

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

In the literature the aspirations and expectations of supervisors and supervisees has a significant place. Brown et al. (1996:51-52) and Morrison (1993:27) consider the clarification of aspirations and expectations as central to the establishment of effective supervision, whereas Munson (1993: 40-41) lists rights and expectations that supervisees and supervisors should have. He argues that only through open realistic expectations of supervision can supervisors and supervisees optimise the opportunities that it provides.

With the above points in mind, the aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings concerning the probation officers' and service managers' aspirations and expectations of professional supervision. The three main areas covered are: the respondents' expectations about the content, process and structures of supervision; their expectations of their ideal supervisor, and the roles and responsibilities they wanted this person to undertake; and finally their aspirations and expectations of the agency's support and organisational culture. The chapter concludes with a summary, which will also outline the implications of the findings.

#### **Expectations of Supervision Content**

All fifteen participants expressed expectations in relation to the content of professional supervision, and it was clear that the expectations of the probation officers were somewhat broader than the service managers' expectations.

#### **Probation Officers**

Among the probation officers the dominant content expectation concerned the area of clients or client work. Ten stated that they expected the content of their professional supervision would involve discussion of their clients and their work with clients. There were however different descriptions of this particular aspect of content. Four officers, (Angela, Jack, Grace, and Tania) spoke of their work with clients in terms of bringing cases, discussing their caseload, and case reviews. The use of the word 'cases' by these

four officers links them back to the strong tradition of casework supervision which dates from the 1930s (Kadushin, 1992a). Five others (Kiri, David, Mary-Jane, Joseph and Ernest) used the term ‘clients’, whilst another (Ellen) used the concept ‘practice’ to describe her work with clients. These differences in descriptions in relation to the same material, emphasise that supervisees’ expectations can differ in accord with their personal constructs of supervision (Solas, 1994).

Two respondents, Jack and Ellen, expected theory and practice techniques to be part of their professional supervision content. Ellen expressed a strong expectation that her supervision would include research and the latest practice developments. Jack, on the other hand, wanted a more technically related content in which he could learn “different types of practice techniques” that he could use “to modify behaviour in individuals.” He also expected that feedback would be based on clinical observations made by his supervisor. These observations would focus upon his application of theory.

Mary-Jane and Tania also expected feedback based on observations. Mary-Jane wanted clinical observation through the use of video and audio recordings of client work (after the client had given their informed consent) and the opportunity to discuss these recordings with her supervisor. Tania referred to observation in a more general (rather than the clinical) sense and wanted feedback about what the supervisor observed that was “possibly the problem”. For example, was she was using her time appropriately and where could she do better.

Tania was one of five officers who expected to be able to discuss herself in relation to her work. She wanted space to express her feelings if she felt that she was not coping. David expressed similar expectations and hoped that his supervision relationship could be developed to the point where:

I would be able to walk in and say ‘I’ve had a shit of a week’ and it’s not because of anything they’ve done, ...it’s something else that’s going on.

Kiri also wanted to talk about her feelings in supervision, however, her emphasis was on her feelings about clients, particularly in terms of who and what she felt uncomfortable with and the reasons for that. Both Joseph and Ernest recognised that there was an

association between their personal and their professional relationships and expected this to be reflected in the content of their supervision.

Mary-Jane, Grace, Ellen and Ernest, stated that they expected professional development to be part of the supervision content. The first three wanted areas identified where their skills and knowledge could be further developed through training and education. Ernest appeared to have a wider perspective, one which involved helping him prepare for “new changes or new challenges”. In essence, it appeared that the content that he was wanting was focused on his development as a professional rather than development in terms of knowledge and skill acquisition.

Another area of content was identified by Joseph, who expected “every now and then” to discuss “work focussed” issues related to his “colleagues or bosses”. Finally, a further theme identified by four probation officers (Joseph, David, Angela, and Tania) was that the content of their supervision would be based on an agreement between themselves and their respective supervisors.

### Service Managers

Among the service managers the most common expected content related to staff and their work with staff. Sofia expected the content of her supervision to be centred on how she could get the best out of staff. She envisaged this happening through being challenged to consider new ways of working with her staff and by reflecting on her work. The staff content Neil wanted was centred upon his relationships with staff and the relationships that his staff had with each other. He wanted to be able to discuss how he could meld different personalities into a team and made the following comment on this matter:

It gets very difficult when you’ve got ...some people who are assertive, but they’re aggressive assertive and then ...others who say no, but they’re very quiet and then get offended because of the aggressive assertive person and so on.

Susan’s expectation was focused upon and included discussion of any staff issues she had and any concerns she had about her supervision of staff.

The next most common content item expected was the person themselves in relation to their work. This was mentioned by both Susan and Neil, whose perspectives differed considerably. Susan wanted to be able to discuss “a little bit of personal stuff” but was clear that she “did not want it to generate into the personal sob story”. Neil, on the other hand, wanted his supervision to assist him in finding a lifestyle balance between his work, home and other roles. In particular he wanted to be able to talk through issues when he thought his balance was “all out of kilter.” Neil also wanted help in his supervision to deal with his managers, to get “them to hear some of the things” that he said to them “rather than just hearing and not listening”.

The other two service managers, Nicholas and Joan, were less specific about their expected supervision content. Nicholas apparently wanted content based upon his managerial role and his work. Joan spoke in general terms of issues and career development when asked about what she wanted the content of her supervision to be.

### Commentary

In terms of the content of their professional supervision, thirteen of the fifteen participants indicated they wanted to discuss the people worked with and their work with these people, be they clients or staff. The next most common supervision content area identified by seven participants was themselves in relation to their work and this was followed by matters of training and professional development. These findings, it could be argued, are consistent with the views of Kadushin, (1992a: 142) who describes the content of professional supervision as “people, place, process, personnel and problem”. Kadushin claims that this is derived from the “nuclear situation of all social work” which he asserts is:

That of a client (individual, family, group, or community-*people*) coming or referred to a social agency (*place*) for help (*process*) by a social worker (*personnel*). The client comes with a *problem* in social functioning.

