitated, several participants talked about their positive experiences of external supervision. In their view, external supervision can:

- contribute to a learning process
- enhance and support the development of the worker and therefore the development of the work
- provide a link outside of the workplace
- provide an independent, more objective, perspective.

Clearly these benefits should apply to good supervision whether external or line managerial. However, the nature of community and youth work and the range of employing organisations in which community and youth workers are found can often mean that a line manager does not have the necessary experience, skills and knowledge to supervise them satisfactorily.

A worker and manager may seek external supervision for a number of reasons. We have identified examples from John’s recent experience that can be used to illustrate the need for external supervision. The diagram, “Examples of Appropriate External Supervision Arrangements” (overleaf) outlines how specification of the needs for an external supervisor can assist the identification of a supervisor with the appropriate skills or qualities.

The emphasis or prioritisation of the attributes that made John an appropriate external supervisor differs slightly in each of the examples outlined in the diagram. However, his skills as a supervisor, experience as a community and youth worker, understanding of organisational and management structures issues as well as his perspective as a black man and awareness and understanding of anti-oppressive issues and practice were significant in each case. In the other workshops and feedback from the conference, it is clear that these qualities are important in the selection of an appropriate supervisor.

Not all workers will be successful in requests or applications for an employing organisation’s support for external supervision. Often an argument has to be made starting with an outline of the benefits to the organisation with a clear explanation of what is involved in external supervision that cannot be provided from within the organisation. Although some organisations may acknowledge the benefits of external supervision for certain groups of workers (usually those from oppressed groups) within their policies, these stated intentions are not always backed up with resources. Non-line management supervision does not always mean external supervision: workers may be required to find support from within their own organisation, possibly because of an unwillingness to pay for an external supervisor.

A good example of this situation came from one of the conference participants. As a development worker with young disabled people within a youth service and as a disabled
### Examples of Appropriate External Supervision Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for request</th>
<th>Appropriate qualities of the external supervisor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A community worker working for a Health Authority and line-managed by a nursing officer. The line manager recognised that, whatever her skills as a manager, she did not have the appropriate experience to supervise the work practice of a community worker.</td>
<td>John’s community and youth work experience was the most significant factor as this was the gap in provision. Many community workers find themselves managed by individuals without experience of development work - and need to find themselves a supervisor with an understanding of community work aims, values and strategies. In our experience, the need to find a potential supervisor with fieldwork experience as a community or youth worker has been consistently identified as crucial to an appropriate choice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A black worker within a statutory organisation being managed by a white worker. The worker requested external supervision from a black supervisor who could provide appropriate experience, awareness and perspective, as well as better support for her as a black worker and her work with black communities.</td>
<td>John’s black perspective contributed to the success of the supervision. A shared perspective, experience or identity is particularly important when a supervisee is isolated from others with a shared perspective - particularly when the supervisee is from a group experiencing oppression. For example, the need to discuss the issues and dynamics of work as a black person, particularly in a non-black team or as a black person working on black issues or with black people with an individual who has experienced similar problems and solutions is clearly common amongst black workers. The same need will often be apparent for supervisees who are women, lesbian, working-class, disabled and/or gay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A voluntary organisation where no one had the appropriate skills, experience or time to supervise the community worker. The funders of the organisation recognised the importance of an appropriate supervisor for a black worker working with minority ethnic groups in the city. However, when the project was taken on as mainstream within Social Services, the worker's supervision was expected to be provided from within the line management structure.</td>
<td>Due to the lack of support and supervision for the worker, the supervision needed to be established with clear links between the supervisor, line manager and supervisee. This was not an easy task. The worker had to argue her case through a number of management structures. The reasons for needing external supervision often have to be outlined carefully so that organisations who have no understanding of the needs of the worker or the project can identify the benefits to themselves. The danger is that a manager may think that by allowing a worker what s/he wants, i.e. an external supervisor, that the work has been supported. If a woman or black person (for example) kicks up a fuss, some managers may see the provision of external supervisor as an opportunity for allowing the worker to get on with their work in their little ghetto. In this way, the work is marginalised and the organisation can carry on as normal without any boats being rocked. It is important that the supervisor maintain links with the management and supports the worker to develop strategies to ensure that the work is recognised and valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John provided “emergency” (temporary) supervision for a Diploma participant struggling with programme requirements due to oppressive conditions in his workplace. As John is part of the tutorial team at the Community Work Unit, the supervision was external to the learner's workplace.</td>
<td>A specialist knowledge of the course requirements plus a knowledge of the issues of oppression meant that John was an appropriate choice in this case. Most of the supervision on the Community Work Unit programmes provide an external perspective on both settings (the workplace and the programme providers) - while work practice supervisors for courses at other institutions are sometimes linked to a short-term work placement and are, therefore, temporarily managerial rather than external roles. A variety of situations will call for specialist knowledge from the supervisor - who may sometimes need to provide a form of consultancy on strategies to overcome particular difficulties, such as time management, anti-oppressive strategies or political manoeuvres.</td>
</tr>
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man himself, he requested external supervision from another disability worker outside the youth service. Because his service would not pay for this, he made a three-way reciprocal arrangement with workers from another authority - offering to supervise one of their workers in return for his own supervision from another. In this example the arrangement was successful but required a lot of input from the workers themselves to establish. The only support that the disabled worker received from his employers was an agreement that the supervision could take place in work time. Later, his line manager realised and acknowledged that the supervision was of benefit to all involved.

External supervision that benefits the worker should have a positive impact on work practice, and consequently, the organisation's output. The organisation will benefit most if the process leading to the improvement of “service delivery” is clear, can be repeated and, ideally, incorporated into the policy and practice of the organisation. The relationship between the line manager and the external supervisor can assist this clarity. However there may be resistance to change even when an organisation appears to be taking steps to bring it about.

“(black) workers who may have been employed to provide new skills, new knowledge, to be an additional resource, are ground into performing work within normal priorities. Remember it is those normal priorities which were found wanting as far as service to the black community were concerned.”

(Rooney, 1980 in Dominelli, 1992; p.172)

An external supervisor can assist a black worker to develop strategies for coping with resistance to change as well as for creating changes.

