

Developing a Tangata Whenua and Bicultural Supervision approach for Oranga Tamariki

Position paper

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Executive summary

*Kua rite te wā, e whakapuru ai tātou i ngā kōwhao o te waka¹.
The time has come when together we must plug up the holes in the canoe.*

Many voices, over many years, have advocated the need for change in relation to how Oranga Tamariki (and its predecessors) provides professional supervision for its social workers. These voices have now been heard, with acknowledgement that quality supervision and quality practice go hand-in-hand, and collectively must improve outcomes for tamariki and whānau or families. So, the time has come, where adopting a systems approach and continuing to be guided by the voices of our kaimahi, we plug up the holes in the waka, re-constructing professional supervision practices which meet statutory social worker needs, and support mahi with tamariki and whānau or families, now and into the future.

The purpose of this positioning paper, drawing from a focused literature review, is to outline the context for the development of our supervision approach and within that, the tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model for Oranga Tamariki. Responding to ongoing but recently reconfirmed issues in supervision (Evans & Swanson, 2021), this supervision approach is a critical enabler in the shift in practice Oranga Tamariki is seeking to make.

The social work profession is intrinsically reliant on practitioner self-awareness, where the social worker themselves is considered the primary tool of their trade (Weld, 2012). In preparation for entering the profession, social workers must demonstrate self-awareness sufficient for critical reflection on personal values, and beliefs, to manage the impact of bias on the practice setting (SWRB, 2022). Practitioner self-awareness must also extend into the historical, social, political and cultural positioning of statutory social work and how this influences practice with clients (Lynch, 2006). After entering the profession, continuing professional education is touted as necessary for social workers to maintain high degrees of self-awareness, to remain true to their commitment to human rights, social justice and social change (Lynch, 2006). Additionally, within Oranga Tamariki, supervision needs to support bicultural practice that is underpinned by te Tiriti o Waitangi, and is responsive to Māori (SWRB, 2015).

Professional supervision represents one of the most important contributors to lifelong learning and the development of social workers (Zorga, 2002). As social workers, quality professional supervision is essential for holding the profession true to its

¹ Metge, J. (1995). *New growth from old – the whānau in the modern world*. Victoria University Press, (pp 258 & 324). On page 324, the footnote for chapter 13 where this quote was used, Metge accredits Rima Eruera of Ngāpuhi and Te Rarawa with providing this whakataukī.

commitment to social justice and human rights (ANZASW, 1999; SWRB, 2022). It also grounds social workers in the practice knowledge that their interactions with whānau and families, and the systems that exist to support them, have consequences for maintaining or altering said systems. Further, Sheppard et al (2000) advocate so strongly for forms of supervision that promote reflexive practice that they head the warning, “should reflexive abilities be absent, the social worker would not be competent to practice” (p482).

There is a broader context in which these supervision developments sit. In November 2019, the Oranga Tamariki leadership agreed to shift the organisation away from the Western-eurocentric (mainstream) paradigm that is widely acknowledged to have driven social work practice within the organisation. This shift, from a Western approach to preferencing indigenous knowledge and practices, is a world first for a statutory child protection organisation to adopt an indigenous paradigm for all tamariki and whānau, not just for an indigenous population group. Framed by te Tiriti o Waitangi, based on a mana-enhancing paradigm for practice and drawing from Te Ao Māori principles of oranga, this shift helps us specifically work more effectively with tamariki and whānau Māori, while the relational, inclusive and restorative practice will benefit all children and families (Oranga Tamariki, 2021). The shift represents a significant opportunity for Oranga Tamariki to preference indigenous knowledge in its construction of social work practice and supervision.

A paradigm shift in a large, statutory organisation is no mean feat. With regards to supervision, the practice shift requires the coordinated implementation of comprehensive, multi-faceted system enablers that must coalesce in an organisational culture that can assure high-quality social work practice, where supporting professional social workers with quality supervision is deemed a critical investment, not an expense. As Oranga Tamariki attempts to temper political and managerial agendas from dominating, introducing relational supervision practices that promote critical analysis, reflection and learning is an imperative (Rankine & Thompson, 2022).

In preferencing tangata whenua literature and incorporating Western literature where it adds value, benefits tamariki Māori and supports the practice shift we are seeking to make in supervision, this paper is structured into the following sections:

- the alignment of supervision with the practice shift, the practice framework and models of practice development
- a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model for our context
- application of the approach and model
- system enablers and barriers.

The alignment of supervision with the practice shift, the practice framework and models of practice development

A shift along the continuum

Reflecting on the continuum of supervision critical thinking and practice approaches, Eruera and Ruwhiu (2021, p200) note that:

... mainstream models are dominant within the global supervision discourse and are generically used to supervise any practitioner regardless of culture/ethnicity and often without consideration of the culture/ethnicity of those client groups they are practicing with.

Māori social work practice models, including supervision models (see, for example, Eruera, 2012; King, 2016; Murray, 2017; Te Moananui-Makirere et al, 2014; Welsh-Sauni, 2018), have developed within the context of a broader cultural shift, or Māori renaissance (Hollis, 2006; Eketone & Walker, 2013, as cited in Dobbs, 2015). That broader cultural shift began in the late 1970s and continues to gain momentum (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2021). Wallace further adds that, “our Indigenous models of supervision practice are recognised as ground-breaking, and Aotearoa is acknowledged as demonstrating global leadership in this specialist area” (2018, p78). Oranga Tamariki has both the opportunity and obligation to contribute to this mounting momentum by championing a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model within the statutory child protection context.