In summary the content areas identified by the participants' corresponded with the main areas from which the content of social work is drawn. These areas being the persons involved and their environments (Turner, 1996; NZASW, 1998d).

### **Process of Supervision**

All fifteen respondents identified the process that they wanted their supervision to use and there was very little difference between the probation officers and service managers. One observation worth raising was that I was asked by nine of the respondents (seven probation officers and two service managers) "What do you mean?" immediately after asking them "what process would you want?" The following extract from Joseph's transcript illustrates this point:

K: In terms of process, what sort of process would you want?

J: What are you talking about?

K: What I'm talking about, is ...when you sit down, the sort of atmosphere and what transpires, the underlying stuff. Content is what you talk about, the process is what goes on.

Arguably, this occurrence supported the early finding in chapter five, which found that the participants tended to construct supervision in terms of its content and functions rather than in terms of its process.

### **Probation Officers**

Two of the ten officers Joseph and Kiri spoke in general terms with Kiri indicating that she wanted a process that would keep her honest and would examine whether she was being difficult or hiding things. Joseph, on the other hand, was more theoretical and spoke of being open to a gestalt process, being familiar with the classic social work models, and wanting a change from supervision that seemed to be "solely hooked into parallel process".

The remaining eight outlined steps or elements of the professional supervision process. Angela and David both spoke of a settling in phase in which there would be a bit of "chit chat". This settling in phase would be followed by an identification phase, which involved setting the agenda or listing the matters for discussion. An identification phase

was mentioned by Angela, David, Ernest, Tania, and Mary-Jane, whilst, Grace wanted a checking out phase in which they would “Check out immediate work crises” and “check out how I am” and proceed from that point. David, Tania and Angela spoke of a phase in which what had been identified would be ordered or prioritised. A working phase where the issues selected would be “worked through to solutions” was wanted by Ernest, Mary-Jane and Grace. Jack indicated that he wanted role-play included as an option in this working stage. Angela and David identified the final phase as an ending phase that involved “feedback from the supervisor” and a review of the content and any outcomes and a brief assessment of “how satisfactory” the supervision was.

### Service Managers

The service managers’ responses were similar to the probation officers. Nicholas responded in general terms and indicated that the process aspects of supervision was something he would want to brush up on. He mentioned that whilst he could not name each aspect he would like a methodical process.

The other four service managers identified steps in the process. Sofia wanted a planning phase, which occurred at the end of a previous session for the next session. Susan wanted a process that began with “pleasantries” and “a bit of warming up”, which would then be followed by the setting of the agenda. Joan wanted a structured process which involved housekeeping, a review of last session’s notes, followed by the identification of any issues that needed discussion. The process that Neil wanted was one where he could talk to someone who would listen and reflect what he had said back to him so that he could start organising it. Neil describes the process as follows:

It’s a little bit like...taking the top off a boil. You’ve got to let it go first, then you can start cleaning it out...that’s what I’d want from somebody.

Susan’s phase where issues were explored and worked through to a resolution had some similarities to the approach described above. Both Susan and Joan also spoke of a review phase near the end of the supervision process in which what was covered was monitored and evaluated by the participants. Susan also wanted a closure phase so that she did not leave “with the session still running around your head.”

## Commentary

The process outlined by the respondents clearly mirrored the social work interview process. This process also involves preparation, an introductory phase, a phase where the purpose or agenda is clarified and ordered, a working phase and a review or ending phase (NZSWTC, 1985; O'Donoghue, 1998a; Payne, 1997). The respondents' perspectives also support the earlier findings in chapter five related to the parallel process between the process used in direct practice and that used in professional supervision. The findings in regard to process also seem to agree with the supervision literature (NZSWTC, 1985; Kadushin, 1992a; Rich, 1993; Morrison, 1993; O'Donoghue, 1998a) and reflect Kadushin's (1992a: 157) view that the approaches and processes adopted for use in supervision are reflective of the approach the person would use in casework. When Kadushin's view is applied to the participants' preferences the casework process that seems to be being replicated is a problem-solving process that is similar to the task-centred practice (Payne, 1994; 1997; Reid et al., 1978).

## Structures

Three main structures emerged from the participants' responses. These were the frequency of supervision sessions, length of sessions and the mode of delivery of the supervision.

### Frequency of Sessions

The desired frequency of sessions for the probation officers ranged from regular to six-weekly. Angela and David both wanted their supervision to be regular and easily accessible but did not state what they considered regular was for them. The sense I got from both of them during their interviews was that regular meant a session occurring either fortnightly or monthly. Tania also wanted a regular frequency, however she wanted "someone or more than one person" on call and available for consultation when she needed. She also wanted to move away from "a rigid once a month thing". Her reason for this was because:

It's often not possible to wait, particularly if it's with a client. It may be a crisis and you literally need to talk to somebody then and there.

Tania also wanted “short supervision sessions at regular intervals” to monitor stress. Her supervisor could instigate these short sessions whenever he noticed that she was not “functioning properly”.

Jack and Joseph both wanted supervision on a not less than once a fortnight frequency, which was interesting given that both men had years of experience within the Community Probation Service. Jack’s reason for this frequency was that he wanted it to bring him “up to speed again”. Joseph on the other hand wanted that frequency because of the nature of the work he undertook.

Mary-Jane wanted the frequency of her supervision sessions to start off fortnightly and then to become monthly. She gave no reason for the variation in frequency. I wondered whether the change in frequency was related to cost because, earlier in her interview, she had used a calculator to work out how much external supervision of a similar frequency would cost. Mary-Jane was also one of three probation officers (the other two being Tania and Ernest) that also wanted an arrangement for consultation with the supervisor between sessions on an as required basis.

Ernest, and Ellen indicated that their preferred frequency was monthly, whereas, Grace wanted the frequency to range from monthly to six-weekly. These three probation officers had all “been in the job a while” and appeared to base their choices upon the years of experience.