Ideally the different roles of the external supervisor and the line manager should be complementary; the skills, knowledge, experience and perspective of the external supervisor could fill any ‘gaps’ that the line manager is able to acknowledge – as in the example of the Health Service manager. In practice, external supervision is often perceived as a threat to line management. In our experience this can be because:

- the worker has requested supervision from someone else - and rejected the line manager.
- the experience of appropriate supervision often results in a more assertive worker
- the external supervisor may be perceived as a “trespasser” who knows nothing about the organisation.
- the manager may feel criticised, e.g. when a black worker makes a request for a black supervisor, the white manager can often reply: “But I’m not racist.”

“It is the subtle presence of racism in our normal activities, coupled with our failure to make the connections between the personal, institutional and cultural levels of racism, which make it so hard for white people to recognise its existence in their particular behaviour and combat it effectively. Thus racism permeates social work interactions unless we take specific steps to counter it.”

(Dominelli, 1992; p. 165)

- the manager’s confidence may be undermined, thinking that “everyone will think I’m no good.”
- The organisation may see external supervision as a loss of power and control.

These fears and conflicts obviously need to be addressed if external supervision is to be supported by managers. The organisation and managers within it may feel they have a lot to lose simply by acknowledging a need for external supervision.
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“…behaviour called ‘face saving’ varies widely. But the proposition or rule that is followed to produce face saving remains the same: when encountering embarrassment or threat, bypass it and cover up the bypass.” (Argyris, 1993; p. 51)

Some of the following methods may help to establish clarity about the reasons for external supervision in any proposals or requests to avoid these “face-saving” tactics:

- Emphasise that the aims of external supervision prioritise the professional development of the worker.
- Hold an initial three-way meeting between the supervisor, line manager and worker - and establish review dates and/or other lines of communication.
- Discuss of supervision as a method of dealing with specific problems or needs; supervision is designed to deal with rather than create conflict.
- Provide a professional c.v. that outlines the specialist knowledge or specific experience that the supervisor brings to the arrangement.
- Clearly outline the different roles of a line manager and external supervisor.
- Provide reassuring examples of the supervisor’s approach, e.g. the supervisor does not “side with” the worker uncritically, but will challenge her/him, particularly on issues of professional concern, such as lateness.
- Give the manager time to see the results of good supervision. Eventually, the disabled worker’s line manager (from the example above) saw the benefits and was supportive.

References

A Model of Supervision that Benefits Communities

Joyce Hatton and Karen Kime

Supervision as a central element of practice for the caring and development professions began to be explored in detail in the late 1980’s. During the last decade, a substantial body of work has emerged on the purposes, tasks and processes of supervision, most notably in the social work (e.g. Kadushin, 1992; Lishman, 1991; Pritchard, 1996; Hughes and Pengelly, 1997) and counselling (e.g. Shipton, 1997; Lagos and Thompson, 1996; Feltham and Dryden, 1994) fields. In relation to community work practice there appears to have been relatively little in the way of models or research, although Tegg (1990) has looked at the types and purposes of supervision. This paper proposes a model of supervision for community work agencies, supervisors, practitioners and course participants that defines some of the relationships and issues involved in providing supervision where the central focus is on communities’ needs.

The term “supervision” has been used to cover a multitude of situations, from ad hoc, informal and sometimes circumstantial encounters to very structured, regular and formal meetings. Rather than specifying the format of supervision, our intention is to look at supervision that purports to offer support, information, reflection and education on a community development approach rather than simply the management of workloads or overseeing tasks. In the workshop where we presented the model, participants told us that the key issues for supervision were that supervision should be concerned with “sharing experience”, “positive reinforcement”, “benefiting from different perspectives” and “personal and professional development”.

In the field of counselling, external supervision is seen as essential to professional conduct and the need to “off-load” in relation to emotionally demanding work - quite separate and different from line management or disciplinary functions. In social work, supervision is used to develop a knowledge of theory and its relation to practice, but is also used for case management - and as a mechanism for ensuring that the agency meets any legal requirements. Some of these functions, particularly the clarification of professional judgement, off-loading and applying theory to practice are also useful in the supervision of community work. Community workers have decisions to make about coping with conflicting demands, responding flexibly to a range of individuals and groups, having a knowledge of child abuse and other criminal activities. Appropriate supervision from an experienced community worker can be vital to good community work practice.

Triangular models of supervision predominate in literature from other professions. For example, Lago and Thompson (1996) use triangles to demonstrate the counsellor/supervisor/client relationship, while Mattinson (1975) uses a similar model for social work. When we tried to use triangular models to provide an explanation of supervision in the context of community work, a dimension seemed to be missing. We felt that an appropriately skilled person who holds the community’s needs as a central focus and converted the triangle into a pyramid should offer supervision. We placed the community at the apex of the pyramid - while a number of different relationships can be expressed at the pyramid’s base.
We used the pyramid to explore the dynamics of power relating to position as well as race, gender, class, identity and ability need when analysing the relationships between the corners of the pyramid. The structure helped us to think about some of the practice issues around supervision, as well as the often conflicting agendas of the different parties, the differences between supervision and line management, the benefits and difficulties of external supervision, the influence of perspectives and identities.

We used our first model to explore the dynamics in an community work setting with an external supervisor. Model A is a triangular pyramid with the community at the apex and the agency, worker, supervisor and community at the base.

Model A: A Community Work Setting

The relationships between the points of the pyramid will vary depending on the agency’s commitment to community development and the supervisor’s arrangements with the agency. A problematic area could be that the agency has certain requirements from the worker to work with the community - which may not always put the community needs first. The agency priorities may be in conflict with the community development approach of the supervisor and worker. The supervisor can act as a broker between the agency and the worker - focusing the process around the community’s agenda - although usually this would be carried out via the worker. Supervisors vary in the level of communication they have with the agency. The agency may pay the supervisor and receive reports on the development work - or they may not even be aware that the worker has a supervisor.

The supervisor may be more experienced than the worker, but their relationship can be based on equality - particularly as both should place the community at the apex. Supervisors vary in the level of direct communication they have with the community. A locally based supervisor may have a lot of knowledge of the area and local contacts. Most workers will have much more contact with the community than the supervisor - but the
supervisor may be better placed to see the community’s needs clearly without being blinkered by the agency’s history or ways of working.

If an agency proposes an inappropriate intervention with the community, the worker could be isolated, unsupported and placed under pressure to meet the agency requirements. An experienced supervisor can assist the worker to plan, carry out and evaluate community development strategies to meet the community’s needs.

The following scenario can be used to illustrate how the model can be used to help us understand some practice issues, particularly the value of a supervisor in making sense of conflicts between management targets and community needs.

