

Research Space

Journal article

Justice professionals' perceptions of trauma informed supervision: a possible solution to the impact of trauma

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Abstract

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to establish how Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) based supervision is understood by justice professionals in the UK, as well as how (and whether) it is put to use in the system.
- **Design/methodology/approach:** A predominantly qualitative phenomenological design with supplementary quantitative data was utilised in order to gain a holistic understanding of the topic. Police officers (n=53 survey; n=5 interview), solicitors/barristers (n=47 survey; n=4 interview), intermediaries (n=56 survey; n=4 interview), and judges/magistrate (n=5 interview) were surveyed and/or interviewed.
- **Findings:** Supervision was often misunderstood by professionals as case management. Only police officers noted the existence of supervision but even that was inconsistent and often inadequate. Other respondents noted a complete lack of supervision. However, the need for it was very apparent as narratives surrounding the traumatic experiences respondents lived through included heavy detail relating to impact on mental health.
- **Practical implications:**
 - At a time when justice system organisations are developing in light of damning reviews, this research calls for embedding trauma informed practice (TIP) based supervision across all justice system organisations
 - TIP supervision is key whether professionals are employed (e.g. police) or self-employed (e.g. intermediaries/barristers).
 - TIP supervision needs to be embedded already at the level of initial training and within a wider TIP context
 - TIP supervision has to be conducted by adequately trained personnel.
- **Originality:** This is the first piece of work on trauma informed practice based supervision in the English justice system with implications globally as literature is sparse – trauma is present in justice systems all around the world.

Keywords: trauma, trauma informed practice, supervision, police, solicitor, barrister, judge, magistrate, intermediary

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Introduction

There have been increasing calls for better established trauma informed processes within the justice system globally, and most certainly also in the United Kingdom (UK). The current research is concerned with one specific element of trauma informed practice (TIP) – supervision. It seeks to show justice professionals' understanding and use of TIP supervision. First, the background and context of TIP and TIP supervision are provided, followed by the methodology of the research. Next, results are presented which lead into recommendations supporting the notion that TIP supervision can, and should, indeed be common practice in a highly traumatic working environment such as the justice system.

Background

There is no denying that the Justice System is traumatic, this is due to its very purpose and nature, whether dealing with crime, immigration, or family law, among others. It deals with victims/survivors of offending, witnesses, as well as offenders, the majority of whom can be considered traumatised due to past or current experiences. It employs people who, every day of their working life, deal with these traumatised people and their experiences. There is increasing evidence to support the notion that those individuals in contact with public services such as those within the justice system-are at a significantly higher likelihood to have experienced trauma than those who are not (e.g. Cooper *et al.*, 2012; McLachlan, 2024). Trauma, at its core, is stored in the brain/body and impacts on mental and physical abilities. Trauma can manifest itself in a vast variety of ways, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety (Grant, Beck, Marques, Palyo and Clapp, 2008). Whilst the justice system works under the auspices of law, legislation and procedure, these are not reflective of

our current understanding of trauma and how it impacts on the underlying concept of the system – *Justice*. Fair access to justice, the ability to participate in the justice process effectively, and the need for necessary adaptations, are topics written about, although not yet developed in a way which is needed. This fundamentally compromises the individuals' right to a fair trial (Article 6, ECHR, 1998). Whilst our system's foundation lies in the adversarial system, our knowledge of trauma should make it unacceptable to continue ignoring the needs of those the system was created for and those who it is run by (Thomas, 2023).

The problem with not fully appreciating the impact of trauma on the work of the justice system is visible across all of its functions. For example, we see victims/witnesses of crime who may be unwilling to participate in justice proceedings due to the trauma they suffered or become re-traumatised as they find themselves in the justice system (Ellison and Munro, 2017). We also find vulnerable defendants and witnesses who are at a much higher likelihood of experiencing childhood trauma than the general population (Gray, Smithson and Jump, 2021). Professionals in the system may suffer vicarious trauma which is accumulative and has a highly negative impact on individuals (e.g. Fleck and Francis, 2021; Foley and Massey, 2021). It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the widespread manifestations of trauma in the justice system, yet the key point remains that trauma potentially impacts on all aspects of the system .