Predating these cultural advances, social work supervision knowledge, theory, training and practices in Aotearoa New Zealand have been primarily sourced and shaped from monocultural frameworks and perspectives (Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Elkington, 2014; Eruera, 2007; O’Donoghue & Tsui, 2012; Webber-Dreadon, 1999). Mainstream approaches have been used indiscriminately in supervision, regardless of the culture of the practitioner, or the culture/ethnicity of those the practitioner is working with. However, knowing that “culture embraces the intangible that makes all the difference” (Gray et al, 2010, p74), our shift in practice enables us to intentionally move from a Western-eurocentric position to a Māori-centred position where we rightly value indigenous knowledge and models of supervision that reinforce Māori practice frameworks (Eruera and Ruwhiu, 2021).

There is an abundance of evidence from tangata whenua academics and practitioners that discusses how principled approaches both strengthen practice and advance our understanding of the dynamics of Māori wellbeing and diversity within whānau, hapū and iwi (Dobbs, 2015; Eruera, 2015; Pohatu, 2008; Ruwhiu, 1999; Ruwhiu et al.,



2008). This knowledge and evidence base is critical to developing a supervision approach for Oranga Tamariki social workers and other frontline practice roles, that fulfils organisational, professional and regulatory requirements for supervision.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Historically, there have been many inequities, biases and prejudices to overcome in the practice of social work and in social work supervision for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand (Webber-Dreadon, 2020, p68).

Adopting a Māori-centred position on the continuum requires social work practice and supervision to be grounded in the rights that Māori possess under te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). This positional starting point preferences the significance of Māori worldviews and the resultant practices. As we shift our practice within Oranga Tamariki, te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) provides the framing for the development of a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model.

Mana-enhancing supervision practice

The place of mana-enhancing practice within the supervision relationship has been well articulated by Ruwhiu and colleagues (2008) through ‘mahi whakamana’. These authors describe mahi whakamana as a principled approach to supervision practice that draws on the diverse realities of mana in its various forms. To practise in a mana-enhancing way requires both the social worker and social work supervisor to have respect for and an appreciation of Te Ao Māori worldview and the values and practices that flow from that (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2021). Three processes are considered critical for mana-enhancing engagements, and for support and healing to be facilitated:

- Being mindful of historical context and influences.
- The unravelling and sharing of narratives.
- Being transparent about how we construct our understandings of wellbeing and wellness (Ruwhiu et al, 2008, p25).

Each of the processes above are explored by Ruwhiu and colleagues (2008) in relation to their application within the supervision relationship. They contend that the nature of the relationship is consistent with the Māori notion of tuākana–teina, which places priority on notions of reciprocity, role reversal, shared mana-enhancing learning, advocacy, planning, guiding and whakapapa responsibilities (Ruwhiu et al, 2008).

The terms ‘supervision’, ‘supervisor’ and ‘supervisee’ have particular meanings and connotations. There is an opportunity to intentionally enable the mana-enhancing relationships and experiences that we seek, through Te Ao Māori concepts. Webber-Dreadon (2020) likewise highlights the opportunities to transform supervision by replacing the term supervision with ‘kaitiakitanga’, which she says better describes the

relationships between kaitiaki and tiaki. She posits this will provide transformation for the supervisor, supervisee and those they work with. Eruera (as cited in Webber-Dreadon, 2020) likewise supports the name ‘kaitiakitanga’, as while not named or known as supervisory, it is supervisory in nature.

In relation to mana-enhancing supervision, Eruera (2005) further adds that this involves the supervision partners being able to demonstrate “respect for, and recognition of, each other’s mana along with sharing an explicit goal of enhancing each other’s mana (self-esteem and self-worth) in supervision” (p23). The critical role of mana in the supervision process and in the supervision relationship is also highlighted in King’s (2016) discussion of the KIAORA supervision model and in Wallace’s (2018) doctoral research. The focus that Eruera (2005) places on the quality of the supervision relationship too is consistent with the view that supervision is most likely to be effective if the relationship supports the wellbeing of both supervisor and supervisee (Simmons et al, as cited in Henley, 2013).

Te Ao Māori principles of oranga (wellbeing)

Te Ao Māori principles of oranga are relational, inclusive and restorative. They have benefits for not only kaimahi Māori but all kaimahi, as they help sustain oranga within our statutory child protection space (Oranga Tamariki, 2021). A focus on oranga within supervision will not only promote kaimahi ora, but is intended to support kaimahi to understand the elements and dimensions of oranga and how to apply oranga framing across their practice, with emphasis on the following elements:

- Oranga is different for all whānau.
- Oranga is a relationship between whānau and their spiritual, natural, physical, and social-economic environments.
- Oranga is not a finite destination.
- Oranga is multi-dimensional.
- Oranga is inclusive.

Supervision is said to create isomorphic practice, or ‘mirroring’ of the social worker and client relationship (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). This means that the type of relationship and interactions that occur within supervision, may be replicated in the relationship and interactions that the social worker has with the people they work with. For example, if supervision is very transaction and directive, this may influence how the social worker in turn interacts with the tamariki and whānau they work with.