Scenario A: The Role of a Supervisor in a Community Work Setting

Mike works for a local authority as a patch-based community worker and is managed and supervised by Caroline, an experienced generic manager whose practice expertise is in advice work rather than community work. One of the most “disadvantaged” areas on Mike’s patch is an estate called Castle Hill. The estate has a reputation of violence and intimidation between groups of residents.

Recently, the local authority sacked a sessional worker at the Castle Hill Community Centre named Jenny, a young black woman from the estate. Residents angry at the decision threatened other workers - and the Community Centre closed for a while.

During the last few weeks, there has been pressure from the local MP and the press to re-open the Centre. In order to meet the local authority’s targets in relation to the Single Regeneration Budget, local Councillors say that activities on the Castle Hill estate need to be revived. Mike’s contacts believe that violence and intimidation of the staff will recur if the Centre is re-opened.

Most agencies would place themselves at the apex of the pyramid and would follow the fund-holders’ agenda to re-open the Centre as soon as possible. Mike is clear that the situation needs to calm before any positive work can be carried out in the Centre. As a local authority representative, his presence could provoke more conflict within the community - and possibly permanently jeopardise his relationship with them. Caroline is clear that the community’s needs are the first priority. As Mike’s supervisor, she can support him to resist pressures from the agency and others. She can also work with him to develop strategies for communicating his understanding of the situation to those in power and for working with the community.

Our second model looked at the relationships for a community worker in training. In this situation, there are more elements involved. Not only is there the community, the supervisor, the worker-in-training, the agency (usually providing a placement) - but there are also the course organisers. A pyramid based on a square may be necessary to ensure that all of those involved are represented.

The triangular pyramid model still works in most cases because the supervisor often comes from within the placement agency - so that there are no additional “corners”
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required. However, sometimes the supervisor would come from within the organisation providing the course (as is often in the case of the Diploma programme at the Community Work Unit). In others, for example, the introductory “part-time youth workers” qualification, the agency actually organises the course as well.

Model B: A Community Worker in Training

Model B differs somewhat from Model A in that:

- It is more likely that the supervisor would come from within the agency.
- Most course organisers, a major component in the diagram, would not have direct communication with the local people - unless the course is actually provided by the agency. At the Community Work Unit, there is at least one piece of assessed work that asks members of a group about the course participant’s work.
- Potential conflicting agendas may now include the course requirements as well as the agency’s.
- The relationship between the supervisor and the course varies greatly in different training programmes.
- Relationships in Model B would usually be established throughout the base of the pyramid through placement contracts and assessments.

Course participants can find themselves in a mass of conflicting needs: the course requirements, the needs of the community, their own learning needs, the agency’s expectations. The following scenario illustrates how Model B can be used to define a role for the supervisor as an interpreter of course requirements into pieces of work that meet the participant’s learning needs as well as being of direct benefit to the community.
Scenario B: Supervising a Course Participant
to meet Course and Community Needs

Katie is a Community Development Worker for a Health Authority undertaking a community and youth work course that utilises her on-going work as the practice element of the course. For the purposes of the course, Shaheena, a colleague who knows the work setting well, supervises her work practice development. Katie’s main area of work at present is with a fairly new Local Exchange and Trading System (LETS) scheme. Members of the LETS group are from a large geographical area who meet quite informally once a month to discuss business and occasional social activities. Most of the group members are white and middle-aged although two are Muslim women and several are over sixty years old.

Katie's course requirements stipulate that she works through an anti-oppressive action plan with a project in her work setting to address race, gender, disability and homophobia. It is suggested that she keeps sessional recordings reviewed each week to demonstrate how the work is progressing.

Katie needs support from Shaheena to work in a way that will benefit the LETS scheme as well as meet the course requirements. Experiencing pressure to gain a qualification may have led Katie to coercing the group into meeting more frequently and to tackling the action plan inappropriately. Individuals under pressure often find it difficult to see other options. As a community worker who puts the community’s needs first, Shaheena can assist Katie to review her plans with them in mind. For example, Shaheena could suggest that Katie supplement her recording of the LETS group meetings with recordings of her work with key individual members and any related development work. She could also consider monitoring her work with a completely different area of work. In addition, Shaheena can encourage Katie to develop and use a range of techniques to raise anti-oppressive issues that are appropriate to the group’s level of awareness and interest.

In our experience, this type of supervision is often missing and community workers are in isolated situations with non-existent or inappropriate practice supervision. Perhaps the fact that a large proportion of community work practice is not operating within legal requirements, it is assumed that the work is not complex or risky. Many community workers in both the statutory and voluntary sectors are managed and supervised by the same person - who often does not have the expertise to offer good quality supervision of community development practice. Agencies may not have the expertise or internal capacity to offer appropriate supervision and external supervision is rare - perhaps because of a lack of understanding of the needs of professional practitioners and/or a lack of resources.

As community workers in an organisation managed by individuals without community work expertise and without the resources available to undertake external supervision, we have partly overcome the gap in provision by offering peer supervision for each other and other colleagues. The arrangement started when Karen was a participant on the Diploma programme at the Community Work Unit - and she approached Joyce as a possible
supervisor. At the time, we were colleagues working in the same team. The supervisory relationship was a success and we decided to continue meeting on a more mutual basis when the course ended. Through this process, we have come to realise that lack of opportunities to reflect on our practice had previously hindered our professional development - and that our effectiveness in the community had been limited.

We believe that experienced community workers can make ideal peer supervisors as they share the same values and principles, understand the issues and have a similar approach to problem solving. Finding a suitable peer may be the key to receiving appropriate supervision for individuals who have difficulty in identifying a suitable supervisor within their management structure - or who are unable to access resources to fund an external supervisor.

The key role of supervision in the practice of community work has yet to be a firmly established principle or generally recognised as an integral part of our professional needs - particularly in comparison with related professions. If the status of supervision is to be raised and the right to appropriate supervision is to be provided, it is essential that models are developed that help us to understand the context and issues that are particular to our work. Our aim in proposing this model was not to attempt a universal blueprint, but to produce an aid to reflecting on the relationships involved. The discussion of what is involved in good practice in supervision needs to take place amongst community workers, employers, tutors, managers, course participants, managers, funders. In our view, supervision is vital to the development of a professional approach to community work.

To summarise, we feel strongly that:

- The core purpose of supervision is to ensure that community work addresses the needs of communities.
- Supervision needs to be an integral part of every community worker’s practice.
- Supervision should be offered and received by all community workers.

