

# The Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Programme

## What you can expect

Updated 2021

## About the CSA Centre

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) is a multi-disciplinary team, funded by the Home Office and hosted by Barnardo's. We are proud to work with the very latest information on child sexual abuse, in collaboration with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector.

We want children to be able to live free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse. Our aim is to reduce the impact of child sexual abuse through improved prevention and better response. To truly tackle child sexual abuse, we must better understand its causes, scope, scale, and impact.

We seek to do this by:

- Collating and analysing existing research, policy, practice, and the real experiences of those affected
- Filling in the gaps we identify with new research, insights, and analysis
- Using evidence and insights to develop new approaches and apply learning and improved knowledge in practice and through training.

We are independent and will challenge any barriers, assumptions, taboos and ways of working that prevent us from increasing our understanding and improving our approach to child sexual abuse. We recognise that expertise lies in many different places: in lived experiences, practice knowledge and academic research. Working alongside researchers, policymakers and practitioners, we work to ensure that an evidence-informed approach is applied to better understanding and responding to child sexual abuse at both an operational and a strategic level.

## Our training

Our courses are delivered by trainers with significant experience in working with child sexual abuse. If your course is specifically for social work, this will include decades of experience both as frontline social workers in Children's Services and child protection. For a multi-agency course, this would be co-facilitated by a trainer with broader, but similarly relevant and longstanding experience. Furthermore, our training content is regularly reviewed to ensure that learners have access to the latest developments in research and practice. We apply vigorous standards of monitoring and evaluation to all our work, and examples of recent evaluations are available on our website at [www.csacentre.org.uk](http://www.csacentre.org.uk).

Since our establishment, we have engaged over **3,000 professionals** through face-to-face events and training to social workers, the voluntary sector, adult services and multi-agency teams. Most recently, our flexibility during the pandemic has enabled us to scale-up our training, delivering purely online training throughout 2020/21 and reaching **2,000 professionals in the past year alone**. We are highly collaborative and will tailor course content to your area - including localised information about the scale of child sexual abuse, drawn from official data and comparative national data, to provide a full context of abuse.

## Improving knowledge, skills and confidence in tackling child sexual abuse

Right now, in England and Wales, far more children experience sexual abuse than are currently being identified and protected and the latest data suggests the gap between recorded experiences and experiences of abuse could be widening. Our moderate estimate is that 15% of girls and 5% of boys will experience some form of sexual abuse, before the age of 16.

Over the course of the last four years, we have gathered sector intelligence through a number of different means and approaches. Our findings have identified:

1. Key professionals working with children lack the **knowledge, skills and confidence** in identifying and responding to concerns of child sexual abuse
2. There are **multiple missed opportunities** for professionals to identify and respond to abuse – as a result many children's needs for safety and protection are not met
3. There has been an understandable yet **disproportionate focus** throughout the system on child sexual exploitation

### Joint Targeted Area Inspection on child sexual abuse in the family environment in England (February 2020)

Found a marked lack of confidence amongst professionals in dealing with cases, including:

- Sexual abuse within the family environment needs to be talked about and is not a high enough priority
- In the absence of clear national and local strategies and approaches, professionals across all agencies lack the training and knowledge they need to identify and protect these children
- Preventative work is absent or focused on known offenders
- Professionals rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose abuse
- When children have displayed harmful sexual behaviour, often it is solely their behaviour, not the cause, that professionals respond to
- Practice in this area is too police-led and not sufficiently child-centered. Too often, health agencies are not involved at all
- The quality of criminal investigations of child sexual abuse in the family environment is sometimes poor

## Why invest in this programme?

Sexual abuse can impact every area of a child's development; psychological, cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural, physical and sexual. Sexual abuse can have both short- and long-term effects on mental health and wellbeing, including externalising behaviours such as substance misuse, 'risky' sexual behaviours, and offending, all of which can lead to physical health problems; including immediate impacts and long-term illness and disability; difficulties in interpersonal relationships; increase vulnerability to re-victimisation both as children and adults; and socio-economic impacts including lower levels of education and income<sup>1</sup>.

The cost of sexual abuse is not only high for individual victims but for society as a whole. In 2014 the NSPCC published its report '*Estimating the costs of child sexual abuse in the UK*<sup>2</sup>. It offered a conservative annual estimate of between £1.6 billion and a more likely, £3.2 billion cost to society. This included estimates of close to £100 million alone on children's social care services for 2012/13.

