Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

Lesson Plan

There are many reasons for choosing social work as a vocation. As part of the work to develop teaching resources we have heard from students setting out on their social work career, those who are newly qualified, as well as those with many years of practice experience, working within both statutory and voluntary sectors as a registered social worker.

No matter what role or level of experience, those who shared their thoughts about the reason they chose social work as a vocation was overwhelmingly to do good, to support children, families and adults in need of care, support or protection. To help empower those same individuals to achieve their best lifelong chances by making a positive difference to the lives of those they support.

While for many there was a sense of this being achieved, others reflected on the paralysing nature of systems responses in achieving this, particularly in relation to children, families and adults affected by sexual abuse, across all its forms.

The National Panel report on Child Sexual Abuse in Family Environments, The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice the Office of the Children's Commissioner report, Its-a-lonely-journey-REA-on-Intrafamilial-child-sexual-abuse.pdf, the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the response to child sexual abuse in the family environment, Joint targeted area inspections of the response to child sexual abuse in the family environment - GOV.UK the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the subsequent Casey review, National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - GOV.UK as well as the National Delivery Plan to prevent child sexual abuse in Wales Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in Wales 2026 to 2036: Delivery Plan all highlight the need for workforce development to improve knowledge, confidence and skills relating to child sexual abuse, suggesting this as being key to sexual abuse prevention.

At the current time across England and Wales conservative estimates indicate that 1 in 6 children experience sexual abuse before the age of 16 (Karsna 2026). This reflects general population data with case management data likely to be considerably higher. For example, children who live in families where neglect is known are circa 5 times more likely to be harmed by sexual abuse, those who live in families where the mental health of adult care givers is not well managed are circa 3 times more likely to be harmed by sexual abuse and disabled children are circa twice as likely to come to harm from sexual abuse *(Sara Scott, DMSS Research Key Messages from Research Second edition, September 2023).*

Despite this knowledge, it remains the case that child sexual abuse is under identified by professionals, likely already providing support to many of these children and families. Assessments within the social care system where child sexual abuse is a concern is the lowest it has been in eight years and children assessed as being at risk of significant harm from child sexual abuse are at the lowest level since

records began (*Office for National Statistics child sexual abuse 2020, Department for Education characteristics of children in need 2023/2024).*

The social care workforce is uniquely placed and fundamental to improving prevention, identification and responses to child sexual abuse. However, for decades we have seen a serious lack of pre- and post-qualifying training to enable the workforce to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to do this consistently and effectively.

The cost of not identifying child sexual abuse at the earliest opportunity is high for children and families and social care and justice systems. There has perhaps never been a more pertinent time to change this.

In addition to engaging with the social work workforce to develop the learning resources, children, young people and adults with lived experience of child sexual abuse were also consulted in relation to how they experienced systems responses in relation to child sexual abuse. The learning from experts by experience has been crucial to the development of the teaching resources and we acknowledge this input with considerable thanks.

Signs and Indicators of child sexual abuse

Lesson Length if all content is used is 90/120 minutes Suggested independent learning and reading outlined will enhance learner engagement in the activities associated with the lesson.

There is no expectation that all content needs to be used. The main theme for this lesson is Assessment, although there are also many other teaching outcomes that can be achieved.

There are 3 scenarios to choose from dependent on the level of learner/learning. The scenarios are designed to be interactive in nature; they can be used is small groups or as a large group to aid discussion, questions and reflections.

Time	Session	Content	Activity
5 mins	**Welcome, creating safety, scene setting**	• Introduction, welcome, and establishing a safe space • Setting the scene by introducing content and providing brief learning about the CSA Centre	• Ask for a show of hands around who has heard of the CSA centre. • Introduction to the CSA Centre's website and newsletter as a way to keep informed of evidenced based practice resources, training and in the moment support through the response pathway. Home | CSA Centre Newsletter | CSA Centre Get support | CSA Centre
20 mins	**Impact of child sexual abuse (CSA)**	• Impact of CSA across the life course • Impact across all areas of development for children • Consequences of not identifying	Independent study or reading that will support learners' engagement in this lesson include What you need to know about child sexual abuse | CSA Centre https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-03/atisn23347doc4.pdf