It is clear to us that supervisors who are skilled in practice methods, aware of interpersonal dynamics and prepared to hold the community’s needs as a central focus can ensure that community work fulfils its aims.

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A Black Perspective on Supervision

Addy Lazz-Onyenobi and Misbah Khan

Often there is a vacuum in the supervision of black workers caused by the supervisor’s lack of a black perspective. Black supervisees often have to educate their supervisors about their own roles and needs as well as those of the black communities. According to Sawdon and Sawdon (in Pritchard, 1995), “the supervisor is seen as a facilitator, joining the supervisee in a process of enquiry and mutual challenge rather than an expert transmitter of knowledge.” While black supervisors may be able to achieve this with black workers, the processes will be ineffective with white supervisors unless they have had information training and developed some awareness of a black perspective.

A black perspective acknowledges and values diversity. Rather than perceiving black individuals and groups as a homogenous group, a black perspective recognises the richness of varying cultures, religions, languages and experiences – as well as the similarity of their experiences, particularly in relation to racism. Community and youth workers with a black perspective - or with an awareness of a black perspective - will comprehend the effects of race in interactions between black and non-black individuals and groups and work to recognise and value black peoples’ particular experiences. The identity or perspective of a supervisor or supervisee can be significant in the supervisory relationship; the celebration of diversity as well as an understanding of the pervasiveness of racism makes this obvious. As community and youth workers and supervisors, we need to be aware of and reflect on the effects of race and power on supervision and work practice in order to develop an anti-oppressive approach.

This paper analyses the need for community work supervision to develop non-oppressive structures and processes in order to facilitate positive work practice with a black perspective and provide black workers with appropriate supervision. We will explore some of the definitions used to explain the purposes and types of supervision in relation to their appropriacy for black workers and supervisors.

A group of Greater Manchester black workers and managers came together last year to supervision as:

“.... an interactive process which involves reflection on practices and work for the purposes of:

1. Supporting the workers to effectively manage their workload.
2. Ensuring equity of learning and in the process not creating hiatus in knowledge and learning.
3. Ensuring the supervision system is culturally supportive.
4. Ensuring the supervision system does not affect working relationship in a negative way.
5. Ensuring that cultural diversity happens within a framework of trust.”

Greater Manchester Black Workers' Group (1997)

The purposes of supervision have been summarised by Tegg (1990) as establishing accountability and promoting professional development. Unless their supervisors have a black perspective, black workers may have difficulties establishing their accountability or receiving professional development. The accountability functions of supervision are to the
organisation as well as to the community; without a black perspective, the value of the black workers’ work and the needs of the target group may not be recognised. If the knowledge of the community comes only from the supervisee, a vacuum exists in relation to the accountability to the community and the process of education is not recognised.

In order for a supervisor to enable professional development, black workers’ needs have to be clearly identified and understood. Strategies to address their professional development needs have to be appropriate and agreed. In our research we found that accountability to the organisation is the primary function of managerial supervision. If the issues raised in supervision are in conflict with the ethos of the organisation, the worker loses out.

Ordinarily, the word [supervision] means overseeing, or a responsible person inspecting the work of someone with less responsibility, but in the caring professions it has come to mean the process through which support, guidance and increasing insight are gained by all workers. (Cruse, 1987)

As the supervisor often does not have an insight into the problems of a black worker, the guidance and support requirements cannot realistically take place. The onus is often on the black workers to provide the perspective that explains the work.

Atherton (1987) defined supervision as, the “process of reflecting on what you are doing with the help of another, in order to help you do it better.” From a black perspective, the process of reflection may not take place because the supervisor’s role in that process is culturally inappropriate. The outcome of supervision may not be positive. The process may not help the worker to do his/her work effectively - and may in fact, get in the way.

Tegg (1990) defines supervision as including a managing and administration role, a teaching and learning role and finally a supportive and enabling role. The work roles and power relationships of supervisor and supervisee must affect the degree to which these roles are successfully fulfilled. The educative, supportive and enabling roles will be problematic where the supervisor’s awareness and understanding of the worker’s situation and work is minimal. Equal opportunities policies may exist as a statutory requirement, but many organisations have inadequate (at best) implementation procedures. Opportunity is usually not equal within agencies; a black perspective is not represented in the hierarchical structure of decision-making. The supervisor may not be aware of decisions being made - or have any influence in the hierarchy of decision-making.

Community workers can receive informal supervision with a supportive function (often inadvertently) through community work networking. As they go about their work, community workers discuss issues with each other: “How are you going to manage this situation?”; “What would you do about ...?”, etc. For this approach to be successful, workers need to feel comfortable about maintaining informal contact with each other. Peer supervision through co-supervision and groups is useful for letting off steam or bouncing ideas around, but to be appropriate for a black worker, a black perspective is required. This form of informal supervision for black workers necessitates a wide network of black workers in different settings who can provide appropriate guidance and support. In the context of a lack of equal opportunities, developing such a network may not always be a simple task.

Some black workers have developed informal supervision structures such as peer supervision and networking. To be most effective, this should be recognised and formalised by the organisation. If the organisation does not recognise the value of these
informal methods, it can be unsupportive and dis-empowering. For example if the ideas arising from the supervision process are not taken on board, it can have a demoralising effect on the worker.

According to Stanners (in Pritchard, 1995), “the function of supervision is to provide a safe environment for:

- assessing and monitoring the practice and workload of the individual worker
- clarification of the agency policies and procedures, levels of decision-making and prioritisation
- information exchange
- learning and development
- modelling good practice
- problem solving
- support.”

We would add to this list the requirement that black workers need to have an input into the decision-making processes for supervision to provide a safe environment within which facilitation, education, management and development of black workers can take place. A black perspective needs to be part of the decision-making of the organisation.

If a black manager does not have an input in the decision-making process regarding resource allocation, for example, there will be a negative impact on the learning and development of the black worker at the grass roots. Facilitation and support become irrelevant to the worker. In effect, the situation becomes demoralising to both the black supervisor and supervisee, as little value given to their work - which becomes marginalised and not seen as part of the whole structure. This peripheral role had been the experience of most of the black workers that attended the workshop.

When we presented various definitions of supervision to the conference, we divided the mixed group into subgroups to look at three situations, listed below, in which workers or supervisors might find themselves. The groups discussed the issues that the supervisor and the supervisee need to be aware of so that a two-way process of learning could be achieved to benefit both parties and the communities they serve.