Approach to development

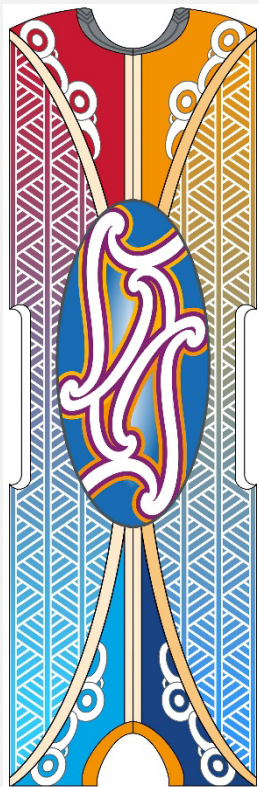
Preferencing Te Ao Māori methods, the supervision model has been developed through a caucus approach, in line with Elkington’s (2015) position on how to achieve a viable starting point for working towards an inclusive bicultural approach to supervision – that being:

... a caucus arrangement to examine ... values in privacy, re-evaluate the situation and negotiate a relationship built on participation, protection and partnership as exemplified by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. ... So must Māori and Pākehā, Tangata Whenua and Tauwiwi do the same to reconcile a relationship that has been somewhat battered by the experience of a dishonoured Treaty (Elkington, 2015, p30).

The practice framework

Our practice framework helps us make sense of and organise our practice. It is framed in te Tiriti o Waitangi, and draws from Te Ao Māori principles of oranga, within the context of our role in statutory child protection and youth justice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Oranga Tamariki practice framework is made up of 5 domains:



Ngākau Whakairo

The heart of our work embedded in our practice – includes rights, values, and professional obligations.

Whai Mātauranga

The pursuit of knowledge and understanding – includes mana-enhancing paradigm, partnering to build understanding, knowledge, and research.

Whai Oranga

The pursuit of wellbeing.

Whai Pūkenga

The pursuit of practice skills – includes communicating, relational practice, developing understanding.

Whai Ākona

The pursuit of best practice – includes reflexive practice, supervision, and coaching.

The practice framework is for everybody who works for Oranga Tamariki, supporting us to work in collaborative and trusted ways with our partners.

The practice framework creates a strong practice line of sight for the whole organisation and, most importantly, enhances the experience of the people we work with. We use the practice framework to consider our policy, guidance, and practice

tools, operating systems, and structures to identify key strengths, along with the areas we need to develop and change.

While supervision is located in the Whai Ākona domain of the practice framework, supervision practices will need to draw from all five domains to support and challenge kaimahi to give effect to the practice shift. An illustration of the benefits of drawing from all practice framework domains is set out below:

Whai Ākona

This domain supports the pursuit of best practice. Supervision supports kaimahi to:

- ground their practice, decision-making and actions from a place of “ko wai au?”
- be critically reflective and reflexive in supervision discussions
- take a critical perspective in recognising and managing tensions in knowledge and power and subsequently the structures and systems that create and contribute to inequality for those I work with
- engage with the construct of Āta within the supervision process and in practice
- talk through emotional responses, feelings and biases, promoting growth, accountability and stretch.

Ngākau Whakairo

All social workers have a right and obligation to receive regular professional supervision in this organisation. Supervision supports kaimahi to:

- recognise and uphold the inherent rights of all tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and family
- demonstrate that te Tiriti o Waitangi guides practice in day-to-day applied ways
- explore and critically reflect of their personal values, those of Oranga Tamariki and the values held by the whānau they are working with
- enact their professional obligations, guided by ethics and principles
- ensure they are meeting their professional accountabilities with the Social Workers Registration Board.

Whai Mātauranga

This domain focuses on the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Supervision supports kaimahi to:

- critically consider the knowledge bases they draw on in their day-to-day mahi
- deepen and stretch their understanding of Te Ao Māori sources of knowledge, methods and social work approaches
- explore complementary sources of knowledge and research that promote working effectively for Māori, and offer benefit to all tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and families
- deepen their understanding of colonisation, historical and ongoing trauma, in practical and tangible ways

- explore the ways in which they are actively working to understand whānau and family hopes, ideas and goals, and what worries them.

Whai Oranga

This domain focuses on the pursuit of wellbeing for tamariki, whānau and families. Supervision supports kaimahi to:

- deepen and grow their practice in how they work with all tamariki, rangatahi and whānau in ways that are oranga focused
- navigate how to maintain an oranga focus within the dominance of risk paradigms
- apply practice models intentionally and with fidelity.

Whai Pūkenga

This domain focuses on the pursuit of practice skills. Supervision supports kaimahi to:

- experience relational practice, modelled through the supervision process
- critically reflect on how they relate to and work with others – colleagues, partner agencies, tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and families
- explore what skills they are using with different whānau and/or in different practice contexts
- reflect on and develop their micro practice skills through discussion, role play and observation.

Alignment to the development of models of practice

The supervision model has intentionally been developed in alignment with Te Toka Tūmoana practice model, so that they may be considered *hoa-haere* – essential companions (Pohatu, 2008). Te Toka Tūmoana is our *tangata whenua* and bicultural principled wellbeing framework for working effectively with Māori co-constructed by Oranga Tamariki and several external stakeholders from 2013 to 2015 (Eruera et al, 2021). Work is underway to develop Te Toka Tūmoana into a practice model, and alignment between the practice model and supervision model will continue to be progressed.

A tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model for our context

Tangata whenua supervision within a statutory context

Kaimahi Māori have advocated for supervisory practices that meet their specific cultural needs.

Through continued assimilation and colonisation, Māori have had to accept western methods of social work and supervision; methods which are often in conflict with traditional Māori practices (Webber-Dreadon, 2020, p68).

The Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey findings (Evans & Swanson, 2021) clearly highlight that we need to do better to support and meet the needs of our kaimahi Māori. There is deep emotion and wairua expressed in comments from our tangata whenua social workers about the lack of support they experience when trying to access the supervision they need. It must be highlighted that wairua² support is a major driver and must be attended to, not only in supervision but across the wider organisation (Wallace, 2018).

I believed I needed to have tikanga/kaupapa supervision based on the work we do with mokopuna Māori, so have utilised my own networks to access supervision that meets my own needs – so that I can meet the needs of our clients, especially mokopuna Māori and their whānau. – Supervisor, Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Report (2021).

[I need] cultural supervision because I am Māori working with Māori under a statutory framework, I believe cultural supervision will help to keep me grounded in my culture and enhance my practice to work respectfully with other cultures. – Supervisee, Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Report (2021).

The feedback from survey participants has highlighted that there is a significant amount of work needed to ensure the organisation responds to the needs of tangata whenua. We must ensure the knowledge and expertise of our tangata whenua social workers is valued and recognised.

² A direct translation of wairua is the second water or second source of life. Often this second water source is referred to as our spiritual source, our spirit or soul. It occupies the tīnana (body) and continually builds and develops because it contains cultural values and beliefs, theories and paradigms, and cultural perspectives.

In defining tangata whenua supervision, Eruera (2007) explains that the terms 'Tangata Whenua' and 'Kaupapa Māori' supervision are often used interchangeably and are defined in a number of ways.

For the Oranga Tamariki context, the following is used to describe tangata whenua supervision:

An agreed supervision relationship by Māori for Māori with the purpose of enabling the supervisee to achieve safe and accountable professional practice, cultural development and self-care according to the philosophy, principles and practices derived from a Māori worldview (Eruera, 2005, p64).

Features of tangata whenua supervision within the Oranga Tamariki context:

- Draws from mātauranga Māori (Wallace, 2018).
- Pertains to supervision provided for Māori by Māori.
- Promotes safety, accountability and professionalism, providing learning opportunities and ensuring kaimahi Māori are accountable, ethical and professional in their practice (Walsh-Tapiata & Webster, 2004).
- Enables a platform for robust tikanga-based critical reflection (Wallace, 2018).
- Support 'best practices' when working with Māori (Eruera, 2012).
- Draws from alternative ways of relating within supervision – that is, tuakana (supervisor) and teina (supervisee) (Davis & Thomas, 2005).
- Enables the kaupapa or purpose of supervision to be co-constructed by both attendees, based on how they describe and define concepts from Te Ao Māori as they are not viewed singularly (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004).

As we are making our practice shift, it is important to consider how we recognise and respect the place of kaimahi Māori in our country, and within the organisation. The supervision needs of tangata whenua have not been a focus of social work supervision provisions within Oranga Tamariki, and the approach and model being developed offer an opportunity to be intentional and responsive to these needs.

Bicultural supervision within a statutory context

It was highlighted through the Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey (2021) that there is ambiguity in the term 'cultural supervision', and what many kaimahi were describing as cultural supervision aligns to the organisation's description of bicultural supervision. As competent professionals, kaimahi are aware that they need a supervision approach that is congruent with and enabling of bicultural practice; one that will also support them to maintain their professional obligations to SWRB, TWSWA and ANZASW that they are competent to practise with Māori and people of a different culture from their own.

I believe cultural supervision should be funded for all social workers and should not be only offered to one ethnicity group. Cultural supervision will have different benefits for Māori social workers and Tauīwi, both are equally important – Supervisee, Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Report (2021).

For the Oranga Tamariki context, the following is used to describe bicultural supervision:

Professional bicultural supervision is a mana enhancing process based on Te Ao Māori wellbeing principles vital to the oranga of whānau, hapū, iwi, hāpori, individuals, families, communities and society. Bicultural within a treaty context, involves those who are not Māori providing supervision for Māori or about Māori service users. It occurs in the context of a co-constructed and reciprocal relationship between participants, one of whom is responsible for facilitating the process. It is regular and planned. Interactive dialogue provides the space for critical, reflective, reflexive and transformative thinking that supports and advances professional bicultural development, continual learning, kaimahi ora and accountability (Te Tira Hāpai Māori, 2020).

Features of bicultural supervision within the Oranga Tamariki context:

- Pertains to supervision involving Māori either as staff and/or as clients. The supervisor may be tauīwi.
- Gives effect to the rights Māori possess under te Tiriti o Waitangi and the associated responsibilities and obligations of Tangata Tiriti.
- Involves the incorporation of a Māori worldview, knowledge and culture.
- Requires tauīwi supervisors to understand Te Ao Māori principles and concepts in their “living wholeness” as well as “within life itself” (Pere, 1982, p8).
- Enables a space that supports two cultures to determine and generate their own meanings and understandings of relationships and Te Ao Māori concepts and principles.
- For kaimahi Tangata Pacifica, an inclusive bicultural model can be created through a relationship based on trust and dialogue (Autagavaia, 2000).
- Provides the ability to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct within a bicultural relationship. It is in the sharing of information that possibilities are created (Lipsham, 2012).