Amongst the five service managers, only Susan specified her desired frequency for receiving supervision. She wanted a formal session at least once a month and a provision to contact the supervisor as required between sessions.

### Length of Sessions

The main theme that emerged concerning the length of supervision sessions was that they were between 1-2 hours in duration. Those who wanted supervision sessions to last an hour seemed to want this on the basis of their past experience. Two respondents (Mary-Jane and Susan) wanted their sessions to be an hour and a half or longer because they felt that it took time “to really get down to it and think” about what they brought to supervision. Susan particularly illustrated this point when she said:

Sometimes I think an hour is not enough...it can sometimes take forty odd minutes before someone starts to really unwind, then you've got to cut it short.

Tania provided the only exception to the 1-2 hour range with her desire for short, brief and frequent consultations for her immediate work problems from a number of different people. According to the literature what Tania wanted appeared more akin to case-consultation rather than supervision (Kadushin, 1977; Shulman, 1995).

### Mode of Delivery

All fifteen participants wanted individual supervision with only Joseph wanting his individual supervision complemented by a peer group arrangement. The other significant theme present in the findings was whether an external supervisor or a supervisor from within the Service provided the supervision.

### Probation Officers

Amongst the probation officers there was a clear division with five officers who wanted their professional supervision provided by an external supervisor and the other five that wanted it provided internally.

Angela, Joseph, Kiri, Grace, and Mary-Jane wanted their supervision provided by an external supervisor. Angela and Joseph wanted external supervision because of their positive recent experiences and considered external supervision to be both "good and valuable". Kiri, wanted external supervision because she felt that it would be safer for her to discuss her issues, particularly if they included "personal stuff". It appeared that Kiri's personality perspective of supervision, which in some ways tended towards personal counselling, rather than supervision seemed to have influenced her choice to some degree. The following extract from her interview illustrates this point:

[If] I have a problem, I don't know how to deal with it, it's to do with work and in some part some of my personal stuff, there are heaps of transference going on here. I've a real problem. I would like to see my professional supervisor about it.

Grace appeared to want outside supervision because her experiences of internal supervision had not been positive. She believed that her chances of having “good supervision” were greater with an outside supervisor. Grace also felt that the agency, by paying for outside supervision would demonstrate that it valued her work, and ongoing professional development. Mary-Jane wanted someone outside of the organisation because she thought it would be “really hard to trust someone in the organisation”, because “you never know what their agenda might be.” Mary-Jane also appeared to infer that she would be more likely to get someone with “a bit of experience and a wealth of knowledge” outside of the Community Probation Service.

David, Jack, Ellen, Ernest and Tania wanted their supervision provided within the Community Probation Service. David and Jack both stated that their preference would be somebody from within the service, but also stated that they did not want anyone they currently worked with. Jack’s reasons were that he knew “all their weaknesses and foibles” and would feel that it would be “almost hypocrisy” for them to sit down and supervise him. Jack preferred somebody he hadn’t worked with from another area within the Service as his first choice. If such a person were not available he would then want someone outside the service. David felt that there was no one within his office that he was comfortable with, or had the personal development that he considered a professional supervisor should have. He did however, indicate that there were “people in our area office” that he would feel “comfortable with” and that “there are probably people in other area offices” that border on to his, that he also felt comfortable with. In summing up David made the point that he would want outside supervision only “if there was nobody in the Department he could have that relationship with.” Ellen had a similar perspective to David. She also preferred to have someone from within the service, but if a satisfactory person could not be provided she wanted an outside supervisor. Ellen’s choice of supervisor was based on whether she thought the person “had better skills than herself”. Ernest, on the other hand, wanted his supervision provided by his Service Manager. His reasons for this were that he considered that supervision of work and the management of work were inextricably linked and he did not support the idea of separating management from professional supervision. Ernest made

two further points: the first was the need for service managers to make supervision a priority; the second was that the organisation should set up structures within its returns system to monitor, legitimise, prioritise and support supervision. Tania wanted her professional supervision to be provided internally within the Community Probation Service “because of the nature of the work”. Tania indicated no preference about whether her supervisor was a peer or her service manager, and pointed out that her choice would depend on their personality. Tania thought that it was necessary to have external supervision for some issues such as sexism and relationships within the office, particularly when the supervisor or manager was involved. She said that this was because people “need to talk to somebody outside...to try and get an unbiased view.”

### Service Managers

Four of the five service managers wanted supervision provided externally. Nicholas was the only one who wanted professional supervision to be provided internally by managers. However, he also indicated that if that was not possible he reluctantly wanted external supervision. Nicholas wanted professional supervision to be provided by managers because he considered the alternatives to be “the thin end of the wedge” which was going to push him “out of this building”. The point he made was that any arrangement, which resulted in the separation of the supervisor’s role, was likely erode the service managers role, with the potential outcome being its disappearance.

The other four service managers wanted professional supervision provided outside of the Service. Joan wanted to continue her external supervision and wanted her team of probation officers also to have external supervision. Her reason for wanting supervision “taken right outside the organisation” was that it would be “provided in a safe, objective, professional environment” and that supervisees had a choice. Sofia wanted external supervision both for herself and her team and she stated that service managers still needed to provide administrative supervision because, “they are there when a crisis arises” and they receive any concerns that professional supervisors have. Susan wanted external supervision for herself, but wanted her team to be able to choose between external supervision and professional supervision with her. Susan indicated that she had conducted a straw poll amongst her staff and found that none of them wanted to be supervised by a

peer. The options they put forward were professional supervision “with their manager or an external provider who has a contract with their manager”. Neil also wanted external supervision for himself and for his team. He clearly believed that professional supervision should be “divorced from the organisation”, and he indicated that his staff wanted an external provider. Neil also envisaged a contracting arrangement between the supervisee, the supervisor and the service manager, based upon “a three way meeting”. Neil said that this contracting arrangement would be “like when we set up a community care programme for the clients”.

