

Improving the response to child sexual abuse in London

Learning from a pilot programme led by the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse and the London Safeguarding Children Partnership

December 2022

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) aims to root all its work in the best evidence available. For all our training courses and programmes, this starts with the development of the training, and we review the content regularly to ensure that it reflects the latest developments in research and practice. We routinely collect feedback from training participants, using it for reflection and continuous improvement. When we pilot a new course, or offer it to a new group, we may collect more follow-up data and publish a report. Our learning reports contain participant feedback; evaluation reports synthesise additional evidence, such as interviews with participants' managers.

Executive summary

In 2021, the CSA Centre was commissioned by the London Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) to design and deliver a holistic package of support to improve the identification and response to child sexual abuse in three London boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Ealing, and Hackney). The CSA Centre–LSCP programme consisted of three main strands of work, delivered virtually because of the restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. An in-depth training programme on child sexual abuse, delivered over a five-month period to train 60 social workers from the three boroughs as Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads.
2. A one-day course on intra-familial child sexual abuse for multi-agency professionals across the three boroughs, delivered twice in each borough with a total of 256 professionals attending.
3. Individual support to help each of the boroughs improve their data collection in relation to child sexual abuse.

Feedback from participants in either type of training revealed that it had increased their knowledge of child sexual abuse and their understanding of responsibilities and actions to support and protect children. In addition, most of those taking part in the Practice Leads Programme felt it had equipped them to take on their role as Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads, although some still felt they needed more support before they would feel confident in this role. Furthermore, the vast majority of those who provided feedback after attending the one-day course on intra-familial child sexual abuse felt they would be able to apply their learning to their practice and many gave examples of how they would do this.

On the whole, the support with data improvement was less effective, mainly owing to a lack of ownership of the work and difficulties maintaining contact with relevant stakeholders locally. In addition, Hackney Council was subject to a serious data breach, involving a cyber-attack on their data systems which left them unable to participate fully in this element of the programme. Nonetheless, Barking & Dagenham completed a multi-agency data audit, and used the results to explore the development of a multi-agency dataset on child sexual abuse. In Ealing, staff reported that the support had enabled them to scrutinise the data currently collected in their local authority, and had encouraged them to ask questions concerning governance; in Hackney, the CSA Centre's data improvement tool was used to identify how child sexual abuse data collection could be improved in a new children's services data system which is being developed.

While there is little data available to evidence the overall impact of delivering this holistic package of support across the three boroughs, work is ongoing to develop the role of the Practice Leads who, in some areas, are now offering regular case consultation to support colleagues within children's social care in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse. As a result, senior leadership have highlighted the benefits of having a group of staff who can provide expert advice on complex cases, as well as the financial savings to be made from the reduced need for external expert advice.

Key learning from the CSA Centre–LSCP programme includes the importance of:

- identifying lead people at different levels in the local authority to support programme set-up and implementation; to allow sufficient time for set up and planning; to consider offering a bespoke package of support; and to run a Theory of Change session with senior leads and relevant parties at the start of the programme, in order to engage their support and buy-in

- considering how best to structure the delivery of the Practice Leads Programme, in terms of its delivery (e.g. online versus face-to-face) and remit (e.g. social work teams or multi-agency programme), and how to ensure that Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads have sufficient capacity and support to fulfil their new roles once the programme has finished
- offering the one-day multi-agency training course virtually, as this enables large numbers of people to attend, and looking at how the course can be rolled out to spread the learning across a broader pool of professionals
- ensuring that sufficient capacity is available to support in-depth work on data recording and analysis, and that senior managers appreciate the value of having more accurate data on child sexual abuse cases.

The programme has also generated learning for the CSA Centre in taking forward this kind of initiative elsewhere, and we are currently piloting a different regional approach in delivering our Practice Leads programme across nine local authorities in the Cheshire & Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership. We will be producing a learning report from this work, and sharing it in 2023.