Traumatised individuals can only effectively participate within a specific 'window of tolerance' (the optimum level for coherence, communication and participation) which professionals need to be able to facilitate (Gill, 2017). Otherwise, individuals might manifest behaviours which may be misinterpreted by professionals, and they will not be provided with the appropriate support. Equally, for traumatised professionals, not being able to function within their window of tolerance, due to lack of organisational systems and support mechanisms, can result in negative health outcomes as well as being unable to do their own job as well as they could.

In response to our increased understanding of how the effects of trauma develop and how it can manifest, the notion of 'trauma informed practice' (TIP) was developed. It has become common place across many organisations and is beginning to emerge in the justice system (McLachlan, 2024). In simple terms, TIP is "an approach to health and care interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development" (Office for Health

Improvements and Disparities, 2022). At its core, it highlights a whole system change in how organisations operate. The shift needs to be towards responding to the needs of individuals, enabling effective participation, rather than purely the needs of the system itself. Studies consistently show that embracing TIP is of great benefit in health and social settings (e.g. Overstreet and Chafouleas, 2016); however, the justice system remains behind.

There have been some developments in TIP in the justice system in the UK (these do differ somewhat between countries). Significantly, the introduction of Special Measures (YJCEA, 1999) provides special provisions for individuals most likely to be highly traumatised (i.e. vulnerable and intimidated witnesses) but most of the measures cannot be reliably guaranteed for those outside of the witness scheme (e.g. appellants or defendants). TIP processes are also visible in some police work, for example, through Achieving Best Evidence interview guidelines which focus on rapport building and a good understanding of the history of the person being interviewed (HM Government, 2022). There have also been some limited developments in supporting professionals working in the system, for example the introduction of Oscar Kilo, the national police wellbeing service, and TRiM – trauma risk incident management protocol, aiming to support police officers (College of Policing, 2024).

Whole system changes commenced in Scotland with their introduction of ‘The Vision for Justice in Scotland’ in which TIP plays a central role (The Scottish Government, 2022). However, the provision of intermediaries in Scotland does not exist. Calls for TIP have also been made in England. Whilst scattered approaches are visible, the lack of a holistic approaches to tackling trauma and its effects remains a significant problem for the system. Reports continue to outline failings of the system, including for those who are rape victims (CJJI, 2022) or those who have mental health needs (CJJI, 2021). There are mental health concerns for professionals across the system, including judges, solicitors, barristers, police officers, or intermediaries due to the accumulative trauma they experience (e.g. Ellison and Munro, 2017, Fielding, 2023). Without enabling practitioners to appropriately deal with the trauma they experience, their mental health may suffer, and they will not be adequately prepared to help those who come into the system.

In the words of the Chair of the Bar, Mark Fenhalls KC: “Justice is a vital public service that has been starved of funding and political support over the last decade. The results are clear for anyone working in the sector – a system stripped of experience and expertise, systems and buildings that aren’t fit for purpose, and a tired and cynical workforce increasingly looking

for a way out” (Bar Council, 2022). Therefore, considering that we find ourselves in what has previously been described a ‘broken system’, how do we respond to the *problem* of not appreciating the impact of trauma on all those concerned? This article focuses on one specific *solution* which is fundamental to TIP – supervision. Supervision has been recognised as key in an effective TIP system. It serves a multitude of functions such as education relating to our own wellbeing, as well as how to work with and support others. This is in addition to a more traditional supervisory roles as administration and case management (Berger and Quiros, 2014). TIP supervision differs from what many still perceive it as, a management type approach, providing oversight or even scrutiny. TIP supervision provides a safe space and depends on a trusting relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The principal significance of TIP supervision lies in the recognition that effectively supporting professionals working in a generally traumatic environment, will assist with wellbeing in a challenging environment . Supervision presents a protective factor to mitigate and mediate the negative aspects of professional demands, offering a space for reflection.

Supervision in the justice system is inconsistent. For example, whilst the College of Policing (2022) perceive the relationship between a police officer and a supervisor as paramount, its use is said to be inconsistent, inadequate or even totally unavailable (Cohen, McCormick and Rich, 2019). It is also unclear to what extent it can be considered TIP supervision. We do not have information on solicitors or barristers in the UK and there does not seem to be a TIP supervision system in place at all. However, we know from international research that lawyers are indeed traumatised more than the general population (e.g. Fleck and Francis, 2021). Lack of support was also noted for judges in England and Wales where even if support does exist, it is rarely advertised (The Judiciary for England and Wales, 2022). Research on the role of intermediaries is still in its infancy. These professionals are most commonly called as communication specialists to assist only the most traumatised individuals in the system. However, whilst overseen by the Ministry of Justice, there is no supervision currently available to intermediaries (MoJ, 2022). Effective TIP supervision not only supports individuals’ wellbeing but also enables them to support those they are working with in an appropriate manner. Its importance is significant, but as can be seen, very little has been done to embed supervision as a cornerstone of the justice system.