		CSA • Safeguarding and providing support to recover • Recognising behavioural presentation as signs of distress rather than applying negative labels • Importance of using SW tools such as chronologies to help understand how unresolved trauma and abuse may continue to impact children into adulthood • Explore what this means for trauma impact, disrupted attachment and children being able to achieve best lifelong chances	• Either as a group or as small groups ask the learners to consider what the expected impact of CSA may be for younger children (preverbal) prepubescent children, teenagers and young adults. • Ask them to consider what difference if may make if the abuse is identified and stopped vs if the abuse persists. • Ask them to consider what children may need from adults to recover from CSA • Take feedback • Use the Gwella slide as an interactive exercise. Explore where in our systems the learners may have supported children across the top line of the Gwella model. • Consolidate learning so far using this slide.
20 mins	**Signs and Indicators of child sexual abuse**	• Evidential difference between criminal and welfare thresholds • Building a picture of concern that is not focussed solely on the child verbally telling or through their behaviour • Considering values, bias and assumptions in our responses to CSA • Using the signs and indicators template in practice • Record keeping and its role in safeguarding and protection of children	Independent study or reading that will support learners' engagement in this lesson include http://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/blog/the-myth-of-absolute-knowing/ The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice Pre-Trial Therapy | The Crown Prosecution Service Signs and indicators: A template for identifying and recording concerns of child sexual abuse • Play Signs and Indicators clip slide (17) • Either as a shout out activity, in small group discussion or using interactive apps, ask the learners to consider how values, bias and assumptions may impact upon responses to CSA • Ask the learners to consider their practice experience so far. Can they reflect on any

			challenges they have faced, either through their own values and bias or those of others. • Ask the students to consider any barriers children and families may face in trusting/talking to us. • Feedback
25 mins	**Applying the signs and indicators template to a Case Scenario**	• Consideration of how the signs and indicators template can be applied using a case scenario. • How the template can be used to support the social work role across different contexts • How the template can be used to consider recent and non-recent concerns of child sexual abuse	Independent study or reading that will support learners' engagement in this lesson include Signs and indicators: A template for identifying and recording concerns of child sexual abuse Sibling sexual abuse: A knowledge and practice overview Supporting parents and carers: A guide for those working with families affected by child sexual abuse Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour Key messages from research on the impacts of child sexual abuse Key messages from research on identifying and responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse Safety planning in education: A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour Child sexual abuse of African, Asian and Caribbean heritage children: A knowledge review • There are 3 case scenarios to choose from depending on the knowledge/level of the learners and themes to be considered. • Select the most appropriate scenario for the learner group • Ask the learners to work individually or in small groups to discuss the signs and indicators present for the child, environment and adults depicted in the case scenario. • Feedback
15 mins	**Gathering additional information**	• Filling in any gaps in information • Resources to support assessment • Consideration of what helps when communicating with children	Independent study or reading that will support learners' engagement in this lesson include Communicating with children | CSA Centre Communicating with children: A guide for education professionals when there are concerns about sexual abuse or behaviour • Optional exercise. Use the narrative case scenario information, including genogram, chronology, timelines as a

		where there are concerns about child sexual abuse	source of further information to fill in any gaps • Use Social Graces as a prompt to consider power, privilege and social difference as it applies to them and the child in the selected case scenario
5 mins	**Questions and resource sharing**	• Links to share	• What you need to know about child sexual abuse | CSA Centre • Supporting practice film series | CSA Centre

Areas covered: The range of roles of social work and related process, guidance and law. Assessment, Professional Curiosity, Maturation, Life Course Development, Child Development, Sexual Development, Disrupted Development, Trauma Impact, Safeguarding, Intervention, Attachment, Assumptions, Bias, Values, Law and legal thresholds, adult support needs, Child's Voice and Perspective, Applying theoretical perspectives EG, Ecological Theory, Systems Theory, strengths-based practice, attachment theory. Professional curiosity, risk and protective factors and effective analysis (including links to research) Recognising and responding to emotions in social work (including the social worker's), multi-agency working, Planning and monitoring for child welfare and family support (including tools and resources) Recording.