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1. Introduction

In 2021, the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) and the London Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) initiated a joint programme of work, with the aim of testing the value of implementing a holistic package of support to improve the identification and response to child sexual abuse in three London boroughs (Barking & Dagenham, Ealing, and Hackney). The CSA Centre was particularly interested in exploring how it could use a multi-area approach to increase its ability to support local responses, and saw this as an opportunity for learning more about how this might work. This short report provides an overview of what was involved in delivering this programme, how effective it was and what can be learnt from it to support future work. It draws on an external evaluation of the programme carried out by Justice Studio, whose work contributes to this report.

2. Setting up the programme

The opportunity to develop the CSA Centre–LSCP programme arose when the CSA Centre’s director and its deputy director for knowledge and practice development were invited to present to the LSCP (which brings together all of London’s local safeguarding children partnerships). Building on our previous work, we envisaged that a combined package of training and data support on a multi-area basis would deepen our work’s impact through increased sharing of knowledge and skills. The package would involve:

1. An in-depth training programme on child sexual abuse to train social workers as Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads.
2. A one-day course on intra-familial child sexual abuse for multi-agency professionals.
3. Individual support to help boroughs improve their data collection in relation to child sexual abuse.

The CSA Centre has a track record of delivering effective training to professionals – as described in, for example, the evaluation reports of our [Practice Leads Programme in social work](#) and our [Practice Leads Programme in adult substance misuse services](#), and our learning reports on our [one-day multi-agency training on intrafamilial child sexual abuse](#) and our [training for social work students](#).

Additionally, in 2019 we published a [tool to help organisations improve their data collection](#) in relation to child sexual abuse, based on a study involving four local authority children’s services, four police forces and six voluntary-sector services. The study tested the tool’s value and practicability for agencies to collect core data about the nature of child sexual abuse, the people involved in and affected by it, and associated services. Support with data improvement is part of an ongoing strand of our work which focuses on providing an up-to-date, comprehensive national account of what is and isn’t known about child sexual abuse from current data; more information is available in the [Scale and nature of child sexual abuse](#) section of our website.

Our presentation to the LSCP resulted in three London boroughs (Barking & Dagenham, Ealing, and Hackney) expressing their interest in being part of this work. Each identified a lead person to coordinate the programme in their borough and drive it forward.

3. Programme design

As set out in its Theory of Change (see Appendix 1), the CSA Centre–LSCP programme aimed to improve the identification and response to child sexual abuse in the three participating boroughs by:

- improving knowledge, confidence and skills among participating social workers, so that they could share information and support colleagues working with cases of child sexual abuse
- increasing knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse among a wider range of multi-agency professionals, raising their awareness of signs and indicators of child sexual abuse, and boosting their confidence to record and name their concerns and refer children on to appropriate services
- raising professionals' awareness of the importance of recording detailed data on child sexual abuse, and supporting agencies to improve their data collection, so that data is accurate and complete.

The programme ran from October 2020 to March 2021 and was delivered virtually, owing to the restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.1 The Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Programme in Social Work

This programme aimed to train a total of 60 social workers (20 in each borough) as 'Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads': key resources within their organisations, who could advise and support colleagues seeking advice on matters relating to child sexual abuse. The programme involved 10 days of learning over a five-month period, with participants coming together (virtually) on each day for a morning of structured teaching followed by an afternoon of facilitated reflective case discussions focusing on their 'on the ground' practice experiences.

The programme covered key topics for understanding and addressing child sexual abuse, identified through the CSA Centre's research, scoping work and engagement with the sector. These topics included the scale, nature and impact of child sexual abuse; disclosures and the social work role; child sexual abuse in different contexts (intra-familial, online-facilitated, child sexual exploitation); working with children and their non-offending parents/carers; working with children who display harmful sexual behaviour; women who sexually abuse; working with survivors; and child wellbeing and the child protection process.

Participants came from a range of social work teams including Initial Response, Assessment and Intervention, Family Support and Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting and Permanency, Strategic Commissioning and Safeguarding, Adolescent Exploitation, and Fostering.

At the end of the programme, participants were asked to complete an online feedback form, and two focus groups were held to explore participants' experiences of the programme and assess its effectiveness. Six months later, participants were invited to complete a follow-up survey, and interviews were carried out with two Practice Lead line managers and three Practice Leads.