The first group looked at the issues that a white manager needs to be aware of when supervising black worker, and identified the following. The supervisor needs to:

- have an awareness of the diversity of black communities
- understand the communities’ perception of workers
- question whether they are able to give appropriate advice
- recognise that they will only see the “tip of the iceberg” in supervision
- understand the dynamics and power relationship in management and supervision - both individual and organisational
- nurture a challenging culture within the organisation
- be aware of non-verbal communication and how to interpret it
- understand the significance of racism in the relationship and to recognise internalised racism as a factor.

The following issues were raised by the second group that looked at the issues that a black manager needs to be aware of when supervising a white worker:

- the shift in power and the role of racism in the relationship
- the religious, cultural, values and background differences
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- the danger of stereotyping
- the support and supervision structures available for the manager.
- the manager's need for an awareness of the communities that the worker operates in
- the resources available for the development of both manager and worker
- the rarity of the situation.

The third group looked at the issues that a black manager needs to be aware of when supervising a black worker. They identified the need for:

- an awareness of the diversity within black cultures; it is very important to minimise assumptions
- an awareness of supervisee’s background
- empowerment of supervisee to identify her/his development needs
- mutual respect
- the supervisor to provide a positive role model
- support for both supervisor and supervisee within the organisation.

In conclusion, to achieve the above, a good support structure for supervision must be put in place to ensure that:

- there is relevant information exchange between the supervisor and the supervisee.
- the knowledge base and learning environment will facilitate positive role models and in the process increase the potential and confidence of the worker, in particular, the development needs.
- there are realistic expectations of goals and outcomes.
- an anti-oppressive agenda is incorporated within the entire structure and not seen as a separate issue.
- supportive and trusting structure will be such that confidentiality will not be compromised.
- secured supervisory structure will facilitate less guarded interaction between the supervisor and supervisee which will result in the development of both in a safe and positive environment.

In order to ensure that supervision is relevant and in a safe environment with positive role models, supervisors should have or be aware of a black perspective. This will require supervisors to be adequately training and supported. Black supervisors need to be recognised and valued for the perspective they bring; white supervisors need to ensure that they reflect on their practice to develop their awareness.

References
Greater Manchester Black Workers Group (1997)
Increasing awareness of anti-oppressive perspectives, on gender and race for example, has led to some consideration being given to addressing cultural differences within professional practice. This paper argues that similar complexities arise in other cross cultural scenarios such as deaf-hearing supervisory relationships. It puts forward the case for a “Deaf friendly” approach characterised by increased awareness of Deaf culture and the acquisition of sign language skills. It draws on personal experiences of being a non-deaf supervisor of deaf youth and community workers in training and includes comments from a deaf colleague about her experiences of supervision.

Anti-oppressive practice involves working sensitively with cultural differences. There are, for example, different degrees of deafness, including those who are profoundly deaf, have partial hearing, are deafened or hard of hearing. Thus appropriate responses may vary and require knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture. Linguistic flexibility and communicating through a shared language can assist here. This “Deaf friendly” approach is about the adoption of a “goodwill” strategy (Harris, 1997) and looking back we can see why it has become so necessary.

Over the years, misconceptions and stereotypes have permeated deaf-hearing relationships, leading to the significant exclusion of deaf people from basic rights to employment, little recognition of Deaf culture and discriminatory questioning of competency and sanity. Myths about deaf people abound and include assumptions that all deaf people can lip-read or use sign language. As one deaf colleague pointed out "lip-reading is mainly guess work and can be exhausting for any deaf person". This is compounded when some of the professional terminology and jargon is used thus "adding to the confusion".

With the dominance of the oralist perspective, hearing is presented as the norm. An interpreting role is forced onto a deaf person to “hear” the hearing person. This means in practice that the deaf person frequently has to educate their hearing colleague explaining what deafness means and some of the basics of deaf awareness. When this occurs in the supervisory relationship, it means that less time is spent attending to the learning needs of the deaf person. The supervisor’s role is expected to enable the supervisee to reflect on practice, to gain an understanding of what is going on through considering theoretical perspectives, to build on skills and knowledge and to develop ways forward. When interpretative and educative roles are placed on the supervisee, attention is drawn away from her/his learning as being the prime focus in the session.

A deaf youth worker spoke of how the sense of "achievement" she felt in relation to gaining a place on a training course for deaf youth workers was undermined at the

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10 The capital “D” signifies membership and culture of the Deaf community; the lower case “d” generally refers to the audiological condition of deafness (Gregory and Hartley, 1991)

11 An innovative part-time training course for deaf youth workers in the NorthWest organised by the British Deaf Association in conjunction with Greater Manchester Youth Association and Salford Youth and Community Service. Piloted in 1988-1990, the course offered training for deaf people to take active roles as youth workers and to enable access for deaf young people to the youth service.
prospect of having a hearing supervisor for her practical fieldwork. She comments on the feelings aroused and the "havoc" caused due to her previous experiences of being misunderstood and rejected by hearing people in authority. One instance of misinterpretation she quoted is when a deaf signer using British Sign Language is “often mistaken for being angry.”

Stereotypes from deaf people’s previous (and often negative) experiences of hearing adults in positions of power may be transferred into the supervisory relationship. Although it is important not to collude with the idea of the deaf person as a victim, nevertheless, acknowledging and allowing the expression of this negativity can enable movement forward. Our sense of identity is shaped by formative experiences in our dealings with others. For instance, deaf people often introduce new contacts by name into their circle with the additional identifying characteristic (where appropriate) of “hearing” (Harris, 1997). Our senses help us to perceive and distinguish the world of which we are a part. Being deaf (or hearing) is part of this cultural identity.

On example of a formative experience is the relationship with the supervisor. Supervision needs to offer the supervisee the chance to explore in a safe way her/his own practice and to build self-esteem through recognition of progress and action on learning needs. In the training course for deaf youth workers referred to earlier, the hearing supervisor’s role was to be a support and a guide, to be an experienced interpreter of the students’ practical work and a facilitator of learning. Hearing supervisors who can provide a safe place are still required today because of the lack of training opportunities for deaf youth and community workers.

Deaf writers have observed the fragile nature of their identity due to previous experiences (Taylor and Bishop, 1991) particularly at school. In the historic struggle between those advocating the language of signs and those who espoused an oralist approach, the hearing world prevailed and imposed an oral education on successive generations of deaf students. Subsequently many deaf people leave school with "mixed feelings" on how they identify themselves and often feel "under pressure" to prove themselves as capable to hearing people in a world where "having good speech and understanding means you are intelligent".