There is a clear and identified need for increased provision of quality bicultural supervision within Oranga Tamariki. The supervision approach and model are designed to respond to the bicultural requirements identified in the recent Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey and highlighted within relevant literature.

Differences between cultural supervision and cultural consults

The line between what might be seen as supervision vs training can be a bit blurred.

It is common for people to talk about types of supervision, such as 'clinical supervision', 'line-management supervision', 'professional supervision' and 'cultural supervision'.

The meaning of these terms, and the ways they are used, can vary, and the term 'cultural supervision' is often, and perhaps inaccurately, used to refer to two different things – cultural supervision and cultural consults.

Cultural supervision

Cultural supervision is a term that refers to supervision when the supervisee and supervisor share a cultural worldview. From that shared cultural worldview (Samoan, Tongan, Māori, Scottish, Northern African, etc), reflections on practice can be positioned and tensions around practising can be explored without the need to explain shared cultural understandings or ways of being. This can be particularly critical for those who are not of Western cultures but are practising social work within Western organisations and processes. Modes of delivery can vary (individual, peer or group), but should be based on needs of the supervisee.

Cultural consults

Cultural consults are an educative process, where a social worker seeks knowledge and skills learning from someone of a different culture from their own. The purpose of these interactions is to improve their cultural responsiveness when working with people from that cultural group. While cultural consults require reflection as a key task, these are generally considered to fall outside of the scope of what we would consider social work supervision (ANZASW Supervision Strategy). Engagement in educative processes like cultural consults should be supported as part of professional development for social workers. Modes of delivery can vary, with both individual and group commonly utilised.

Cultural supervision in the context of Oranga Tamariki

Within the Oranga Tamariki context, cultural supervision is supervision that is provided by a supervisor of the same cultural/ethnic background as the supervisee, whether in an individual or group context.

As such, we have established group supervision that is configured by ethnicity: Tangata Whenua, Pacific and Taiwi.

Walsh-Tapiata and Webster (2004) state the purpose of cultural supervision is to:



- build a worker's knowledge of their own cultural values
- provide a supportive context for kaimahi to manage complex cultural issues
- ensure safe practice and culturally appropriate behaviour
- clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- define the parameters for cultural supervision as distinct from training and development or professional supervision
- promote professional development by developing skills, knowledge, confidence and competence in understanding Māori attitudes and behaviours in an area of practice, provide opportunities for the worker to appraise their responsiveness to Māori within their practice
- support kaimahi learning by linking practice to cultural knowledge.

In terms of what should be covered in cultural supervision, the focus does not differ from professional supervision. O'Donoghue (2000) identified four functions of New Zealand supervision:

- the maintenance of boundaries and ethics
- protection from unsafe practices
- a form of quality assurance
- providing reassurance to clients that the people seeing them were competent and accountable.

Application of the approach and model

Western-eurocentric knowledge and approaches to supervision often benefit when used discerningly, and with the lens of adding value to kaimahi Māori and, in turn, all those the organisation works with, and most especially tamariki and whānau Māori. The supervision approach draws from such knowledge, setting out the wider landscape that seeks to promote quality supervision experiences. The approach includes functions of supervision, modes of supervision, and considerations for the application of the model.

Functions of supervision

O'Donoghue (2015) acknowledges the evolving paradigms within social work supervision and for around a decade has been highlighting the need to move away from traditional constructions of an internal supervision model (where the internal or line manager supervisor is tasked with performing a range of sometimes competing functions within the organisation). O'Donoghue (2015) has highlighted the need to explore how the different functions can be best met.

The three core functions of supervision are often considered to fall under the labels of management, development and support (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Kadushin, 1976), with mediation sometimes added (Morrison, 2005). As discussed, the primary orientation of current social work supervision within Oranga Tamariki is around management functions (specifically, case management and KPI compliance).

The Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey highlighted that in 2021 across all regions of the country, there was a concerning neglect of the developmental and supportive functions of social work supervision.

A crucial rebalancing of the functions within supervision is being promoted through the tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model's core purpose of supporting: kaimahi ora, mahi ora and whānau ora. For additional detail, see Appendix A, which maps out the key functions of supervision, in line with the practice shift Oranga Tamariki supervision seeks to achieve.

Supporting the narratives of respondents to the Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey, it has been noted in the literature that supervision must provide a safe space where emotions are valued and legitimised, through enabling emotional containment which sustains people's capacity to carry out their often stressful and challenging work (Patterson, 2019). To restore balance within ongoing internal case management supervision, the management function must be balanced proportionately with the other main functions – those being support and development. To support this rebalancing, alternative processes for case management can be explored, so this task does not continue to monopolise supervision. There are opportunities to explore more

efficient and effective ways for case management to occur, to mitigate against this task continuing to monopolise supervision.