Considering the amount of trauma professionals in the justice system are exposed to, combined with the limited, inconsistent, and at times inadequate support, our justice system is far from being trauma informed. This poses a significant *problem* in our ability to seek justice

in a fair manner for all. Whilst a possible *solution* to this problem lies in TIP based supervision, there is very limited evidence available on whether it exists in certain professions, or whether it works, resulting in the need for the following research question:

How do professionals in the justice system perceive supervision in the context of TIP?

Methodology

Approach and Design

Considering that the aim of the research is to not only gain an understanding of a real world problem but to also create recommendations, following a pragmatic design, it was important to collect data in multiple ways in order to gain a holistic understanding to support action. A predominantly qualitative, phenomenological design based on survey and interview data was utilised in this study with supplementary quantitative data (Howard, 2017). Through this combination of approaches, it was possible to not only gain more generalisable data on a larger sample, but to also understand nuances and depth of participants' lived experiences.

Participants

A sample was obtained across four different justice system professionals

- Police officers – 53 police officers filled in the survey and five took part in an interview
- Barristers/solicitors – 46 barristers/solicitors filled in the survey and four took part in an interview
- Intermediaries – 56 intermediaries filled in the survey and four took part in an interview
- Judges – the researcher was not granted permission by the judiciary to conduct research with serving judges which was a disappointing development considering the urgency of the topic. Hence, none could take part in the survey. However, four recently retired judges and one magistrate took part in the interviews to ensure that their views are heard.

For the surveys, convenience and snowball sampling were utilised. Participants were given the option at the end of the survey to provide researcher with contact details in order to take part in an in-depth interview. For judges, a snowball sample was utilised to obtain the sample. Interviews were only conducted until the point of data saturation.

Measures

The survey questions concerning supervision were designed with the knowledge that very little information on the topic currently exists. Three quantitative questions (yes/no) were asked relating to participants' experience of supervision as well as perceived benefits. Open-ended questions focused on these topics also. The qualitative interviews built on responses given and prompted participants to talk about their experiences (or lack of) with supervision and wider views on supervision in their profession.

Procedure and Ethics

Participants were sent a link to an online survey website (Online Surveys) via personal networks as well as organisational networks. Interviews were all set up online, at a time convenient for the participants. All participants had a right to withdraw at any point without giving any reasons and they could withdraw responses up to two months after their participation. All responses were kept anonymous and confidential. All participants provided informed consent prior to taking part in the research after being provided with a thorough information sheet. The study received ethical clearance through Canterbury Christ Church University. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics as the aim was to understand wide trends. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke's 2023) for the survey data and narrative analysis (Holstein and Gbrium, 2012) for the interview data in order to gain further rich insights.

Findings

The following section presents findings relevant to supervision within the justice system. The data are collated together as the survey and interview data work in unison to present answers to the research question.

Supervision in the justice system

Participants had a highly mixed understanding of what supervision is. Most commonly, it was perceived in terms of collegial support – this was for supervisory as well as supportive purposes. This form of support could be both formal and informal. However, some, especially across the solicitor/barrister sample, perceived supervision purely in terms of case management or even scrutiny.

Among the most frequent references within the participants' qualitative answers was the desire for regular supervision. Many noted that preventing vicarious trauma should play a

significant part. This was core as the majority of participants disclosed that they felt they either had no supervision available or very little (less than once per year), as well as that they generally felt unsupported. Only some felt that appropriate supervision was available. There was generally a significant inconsistency in participants' reflections on supervision.

Supervision was seen as an interlinking point to a number of different TIP principles – such as enabling reflective practice, promoting feeling of safety, support and trust, or feeling empowered in their role. These are all areas explored in the wider research agenda of which this research forms a part.

Police Officers

Over half of police officers (59.6%) noted that they received regular supervision through their organisation. Almost all (97.7%) stated that they desire regular supervision. Out of those officers who do receive regular supervision, most find it useful, but 15.6% stated that they did not find it useful.