We believe improving the professional response to child sexual abuse should be a priority both in terms of reducing the long-term impact of sexual abuse on individuals and their families but also on public services and society as a whole. In establishing an understanding of sexual abuse and offending amongst professionals who work with children, we can increase the likelihood of responding to such cases in a safe, confident, competent and proportionate way.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, S. and McNeish, D. (2018) Key Messages from Research: Intra-familial Child Sexual Abuse. The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.

<sup>2</sup> Saied-Tessier, A. (2014) Estimating the Costs of Child Sexual Abuse in the UK. NSPCC: London.

## About the programme

The Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Programme aims to support 'lead workers' across your local authority, organization or service to further develop their understanding, skills and confidence around child sexual abuse. The programme encourages the transfer and dissemination of their knowledge from practitioners within organisations to improve practice in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse through an enhanced understanding of abuse, evidence and resources.

In selecting a group of Practice Leads from across your organization, service or local or safeguarding partnership, the focus will be on:

- (1) Developing the knowledge and skills of individual Practice Leads
- (2) Equipping Practice Leads with knowledge to disseminate learning throughout their teams and / or organisation
- (3) Facilitating Practice Leads to develop internal culture/systems of learning and development, linked to the CSA Centre, which supports ongoing best practice in child sexual abuse

## Programme structure

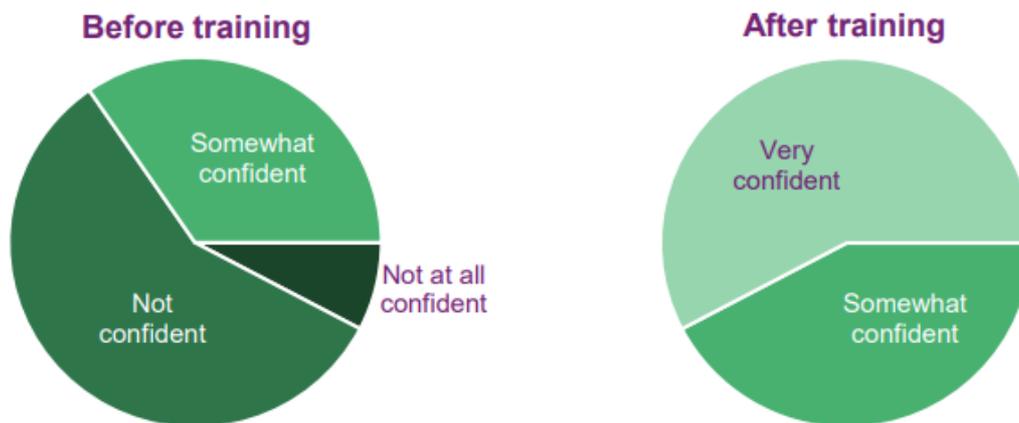
The ten-session programme delivered over 6 – 10 months, will involve ten one-day learning sessions, involving a half-day of formal teaching and a half-day of reflective case discussion which connect evidence to 'on the ground' practice experiences. These sessions will use research, evidence and practice expertise to explore key areas for understanding and addressing child sexual abuse.

## Delivery methods

Currently it is not possible for the programme to be delivered in person, so it will be delivered virtually via Zoom or Teams using a range of methods, including:

- Interactive small and large group discussions
- Guest experts (either from the CSA Centre or within the local area)
- A variety of multimedia - videos, podcasts, audio etc.
- Reflective case discussions
- The use of case studies and other exercises to embed learning
- Resources to support practice
- Booklists and carefully chosen references to explore and learn further on child sexual abuse

## Evidence of success



The Practice Leads Programme was first piloted in three Children’s Services departments in 2018-9. Here the Practice Leads were selected from across social work teams within each local authority. A dedicated evaluation into this found:

- Strong evidence of impact on knowledge, skills and confidence in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse concerns; this had enhanced practice and enabled them to develop as specialists within their teams and wider organisations
- In particular, the Practice Leads appeared to be taking a lead in tackling the fear and uncertainty that surrounds concerns of child sexual abuse, both supporting colleagues and, at times, challenging them to ask direct questions and not let concerns be put aside due to lack of proof
- Considerable evidence of the Practice Leads disseminating learning by supporting colleagues with child sexual abuse issues, sharing resources and delivering presentations to wider teams
- Some early indications that the programme may be beginning to have an impact on authorities’ culture and systems

Similarly, the evaluation of the programme delivered in a third sector organisation found that Practice Leads:

- Were more inspired, motivated and skilled to enquire about child sexual abuse, and were responding better to disclosures
- Had increased the depth and breadth of their awareness, knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse dramatically
- Felt much more confident to ask service users whether they had experienced child sexual abuse and to support other staff to do so
- Began to cascade the learning gained with their teams

“The programme has given me the confidence to talk about sexual abuse and has provided me [with] tools where I believe I could support children and families a lot more effectively than previously.”