What worked well

Overall, participants were very positive about their experiences of the programme, identifying several core areas of learning which they felt would improve their practice around child sexual abuse. While a small minority shared specific challenges (see the next section), which will be considered by the CSA Centre when planning future delivery, overall the feedback suggested that the programme had delivered strong learning which would contribute to improved practice across the teams involved.

In particular, the feedback survey (completed by 33 participants) revealed that the programme had enabled participants to **increase their knowledge and understanding** of child sexual abuse, **and their confidence** in identifying and responding to it.

All respondents said they now **knew more** about child sexual abuse and identifying it:

“I understand the depth of the issue a lot more now, and the importance of considering it from various perspectives.”

“I now know some things that I did not know especially surrounding the questioning and what support you can give the victims/survivors. I also have more resources that I ever did.”

All respondents felt **more confident undertaking work with** cases of suspected or actual child sexual abuse:

“I am confident now to ask most questions which I would have not asked previously.”

All but two said they felt **more confident in talking about child sexual abuse** with other professionals:

“It was a great experience and I really value what I have learned as I feel it will really benefit myself and my team in this area of work.”

“I feel more aware of sexual abuse and will use my new knowledge when I deliver safeguarding training to colleagues in Early Years settings. I now have information to break down myths and to just name the sexual abuse.”

Furthermore, the programme had helped equip participants to **take on their Practice Lead role**, although some felt they still needed more support before they would be confident in the role.

Three-quarters reported having **already begun to share learning** within their organisations:

“I have had a case consultation with a social worker who is leading on a sexual abuse case. We were able to provide her with directions around what could be done next and how to speak to the child.”

Most felt that they were now **better able to support children** identified as being at risk of or experiencing child sexual abuse:

“My approach has changed in that we do not need a child's direct disclosure of abuse but rather looking for other indicators and sensitively exploring children's experiences with them is more important; we need to be patient and not driven to get a disclosure to provide us with evidence of abuse. We can still support children by believing them without having hard evidence of abuse and it is important to convey this to them.”

Three-quarters felt that taking part in the programme had already led them to **change the way they worked** in relation to cases of child sexual abuse:

“This course has been very informative and is very useful in developing my knowledge of [child sexual abuse] and can share some contents with my teams to develop into practice.”

“I am more open to naming the possibility of child sexual abuse for the young people in the team and also feel that my response to children where they have been sexually abused in the past has changed to one of feeling more confident to speak about this.”

Participants highlighted aspects of **programme delivery** that had been important.

Participants had enjoyed the **mix of presentations and activities**:

“The mixture of presentation, guest speakers, activities and break-out sessions.”

“The variety of different speakers ... it gave good insight from lots of different backgrounds.”

They had valued being able to **bring cases for discussion** and getting other people’s perspectives on these.

“I enjoyed the case discussions in our local authority groups. Liked considering the cases and using knowledge from the course to explore the case differently.”

“Some shared experiences in the smaller break out rooms were very powerful.”

Some commented on the **expertise of the training facilitators**, and how they had encouraged participation and engagement:

“The knowledge and practice wisdom of trainers.”

“I found the trainers very respectful and sensitive to our needs and experiences.”

Most (84%) said it had been useful to be **trained alongside other social workers** from across their own and other local authorities:

“It was good to interlink with other boroughs or teams as good practice can be shared.”

“It was really good to get an insight into the approaches of other teams and other local authorities.”

“Case discussions with own borough were helpful to pool ideas.”

Analysis of programme attendance data revealed that participants had maintained **strong engagement**, with 55 of the 60 Practice Leads completing the programme.

Challenges

Feedback from the Practice Leads and their line managers revealed some aspects of the programme delivery that had made **participation challenging for some**.

Spending a **whole day focusing on child sexual abuse** could be an intense experience, particularly when participants were attending virtually. Some noted that the morning sessions tended to contain a lot of information for participants to absorb:

“Some of the content was heavy and I found it difficult to come to grips with.”

“Presentations were good but some mornings felt long and overkill by PowerPoint.”

The use of **breakout rooms** did not always work well, as some participants had their cameras off and did not engage in the discussions:

“Some of the small groups I was placed into were difficult, as not everyone spoke, had cameras on – so it was difficult to have discussions.”

