

# Moving the fences: the complexities of Service User participation in supervision research

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**Keywords:** supervision, service user involvement, adult care, service user research Beresford (2000) has argued that there is a strong case for including the knowledges and theories of service users in research, which grows out of their direct experiences of services. This paper focuses on the benefits and challenges of service users' involvement in research into supervision. It is drawn from the only known research to have done so, a gap identified in several recent reviews of the evidence (Goldman 2013; O'Donoghue and Tsui 2013). The research focused on supervision in adult care services (Lambley and Marrable 2013) utilising a systemic approach to locate 'good practice' whilst seeking evidence of improved outcomes for service users and staff. Respondents included commissioners, managers, professional and non-professional workers from health and social care, and two service user groups who contributed 'customer' and 'co-producer' perspectives to the findings. Data was gathered through a mixed methods on-line survey, with 136 respondents from 28 service sites who self-selected to take part, followed by 19 in-depth interviews with supervisors and supervisees across four case study sites to explore the themes that arose from the survey. While practitioner and organisational replies highlighted examples of the direct impact of supervision on outcomes for those receiving services, the service user groups offered new perspectives on the purposes and practices of supervision. Using Simmonds' (2009) model, the paper will reflect on the ethical and methodological challenges of gaining service user perspectives on supervision when service users are not formally involved. The research findings call for a movement of the parameters around supervision practices so that, while practitioners remain supported, service users gain more control over the decisions currently being made about them without their direct input.

## References

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