***Child Sexual Abuse Practice Lead***

“I have a wealth of resources to refer to, have more confidence in the subject overall, know where I can go to find things out, and have colleagues from the course who I feel confident in speaking to about any matter to do with child sexual abuse.”

***Child Sexual Abuse Practice Lead***

## How your programme will work

### Session

#### **Introduction to the programme:**

Meeting the Practice Leads and their managers; key principles and context of the work; impact of the work and self-care.

#### **Session 1:**

Scale, nature and impact of child sexual abuse

#### **Session 2:**

Working with children, disclosures and the professional role

#### **Session 3:**

Child sexual abuse in the family context – adult male offenders and offending

#### **Session 4:**

Child sexual abuse in the family context – non-abusing parents and carers

#### **Session 5:**

Children and young people who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour

#### **Session 7:**

Online offending

#### **Session 6:**

Female sexual abuse

**Session 8:**

Child sexual exploitation

**Session 9:**

Working with adult survivors of child sexual abuse

**Session 10:**

Child wellbeing and the child protection process in child sexual abuse cases

## Embedding Practice Leads

We know from the evaluations into our pilot Practice Lead Programmes that the process of embedding a Practice Lead role is fundamental in creating change. The recommendations we have in place for ensuring this include:

### Preparation for the programme

We would recommend ensuring 'buy in' for the programme from Senior Managers from the outset, including:

- Identification of a Senior Management named lead who is responsible for all communication with the CSA Centre
- Senior Management Lead to present to their Senior Management Team groups about the Practice Leads Programme, with support from the CSA Centre if needed, for discussion about how the role can be supported within their organization
- Briefings for Senior Managers shared with Senior Management Team
- Recruiting Practice Leads who will maximise sustainability of knowledge sharing within their organisation. All potential Practice Leads should be sent the briefing in advance to ensure that this is a role they are committed to undertaking and this includes a 'health warning' about the impact of the programme.

### Selection of Practice Leads

It is recommended that Practice Leads are chosen on the following criteria:

- Competent practitioners/managers in their own right with an established reputation within their organisation for good practice
- Interested in developing their knowledge and expertise in the field of child sexual abuse
- Have some skills and experience in sharing their knowledge with others (e.g., cascading training, delivering group supervision or training)
- Planning to remain with their organisation for the foreseeable future
- Willing to take part in any subsequent evaluations on progress
- Committed to attending the programme and sharing their knowledge

Agreeing how the role will operate within your organisation and ensuring appropriate support is in place for them to undertake the role is pivotal. Again, to achieve this, the following is recommended:

- A formal kick-off meeting to be organised for the Practice Lead and their Line Manager/Senior Manager during which options for how the role will operate can be discussed and agreed. (The CSA Centre will provide a list of possible options)
  - Where senior managers are not part of this meeting, senior management sign off should be attained.
- Consideration of affording protected extra time (e.g., half-day per month) for the Practice Lead to be able to undertake tasks for the role

### Support during the programme

Line manager support is key during the programme to support Practice Leads in their learning and roles. The following is recommended:

- Line managers to attend the first session of the introductory day with their Practice Leads
- Line managers to add a supervision agenda item for each supervision regarding discussion of the programme, impact of the learning, and ways to support the Practice Lead
- Programme facilitator to regularly update line managers on the learning being covered by the programme, to support discussion during supervision
- Line managers to commit to prioritising Practice Leads attendance on the programme
- Line managers to allocate child sexual abuse work to their Practice Lead, as appropriate
- Line managers to support their Practice Lead in sharing their learning, for example signposting other staff to seek advice from Practice Lead or allowing time in team meetings to share learning

### Sustaining the role

We know from earlier programmes that senior management commitment to embedding the role in the long term is showing early indications of successful sustainability. Some of the ways to maximise this are as follows:

- Supporting the Practice Leads to continue to meet as a group after the end of the programme on a monthly/six weekly basis for two hours.
  - This could offer peer support, a space to plan further dissemination work, strengthening or development of multi-agency working protocols and processes
- Using existing 'knowledge hubs' where resources can be shared within the wider organisation.
- Offering opportunities within existing meetings, such as Senior Management Team meetings, Practice Forums, Community of Practice events, for the Practice Leads to share their learning

**If you are interested in booking our Practice Leads Programme, or finding out more about the course, please email Lamont Emesibe at [lamont.emesibe@csacentre.org.uk](mailto:lamont.emesibe@csacentre.org.uk), outlining your individual objectives and requirements.**

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