Modes of supervision

Line-management supervision

Internal (line-management) dyadic supervision is currently Oranga Tamariki's primary provision of supervision. The term refers to a supervisory relationship where the supervisor is also a team leader, member of a management team, or holds some form of organisational power and responsibilities for the supervisee's practice (Beddoe, 2011; Morrell 2001, 2008; Rankine, 2019). Typically, such internal supervision is oriented to administrative, case management, performance measures, compliance, and organisational matters (Beddoe, 2011; Egan, 2012; Evans & Swanson, 2021; Rankine, 2019). The findings of the Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey confirm that this is indeed the case with the organisation's current supervision offer. However, even this narrow focus is not fully achieved, with approximately 30% of respondents to that survey reporting that they are not receiving regular internal case management supervision – posing a significant risk for social workers, for those they work with and for the organisation.

Oranga Tamariki supervision tends to focus on case direction, admin related tasks and addressing performance issues. Given the large workloads and little training of supervisors, this feels it is near impossible to be achieved – Supervisee, Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey Report, 2021.

The impact of managerialism on internal supervision appears to be suppressing social workers' capacity for critical reflection, learning, and skill and knowledge development, and to be appropriately challenged, and to address impacts on and restore oranga. Current work within the practice programme is addressing the construction and delivery of social work supervision in a statutory context, in a fresh and more critical light. But there is a need for a wider organisational response to sit alongside this work, to address interrelated aspects raised by the survey which include recruitment, retention, workload, professional development, and post-graduate training opportunities.

There is clearly a need to strengthen the line-management supervision offer. In response to the absence of a supervision model for the organisation, current social work supervisors will be supported by the introduction of a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model and associated applied practice resources. The success of the model and quality supervision experiences is dependent on the induction, training and maintenance supports put in place, as well as wider system factors, outlined in the next section.

Reconstructing a mana-enhancing supervisor relationship requires acknowledging and mitigating the power imbalance that exists within the relationship. Supervisees are reluctant to discuss vulnerabilities and impacts of the work on them, or raise work-related interpersonal challenges or practice concerns (Evans & Swanson, 2021; Rankine, 2019). This is further compounded when the supervisor is trying to manage performance issues or is aware of personal factors that are having an impact on practice. The Supervision Survey (Evans & Swanson, 2021) found that within internal (line-management) supervision there is little emphasis placed on kaimahi ora, professional development and other needs of the individual kaimahi. Supervision thus appears to not be about meeting the needs of the supervisee, rather serving the purpose of meeting the managerial compliance needs of the supervisor and organisation.

In reconstructing a mana-enhancing supervisor relationship, it is helpful to draw on Te Ao Māori concepts of kaitiaki and tiaki (Webber-Dreadon, 2020), to allow for co-construction of the relationship, and to support the mutual exchange of knowledge and skills between the supervisor and the supervisee (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). With a mana-enhancing, reciprocal relationship in place, this allows for transformational shifts to occur (Webber-Dreadon, 2020).

Even with an intentional rebalancing of the supervision functions, and support and training available for existing and new supervisors, there is likely to be a continued need and request for the provision of external supervision, or supervision that is not provided by the line manager.

I have received external supervision in the past and this is hugely beneficial for practice and well-being. Supervision needs to be catered to the holistic well-being of staff and professional development – Supervisee, Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey Report, 2021.

Non-line-management supervision

Some organisations employ a matrix approach for the provision of supervision where a supervisor from a different team, or peer from within the same team, provides supervision. The line manager continues to be accountable for their management functions within their role, the main functions being planning, organising, leading and controlling. Providing non-line-management supervision may in fact enable line manager supervisors to focus on the core (managerial) aspects of their role, without trying to provide practice/professional supervision in addition, therefore mitigating the inherent tension and conflictual nature of the dual role.

External ‘professional’ supervision

External supervision is a term used to describe a supervisory relationship where the supervisor is external to the organisation. Typically, external supervision is orientated to professional reflective and reflexive practice, culturally relevant significant learning and lifelong development (Beddoe, 2011; Bell & Thorpe, 2004; Mo & Tsui, 2016; Rankine, 2019). External supervision has been noted to especially assist social workers employed in child welfare practice to develop and reflect on their cultural personal and professional knowledge bases, ethics and values (Harvey & Henderson, 2014; Itzhaky, 2001; Rankine, 2019; White, 2015).

Many respondents to the Oranga Tamariki Social Work Supervision Survey indicated that access to external supervision would be helpful for them culturally, personally and professionally – with many noting their perception that external supervision is a core component of them meeting their regulatory and professional requirements. While external supervision was identified as desirable by the largest number of respondents, this was never identified as being a replacement for regular, quality, internal (line-management) supervision. Rather, external supervision is seen as complementary. As a previously uncharted territory for Oranga Tamariki, it would be helpful to provide staff with communications and education around the purpose, functions and scope of external supervision. Any misconceptions can thus be alleviated by clearly delineating the purpose and function of both internal and external supervision, and how they work *together* to support kaimahi. By way of illustration, external supervision in our context would not involve any case management and would not involve any decision-making about casework. Tripartite supervision agreements are commonly and successfully used to make clear such agreements and processes, including accountability and confidentiality matters.

Group supervision

In addition to dyadic supervision, group supervision can be very effective. Group supervision can have a variety of meanings but is generally understood as the “regular meeting of a group of supervisees with a designated supervisor or supervisors” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, cited in Beddoe & Davys, 2016, p124). The ‘supervisor’ may also be a peer, where the group self-manages alternating the role of supervisor. The literature talks to both the efficiency and cost efficacy of group supervision, while highlighting the numerous benefits, which can include maintaining self-care, mitigating bias and promoting critical reflection (Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Bradley & Hojer, 2009; Newcomb, 2021; Osvat et al, 2014).

