

Learning Exchange 2016

Event Report

1. BACKGROUND

On 1st December 2016 we held our third and final Learning Exchange event in London, bringing together services from all three phases of the Hub and Spoke project. In previous years the evaluation team had shared emerging findings from the evaluation. However this year no interim report was published, so the focus of the day was on services coming together to share their own experiences and learning with one another. Feedback from the event was very positive, and focused overwhelmingly on the value of being able to meet, network and talk to other services working in the field of CSE.

You can find a list of attendees at the end of this report.

2. HEARING FROM PHASE 3 SERVICES

The eight services funded in phase 3 of the Alexi Project all had the opportunity to present a 10 minute summary of their experiences of the Hub and Spoke model so far, including any particular challenges, opportunities or promising practice. Some of the areas covered and issues arising related to the following.

- **Geography/demography.** One service is co-operating across LAs in response to drug-related trafficking - others described impact of working in rural areas without good phone signals, or having large areas to cover.
- **Hub and spoke model.** Allows co-operation and communication across LA boundaries that might not otherwise be happening.
- **Impact of service location.** Services are based in SARCs¹, offices or youth-work environments among other contexts, and some have no physical base at all.
- **Partnership.** On-going issues with helping professionals see and understand CSE. Services training/upskilling other voluntary sector workers in relation to CSE, and working in schools/colleges. Highlighted importance of diverse referral pathways (beyond statutory) and of being as persistent and tenacious with partners as with YP.

¹ Sexual Assault Referral Centre

- **Wider LA/service contexts.** Challenges include the use of locum social workers, high staff turnover, cuts to social work and lack of wider services for teenagers and young adults.
- **Risk.** Concerns about high risk cases being closed because child ‘not engaging’, voluntary sector holding all the risk and a lack of quality risk assessment approaches. One service attempted unsuccessfully to get every child onto a Child Protection Plan.
- **Establishing a service.** Lots of challenges with setting up new work including creating new referral pathways and staff turnover.
- **Prevention and risk.** Some services focusing on early intervention while others doing trauma work with known victims.
- **Family work.** Some services working with parents and families. Barnardo’s London, CLEAR and Checkpoint all using strength-based approaches (Checkpoint using Triple P). Can be issues around parental response to risk and setting boundaries.
- **Diversity and service reach.** Some spoke workers developing expertise in supporting particular groups of young people (e.g. learning difficulties/autism, faith and culture groups, boys and young men).
- **Approach.** Services are using therapeutic knowledge base alongside engaging the child and building relationships before doing any safety work. Use of attachment informed work, creativity and resourcefulness and focus on sexual health.
- **Evaluation.** Some services are evaluating their work and developing having outcomes frameworks that are ‘young-person friendly’.

3. UPDATES FROM THE ALEXI PROJECT TEAM: EVALUATION

Julie Harris provided an update.

The evaluation fieldwork has now been completed. In total, Debi and Julie have visited 55 local authorities, undertaken in excess of 250 interviews and facilitated around ten focus groups over the three years of fieldwork.

We embark upon the final leg as we head into 2017. We will spend some time in January pulling in the last of the data – this may include any missing data returns and also sending out a quick ‘snapshot’ survey to capture the most current data about staff posts and roles from services. From January to March we will be coding and analysing our data before starting to draft the final report around April. We aim for a first draft to be completed in July with the final report launch in September 2017.

A sincere ‘thank you’ goes out to everyone who has welcomed us to their area and participated so enthusiastically and positively in the evaluation work.

4. UPDATES FROM THE ALEXI PROJECT TEAM: PARTICIPATION

Isabelle Brodie provided an update. She explained that there have been four strands to the participation project over the past year.

1. Developing the evidence base

A scoping review of the literature relating to participation has been completed and is available on the Alexi website (www.alexiproject.co.uk/participation) together with a practice summary, which includes questions that might be helpful in developing thinking about participation.

2. Meeting and talking to young people

We have met with several groups of young people, to talk about their experiences of involvement in services. We also asked them what might be a helpful way to communicate these messages to practitioners – it has proved hard to get a consensus on this, but we are currently thinking about a poster and postcards. The animation that the participation/policy strands have developed is also part of this.

3. Talking to practitioners: what does participation mean in practice?

Interviews have been carried out with Phase 2 and 3 service managers. Additionally, a further piece of work has developed around group work and what this means in the context of CSE services.

4. Recording the process

As part of the process of developing an evidence base, we have been anxious to record the experience of the participation strand by writing a diary.

Finally, we have been working to communicate the findings of the participation strand – through the International Centre blog and presentations at professional and academic conferences.

Next steps for the participation strand include:

- Young people's survey – for young people who do NOT take part in groups – a good idea?
- Resources audit?
- More outputs reflecting young people's views and perspectives – example coming up
- Ongoing reflection, writing and dissemination

5. UPDATES FROM THE ALEXI PROJECT TEAM: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Lucie Shuker provided an update.