Survey data showed a great deal of inconsistency in availability of supervision in police responses, and this was due to several reasons, one of which was resourcing. POL863 noted: *“well our department is very busy so I don't have one to one supervisor”*. This response, alongside many others, saw supervision in more of a hierarchical sense rather than the more rounded TIP supervision. The approach of the supervisor for effective supervision was also noted: *“I think the police and I include myself tend to 'box things up in our heads”* (POL863). Participants also noted the need for effective supervision, not just any supervision, with supervisors trained in TIP principles, focusing on a holistic approach to supervision beyond managerial tasks: *“Supervisors are not trained in T.I.P and therefore do not have an understanding. Staffing levels are at an all-time low and putting pressure on the teams”* (POL207). There were suggestions of dual supervision – more traditional case file supervision and TIP supervision, as well as the need for a more preventative approach reliant on a culture change. The importance of appropriate supervision, rather than just any supervision, was also noted: *“Supervision, if done correctly can be supportive and beneficial as long as it doesn't come across as micro management and checking up on a person's work”* (POL764). There were many who received very little to no supervision despite dealing with difficult cases, such as POL402: *“We just get on with it. In the last four years I have worked on about 35 murder investigations. I perhaps have had time for one sit down with my Boss to talk about development. The rest of the time we are just dealing with the investigations”*.

‘Getting on with it’ was a strong theme across responses, in line with more traditional police culture underpinnings. Frequently, the perception was that a supervisor is not there to regularly support an individual, but to intervene only when necessary: “*Supervisors in my experience do not get involved unless something has gone wrong*” (POL530).

Through narrative analysis, the perceived importance of TIP supervision became very apparent. For example, one police officer (P10) explained the subpar supervision he received and what he actually needed: “*Supervision is something that's sadly lacking. Supervision, to me, is something that in this particular role, I think, is very important, but it doesn't happen. There are a lot of people who are supervising, people doing my role who- I say ‘supervising,’ but it's inverted commas, flashing neon lights, it's supervising is in name only. Supervision should be, for people working with those with trauma, should be about working out whether the cases that you've got are impacting upon you. And offering that bit of support and knowing where your members of staff are. It's about seeing whether they're doing their job, whether they've got the capacity to do that job, or whether they're taking on too much. A while ago we were given a mandatory annual occupational health appointment...once a year. It was a tick-y box on how you're feeling about things*”. The narrative of police officer P9 really highlighted the need for better systems in policing: “*I was totally burnt out. I was put on restricted duty duties. It was an accumulation of stuff really. There was bullying at work and also, I was sexually assaulted by an off duty officer and have reported that incident to Baroness Casey for her current review. I think I have PTSD. I'm hypervigilant, I jump at the slightest sound and sometimes I feel it's all a bit much. But there's no structure to take this up. I was so shocked when I worked alongside psychologists on the same cases in the same centre psychologists had supervision and support, and us police had none. That's not equal, is it?*”

Whilst the police are seemingly welcoming the idea of TIP and supervision, even providing national guidelines, the responses in this research showcase inconsistencies in the availability and quality of supervision. The stretched police resources and culture were most frequently noted as underlying limiting factors.

Solicitors/Barristers

Just over 30% of solicitors/barristers stated that they received regular supervision.

Interestingly, 36.1% disagreed that there is a need for regular supervision – these findings are

partially explained through qualitative answers discussed later. Of those who do receive regular supervision, around 25% stated that they did not find it useful.

Survey data uncovered an overwhelming notion that was most commonly experienced by this group of participants, rather than the others, that supervision simply relates to case management, micro-management, or even scrutiny. Whilst also present as a theme with police officers, it really resonated with solicitors/barristers. The focus of many responses was purely on cases: *“Monthly file reviews, informal conversations probably every few days”* (SB777). As SB69 summarised, whilst supervision can still be perceived as beneficial, this perception is more based on what someone understands of beneficial. It could be beneficial in terms of the case but does not necessarily mean it is centred around TIP principles: *“It's beneficial to my case work, but isn't trauma informed.”* Another participant actually noted that supervision decreases as one progresses in their career, as less pressure is put on case oversight – and so even case management type supervision becomes less available: *“It is difficult as a barrister to get supervision other than when being led as a junior”* (SB494). SB078 even noted simply that: *“There is no mechanism for supervision at the Bar”*. The lack of TIP based supervision, as well as the desire for more of it, was well summarised by SB308: *“Those times I have had some supervision-support it did assist, however, only in regard to professional development. Issues of 'trauma' etc have never been discussed. It is not always discussion that I would want sometimes, it is simply... recognition for what I am dealing with, support (e.g. financial if I take youth cases which take a lot of time for little remuneration)”*.