Practice considerations for introducing a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model

Giving effect to rights of tangata whenua and associated obligations of Tangata Tiriti, it is anticipated that kaimahi Māori will receive supervision provided by a Māori supervisor (either internally or externally to the organisation).

The competence of a tauwi supervisor utilising the bicultural model will be commensurate with their ability to reflexively examine their own worldview (ko wai au) in respect to social work practice and the application of Te Ao Māori principles and practices. Several key factors will need to be addressed within the wider system approach:

- A bicultural supervision model does not mitigate the need to access cultural advice or consultations when deemed necessary.
- Tauwi supervisors practising with a bicultural model will need to maintain high levels of self-awareness of their own knowledge base and the limits to this.
- It is acknowledged that bicultural supervision is not a quick-fix approach for meeting a practitioner's cultural development needs (Elkington, 2014).
- It has been noted that particular investment will be required for kaimahi tauwi, as while tangata whenua are equipped to practise biculturally, few tauwi social workers are (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2021, pp6–7).

Needs-led approach

While regular scheduled supervision sessions are especially important for emerging and beginner practitioners, it is acknowledged that the developmental and support needs of a practitioner will change over their professional career. While social workers generally participate in career-long supervision there is critique of trying to engineer a 'one size fits all' approach (Beddoe, 2015; Hair, 2013). Flexibility based on need has led to a range of formats and relational practices within social work supervision.

The Supervision Survey (Evans & Swanson, 2021) clearly identified that social workers are not consistently receiving supervision at the frequency set out in the organisation's Professional Supervision Policy. While there is no dispute that social workers need quality reflective supervision, there may be benefits in striking a balance between prescribed supervision and enabling competent registered professionals to identify their own developmental and supervisory needs and to match this with the most appropriate mode and/or form. By way of an example, Ruwhiu et al (2008) propose an approach where practitioners seek supervision support as and when required, with consideration for places and spaces of engagement. The point of consistency 'was with whom the supervision is received from'. The opportunity to explore supervisee-led construction of supervision is more possible in line with a mana-enhancing relationship.

System enablers and barriers

Supervision is an enabler to the Oranga Tamariki change strategy

Oranga Tamariki has committed to the central goal of moving from the centre of the care system to an organisation that enables communities, hapū and iwi to become the decision-makers who lead the support for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau. To enable this change it is acknowledged that we need a workforce development strategy that transforms our organisational culture and empowers kaimahi to excel and take up the opportunities change provides as we raise the status of the approximate 1800 social work professionals employed by Oranga Tamariki. Supervision is a core mechanism to whakamana and support kaimahi through this significant change process.

Supporting our supervisors

The supervision approach requires us to pay particular attention to those who will be delivering supervision – our supervisors and practice leaders. Who supervises the supervisors is therefore a considerable issue, given what is known of the isomorphic practices that occur within supervision. Congruent with the supervision survey findings (Evans & Swanson, 2021), the Ministerial Advisory Board Report (2021) highlights the significant issues experienced by our supervisor workforce and implores with urgency that these issues be addressed:

We consider that urgent improvements to the provision of supervision is required. This includes succession planning and training for new supervisors and ensuring that supervisors and practice leaders have the time and resources to focus on all aspects of supervision, including reflective supervision. Supervisors should not have to carry active caseloads themselves. We have been told that social work supervisors take responsibility for active caseloads when sites are under-resourced or social workers are still being (or waiting to be) inducted or trained.

Position description

The role and function of the Oranga Tamariki ‘Supervisor Social Worker’ position must be urgently reviewed with consideration given to splitting the line-management function (or part thereof) from that of supervisor. The current position description is focused on the ability to deliver on organisational compliance and performance imperatives, not to support professional social work practice, the stated purpose of the position being:

- The Supervisor is responsible for the effective management of a team of social workers and support staff to ensure the efficient delivery of casework that fulfils Oranga Tamariki’s service delivery responsibilities as agreed with the Minister.
- They will also ensure that the services and resources are managed in accordance with the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and the State Sector Act 1988 and other relevant legislation.
- The Supervisor will implement and maintain protocols, processes and systems to enable full and effective delivery of social work services to meet the KPIs and business plan requirements.
- This includes close communication and collaboration with the Site Manager and Practice Leader.

That the supervisor is responsible for providing supervision, let alone quality reflective supervision is not mentioned once in the position description. They are however required to “ensure that the Professional Supervision Policy operates effectively as per the policy guidelines” (Oranga Tamariki Supervisor Social Worker Position Description).

The closest reference made to any supervisory skills sought for the position sits down on page 5, with the wording, “strong line management **or** supervisory ability or potential”. This binary requirement seems to further negate the fact that the skill set of a line manager is not the same skill set of a supervisor. Nor is the skill set of a social work practitioner the same as a line manager or supervisor, yet there is a tendency to employ practitioners into supervisor roles without providing them with the training and support required. Risk must be highlighted when people are employed into the role with no supervisory experience or training on the caveat that Oranga Tamariki offers “significant training and professional development so that you can thrive and grow” (Oranga Tamariki Supervisor Social Worker Position Description). This contrasts with supervisors’ experience of what is provided.