Some felt the **sharing of resources** could have been better organised, saying that this would have made it easier to keep track of how everything fitted together:

“Lots of material sent through at different times and it wasn't always clear which resource related to which topic.”

The afternoon **reflective sessions** relied on participants bringing cases to the discussion, but this did not always happen and the sessions sometimes felt unstructured as a result:

“I feel [case discussions] would have benefitted from setting a timetable in the initial session so people knew who was going to present and the presentations to be linked to what was discussed in the morning session so that we could make sense and apply the learning.”

Some feedback suggested that **not all participants felt fully equipped** to take on their role as Practice Leads.

Some felt that they had **not had enough time** to absorb the learning from the training, and so did not feel prepared to take on the responsibilities of their new role and to share their learning with others:

“There has been no time from work to actually absorb the information and make sense of the training.”

“I feel that this is something that will develop in time and need to develop confidence and trust in my own knowledge and skills.”

A few were **not yet clear how their new role would take shape**, and to what extent they would be **supported** by colleagues and management:

“I am not sure how my local authority wants to deliver or utilise what I have learnt and disseminate this learning to other teams and services.”

Additionally, some of the areas have reported since the training programme that **staff turnover** has affected their ability to maintain the full cohort of Practice Leads.

3.2. The one-day multi-agency course on intra-familial child sexual abuse

The second strand of the programme involved piloting a new one-day multi-agency course on intra-familial child sexual abuse for professionals in a range of agencies. Covering the key issues around intra-familial child sexual abuse, the course aimed to give participants a better understanding of:

- the scale and nature of child sexual abuse
- how the impact of sexual abuse presents in children
- how children communicate their experiences of sexual abuse, and the professional role in helping them do this
- how and why sexual abuse happens in families.

It also aimed to improve participants’ ability to identify the potential signs and indicators of sexual abuse and sexually abusive behaviour, and give them greater confidence in identifying and responding to concerns of intra-familial child sexual abuse.

The course was delivered twice in each of the three areas, to a total of **256 professionals** from agencies across social care and social work, health, education, voluntary sector, mental health, criminal justice and housing. There were:

- 60 professionals in Ealing
- 79 professionals in Hackney
- 117 professionals in Barking & Dagenham.

Of the 120 course participants from across the three areas who completed the feedback survey, about three-quarters said they worked in **frontline services** (e.g. teachers, GPs or family support workers); this included a mix of practitioners and senior practitioners.

Sector	Percentage of respondents
Health	28%
Social care/social work	26%
Education	15%
Mental health	15%
Charity and voluntary	8%
Benefits and housing support	1%
Criminal justice/law enforcement	1%
Early intervention	1%
Housing	1%
Sexual health	1%
Youth work	1%

More than a third (36%) of the survey respondents who answered the question said **they had not previously received any training** aimed at improving their understanding of or response to child sexual abuse.

Sector	No. of respondents who <i>had not</i> previously received any training on child sexual abuse	No. of respondents who <i>had</i> previously received training on child sexual abuse
Social care/social work	10	19
Education	8	6
Health	8	13
Mental health	2	9
Benefits and housing support	1	0
Sexual health	1	0
Youth work	1	0
Charity and voluntary	0	6
Criminal justice/law enforcement	0	1
Early intervention	0	1
Housing	0	1
Total	31	56

Among those who *had* already received training around child sexual abuse, many said that this had been basic or had focused only on one aspect, such as child sexual exploitation.

What worked well

Most survey respondents reported that attending the course had **increased their knowledge and understanding** around identifying and responding to intra-familial child sexual abuse.

Analysis of the 120 feedback forms revealed that:

- 92% had increased their understanding of disclosures and helping children to tell
- 90% had increased their knowledge of the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse
- 89% had increased their knowledge of how child sexual abuse happens in families
- 89% had a better understanding of responsibilities and actions to support and protect children.