Solicitors/barristers were most likely to disregard the need for supervision. However, this seems to stem from a very traditional understanding of supervision as was just explained. Their reasoning for no need for supervision included: *“Completely pointless - what I do is unique - I can only supervise myself”* (SB562); *“No need. Barristers are autonomous independent practitioners [...] It would challenge my independence”* (SB731). However, others appreciated that regular supervision would, indeed be helpful, whether in the form of more traditional case management supervision: *“It is fundamental to have regular supervision given the legal complexities of the work you do as a Legal aid lawyer. Which is often both factually and legally complex. Having supervision allows a second and fresh pair of eyes”* (SB450) or TIP based supervision: *“A consistent individual to check in with would be good - would be a regular reminder to ask myself if I am ok and whether I need a break / to take different work for a while”* (SB563). The culture of supervision seems to be lacking in this profession, as SB702 explained: *“I do it on an informal basis with colleagues I trust/I am*

friends with. it's not part of the culture though". Importantly, lack of supervisor training was considered a key barrier to effective supervision: *"But it is one thing to be talked down by a trusted friend who understands and another to be supervised by someone who has to do it and has spent an hour training how to do it"* (SB474).

The narrative analysis of interviews with barristers brought to light these discussed issues even further. Barrister P6, for example, clearly highlighted that supervision is crucial for the job, despite not currently existing in the system: *"I feel that supervision is very important and I feel that it's fundamentally lacking as well. For me, I have elected to have my own supervision. I have clinical supervision with somebody who is a psychotherapist once a month"*. Similarly to judges, the culture is very much on the opposing side of TIP approached, as barrister P6 continued explaining: *"There is resistance to supervision and reflection. I've heard people say "oooh these woke snowflakes, they just love to talk about trauma, don't they? ... I noticed that the more we talked about trauma and our feelings, the more people have permission to say "it's so hard and actually I have to talk to someone about it', then others say "oh I know what you're talking about." It's important to give people a common language to describe their experience... and also to help other people if they weren't prepared to accept what had happened to them"*

Barristers and solicitors, in general, do note the traumatic elements of their jobs; however, culturally, there is inconsistency in their views relating to the need for supervision. What is more, it was most often misunderstood simply as a case management tool. Despite much resistance to it, there were barristers who explained that talking about wellbeing, and needing supervision, are very important, but the system is not welcoming of it or set up for it.

Intermediaries

Over 40% of intermediaries stated that they received regular supervision. The vast majority (96.4%) stated that they think regular supervision is necessary. Of those who do receive regular supervision, almost all noted that it is useful. It is worth noting here that intermediaries do not receive supervision in their workplace but usually seek it privately elsewhere which might relate to the quality of supervision they receive.

Survey data of this group of participants most commonly noted the necessity for effective supervision following TIP underpinnings. INT312 explained the importance of supervision as a cornerstone for their ability to do their job and remain a job which can be very traumatising: *"This is vital for mental wellbeing... this is an isolated role which is little understood..."*

Sometimes we are the most hated person in the court, other times everyone works together well. It is important to off load, debrief and be recharged in order to continue with this difficult work we need a system where supervision and reflective practice is respected. This may help the exit rate". INT564 also noted some specifics which need to be discussed in supervision in order to mitigate their possibly negative consequences on the person: *"Maintaining boundaries; over identification with the witness /recognition of possible response me which the witnesses experience may have triggered".*