### Commentary

The structures identified by the respondents as desirable for professional supervision, namely frequency, length of sessions and mode of delivery seem to correspond with those identified in the supervision literature (Kadushin, 1992b; Morrison, 1993; Brown et al., 1996). One structure which was not identified by the probation officers but had risen to prominence in the supervision literature was the supervision contract between the supervisor and the supervisee (Morrison, 1993; Brown et al., 1996). This structure was identified by only two service managers, Neil and Susan, and in each case it was in relation to purchasing and accountability of the parties involved in external supervision.

The specific findings in relation to the structures identified by the respondents present a mixed comparison with the literature. The findings related to desired frequency of sessions, which ranged from short to six-weekly differ from the frequency specified by Kadushin (1992c: 14) who found that fifty percent of supervision sessions were on average held weekly. In regard to the desired length of sessions the findings, which ranged from one hour through to two hours, appeared to equate with the duration reported by Kadushin (1992c: 14).

The mode of delivery findings, when compared with Kadushin (1992c: 14) revealed both similarity and difference. The similarity was in relation to the dominance of individual supervision. The difference on the other hand relates to the strong preference for external supervision expressed by nine of the fifteen respondents, which is not replicated in the supervision literature. This preference, which was strongest amongst the service

managers, appeared to be based on the premises that an external supervisor would provide better and safer supervision and supervisees should be able to choose the supervisor.

Philosophically the expectations espoused by the nine respondents for external supervision appeared to reflect public choice theory and agency theory, both of which are identified by Boston et al., (1996) as part of the theoretical underpinnings of new public management. Arguably it seems that the respondents who want external supervision are wanting to replicate the purchaser-provider split and the individual freedom espoused by the free market through choosing their supervision relationships (Brown et al., 1996). Alternatively, the reason for these expectations may be found in the distrust and lack of support the respondents' perceived was present in the Service.

### Performance Management and Competency Programme

The Community Probation Service's performance management system and its competency programme were identified by the Service's management as structures that were complementary to the professional supervision programme (Community Corrections, 1997b). All fifteen respondents were asked what relationship they would want between each of these structures and professional supervision.

The respondents were divided about the performance management and professional supervision's relationship, with eight (six probation officers and two service managers) in favour of the two structures being linked, and the remaining seven (four probation officers and three service managers) wanting them kept separate.

The type of relationship described by the eight respondents who wanted supervision and performance management linked was one where information about performance was shared between the parties, with any performance problems initially addressed through the supportive environment of professional supervision. These respondents also recognised the need of the professional supervisor to "whistle blow" if there were performance deficits reported in supervision that were professionally dangerous.

The other seven respondents (four probation officers and three service managers) wanted performance management and professional supervision kept separate because they felt that the confidentiality and the safety of the professional supervision relationship

would be compromised by any relationship. They also thought that performance management was an administration task that sometimes had “negative connotations”, whereas professional supervision was a positive process.

The findings concerning the relationship the respondents wanted between the competency programme and professional supervision differed somewhat from those of performance management, with a clear majority of the participants wanting a relationship between the competency programme and professional supervision. Ten of 15 respondents (8 probation officers and 2 service managers) wanted a relationship between the competency programme and professional supervision. The sort of relationship envisaged was one where professional supervision supported the competency assessment process. This would be through attestation and advocacy by the supervisor about the probation officer’s competency, providing guidance and personal support throughout the competency process, and helping prepare the probation officer for the assessment through training, coaching and gathering of the supporting evidence.

From the remaining five respondents, one (Neil) did not know what relationship he wanted between competency and professional supervision. The other four (two probation officers and two service managers) did not want any relationship between the competency programme and professional supervision. Their reasons were that the confidentiality of the supervision relationship would be compromised, that supervision and competency were separate entities which “sit nicely by themselves”, and because they were “not sold on the competency programme” in its current form.

### Commentary

The findings concerning the relationship that respondents wanted between professional supervision, performance management and the competency programme, show that their opinions were clearly divided about performance management and less divided in regard to the competency programme. It would appear that the competency programme was viewed more favourably because it was thought to have a development function, whereas performance management appeared to be viewed as synonymous with evaluation of job performance. In the supervision literature both performance management and the assessment of a practitioner’s competence are viewed as evaluations of one’s ability to do

the job (Kadushin, 1992a; Munson, 1993; Kemshall, 1995). Generally, such evaluations were understood as involving both the administrative, educational and supportive functions of supervision and were conducted by a supervisor who had responsibility for both managerial and professional supervision (Kadushin, 1992a; Kemshall, 1995). Kemshall (1995), writing about the probation service in Great Britain, viewed performance appraisal as clearly related to professional supervision and advocated that both reflect the process of continual quality improvement rather than managerial control. Payne, (1994) on the other hand, asserted that the role of supervision in performance review was ambivalent. He attributed this ambivalence to the conflicts between: the managerial and professional aspects of supervision; the ongoing implicit assessment in supervision sessions with the one off explicit assessment of an appraisal; and agency policies which promote efficiency and effectiveness with best professional practice (Payne, 1994).

It appears from the supervision literature reviewed, that little attention has been paid to the implications of the distinction between the output and task accountability of management supervision and the process accountability of professional supervision. Perhaps, the ambiguity found in the participants' responses is reflective of the lack of thought given to this distinction and the novelty of the Community Probation Service's professional supervision programme.

### **Ideal Supervisor**

Both groups outlined attributes they wanted their ideal supervisor to have. In general the probation officers wanted more attributes than the service managers and there was a clear difference between what each group wanted. However, there appeared to be a clear convergence between what service managers wanted for their probation officers and what the probation officers wanted for themselves.

### **Probation Officers**

The three attributes of qualified, experienced and comfortable to be with, stood out from the probation officers responses. Eight of the ten probation officers expected that their professional supervisor would have either professional or supervision qualifications. Seven

expected the supervisor to have professional practice experience, and five expected that their supervisor would be someone they felt personally comfortable with.