Respondents highlighted specific areas in which they felt they **were more knowledgeable** and/or **felt more confident in addressing concerns** of child sexual abuse:

“It helped me to better understand what it feels like for a young person to talk about child sexual abuse and disclosures generally. I also found it helpful to look at what perpetrator behaviour may look like and again, what that feels like for a young person.”

“I think now that I am sure about the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ which gives me much more confidence to ask the right questions.”

“It has given me the confidence to explore better in cases of potential abuse in families seen during contacts.”

A large majority felt they would be able to **apply their learning to their practice**; 81% said they would be able to do this ‘a lot’, and a further 14% would be able to do it ‘a little’.

Respondents described how their increased knowledge and confidence would inform their practice:

“A better awareness and knowledge about child sexual abuse will inform my practice as Deputy Safeguarding Lead in a Junior school, looking out for signs, and understanding abusers’ behaviour and grooming techniques.”

“I am the safeguarding lead in a special school so will use this in my everyday practice and when training others.”

“I am more open to naming the possibility of child sexual abuse for the young people in the team and also feel that my response to children where they have been sexually abused in the past has changed to one of feeling more confident to speak about this.”

“[I] will use the mantra, ‘What if I am right?’ next time I have any concerns.”

Although this was only a one-day course, participants from a range of different services were keen to **share their learning** through training and supporting others.

“I’m thinking about dissemination of key messages as a Designated Doctor for Child Protection.”

“As I work in safeguarding, I will be disseminating and cascading the information to colleagues.”

“I supervise practitioners and therefore will be able to help them to unpick what is going on for the child [and] ... support them better in relation to recognising signs and indicators.”

“I manage an early intervention programme for vulnerable first-time parents with many experiencing child sexual abuse so the information is very useful. I also supervise a team of nurses and some of the information in the training will help me to support them in supervision when we are discussing cases.”

“I work with children with disabilities and manage several teams including [looked-after children] and special school nursing. This will help within our safeguarding supervision.”

“I work with Children in Care who often disclose sexual abuse. This training will be useful for me to support staff in supervision.”

“Working in [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] we regularly have allegations made by young people. This will help me as a team leader to support staff.”

“As named nurse for safeguarding children, this information will inform practice including training, supervision and increased professional curiosity.”

Others felt it would **support them in their specialist roles.**

“It will help in the legal advice that I provide.”

“I work as a clinical psychologist in children's social care – it will be used a great deal.”

“I work with families – what I have learned will help me to speak to parents regarding other forms of abuse as well as the children.”

“As an Early Start Worker, I will be more confident when dealing with a disclosure from either a child or parent.”

“I do not work directly with children, but with mothers who have had children removed. However, this will help with the conversations I have with mothers about experiences and possibly how they can have the conversation also.”

“I work with children and families under five daily. This has raised awareness of the challenges children have to face and the abuse that may go unnoticed.”

“I am a school nurse and will use the training to be able to identify signs of abuse and how to deal with it.”

“As a housing officer coming in contact with residents who would have children, this training allows the understanding of how to spot those who need support/assistance with the ways to communicate with the victims when contact is made. It also highlights the organisations that exist where referrals can be made or can be referenced with those who don't wish to go into details so they can still receive support.”

Challenges

Four participants said had **not found the training particularly relevant or useful** – they generally indicated that it had been at too basic a level for them, although some recognised its value for professionals with less experience.

“[It was] more basic than I thought it would be – a lot of generic examples – perhaps a more advanced session in addition to this could be available – adding more current topics that families are experiencing currently e.g. gangs, CSE, county lines, trafficked by family etc.... Slides will be useful as a point of reference to take back to my team of colleagues.”

Two participants specified that the training did not sufficiently support them in their role working with disabled children.

“Given the higher incidence in children with disabilities, I would like more specialised training in this area.”

“More thought needs to be given to supporting pupils with complex communication needs. Many children from my setting are not able to use the communication strategy provided within the course. It is all well and good telling us that we must provide children with the means to disclose, but that just isn't feasible for the majority of pupils within my setting.”

3.3 Support with data collection

The third strand of the programme involved offering support to each local authority to scope out how it was collecting and recording data on child sexual abuse, and to identify opportunities for improvement. To support this, the CSA Centre produced an evidence pack for the LSCP focusing on agency data related to identifying and responding to children at risk of sexual abuse in the three areas, benchmarked against other regions.