For the non-deaf person as well as the deaf person in the supervisory relationship some of what is shared is lost, through the deaf-hearing divide. Non-verbal communication is expressed differently between the hearing and deaf world, with touch and eye contact for example being open to misinterpretation. Thus, as well as the usual professional concerns about ensuring quality of the supervision process is the need to understand Deaf culture and to communicate in a Deaf friendly way.

Deaf culture incorporates the symbols and values identified through a shared experience, language and involvement with the deaf world as well as appropriate ways of expressing this deafness according to deaf people. This minority group does not accept negative definitions of their worth in the “hearing impaired deficit model” nor disparaging signs for DEAF which suggest “deaf and dumb” (Gregory and Hartley, 1991).

My introduction to the deaf community began some years ago when, as a senior fieldworker, I was matched with supervising a deaf youth worker in training. Initially I met the supervisee at the local Deaf centre and as a hearing person I began to appreciate the visual impact of communication between deaf people and some understanding of being in
a minority linguistically in this deaf signing world. This introductory process was followed by a residential experience of total immersion into British Sign Language, the language of the Deaf community with its own structure and grammar, and quite different to English. This experience was quite a cultural shock. I became aware of the diverse richness of the language with its patterns of linguistic gestures, range of hand shapes and differing facial expressions that imply particular meanings - and it left me low in confidence at my ability to communicate well in this new form.

My learning since those days has been in rather more manageable proportions; through participating in deaf awareness training where I learnt how to give deaf people a “hearing” and also to facilitate similar experiences for other hearing colleagues. My education continued by joining a class in British Sign Language that led me to obtain the Level One qualification from the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) some months later.

The deaf supervisee felt helped by recognition being given to cultural difference around Deafness, and with clear explanations of written requirements and jargon. Deaf colleagues also state that there should be support for working “in their own environment” at the deaf youth club rather than at hearing youth clubs. They have found that practising youth work skills by working mainly with hearing young people and hearing staff teams can add further complications to managing the learning process for both supervisee and supervisor.

Deaf students have been successful through the deaf youth workers training project. The inaugural scheme in 1988 and its successor in the early 1990’s offered a national training programme in part-time youth work through Bradford and Ilkley Community College’s programme in Applied and Social Studies and regional supervisory support groups. Several deaf adults achieved part-time youth and community work certificates and some continued, accessing training that led to successful completion at the JNC level for full-time youth and community work.

The value of these experiences has been to raise my own awareness that I need to start with my own knowledge and skills if I want to work in an anti-oppressive way with deaf colleagues. It is a concern that others have identified. One deaf psychologist (Jones, 1991), reflecting on his experience, states:

"Here in the UK, with the emerging number of deaf people becoming professionals, it is high time that the hearing professionals working with the deaf should start and treat them exactly equal. This means also ensuring that there is proper two-way communication."

This equality of communication involves looking at the personal development of British Sign Language (BSL) skills or the use of interpreter services with some clarification about the type of interpreting that is required - e.g. Signed English or BSL. The impact of the professional interpreter in the supervisory relationship may change the one-to-one dynamic but could offer a more Deaf friendly approach by providing bilingual translation between the oral and signed communications of the two parties. The term “translator” is a reminder that there is another language at work here and by offering translation services we are recognising that full information needs to be available to both parties at the same

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12 The substantial work of Jean Hough and Dave Ellis who established Deaf Youth Workers Training through both of these initiatives is particularly noteworthy here.
time. It is to be noted that there is also a pressing need for interpreters' practice as translators to be supervised. At this time, this professional interpreting service is greatly under resourced. There are funding implications if the service is to become established as part of local service provision that is supported by local authorities.

It is time for discrete training in supervision skills to be made available for deaf youth and community workers. Funding for the BSL interpreter-communicator service also needs to be addressed and resourced in a similar way to translation services that have been developed for other minority groups.

In summary, misunderstanding and lack of awareness among non-deaf professionals about inclusive ways of working with deaf colleagues prevails; positive action needs to be taken to involve deaf colleagues in reviewing and evaluating the practice and service provision that is on offer. We need to respect and appreciate cultural differences, breathing life into the egalitarian principles that we say we hold. Today would be a good time to start building effective cross cultural partnerships so that we can look forward to the rewards of more equitable profession relationships tomorrow.

References
Kathie Hare-Cockburn, a Fieldworker in Advocacy for the NorthWest Area, contributed observations from a Deaf perspective
Transitions from Supervisee to Supervisor

Alison Healicon and Gareth Jones

The following transcript describes the process of one person’s transition from being a supervisee to becoming an ‘Approved Supervisor’ for the Community Work Unit. Although this scenario is specific to an individual’s development, the essential elements or stages of professional development are identified, such as: learning from experience, recognising and building on interpersonal skills, reflection on own experience of supervision and enjoying the experience. The conditions which employing organisations can offer to encourage workers to make this transition are also discussed, such as: the provision of role models, practical experience of supervision, opportunities for study and research as well as positive feedback.

Gareth is a Community worker in Burnage, Manchester. He became involved with the Community Work Unit as a participant of the Community and Youth Work Studies Diploma programme after a number of years working as an activist and youth worker with the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled people and then in a local authority Youth Service. The dialogue takes the form of a supervision session where Alison Healicon (A.H.) is asking questions to enable Gareth (G.J.) to describe and recognise the process of transition.

A.H. Tell me about your community and youth work experience.

G.J. I have varied experience from voluntary work to recognised youth work. At first I was employed with the city council dealing with the public and I would go off to find information for people, which got me into trouble, as it was not my job! I enjoyed talking to people, giving ideas, networking – not what city council workers were supposed to be doing.

Then I became involved by accident with the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. I went down to find some information and was interested in what they were trying to do - empowering disabled people and campaigning on disability issues. Things snowballed from there. At first I was doing admin, then talking to people and then I worked with the voluntary youth club. There were up to 20 young disabled people involved in activities and games, but I was mainly listening to what the young people had to say. We talked about issues such as benefits, drugs and sex education - as in general youth work. I was also an advocacy worker providing a link with professionals and parents and a voice for disabled young people.

I applied for a sessional worker post in Stockport working with disabled young people and got the job! I took on the Youth Service Portfolio Training which meant I had to do mainstream youth work, which scared me initially. But I did it and gained experience of loads of different kinds of youth work: information, advice, street based outreach work and project based work around discussions and activities. I think grass roots work and contact is really important and sessional workers and volunteers are not valued enough.