Succession planning and training

Acknowledging the complexities, developmental models are deliberately chosen to recognise and support supervisors and practice leaders who transition from within the team. Well-supported succession planning, and training may provide the crucial support needed to help new supervisors navigate the challenges of power dynamics within supervisory relationships, have confidence to exercise role clarity, and appreciate supervision as a shared learning space that meets the individualised needs of each supervisee (Carroll, 2009).

For supervisors adapting to their new role, a staged process often applies (Patterson, 2019), which has associated implications for those whom they are supervising. Initially new supervisors may feel a need to provide answers, to be helpful and to do the right thing. This becomes problematic if they undermine the supervisee’s capacity to find their

own solutions, or to enable them to sit with uncertainty and the unknown. This is especially undermining and unhelpful for experienced supervisees. Resisting the tendency to move too swiftly into problem-solving mode is shown to be difficult even for experienced line managers who are skilled in reflective supervision (Wilkins et al. 2017).

Becoming a supervisor requires a role adjustment, including acceptance of the power differential that separates them from their peers. There is a transition from a do-er role to a leader role, where you achieve things through others. Many supervisors experience loss or reluctance to let go of their practitioner identity in which their skills and competence are often well established. This can lead to micro-managing and is further compounded when supervisors are expected to carry a caseload.

Supervisors may be reticent to seek help with their learning and development. Research findings indicate that supervisor learning and development needs are given low priority by themselves and the organisation.

“While recognising a deficit, their attention is more focused on frontline practice than self-advocacy or seeing the organisation’s supervision culture as a holistic entity. Later stages of the developmental model indicate supervisors’ increasing commitment to critical reflection and their capacity to use different approaches in response to diverse situations and people (Patterson, 2019, p49).

A final caution is offered that, despite adapting a developmental model, there is no guarantee that a supervisor can successfully ‘learn on the job’, further adding risk to the current position description and recruitment processes, given that, “supervisors do not necessarily become more competent merely by gaining experience in providing supervision” (Cousins, 2004, p180).

A learning organisation approach

Supervision is but one offering within a kete of wider organisational learning approaches, which has the potential to promote not only organisational learning, but preferably a learning organisation. Tsui and colleagues (2017) write of an organisation learning approach, consisting of complementary offerings: supervision, consultation, mentoring and coaching. In considering the various forms and modes of supervision, the kete could be further extended to include peer (dyad & group), internal (line management) and external supervision. Positioning supervision as one offering amongst others rightly places greater emphasis on the practice outcomes sought, rather than continuing to hold undue expectations on supervision as a lone offering.

Summarising years of research in social work supervision, Beddoe & Wilkins (2019, p. 1) remind us, “[w]hen social workers do not have suitable space and time in which to stop, think, and reflect, their emotional and social wellbeing suffers, and they provide

a poorer service for the individuals, families and communities they work with.” Supervision has long been acknowledged as a routine component of social work practice (Beddoe et al, 2016; Carpenter et al, 2013; Rankine, 2019).

Over the years, a range of authors have drawn attention not only to the contribution of supervision to social workers’ performance, but also to its impact on job satisfaction and retention in social work (Carpenter et al, 2013; Mor Barak et al, 2009; Rankine, 2019). Indeed, it has been noted that “supervision is recognised as one of the major determinants of the quality of service to social work clients, the advancement of professional development and social workers’ level of job satisfaction” (Tsui et al, 2017, p2406). For these reasons, culturally relevant regular, reflective and reflexive professional supervision is a fundamental to enabling and supporting Oranga Tamariki social workers to practise effectively and competently in ways that are responsive to the needs of their community.

Conclusion

This paper has contextualised our approach to the development of a tangata whenua and bicultural supervision model for Oranga Tamariki, emphasising the fact that effective supervision is a critical system enabler that can advance successful social work practice in this statutory environment. The practice shift necessitates redefining ‘supervision’ and the roles and functions that sit within this relationship, to centralise the functions of kaimahi ora, whānau ora and mahi ora at its core. The vision being that, when kaimahi experience transformation within this space, the outcomes and benefits transcend into practice.

There is a prime opportunity for Oranga Tamariki to deconstruct, reconstruct and transform supervision within the current social, cultural and political context. Supervision can then meet practitioner, professional and organisational needs, and crucially benefit tamariki and whānau. We know that realising this vision requires a well-coordinated systems-level commitment and investment, a commitment recognised and assured through the Ministerial Advisory Board Report Kahu Aroha (2021).

Appendix A

Table 1: Key functions of supervision

Author	Function			
Kadushin (1976)	Educative	Supportive	Administrative	
Proctor (1988)	Formative	Restorative	Normative	
Hawkins & Smith (2006)	Developmental	Resourcing	Qualitative	
Davys & Beddoe (2010)	(Educative)	(Supportive)	(Administrative)	Mediation
Eketone (2012)	Education	Support	Protection	
Weld (2012)	(Formative)	(Supportive)	(Normative)	Transformational
Oranga Tamariki Supervision Policy (2017)	Development	Support	Management	Facilitation/ Mediation
Oranga Tamariki External Advisory Group (2021)	Whānau ora	Kaimahi ora	Mahi ora	

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