However, whilst intermediaries placed significant value to supervision, there was also an overwhelming sense that they are not provided with this supervision which has a strong negative impact on their wellbeing. Sharing their personal experience, INT723 explained: *"I have twice reached a place of burn out and been open and public about it, yet the Ministry of Justice literally don't care or try to understand. They won't even listen to reasons we have retention problems."* There was clear indication among the respondents that all those in the justice system need better support due to what they experience in their jobs every day. For intermediaries, there is no system in place and in fact some were told to seek supervision privately – which from the quantitative responses many do: *"I actually think they should provide regional supervisors, paid for by MoJ. They just tell you to pay for it privately"* (INT457). This was reflected in a number of other responses, such as that of INT205 who themselves pay for private supervision: *"(I have) huge concerns [about Vicarious Trauma]. We deal with traumatised people every single week if not day yet are not afforded any way to process this through supervision. I now pay for supervision myself. I worry about being unable to work for a long time if I were to experience severe secondary trauma. We aren't paid sick pay and I am the only one in my family bringing in an income".*

The role of an intermediary can be seen as different from the others researched here. They explain it as a lonely profession – a single intermediary assisting a vulnerable child or an adults with no headquarters and limited support. They often find opportunities to debrief among themselves though this is unofficial and not regular. Intermediaries perceive this as their 'occupational hazard': *"I don't really have anyone to talk to about specific things I hear in ABEs [Achieving Best Evidence police interviews] that rattle around in my head for days, weeks, months afterwards"* (INT553). In general, there is almost no direction for intermediaries in the sense of supervision, raising serious questions surrounding their wellbeing, as also noted by IN207: *"Secondary trauma appears to be an occupational hazard in our role, particularly because we take on the responsibility for containment + reciprocity*

of the witness' emotional needs during the process. I worry that accessing support for myself (if I needed to) would be my responsibility to identify and organise, and that I wouldn't know where to begin”.

Narrative analysis of interviews with intermediaries uncovered rich stories of trauma and the lack of the system's ability to support intermediaries through it. An intermediary (P8) explained this well in their own words: *“I think it goes beyond that initial training in Trauma Informed Practice. There needs to be support mechanisms afterwards that are trauma informed. And it taps into the whole supervision, or lack of supervision, lack of responsibility from the MOJ [Ministry of Justice]. It's a confidential safe space where you can explore issues that have arisen and seek to understand your own responses and look at how those issues could be dealt with next time. It's about CPD. I think it, as an RI [Registered Intermediary], it has to have an emotional supervision component, as opposed to purely being clinical or service driven, if that makes sense. It's needs to have an emotional component due to the frequency that we're encountering people who've experienced trauma and the risk of that impacting on ourselves through Vicarious Trauma. So that we can stay well enough to keep practising”.*

Intermediaries, out of all the participants, were the most attuned to concepts surrounding TIP and supervision – this is unsurprising considering intermediaries' backgrounds (e.g. many communication specialists come from a clinical background where supervision is a requirement). However, alongside other participants, they noted a complete lack of available supervision through their overseeing body (Ministry of Justice) despite high levels of traumatising experiences.

Judges/magistrates

As noted in the methodology, the only way to include judges' perceptions, which are of utmost importance as they are a key part of the justice system, was to approach retired judges for an interview. This provide extremely rich data and their narratives relating to trauma and supervision which were very vivid.

The narrative analysis uncovered an interesting dichotomy of views which arose with participants, other than judges, perceiving the court room as highly traumatising, in big part due to the role that judges play in it: *“It doesn't help anyone, least of all defendants and victims in court, if they perceive the environment, they find themselves in as one where people are allowed to behave in such a way”* (Barrister, P12). The judges, on the other hand, placed

much focus on their role in terms of the technical processes which need to be followed, placing emotions as secondary. This role as a referee which should not show emotion and must strictly follow processes seems to be embedded within the pressures that they are experiencing inside and outside of the courtroom: *“Sentencing a winner of a fight is too frequent. But I am an officer of the court, I have to do it. It is a burden but one that I chose. I have to make decisions...prison or go out and commit more crimes? If I make a mistake the consequences can be terrible...this can be anxiety provoking. Even in one horrific case where I had to watch an execution as part of evidence, at the time I was so focused on holding the court room, the jury, all present that the execution became so far removed.”* (Judge, P2).