Amongst the eight that wanted their supervisors to have qualifications, differing expectations were expressed in regard to the type of qualifications desired. Three (Kiri, Mary-Jane, and Joseph) wanted them to have a qualification in either social work or psychology. Ernest, on the other hand, wanted his supervisor to have similar qualifications to himself, i.e. social work qualifications. Three other officers (Jack, Grace and Tania) wanted their supervisor to have a qualification in supervision, but did not specify from which professional discipline the qualification came. Angela was also not specific about the type of qualification she wanted her supervisor to have but stated that the level of qualification she wanted was “quite high”.

The seven probation officers that wanted their supervisors to have practice experience wanted someone that had experience with clients and understood what it was like to work with the probation clientele. They also wanted the supervisor to have a depth of front-line practice experience and a familiarity with the probation officers’ role. A particular preference was also expressed by one respondent (Mary-Jane) that the supervisor have experience in related practice fields such as mental health, and child protection.

The five respondents that wanted their supervisor to be someone they were personally comfortable with, emphasised aspects commonly found in positive helping relationships such as empathy, positive regard, faith, trust, genuineness, and the ability to pick up on non-verbal and behavioural cues (Egan, 1990).

Another matter related to personal comfort raised by three officers (David, Mary-Jane and Joseph) was the gender and ethnicity of their supervisor. David, and Mary-Jane indicated that they wanted a female supervisor because they would feel more comfortable with a woman. Joseph on the other hand also included ethnicity and indicated that he could see some real value in having a Maori woman supervisor because she could help him work with Maori clients in a more culturally appropriate and effective way. Joseph also stated that in the past he had found that a woman supervisor “has been valuable in terms of at least testing whether I’m as much of a SNAG [sensitive new age guy] as I think I am.”

## Service Managers

The five service managers' expectations in regard to their own ideal supervisor revealed little or limited commonality. Nicholas wanted someone like his current area manager, whom he related well with and who had "wide experience, a good practical base". Sofia wanted a Maori person because the demographics of her area showed a high Maori client base and she believed that such a Maori person would keep her safe. She also wanted her supervisor to be highly qualified with professional supervision qualifications and membership of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. In summing up, Sofia insisted that her ideal supervisor be approachable, technically competent, and have a background in management. Neil wanted someone he could trust who was "non-judgmental", and stated he would not see someone he did not believe he could trust or was judgmental. Joan wanted someone who was of the same gender and culture, of good standing professionally, with good credentials, a managerial background and was compatible with her. Susan also wanted a female supervisor because of the "male dominated culture she worked in". She expected her supervisor to be skilled, with proven supervisory experience, good standing as a supervisor and older than herself. Susan wanted her supervisor to have a good knowledge of the public service, her work context and the work itself.

All of the service managers agreed that they wanted supervisors for their probation officers that were qualified, experienced, and with whom the probation officers were comfortable.

## Commentary

The respondents' expectations about their ideal supervisor reflected individual preferences and tended to suggest that the profile of the ideal supervisor was dependent upon the perspective of the person drawing it. The range of views appears to imply that amongst the respondents there are differing individual supervision needs. These differing needs seem to imply that supervisees ought to have a range of supervisory choices.

Despite these individual preferences, the common picture of the probation officers' ideal supervisor emerged as a competent supervisor who was professionally qualified, had

a reasonable amount of practice experience and was able to put supervisees at ease. This picture corresponds with Kadushin's (1992a: 339) who asserted that:

The general picture of the "good" supervisor shows him/her to be a person who is a technically competent professional, with good human relations skills....

The finding that the probation officers were more particular than the service managers seemed to support Munson's (1993: 29) assertion that "social workers tend to look for more specific characteristics in supervisors than workers from other disciplines". The challenge that the respondents pose for the Community Probation Service concerns the provision of supervisors who have professional qualifications, practice experience and well-developed interpersonal skills to supervisees who are very discerning and specific.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The participants' perspectives on the roles and responsibilities they wanted their supervisors to undertake adds further detail to the outline drawn above and fills in the portrait of the ideal supervisor.

#### **Roles**

The respondents expected their supervisors to undertake a range of roles. The roles identified by the probation officers were more varied than those espoused by the service managers. However, despite the difference there was a convergence between both groups in the sense that the roles identified generally fell into two categories, namely, those related to development and those related to support. The roles that related to the development of the supervisee, were:

Facilitator/Problem Solver; Challenger; Trainer; Mentor; Advisor; Role Clarifier.

The roles that appeared to be related to support were:

Sounding Board; Monitor of Well-Being; Motivator; Affirmer; Counsellor; Helper; Leader.

Table 7.1 below lists the roles identified and the number of participants that identified it.

**Table 7.1: Roles of Supervisors**

Category	Role	Number	Probation Officers	Service Managers
Development	Challenger	7	David, Jack, Grace	Joan, Susan, Sofia, Nicholas
	Facilitator/ Problem Solver	3	David, Jack, Grace	–
	Mentor	2	–	Joan, Susan
	Trainer	1	Angela	–
	Role Clarifier	1	–	Susan
	Advisor	1	Tania	–
Support	Sounding Board	4	Angela, Grace, Ernest Tania	–
	Monitor of Well-being	4	Kiri, Jack, Ernest Tania	–
	Affirmer	3	–	Sofia, Susan, Nicholas
	Leader	2	Mary-Jane, Ellen	–
	Motivator	2	David, Ernest	–
	Counsellor	1	–	Joan
	Helper	1	–	Neil

The most common role identified was challenger, a role that related to supervisee development. This role, identified by seven of the respondents, was best described by Grace who said it was “the ability to get me to think beyond my sphere”. The two next common roles, sounding board and monitor of well-being, both related to supervisee support, with the former involving empathy and reflective listening and the latter checking out that the supervisee was okay. Jack aptly described the application of this monitoring role when he said:

I'd like them to come to me and say 'I notice that you've been snapping at everybody around the office this morning. What's going on? It's interfering with the way you function.'