The offer to the three local areas then included:

- helping to build a picture of the current data system(s) used in each local authority to store data on child sexual abuse
- auditing how each local authority was collecting and recording information on the suspected victim, suspected perpetrator, nature of the abuse and service response, and identifying strengths and weaknesses in its current data collection processes
- facilitating focus groups with service managers and frontline staff to discuss how the collection and recording of data on child sexual abuse could be improved
- supporting audits of data collection on child sexual abuse in partner agencies which were interested in improving their own data collection
- producing a report outlining the results of the audit and the concrete steps required to improve the collection of data around child sexual abuse in each area.

The following work was undertaken:

- Barking & Dagenham audited its children's services main data system and invited partner agencies to undertake audits of their data systems.
- Ealing audited its children's services main data system, as well as a separate system used in the child sexual exploitation service.
- While no audit was possible in Hackney (see below), discussions with service managers identified opportunities for the data improvement tool to inform the development of a new data system.

Alongside this work with individual local authorities, staff from the CSA Centre presented data on the scale and nature of child sexual abuse to the London-wide Task and Finish Group, performance leads groups, and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

What worked well

- With support from the CSA Centre, staff in Barking & Dagenham **completed a multi-agency data audit**, working with partners in the Metropolitan Police, the East London Child Sexual Abuse Hub, the North East London NHS Foundation Trust and the Havens. The audit results were used to explore the development of a multi-agency dataset on child sexual abuse. The intention is that this multi-agency dataset can be monitored regularly to track progress in improving services to children.
- In Ealing, staff reported that the support had enabled them to **scrutinise the data** currently collected in their local authority, and had encouraged them to ask questions concerning governance.
- In Hackney, the **data improvement tool was used** to identify how child sexual abuse data collection could be improved in a new children's services data system, currently in development.

Challenges

- While this work was under way, Hackney Council was subject to a **serious data breach**, involving a cyber-attack on its data systems which left staff unable to carry out the full data audit.
- In other areas, the data improvement work **progressed slowly** due to lack of clear ownership of the work and difficulties maintaining contact with relevant stakeholders.

4. Impact

The overall aim of this programme was to test the value of implementing a holistic package of support to improve the identification and response to child sexual abuse in Barking & Dagenham, Ealing, and Hackney. While little data is available as yet to evidence the overall impact of delivering this package of support, some indications of progress towards this can be seen.

Across the three areas

- **332 professionals** have received training in responding to concerns of child sexual abuse.
- **60 of these have been skilled up** to provide in-depth, ongoing support to colleagues across social care in responding to concerns of child sexual abuse.
- **93%** of the 153 professionals who provided feedback at the end of their training said that **they would apply what they had learnt to their own practice**.

In Barking & Dagenham

- Practice Leads are now offering colleagues regular case consultation to support them in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, and have set up a monthly clinic to which colleagues can bring these cases.
- They have also presented to more than 200 staff, sharing key messages, highlighting best practice and promoting their consultation offer.
- Senior leadership have highlighted the benefits of having a group of staff who can provide expert advice on complex cases, as well as the financial savings to be made from the reduced need for external expert advice.
- Barking & Dagenham was selected, out of 14 areas that applied, as one of three areas to pilot the CSA Centre's Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway.
- Plans are being made for a data deep-dive, to better understand how cases of child sexual abuse are responded to.
- There appear to be indications that more cases of child sexual abuse are being identified.
- The CSA Centre has been commissioned to provide ongoing support for the Practice Leads, to support them in their case consultations and further develop their confidence and skills.

In Ealing

- The NSPCC has been commissioned to build on work done so far, overseen by a Task and Finish Group, with plans to develop a virtual Child Sexual Abuse team.

In Hackney

- The CSA Centre has been commissioned to provide ongoing support for the Practice Leads, to further embed learning and increase their confidence and skills.

5. Learning

Reflecting on what went well and the challenges encountered in delivering this programme, we have highlighted learning that the CSA Centre and local authorities considering future programmes of this nature should take into account.