13 The procedures for approval were developed through the support of an Enterprise in Higher Education grant and the Leonardo Project and are available from the Community Work Unit.
A.H. *What was it about grass-roots work that you liked?*

G.J. The “buzz”. Face-to-face involvement is fundamental to good youth work. Seeing people become more confident, building up a relationship with young people, going around and networking and building up relationships to find out information. So much so that I became well known and ‘one of the most notorious people’ in the council. I liked talking to people as a way of resolving problems or issues without making more of any issue than it should be.

A.H. *What skills would you say you used as a face-to-face worker?*

G.J. I enjoyed networking and would make the most of any opportunities to network. I also had to use listening skills: I am a ‘people person’. I had to be supportive, provide a supportive environment, be aware of some of the issues that people were facing, know who to contact or how to find out information. I was encouraged in the Coalition to support people. If they were having a hard time because of their situation, we would take on the role of advocate to challenge others’ (professionals, general public) misconceptions, stereotypes and attitudes. Without overstepping the boundaries so that the individual involved would not feel dis-empowered.

I also had to build up people’s self esteem and confidence by giving them information to make more informed choices, a sense of independence and the confidence to make own decisions.

I developed as a worker as well. At the time I wouldn’t have recognised my approach to work as community or youth work values. During the Portfolio Training I began to become aware of what youth work was and how it related to my work.

A.H. *You had developed some useful interpersonal skills as a face-to-face worker. What is your experience of supervision?*

G.J. My experience of supervision up until the Diploma programme was very limited and also very negative. When I first started in work, I didn’t know what supervision was – I just thought it was a good excuse to go for a “skive”, usually with a friend who was ‘supervising’ me. Certainly within the city council, supervision was taken pretty lightly and the sessions were not taken seriously at all. I answered “Is everything all right?” with “Yes” then we spent the rest of the time talking about what we did the previous night or what was on the television that night.

While I was working in a local authority youth service, supervision was again very limited and superficial. When I first came on the Diploma programme, my line manager was also my Diploma supervisor - the lines were very blurred. We never had proper supervision. It lead to a very difficult situation where I would go into supervision feeling very defensive. It became very much a checking out session: ‘Did you do this?’, ‘Did you do that?’; ‘Why not?’ - and it wasn’t about looking at the possible ways forward. I think this can be pretty typical of management supervision.

A.H. *So your experience of supervision had been fairly negative because the role of the supervisor had been unclear and your supervision had been linked closely with line*

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**Supervision of Practice and Professional Development**

14 Participants on the Diploma programme are provided with “Approved Supervisors”, usually external supervisors, who meet with them on a weekly basis to supervise their work practice and professional development.
Supervision of Practice and Professional Development

management. You mentioned that you took on the Portfolio Training which suggests that you were willing to think about your work and that you valued learning even if the supervision you received didn’t encourage your development. Your enjoyment of the work you do also seems to involve finding out and talking to people. What opportunities did the Diploma programme create for you?

G.J. In terms of supervision, the turning point, the catalyst was the work practice module\(^{15}\) where I had to reflect on my supervision of another worker. I did have concerns about supervising someone else. I thought - “Do I really want to do this? If I don’t do it I won’t be able to finish the programme.” I thought really seriously about whether or not to continue - I was that worried. The key word for me was responsibility. I didn’t think I would be capable of taking that responsibility on and I didn’t know whether I really wanted it.

A.H. You were worried about taking on the responsibility of supervision - so what preparation did you do to overcome these feelings?

G.J. I found someone who was willing to be a ‘guinea pig’ - that was one less hassle. It was also about talking to various people both supervisees and supervisors, people at work that I knew who had been supervising for ages and the tutors. I talked with people who had good and bad experiences of supervision - training officers. Basically I talked to a lot of people and bounced ideas off them really. I did some textbook reading - still very uptight and nervous about it I suppose. Then I put it into practice. The first couple of sessions with my supervisee were horrendous in many ways - I was so starchy and uptight about it. And we did things by the textbook and I blinded him with science. I was very blinkered and didn’t even stop to let him get a word in edgeways. It was almost like a robot doing the supervision. I was feeling that “We’ve got to do this and this..” and I could see him looking at me and thinking “What the hell are you talking about?”.

Having said that, the sessions went okay - although I wasn’t particularly happy with them. After the second one I went away and sat down thought about what supervision was to me and drew a spidergram and thought about it logically for half an hour. The diagram illustrated connections between my random thoughts about different models of supervision, the value of feedback, how to provide support through suggestions, reflections and questions, the need to listen, frameworks for sessions and agendas, how to use the session to put theory into practice, prioritising. I was able to organise my thoughts about supervision.

The next time we met, we drew up a contract and discussed what supervision was about and the processes so he understood it and more importantly I did as well! Then it went really well. It began to evolve into something really good. He got a lot from the sessions and I certainly did. And we even continued to meet for supervision when the module was completed.

\(^{15}\) One of the Work Practice modules at Level Two of the Diploma programme requires participants to monitor and evaluate their practice of supervision. The Level Two Work Practice Handbook, developed with the support of the Leonardo Project, outlines the requirements and is available from the Community Work Unit.
### Contract Suggestions
from Gareth Jones and David Stead

- Be on time
- Keep to routine
- No interruptions from outside
- Not a moving session
- Comfortable environment (physical and mental)
- Learn from each other
- Be relaxed as possible - without losing structure
- Make sure that we know what we are talking about
- Aim for clarity
- Come prepared
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Clarify each person’s responsibilities
- No smoking
- Tea or coffee break (optional)

A.H. You obviously took your role as a supervisor seriously and you show your concern to get the supervision right. How did you feel after the module?

G.J. Relief! And really fulfilled and pleased with myself because this was something I had real doubts whether I could do it and I started to believe in my own abilities and I began to question more the supervision I was receiving. For instance within my line management supervision after that, I actually questioned a lot of things and we picked things out and separated a lot of the issues. So supervision with my line manager improved.

A.H. So you became more confident and were more able to question the supervision you received. What else did you learn from this experience?