The two categories of roles identified above seem related to findings concerning professional development and personal support functions identified in Chapter 5. This revealed that professional development and personal support were the most common functions identified by the respondents.

The literature concerning the roles undertaken by supervisors seemed to confine itself to the roles of an enabler or supporter, teacher, administrator, mediator and advocate (Kadushin, 1992a; Morrison, 1993; Shulman, 1993; 1995; Brashears, 1995). Whilst these descriptions seem to encapsulate the roles outlined by the participants they seem to be quite limited in their description of the supervisor's role and less descriptive than those of the participants. The variety of desired roles that the respondents wanted their supervisors to undertake did not appear to be discussed elsewhere in the supervision literature.

### Responsibilities

Both groups of respondents expressed similar expectations about the responsibilities that they wanted their supervisors to undertake. The most common expectation identified by eight (five probation officers and three service managers) of the fifteen participants was that the supervisor be committed to the supervision. Commitment was defined by these respondents as including planning sessions, keeping appointments, and being organised and prepared for the supervisee. Grace sums up the sentiments expressed by this group of respondents when she said:

I'd want them to be responsible for having to see me, and being committed to their job as a supervisor to the best of their ability.

Grace's statement seemed to support the assertion made by O'Donoghue (1998a: 18) that supervisors have a responsibility to their supervisees, the profession and themselves to be models of best practice.

Several individual probation officers and service managers spoke of other responsibilities they wanted their supervisor to undertake. These were, to engage and guide the supervisee through the supervision; to keep the supervisee honest; to support the supervisee; watch over the supervisee's well-being; to establish and maintain boundaries; confidentiality; and to walk alongside the supervisee.

The literature concerning the responsibilities of supervisors tends to focus on the supervisor's functional responsibilities, namely administration, education and support, (Kadushin, 1992a) more than the more personal responsibilities expressed by the respondents. The literature, however, does indicate that when supervisors do not undertake the personal responsibilities outlined by the respondents there is dissatisfaction with the supervision provided and the supervisor (Kadushin, 1992a; 1992b; 1992c).

The portrait of the desired supervisor outlined by the respondents when viewed in terms of the background, roles and responsibilities seemed to correspond with the picture presented by Kadushin, (1992a, 1992b) and echoes the maxim: "Good supervisors are available, accessible, affable, and able" (Kadushin, 1992a: 339).

### **Agency Support**

All fifteen respondents wanted the agency to support professional supervision and expressed their expectations about their desired level of agency support. The most common theme identified (by ten of the 15 respondents) was that they expected the agency to adequately resource professional supervision.

### **Probation Officers**

Amongst the probation officers several expectations were expressed. The most common expectation, expressed by five of the 10 probation officers, was for the agency to pay for external supervisors. The view taken by these five appeared to be best captured by Angela and Grace. Angela wanted the agency to pay because supervision has "to do with the clients and it's to do with the job." Angela believed, therefore, that the onus was on the agency to meet her needs. Grace reflected a similar position and emphasised two further points; namely, her occupational health, safety, and feeling valued as an employee. Grace raised what appeared to be expectations about her occupational health and safety when she stated that:

I think what we do is not easy, and the fact that there's the safety issue and a burnout stress issue, that you may not have in other jobs.

Grace asserted that outside supervision would help her reduce the risks related to personal safety, burnout, and stress. In her second point, Grace emphasised that agency support of external supervision would provide recognition that she was valued as an employee.

Two further probation officers (David and Jack) spoke of resourcing professional supervision in more general terms. They expected that the agency would resource the professional supervision project adequately. David wanted "Corrections to resource it adequately" because he thought "the quickest way to kill it would be to under resource it". He believed that the agency should also support supervision through providing a "pool of supervisors" who were knowledgeable and well trained. Finally, David wanted agency "guidelines or protocols" about the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and supervisees and a "transparent appointment process". In a similar vein, Jack emphasised that professional supervision "can't be taken out of current resources because we're cut to the bone". He wanted the agency to support it by providing additional money for good quality supervisors and extra staffing so that staff could take the time to attend professional supervision. Jack also wanted suitable equipment provided that would facilitate professional supervision. He had stated earlier in his interview that he wanted his supervisor to observe his practice so it was likely that the equipment he was referring to was audio/visual and may have included special screening rooms. The use of equipment is discussed in the supervision literature, where it is argued that it adds value to traditional approaches (Kadushin, 1992a; Munson; 1993). Kadushin (1992a: 469) further argues that such equipment is a necessary addition to the supervisee's reports of their practice and that "there is little justification for not using the various methods for direct supervisory access" to the worker's practice.

### Service Managers

The service managers expressed similar expectations to the probation officers. The major theme present in their responses was that they wanted the agency to support professional supervision through resourcing it at a higher level than it was at the time of their interview. Two service managers had expectations about money to pay for external supervisors. Sofia

wanted enough money for all probation officers to have “a decent amount of professional supervision”. She also wanted the agency to bring in professional supervision for management and to provide service managers with training so that they could understand professional supervision better. Joan wanted the agency to provide support for professional supervision in two ways. Firstly, by providing an extra \$1000 per year in her team’s budget for each team member to have external supervision. The second way was that if the agency was unable to find the extra \$1000 per team member, she wanted the agency to allow her to find the money from within her budget through making savings elsewhere. Essentially, Joan wanted the management to empower her by permitting her more freedom to decide service delivery priorities.

Neil also wanted a budget at service manager level that he could manage with his staff to obtain the best possible supervision available for that money. Neil made the following plea in this regard:

Give us a budget at service manager level...we’re accountable. We have auditors...I can’t take the money and spend it on myself...leave it up to me in conjunction with my staff.