The [Alexi Project website](#) is live and is the main hub for news and knowledge exchange. Services really value hearing about each other's work, so we plan to publish at least one blog post about each service during 2017. This is a chance to share interesting CSE practice, help partners understand what you do, and create some legacy from the project. Lucie will be in touch with each service, so please think about an aspect of your work that you would like to profile on the website. Here's an [example of a post](#) already online.

Attendees gave feedback about the monthly newsletter, which is designed to keep you up to date with activities of the evaluation. Please [get in touch](#) if you want to advertise anything with the other Alexi Project services through the newsletter, or have ideas about how it can improve.

We launched online forums, which are a closed space on the project website where you can continue to share tools, discuss issues and create a wider network/community of practice around CSE beyond your own service. Only hub and spoke workers/managers have an account and if you haven't yet used the forums you can find all the information you need to access them [here](#). Current threads include [family work and tools/resources](#) for using in work with young people.

Finally we shared a [video](#) of a work-in-progress from the participation strand of the project. We plan to record a proper voice-over for it soon.

6. MORGOLIS WHEEL OF PRACTICE

Kate D'Arcy led the group in the Morgolis Wheel exercise. This involved the group forming circles of 10 people, with an inner circle and an outer circle facing each other in five pairs. Person A in the pair shared a practice challenge for a minute, and person B had a minute to offer thoughts and ideas. After the two minutes was up, the inner circle moved one place to the left, and the process started again. It was a good post-lunch tool for rapid knowledge exchange.

7. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

In the afternoon attendees joined one of four roundtable discussions.

Group 1: Extending the reach of services to different groups of children and young people

The Hub and spoke services represented at the table were working with children with learning disabilities, lesbians and trans young people, unaccompanied asylum seekers, boys and young men, those with sexually harmful behaviours and peer perpetrators. The group agreed that there are not really coherent models or types of CSE affecting particular groups of young people.

The following strategies for extending reach were discussed.

- Raising awareness and increasing knowledge e.g. training professionals who can explain or explore local issues.
- Joint work with other specialist services to address local need which can involve training them in CSE and learning more about their specialist services at the same time.
- Sharing information and appropriate approaches where there are multiple organisations delivering CSE work. This requires coordination, and in some areas an approved provider might need to be agreed.

- Adapting tools and resources e.g. specialist assessment tools for learning difficulties. Examples shared included: My Wheel (Lancashire); Friend/ Foe (Sheffield); LGBT resource (Terrence Higgins Trust); sex and relationship work (Bristol).
- Understanding the local need by asking communities and looking at existing profiles e.g. community profile, health and wellbeing, screening tools, YP referrals. You can then assess how well service provision reflects local demography.

The group also explored the impact of local authority strategies for addressing CSE, acknowledging that they can influence the direction of work for a service. 'Top down' strategies can conflict with 'bottom up' needs e.g. where the LSCB decide they need to focus on women and girls, but this is not a priority for an individual service. LA strategies may not include perpetrators, or different strategies may not be joined up. Lastly, it can be challenging for services to get into schools, and some schools require funding if the service wants to go in. Work in schools is often not coordinate between the different organisations going in.

Group 2: Tools and resources used in CSE services

The group reviewed the range of tools and resources that are available in work with young people affected by CSE. Members of the group shared long-established and newer materials and resources, including (amongst many) Rainbow Journals, trust activities ('who am I closest to?'), Friend or Foe resource, snap cards, and Feelings Jenga. The advantages and disadvantages of current resources and tools were shared. Several members pointed out that resources don't have to be CSE specific, but that any resource can be used and adapted to the specific context of the young person being worked with. It was agreed that there are a number of gaps in current tools available – including those specifically for young people with disabilities, those aimed at one-to-one work rather than groupwork, materials with a focus on boys, and those for young people with high levels of trauma. A full list of tools discussed can be found in the online forum on ['Tools and resources'](#).

Group 3: Shifts and developments in the types of harm/abuse the service is working with

The group discussed a range of forms of abuse they were encountering in their services, focusing on their perceptions of new developments. This included the exploitation of boys by females, and an increase in referrals relating to over 16 year olds. The latter may be the result of greater awareness of CSE locally, or of perpetrators' awareness of the legal age of consent. In another area 16-18 year olds were being targeted because of their access to council provided housing.

Online abuse continues to be a problem, especially where it is increasingly 'hidden' or distributed across different virtual spaces. One service was responding to S&M related cases where children were being groomed online to be a 'submissive'. These cases were identified through the police and family concerns, and affecting children with no previously identified vulnerabilities. Another service was working with children who were exploited as a result of their online gambling, and subsequent use of payday loans – which needed to be paid off. They described online gambling affecting younger age-groups as well as older

children. It is a constant challenge for professionals to keep up with the apps children are using. We discussed the use of the [Whisper](#) app which allows people to exchange anonymous messages, and [Kik messenger](#), which is also anonymous and has been criticised for involvement in cases of CSE. In one area, children were being filmed in shopping malls and the pictures being distributed online. Services are using/working with the Internet Watch Foundation, CEOP and Interpol in their responses to online abuse.