G.J. Supervision is very much about your own work practice as well as your supervisee’s - and maybe it’s also about being a resource. As supervisors as well as workers, we need to think about how we can we bring certain things into our work, like anti-oppressive practice. Not necessarily to have a check list but certainly, we need to go through the scenarios and ask questions like “what would you have done differently?” Monitoring and evaluation of anti-oppressive work is a real process. Supervisors need to use open and closed questions, encourage people to do anti-oppressive work and believe in themselves. Supervision can be a two way process where both the supervisor and the supervisee benefit.

A.H. This experience has been positive for both you and your supervisee. What opportunities were there for feedback?

G.J. Constant - I wanted and sought feedback from colleagues, tutors and also supervisors. My supervisee did a bit of an evaluation of me at the end of the module - which was positive. It enabled me to go onto the next stage - which was when I was approached by a colleague on the programme to be her supervisor. She was also a friend and this was a big issue as we had to negotiate my role as supervisor - which is not easy and friendships can go out of the window. We were very clear from the start that we had to be professional and leave our personalities outside the door. We sat down again to negotiate the contract. We laugh and joke but at the same time we
are very business-like and go through the various agendas that we have set. It works well.

A.H. You went through the Approval Procedures before you took on this role. How did you find that process?

G.J. A real eye-opener. It was tough and thought provoking and left me with a headache at the end of it! But it was really good because a lot of my past experiences were about informing people and encouraging people and in some respects this was me using the skills of a supervisor. I had been doing a lot of that work before and I hadn't really recognised it or thought that it was valid. The skills developed through work sometimes go unrecognised and supervision can be about valuing experience and skills.

A.H. You have been successful in your supervision up to now. What support do you have if problems arise?

G.J. I have a wide network of support. In my current post I get supervision from an experienced practitioner. I am also a guinea pig for him on a course on supervision - which he is doing. I also talk to other colleagues and participants of the programme. Text books if I need them. But the most important support has been the Community Work Unit. Going through the Diploma programme and then being recruited as a supervisor has given me access to the resources and opportunities to develop my skills and experience. People are around to bounce ideas off, reflect on my work, provide information and offer experience. They have regular supervisors’ meetings so that information can be shared and supervisors can keep up to date with the programme. Also there are opportunities for feedback and evaluation after each module as a supervisor.

A.H. What would you say are the benefits of being a supervisor?

G.J. There are many, many benefits. I didn’t really understand what supervision was and it took me a long time to get my head around it and take it seriously. The context of the supervision is asking questions to see that they are opening up and becoming empowered. To act as a resource and to encourage someone to look at alternative ways of working and reflecting on their anti-oppressive practice also benefits you. As much as you give them, you also learn and it keeps you sharp and it also reminds you of why you are doing the job you do and it actually helps you to keep focused on the work and the ethos.

A.H. Looking back on the process would you do anything differently?

G.J. I suppose if I knew then what I do now I would, but then again I have learnt a lot by going through this process and my hit and miss approach has enabled me to learn.

A.H. What is next for you?

G.J. I have applied to go on the post-qualifying ‘Issues and Practice in Supervision’ course to develop my own supervisory skills. You never stop learning. I have still got so much to learn from other people. I have also been given more responsibility in my current work to do more supervision. It may lead me onto more management type jobs which scares me but the supervision experience is a good grounding and preparation.

16 (See earlier footnote .) 17 The Community Work Unit pilot course is starting in January 1999 through the Leonardo Project.
In presenting this dialogue, we hope to have demystified supervision as well as raised some issues and questions for those thinking of taking on the role of supervisor. We have also highlighted some of the conditions within an organisation, which can be useful for promoting good practice in supervision. To summarise, these conditions are: providing opportunities for supervision, encouraging others to access relevant training, prioritising the use of resources to fund supervision and training as part of a commitment to workers’ professional development, networking with others to share information on supervision, providing opportunities for feedback and support and drawing upon and valuing the experience of the team.
About the Contributors

**John Best** is a tutor at the Community Work Unit and a consultant for the Community Work Accreditation Process. He also works in a consultative capacity for a number of groups and organisations throughout Greater Manchester.

**Mary Kenny** is currently a part-time tutor at the Community Work Unit and has over 20 years experience of community work in Greater Manchester in both voluntary and statutory groups. She is particularly interested in the training and education of community workers and is studying for an M.Ed. in Adult and Continuing Education.

**Leigh Cook** works in a local authority Youth and Community Education Service and is an Assessor and Supervisor for the Community Work Unit. Inspired by Conference attendance, Leigh submitted her paper for inclusion in this collection.

**Joyce Hatton** works for a local authority with responsibility for working with community organisations on three priority estates and for developing LETS schemes. She also undertakes independent consultancy and training work with voluntary organisations and is on the management group of two projects in Manchester. Joyce has considerable experience in statutory and voluntary sectors and is committed to providing access to training and qualifications for activist through local and national initiatives. Her interest in supervision has been fuelled by the positive experience of undertaking peer supervision and her involvement with the Leonardo Project to develop and promote models of good practice.

**Alison Healicon** is the Work Practice Tutor for the Diploma programme at the Community Work Unit and Co-ordinator of the Leonardo Project in Manchester and has been involved in the Women’s Aid movement for the past ten years.

**Gareth Jones** is a disabled youth worker for a local Multi-Agency Community organisation with experience of the voluntary and statutory sectors. Gareth is an Approved Supervisor for participants on the Community Work Unit Diploma programme.

**Misbah Khan** has a wide range of experience in statutory and voluntary community organisations. She has been an Assessor with the Community Work Unit for the past eight years and facilitates Community Work Skills courses in Salford.

**Karen Kime** is a generic, patch-based community development worker for a local authority with a range of experience in the statutory and voluntary sectors. For the past ten years, she has worked alongside local people who have set up and run a number of community based projects. More recently, she has been involved in the provision of community work skills training for activists throughout the borough. She recently completed the Diploma programme at the Community Work Unit - developing an interest in the role of supervision as a tool in professional development.
Addy Lazz-Onyenobi, BA Hon., M.Ed., is a part-time tutor with the Community Work Unit and has been actively involved in community work for more than 18 years. Her special interest is “Women in Development and Women in Higher Education.

Paula Pope is a Senior Lecturer in Youth and Community Work at Liverpool John Moores University. Paula submitted the paper following invitations at the conference for further writing inspired by attendance.

Kate Sapin: I have been involved in developing, organising and facilitating participative learning programmes for experienced and active community workers (including youth workers) at the University of Manchester since 1985 and was one of the founders of the Community Work Unit. I co-authored Learning From Each Other (William Temple Foundation, 1990) with Geraldine Watters.