

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Evidence principles

Why do we need evidence principles?

Evidence principles are important because:

- (1) The aims and objectives of the programme require identification, analysis and application of evidence to practice.
- (2) The ethos of the programme is grounded in a recognition of the importance of evidence as critical to informing the development of practice and policy that safeguards children and young people effectively, and promotes their wellbeing.
- (3) Scholarship and professional expertise indicates that the relationship between evidence and practice is complex and dynamic. This complexity, and the contested nature of what constitutes good 'evidence' makes it important to establish some shared understanding of how evidence will be understood within the TCE programme.

How have the evidence principles been developed?

The evidence principles are built on the work of the scoping report, including the evidence review, and the discussions that have taken place as part of the programme's development to date.

Evidence principles

1. The process of using evidence to inform policy and practice is an active and dynamic one that requires the active engagement of the different participants engaged in the programme.
2. Evidence is a priority for everyone engaged in the programme. Identification, interpretation and application of the evidence is not restricted to any individual or team. Individuals have a range of expertise that can contribute to the development of the evidence base.
3. The nature of the evidence relating to child exploitation and extra-familial abuse is complex, and will at times be unclear or contested. In some areas very little information will be available, but being able to assess this will add value to our understanding of the evidence base.
4. In turn, the evidence base, and the ways in which evidence is or is not applied to practice, should represent a means by which the policy, practice and research communities are challenged to improve responses to different forms of exploitation and abuse. This will include responses to groups of children and young people whose needs are under-recognised and addressed.
5. As new evidence is identified and incorporated into the knowledge base of the programme, it will – and should – challenge existing thinking and practice. This may also present

challenges for individuals and the programme as a whole, and space is required for discussion to facilitate shifts in understanding, or conflicts with existing approaches.

6. The knowledge base regarding child exploitation and extra-familial abuse is an evolving one. The programme will aim to keep abreast of current knowledge, and to seek expert advice in relation to specific topics.
7. Evidence relating to child exploitation and extra familial abuse is multi-disciplinary and crosses professional boundaries. It will be important to recognise the value of different perspectives, and to open up debate about the ways in which these may help develop or change thinking.
8. Evidence will be understood as including a range of different types of work (empirical research, practice development tools, evaluation) as important in supporting the development of policy and practice. Equally, different methods will be appropriate to answering different research, policy and practice questions. There is no single approach which represents a 'gold standard'.

References

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