Such developments were leading to some local conversations about what is 'real CSE' with the perception that other forms of abuse being 'downgraded'. Our discussion about responses focused on the need for preventative work, including a focus on the most vulnerable, support for parents², and children in and out of school. There was agreement that conversations about relationships and abuse needed to start before puberty.

Group 4: Children and young people's participation in the Hub and Spoke service

Those attending the group brought a range of experiences of participation, and felt they were at different stages in terms of developing participative work within their services. One service had recently held a launch event for young people, others had groups or other activities that were more established.

It was recognised throughout the discussion that participation is invariably political, and that those seeking to enable young people to contribute actively to service development face a number of practical and structural constraints. Participants questioned how 'participative' some 'participation' activities really are – for example, how far are these activities influenced by adult interests, or those of funders? It was noted that participation could too often be viewed as an 'add-on' or even something that is done because it is a requirement of funding, rather than something that is a principal of practice and integral to service delivery. People also felt that at times so-called participation could be tokenistic, as young people were asked to re-tell their stories for the benefit of others. Some participants felt that the language of 'participation' continued to be problematic, and that it was important to seek other ways of expressing this way of working.

Participants emphasised that for effective participation to take place, it was important for all those working in and with the service to appreciate what it means and make it part of their practice. One person expressed this as a need for a vision of what participation could mean. Financial and practical support is also important to ensure that the service can provide or facilitate transport, and also to ensure the continuity of activities. One voluntary organisation offered 'pot of gold' funding which young people could apply for themselves.

Despite these challenges, there was evidence from the group that interesting and important work was taking place. These included leaflets developed by young people, a conflict resolution course, and group work. One service was working to obtain accreditation for young people who were involved in participation work. Although it was recognised that groups were not the only form of effective participation work, good examples were given of the learning that had taken place through group activities. People were also interested in

² Someone referenced the Speak Easy course for parents, to help them discuss sex and relationships with their child.

finding new ways of gathering feedback from young people who did not take part in groups, and it was agreed that different technologies could be useful in this. All those present were keen to develop their work further.

8. BOUNCING BACK



Working with CSE is challenging. As one hub manager said “I think the role requires a real high level of resilience and you’ve got to really want to do it, there can’t be any doubt in people’s minds and it does take its toll”.

So we closed the day by giving each delegate a stretchy yellow figure and asking ‘What makes you bounce back?’

Attendees discussed an experience from the last year that had inspired them to keep going.

Attendees

First name	Surname	Organisation
Hannah	Marsden	Barnardo's
Olivia	Le Blanc	Barnardo's
Kelly	Hounslow	BASE, Barnardo's Bristol,
Clare	Ruggier	CSE, Trafficking and Missing Service, Barnardo's London
Lisette	Dennis	U-Turn, Hampshire, Barnardo's
Emma	Gudgeon	U-Turn, Hampshire, Barnardo's
Charly	Amor	Checkpoint, The Children's Society, Torbay
Natalie	Ash	Checkpoint, The Children's Society, Torbay
Megan	Chapman	Clear, Safe and Secure: Cornwall
Liz	Dando	Clear, Safe and Secure: Cornwall
Dina	Holder	Clear, Safe and Secure: Cornwall
Carina	Miles	Clear, Safe and Secure: Cornwall
Norman	Cooper	Safe and Sound, Derby
Nicola	Dalby	Safe and Sound, Derby
Laura	Lines	Esmee Fairbairn
Helen	Greer	Henry Smith
Venetia	Boon	Comic Relief
Oliver	French	Lankelly Chase
Blanca	Gonzalez	Link to Change, Cambridgeshire
Sue	Jacob	Link to Change, Cambridgeshire
Lottie	Newhouse	Link to Change, Cambridgeshire
Tarhe	Ibehre	Protect and Respect, NSPCC London
Laura	Finnigan	Protect and Respect, NSPCC London
Katarzyna	Kurylowicz	Protect and Respect, NSPCC London
Hannah	Proctor	Protect and Respect, NSPCC London
Chiwo	Mukome	Sheffield Futures
Kerry	Tate	Sheffield Futures
Sharon	Phillips	Street Safe, The Children's Society, Preston
Lianna	Blezard	Street Safe, The Children's Society, Preston
Sarah	Ainsworth	Street Safe, The Children's Society, Preston
Rebecca	Gardner	Street Safe, The Children's Society, Preston
Clara	Larribeau-Wade	YMCA, Sussex
Lucie	Shuker	University of Bedfordshire
Kate	D'Arcy	University of Bedfordshire
Julie	Harris	University of Bedfordshire
Debi	Roker	University of Bedfordshire
Isabelle	Brodie	University of Bedfordshire
Jenny	Pearce	University of Bedfordshire
Jenny	Lloyd	University of Bedfordshire