The programme as a whole

- Identify lead people at different levels within the local authority to support programme set-up and implementation.
- Allow at least three months for set up and planning.
- Learn from other local authorities which have completed the programme, to inform planning and embedding.
- Consider offering a package of different training programmes to upskill the workforce. This could be a bespoke offer to meet specific needs in an area, drawing from our now much wider range of training programmes (as described in our [training brochure](#)).
- Run a Theory of Change session with senior leads and relevant parties at the start of the programme, to engage their support and buy-in.

The Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Training Programme

- Consider how best to structure the delivery of the Practice Leads training programme, in terms of frequency and the organisation of the reflective sessions.
- Consider what will be most effective in terms of reach and engagement – there are advantages to both virtual and face-to-face delivery, and the programme could be run across a single local authority or across multiple areas.
- Consider which agencies would most benefit from having Practice Leads – the programme can be run across social work teams (see [here](#) for an evaluation of this type of programme) or as a multi-agency programme (see [here](#) for our learning report from our multi-agency programme in Wales).
- Plan how to ensure that Practice Leads will have capacity to fulfil their new roles once the programme has finished.
- Consider building in support for Practice Leads after the training ends to support them in becoming fully embedded in their roles.

The one-day multi-agency training course

- This course can be delivered virtually, enabling as many people as possible to attend, and delivered across different areas simultaneously.
- It can also be rolled out widely, perhaps embedded as part of a regular cycle of workforce training, to spread the learning across a wider pool of professionals.

Support with data recording and analysis

- It can be valuable to have support in looking at local agency data on child sexual abuse. In particular, senior managers, who will already be using this data to monitor their teams' work, will appreciate the value of having more accurate data on child sexual abuse cases.
- It is also helpful to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to support in-depth work in this area.

Other ways to support improved identification and response to child sexual abuse

- Having an effective child sexual abuse strategy is key to improving local areas' identification of and response to child sexual abuse. We are currently developing a guide to developing a strategy, which local areas will be able to adapt and implement.
- We will continue to develop and share resources that support identification and response to child sexual abuse, such as:
 - [*Signs and Indicators: A Template for Identifying and Responding to Concerns of Child Sexual Abuse*](#)
 - [*Communicating with Children: A Guide for Those Working with Children Who Have or May Have Been Sexually Abused*](#)
 - [*Supporting Parents and Carers: A Guide for Those Working with Families Affected by Child Sexual Abuse*](#)
 - [*Safety Planning in Education: A Guide for Professionals Supporting Children following Incidents of Harmful Sexual Behaviour*](#)
 - our [*Key Messages from Research*](#) series, which provides succinct, relevant information for frontline practitioners and commissioners.

6. Where next

Using our learning from this programme, we are **continuing to deliver and expand the support** we provide to local authorities and agencies responding to child sexual abuse. Further information is available on our website, www.csacentre.org.uk. For example:

- In London, other local safeguarding partnerships have now requested the one-day multi-agency training, and we will be delivering it across all 32 London boroughs in 2022/23.
- We are piloting a different kind of regional approach in delivering our Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Programme across nine local authorities in the Cheshire & Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership.
- We have produced a *Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse* film series, in addition to our other short e-learning films. Some local authorities are now putting these onto their own e-learning platforms. We are also now developing an e-learning programme.
- We are facilitating the sharing of information and resources across local authorities – for example, by sharing guidance, produced by Hackney with Cardiff, for working on cases of child sexual abuse.
- We have set up a network for the Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads we have trained across England and Wales, so they can come together and continue to develop in their roles.
- We are piloting the implementation of a Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway in three local areas. The Response Pathway sets out the process to follow and the actions required when responding to concerns of child sexual abuse, in compliance with existing law and guidance, and brings greater clarity to key decision points and responsibilities, so that professionals' responses better meet the needs of children and their families. It incorporates children's voices, drawn from published research, casting light on how children may feel at each step on the way.

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Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

We'd like to hear from you. If you would like to find out more about our training, from previous successes and learnings to our forthcoming programme or bespoke packages, please contact us at info@csacentre.org.uk

Appendix 1: Programme Theory of Change