Judges were very conscious of their role in the system, often unwilling, or purposely refusing, to associate themselves with anything other than being ‘the referee’ responsible for justice: *“It’s important for Barristers and Judges to always remember they are agents of justice - they are not the victim of the offence. You can’t do the job (either of barrister or Judge) maintain that distance. It doesn’t mean you can’t empathise - but empathy is understanding what someone else is feeling, not actually feeling it”* (Judge, P3). Whilst there is an understanding of the effects of trauma in the court room, the fine balance a judge must keep in their 360 degree vigilance while hearing traumatic life events tends to swing towards process, perhaps not allowing some aspects of TIP to emerge. However, whilst this might be the expectation, throughout interviews and conversations with the researcher around vicarious trauma, some judges did talk about how traumatised they become by their jobs: *“There’s no one individual event that I’ve felt has traumatised me. I think I was affected by the nature of the work that I was doing and that the trauma of other people did rub off on me, it’s difficult to say how much of that was responsible for the way I felt, on top of the extra responsibility and the pressure that was going on in the amount of work one was having to do”* (Judge, P1).

Some judges recalled a wide variety of traumatising cases and events throughout their career and reflected that in reality, their work really takes a toll. However, they all noted that supervision is non-existent. Similarly to some of the police officer and solicitor/barrister responses, judges’ definition of supervision seemed to focus on case and became somewhat defensive at the suggestion: *“I don’t need someone overseeing my work. Every word is recorded in court. At the back of your mind is ‘court of appeal’. The definition of supervision is clearly illustrated as when a person manages your work”* (Judge, P2). Following some explanation of TIP based supervision, there was a clear theme among the judges that culturally, supervision of any kind is not a part of the job. There was even a suggestion it

could be seen as a sign of weakness: *“But there is I think a fear amongst others that if they go and seek somebody out, particularly their resident Judge, who is sort of a line manager but not, that it might be exhibiting some kind of weakness”* (Judge, P1). Upon understanding TIP based supervision, they were more open to the idea and its purpose: *“I will never forget a case that we had where we were asked to refuse bail to a person who was quite dangerous. And that night he killed himself and I still remember that now. The following day I phoned the chair with whom I'd sat the previous day. I felt I just needed to talk through my feelings but the phone conversation was pretty stilted and awkward and afterwards I felt a little foolish. There wasn't, at that time, to my knowledge, a support/supervision structure in place”*. (Magistrate, P5).

The narratives of judges and a magistrate revealed a strong need for a better understanding of the role and importance of TIP based supervision which seems to be non-existent and with judges being resistant to the idea of supervision, likely due to a lack of understanding and cultural acceptance. Judges noted that they had absolutely no understanding of TIP or even terms such as vicarious trauma.

Discussion and Recommendations

The current research explored the experiences of justice professionals, namely, police officers, solicitors/barristers, intermediaries, and judges/magistrates, in relation to TIP based supervision. The overwhelming outcome of this research is the TIP supervision is rare in the justice system. In fact, other than police officers, none of the other professionals noted any systems which would provide regular supervision of any kind (i.e. not only limited to TIP supervision) to employees. Even for police officers, whilst supervision was available, it was not available consistently and was at times perceived as inadequate. Narratives from the participants provided rich explanations of why TIP supervision is key in the justice system, reflecting on traumatisation of individuals and how little there is to support them. Becoming traumatised understandably impacts on the individuals' wellbeing, which then impacts on their ability to support the very people who rely on them – traumatised vulnerable children and adults. This raises questions about how much we are facilitating justice, the essence of all, to shine through the process.

This research is not without its limitations, the sample is one of convenience across the UK. Nuanced reflections might occur in different parts of the country, between different sized counties, different forces and law firms which all have different resources, attitudes, and

approaches. A larger and stratified sample would be of benefit, but it is the belief of the researchers that the current research presents generalised findings which should have real life implications.

In line with the pragmatic approach of this research and in line with the ambitions of the researchers in conducting this study, there are specific and feasible recommendations which arise from the findings:

- Supervision practice needs to be established across all organisations in the justice system, regardless of whether individuals are employed (such as police officers) or self-employed (such as barristers or intermediaries)
- Such supervision needs to be carried out by adequately trained *and* re-trained trauma informed individuals
- As part of cultural changes which are ongoing (e.g. as a response to Baroness Casey review), supervision needs to be included. It is key that systemic change regarding supervision be included in early development, discussions and training (e.g. in foundational police training). Continuous TIP CPD is vital as well as training for individuals in higher positions such as judges, to be anchors for change. The Missouri Model for TIP (Carter and Blanch 2019) provides a framework which can be followed, explaining that TIP is a continuous and developing process.
- The way supervision is utilised and understood needs to be evaluated at regular intervals to work with best available evidence.
- These recommendations need embedding within a wider agenda of TIP related organisational change.

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