**Beverley** begins this section.

Offering appropriate support to the interpreters who do this work breathes life back into a deflated practitioner. It completes the circle. The supporter is supported. This means that the interpreter not only gives but receives support. In this way, interpreters can continue, in a sustainable way, with their work as part of the client’s life support systems. The support offering we are discussing today is through Reflective Practice Support groups for interpreters.

 Traditionally interpreters have been referred to counselling and psychotherapy to deal with what is just the effects of the job. But support for one’s occupation can often be more usefully delivered by what is called clinical supervision which can also be called - reflective practice support or RPS and I will use both terms – supervision and RPS. Both are run by a trained facilitator.Supervision and RPS are not counselling or psychotherapy. Supervision or RPS is mandatory for many caring professions. It is not viewed as an expendable option. Both RPS and supervision provide a safe and confidential space to process emotions that arise from our occupations and to help to make sense of them so that we make good decisions in the moment. Donald Schon calls this 'reflection-in-action'. Supervision and RPS require acommitment to ongoing and regular attendance rather than a one-off - as and when there is a crisis. RPS groups do not have a set agenda. Their effectiveness is driven by the material that members of the group are willing to bring to discuss.

A couple of years ago Cynthia Yurena Ojeda Marrero talked to interpreters who had participated in clinical supervision or RPS groups as part of her research which she completed in 2021.

The title of Cynthia’s study was

**Reflective groups for interpreters. A self-care method?** And the research project was conducted as part of a Dissertation for her MA in Intercultural Communication, Interpreting and Translation at the University of Alcalá in Spain. The research considers the emotional impact on interpreters and the coping strategies they employ. 11 of the 15 participants stated that, during their career, they had felt overwhelmed by the content of what they were interpreting at least once.

All 15 participants believed that reflective groups were useful not just when interpreters were facing a crisis. They felt that ongoing reflective groups are an opportunity to learn coping strategies, to reflect on situations that may have affected them in an unconscious way, to share their concerns in a safe space, and to prevent emotional crises. They also felt that reflective groups could be considered an effective method to avoid or to relieve stress and burnout.

We are going to move on now to consider the way in which supervision and RPS groups can be facilitated and the relevant training to be able to facilitate such groups.

Cynthia’s research suggests that RPS groups can be a good source of support for interpreters. Usually, interpreter support interventions are delivered by practitioners from psychological therapy backgrounds. But I think it is perfectly possible to train spoken language interpreters, who are interested, to facilitate high quality Reflective Support for Interpreters. Lawyers and teachers have been trained to run these reflective groups for themselves. So why not interpreters? Isn’t that what a mature profession does? Support each other? I don’t know how helpful it is **not** to develop this strand of work within the profession. Sometimes support from outside is welcome. But Interpreters have limited agency in their role and it seems to me that this is an area where they could feel more empowered - if the support came from within the profession as well.

Although facilitating reflective support groups is not specifically within interpreters’ skill sets, many interpreters’ skills are transferable and their professional skill sets can be developed and expanded. A programme of training for interpreters to run RPS groups has been developed and trialled to train interpreters to be able to offer this type of support to their fellow interpreters. The training initiative is based on an apprenticeship/learning-by-doing model and an approach which dismantles and makes visible participants’ “knowing-in- action” (Schön, 1983).

During the training trainees do at least 4 things:

1. They Participate in a Reflective Practice Group
2. They Reflect on and learn the competencies and skills that a facilitator of a Reflective Practice Group for interpreters needs to develop
3. They Practice peer support
4. They Practice facilitating a Reflective Practice Group for interpreters

Pásalo began this training with a grant from the National Lottery by offering a number of practical group sessions to experienced interpreters. Then AIT began to work with the model. Irina is going to give us a bit of context to our collaboration.

**Irina**

The Association of Interpreters and Translators (AIT), which I represent today, was founded in 2020 with the aim of achieving protection of title for interpreters and translators.

We are concerned with falling standards and feel passionate about regulation and recognition of the profession. As a professional association we see our role in supporting our members.

During our online events which we offer weekly for members and non-members, when we run a short poll, the results showed us that practitioners are stressed (60%); not appreciated or recognised as professionals (60%); under pressure (60%); as well as lacking support, feel isolated, emotionally disregarded, exhausted and misunderstood.

With very little or none support offered to spoken language interpreters we realised the growing demand for facilitators of individual or group supervision. Further challenge was faced when we realised that the word supervision is mostly misunderstood among spoken language interpreters hence we went with more generalised term – reflective practice support groups when we embarked on a project of developing this type of support to our members.

AIT started this project in 2020, which was led by our member, Petra Cookland, who is a qualified interpreter and counselling therapist. We wanted to look at ways to begin to train interpreters for reflective practice. It was clear to us that in order for facilitators to be effective it was essential for them to be advanced supervisees (or as we say “participants of the reflective practice groups”).

Since last year Petra facilitated four groups of four for the AIT with one group commencing in September. The feedback is very positive.

At the same time between 2020 and 2022 Dr Beverley Costa offered AIT over eight events with theoretical knowledge behind the benefits of reflective practice and functions of supervision, which were attended by over 100 attendees. Topics such as systems theory, transactional analysis, intervention styles, Power Triangle, giving and receiving feedback and more. Although there were overlaps with BSL interpreting, these workshops focused on working with spoken language interpreters.

A few of our members were also offered to take part in apprenticeship programme Beverley received the grant for.

Our experience shows that there are over 20 practitioners, mostly members of AIT, and some non-members, who are regularly participating in reflective practice groups and webinars given to the AIT by Beverley.

We felt that we can look at the existing picture, as a three-four-step model where participating in reflective practice groups can be one of the steps in a facilitator’s journey; apprenticeship programme, webinars on theoretical knowledge and finally a module where theory and practice can be combined and where practitioners can learn how to facilitate in practical terms.

It is clear to us that there are about 10 champions who can potentially benefit from attending a three-day module, which can tie up all the gained experiences and theoretical knowledge into a next step towards facilitating reflective practice among colleagues. Beverley will talk a little bit more about it in a minute.

**Beverley** continues

Thanks Irina. We continue to develop the model and we have now devised and delivered a three-day training module for interpreters. The training module is part of a programme of training in reflective facilitation skills. The module is then followed by 4 practice groups for trainee interpreter facilitators to continue to practise without the trainer present.

After each of the 4 practice groups the trainer provides group supervision of the facilitation session which has been run by the trainees.

Anecdotally it seems that trainees feel the training is effective. This initiative could be a very worthwhile research project, by that I mean evaluating the training. Maybe a student you know might be interested. Ultimately it would be ideal if a training course which trains interpreters to facilitate reflective support groups could be offered and accredited by universities and colleges.