Susan also wanted support for supervision through resourcing. She wanted sufficient resources to enable her staff to benefit from it rather than concern themselves with extra work pressures stemming from attendance at supervision sessions. She wanted extra probation officers so that she could “make a commitment to releasing them for the hour a fortnight, or hour a week”, and not worry about the work that was pressing. Susan also wanted the team to commit to undertaking supervision. The fifth service manager, (Nicholas) wanted the agency to support professional supervision through providing ongoing training, but was vague about the details of this training.

### Commentary

The agency support the respondents wanted for professional supervision was primarily that the agency provide money to pay for external supervisors and training, and to reduce work pressure so that staff can make the most of professional supervision. Other points made were that the agency ought to provide professional supervisors of a high calibre, the ability

for staff to choose their supervisor and guidelines for professional supervision including a transparent appointment or accreditation process. In regard to the latter the Community Probation Service professional supervisor competency standard appeared to provide a basis for accreditation as a supervisor, however the findings indicated that this route has not been used as it was intended (Community Probation Service, 1998a). In New Zealand Beddoe (1997a; 1997b) highlights the issue of supervisor accreditation and suggests a portfolio route through the ANZASW board of competency.

The findings also support the assertions made in recent professional supervision literature, namely that agency support in terms of both mandate and resourcing is necessary for professional supervision to meet the expectations of those involved (Morrison, 1993; Brown et al., 1996; Hughes et al., 1997; O'Donoghue, 1998a). Arguably, the findings in relation to the two service managers, who wanted greater managerial freedom to budget for professional supervision, highlights the double-bind new public management creates. On the one hand it gives rise to the expectation of business management principles such as decentralisation, subsidiarity and self-management. At the same time it acts according to the whims of politicians who, whilst espousing business ideology, have a vested interest in ensuring they are not embarrassed by the rogue acts of public servants and therefore support both bureaucratic control and centralism (Peters, 1992; Kelsey, 1993; Creech, 1994; Gregory, 1995; Boston et al., 1996).

### **Organisational Culture**

The findings in relation to the organisational culture desired by the participants revealed a clear similarity between the service managers and probation officers. In short, the findings revealed that the participants wanted an organisation that would be supportive of professional supervision.

#### **Probation Officers**

From the eight probation officers that made comments, four key expectations emerged of their desired organisational culture. They were that the culture was one of trust, it was positive, it had a best practice focus and it was stable.

Three probation officers (Angela, Kiri, and Joseph) expressed expectations in relation to greater trust than there was at present. Angela wanted an organisational culture

to develop where staff were able “to work together for the same common good”, with “the same integrity” and a shared understanding of “what’s important to clients”. Kiri wanted a culture “where people trust each other”. Kiri also made the point that because probation officers are “quite opinionated” with a “fairly thick crust or thick skin”, the trust she desired would need to be managed through “good leadership”. She encapsulated the type of organisational culture she wanted when she said, “a good type of organisation where people... are happy to do their jobs, and are satisfied with their lot.” Joseph stated that he thought the culture that was needed was one of “mutual respect for one another as professionals and (where people were)...motivated to get on with the work.” Joseph believed that this could be achieved through good professional supervision and he made the following point:

Within the organisation there will be some people they should worry about, but as a whole, most staff ...are very dedicated to their job, and if they would provide them with good professional supervision they’d drop the anti group.

Joseph’s points seemed paradoxical because he indicated that the way to achieve a culture supportive of professional supervision is through good professional supervision, and that this good supervision would lead the “anti group” to either change or leave the organisation.

Jack and Mary-Jane were two officers who wanted a positive organisational culture. Jack describe a positive culture as:

Where everybody works together, where the job that you’re doing is important. Where the people...come to work with a smile on their face, and don’t drag themselves through the door ten minutes late...where management recognises staff for what they do.

Jack also provided an example of the type of culture he wanted through telling “a war story” about his first manager and the respect this man had from the staff due to his personable nature and human approach. Jack described the essence of this as “being managed right” and stated that:

It's a matter of being recognised, encouraged, all those sorts of things and that raises your morale and motivation. I'm not kidding you, I used to come to work at half past six in the morning, not because I had to but because I felt I wanted to...and I wouldn't leave my office probably till 6, 7 o'clock some nights and I never thought anything about it...the fact is I did it, and I didn't have to do it.

Mary-Jane also wanted a positive organisational culture. For Mary-Jane this culture involved staff being "more friendly", a "lift" in the mood of staff, a décor change, and a weekly blessing and cleansing of the building of the "negative vibes from clients and colleagues". She also wanted creativity, team building and celebrations.

Ellen wanted a best practice culture where professional practice was the focus. This type of culture would "demand good professional supervision" and a well qualified, well skilled work force and therefore involved everyone in continuous learning and up-skilling.

David wanted the organisational culture to be more stable and he stated that it would be difficult to bring professional supervision into an organisational culture of continuous change. He also wanted a culture where the emphasis was shifted from an individual's performance to team performance because for him team membership was important and more likely to motivate him. David also wanted a culture where decisions related to practice were not determined solely upon their fiscal cost. He emphasised that such decisions restrict good professional practice, particularly if the first question asked is "can we afford it?"

### Service Managers

Amongst the three service managers that expressed views about the organisational culture, the main attributes that emerged were trust, openness and a culture that invests in its staff.

Neil wanted an organisational culture of trust in which "people look at your actions, and they see that your actions marry up with your words". Allied to this Neil wanted a culture of open communication in which information was transparent. For Neil an open

culture was one where “you have to give people more information than they actually need or want.”

Susan also wanted a more open culture. She stated in her interview that “I think we’re pretty much a fear culture right now” and then made the point that if there was more openness “staff would be happier” and their value would be recognised. She went on to state that a culture that valued its staff would be likely to find that its “outputs would vastly improve” and “sabotage would almost disappear.”

The theme of valuing staff outlined by Susan appeared to be expanded upon by Joan who wanted the organisation to redevelop the business philosophy present in its culture so that it invested “in the people that are doing the business.” Joan asserted that the organisation had invested in managing finance, information technology etc... but, “lost the stuff in the middle” which she argued was investing money in the staff. Joan further stated that she thought, “it’s moving in that way” but it “needs to pick it up” by paying for external supervision.

