The Role of the Supporter in the Transforming Practice Programme (TPP) pilot 2016:

Each TPP Team Leader and their team is allocated a Supporter for the programme. Team Leaders and Supporters will need to negotiate the nature of support and agree ground-rules based on team needs and the experience and skills of the Team Leader, the Supporter and the team. Underpinning the relationship needs to be: honesty, trust, integrity and a willingness to engage with the TPP process. The Supporter’s role is primarily about being rather than doing.

The process starts when Team Leaders and Supporters are identified, which will be soon after the start-up day. Communication will be by teleconference or preferably videoconference or ‘Skype’. It is advised that shortly after the start-up day ‘a meeting’ is held between the Team Leader and their Supporter. It is also recommended that a subsequent meeting be held between the Supporter and the whole team, soon after. Regular (at least monthly) meetings with the Supporter should then ensue, preferably involving the whole team for least some of the time. These meetings will obviously be aside from internal meetings of teams. Such meetings will probably last at least an hour.

The Supporters will need to be present at the residential event (April 4-5 2016), working with their group(s) for some of the time. They will NOT be a part of their group(s). Supporters will have (at least) daily conversations with Team Leaders during the residential and will observe team presentations and discussions as part of the programme. The need for and nature of any further support for Team Leaders and teams is for negotiation. The Supporter will be listening to teams and capturing their learning informally, to feedback to the TPP team before, during and after events and once the pilot TPP has concluded.

It is important to note that Supporters and facilitators will also undertake interviews with Team Leaders and Teams as part of the gathering of data to evaluate the pilot TPP. This data may be used as the basis for publications. Ethics approval has been secured for the collection and use of such data. Every effort will be made to ensure that data will not be attributable to any organisation or individual.

Supporters will know how the TPP is intended to work via ongoing communication with the TPP facilitators. They will have been selected because of their expertise and personal experience in facilitation and change management. Their primary role is to support Team Leaders through the TPP process, as and where appropriate.

The following provides an indication of what is intended of a TPP Supporter and what is not.
A Transforming Practice Programme Supporter:

Is a Listener – empathic, a sympathetic ear with an awareness of context; a sounding board
Is sensitive to team dynamics
Is a Facilitator
Is a Broker of relationships with other teams and other externals
Prompts and challenges where appropriate
Offers an external perspective
Gently steers towards reaching desired outcomes
Mirrors – reflects back to team their aims/objectives etc.
May offer relevant expertise including sharing examples from their practice/experience, but recognise when it is not invited/welcomed
Helps tease out a clear articulation of what an initiative is about
Keeps focussed on the process of change not on the content of the initiative (e.g. planning, implementation is later)
Supports teams to think about how to advocate on behalf of the initiative when back in the Higher Education Institution
Provides a degree of external validation and insight
Is a Catalyst
Is a Coach
Has experience so as to be able to assist with the ‘Big Picture’ perspective
May be an Interpreter and/or Guide to the TPP processes and resources
Is a point of contact throughout programme
Works from a strengths and capabilities-based perspective

A Transforming Practice Supporter is NOT:

A ‘critical friend’, but expertise can be helpful – i.e. expert (in their institutional context)
Someone who adopts a ‘one size fits all’ approach
Dominant/dominating
An arbitrator for groups
Taking ownership or managerial responsibility for initiatives
Someone who imposes their views, approach, presence, beliefs etc.
An unlimited resource
Not rigid in mindset & approach
Not a ‘teacher’ in the didactic sense, but rather more akin to a research ‘supervisor’ (eg. PhD)