### Commentary

The respondents’ expectations of an ideal, positive organisational culture were that it was characterised by trust, openness, positivism, stability and investment in the staff. These attributes, with the exception of stability appear to correspond with the management literature about successful organisations (Creech, 1994; Peters, 1992; Covey, 1991; Bartol et al., 1991). The expectation of a stable organisational culture was not supported in the management literature. The only reference found in this literature about stability within organisations was that related to values, purpose and principles (Nelson et al., 1996; Covey, 1991).

Organisational culture was not too widely discussed in the professional supervision literature. The only text found that gives it significant consideration was Hawkins et al. (1989) wherein it is argued that a learning/developmental culture enables professional supervision to flourish. This type of culture is described as continuously learning, steeped in reflective practice and adult learning theory, high in trust and transparency, and a high investment in its staff. Locally, Beddoe, (1997a) has argued that only in the conditions of a learning and development culture can supervision and professional development thrive.

## Summary and Implications

The objective of this chapter has been to explore the respondents' aspirations and expectations of professional supervision. The presentation of these findings involved discussing: firstly the participants' expected content, processes and structures of professional supervision; secondly the participants' expectations of their ideal supervisor in terms of attributes, roles and responsibilities; and finally their expectations of the agency in terms of support and organisational culture.

The findings in relation to the content, processes, and structures of professional supervision revealed that the respondents wanted the content of their supervision to be focused upon their clients, their work with clients, and themselves in relation to their work. The supervisory processes they expected appeared to clearly parallel the social work interview process which involves preparation, an introductory phase, a phase where the purpose or agenda is clarified and ordered, a working phase and a review or ending phase (NZSWTC, 1985; O'Donoghue, 1998a; Payne, 1997). This finding clearly reinforced the earlier finding in relation to a parallel process identified in Chapter Five.

The structures the respondents wanted were related to frequency, length of sessions and mode of delivery. The frequency wanted ranged from fortnightly to six weekly, whilst the length of sessions ranged from one to two hours. The mode of delivery wanted by the respondents was individual supervision, and there was a strong preference for external supervision, which is not replicated in the supervision literature. This preference, strongest amongst the service managers, appeared to be based on the arguments that an external supervisor will provide better supervision, that trusting internal supervisors was difficult, that having external supervision was safer for the supervisee, and that supervisees should have the supervisor they want. Philosophically, the expectations espoused in favour of external supervision seem to reflect public choice theory and agency theory. These theories are identified by Boston et al. (1996) as underpinning new public management. Arguably, at an ideological level, it would appear that these respondents were mirroring the purchaser-provider split present in public service contract management through this expectation.

The respondents' expectations of the relationship between professional supervision, performance management and competency programmes revealed that the relationship that

respondents wanted was clearly divided in the case of performance management and less divided in regard to the competency programme. It would appear that the competency programme was viewed more favourably because it was seen to have a development function, whereas performance management appears to be viewed as synonymous with evaluation of job performance.

The findings in regard to the respondents' ideal supervisor, and this person's role and responsibilities, revealed that for probation officers, the ideal supervisor was expected to be competent, professionally qualified, with a reasonable level of practice experience and sufficient personal attributes and interpersonal skills to put supervisees at their ease. The service managers' picture of an ideal supervisor was less specific, with the most common findings being someone they could trust who had management experience. In terms of roles expected to be undertaken by the supervisor, the findings identified roles related to professional development and personal support. The most common roles were those of challenger, sounding board, and monitor of the supervisee's well-being. The primary responsibility expected by respondents of their supervisor was that the supervisor be committed to supervision with commitment defined as including planning sessions, keeping appointments, and being organised and prepared for the supervisee. The respondents' findings in regard to supervisors seemed to support Kadushin's maxim that "Good supervisors are available, accessible, affable, and able" (Kadushin, 1992a: 339).

The agency support and organisational culture findings emphasised that the participants wanted the agency to support professional supervision and provide an environment where it can thrive and flourish. In terms of agency support, the respondents wanted the agency to pay for external supervisors, supervision training and to reduce work pressure so that staff can make the most of professional supervision. Other points made were that the agency ought to provide professional supervisors of a high calibre, choices for staff, and guidelines for professional supervision, including a transparent appointment or accreditation process. With regard to organisational culture, the respondents wanted a culture which had a high level of trust, openness, positivism, stability and investment in the staff. This type of culture appears to correlate with the learning/developmental culture outlined by Hawkins et al.(1989).

The implications of the respondents' aspirations and expectations of professional supervision are considerable. The findings are both positive and problem posing for the Community Probation Service. The positive aspect of the findings was that the respondents' presented a positive and clear message that they wanted good professional supervision so that they could do justice to the clients of their service. The respondents wanted supervision that addressed both the persons involved and the supervision environment. They wanted the agency to: sufficiently resource the professional supervision programme; to allow supervisees choice in regard to their supervisor; provide supervisors of high quality; and where necessary, invest in external supervisors. The respondents wanted a clear accreditation process with integrity for supervisors and the agency to provide guidelines for professional supervision. They also wanted an organisational culture that was supportive of professional supervision namely one that promotes learning and best practice.

The problem posing implications of the respondents' findings for the Community Probation Service are that the respondents' expectations are a fair distance from the experiences they outlined of professional supervision and the supervision environment, and where they believed professional supervision was heading. These unmet expectations pose problems for both the respondents and the organisation (Reid et al., 1978). Some of the particularly significant implications for the professional supervision programme are in regard to staff support or buy in, and the programme achieving its purpose and objectives. In terms of the direct implications of these findings, the agency would be well advised to reconsider its supervisor selection or accreditation process, together-with the mode of delivery outlined in its supervision policy. It would also be well advised to consider professional supervision for its service managers.