

## **Project Learning Report**

<b>Details of Bespoke Support Project (BSP):</b>	
Partnership Name:	Sefton
Core partner agencies involved:	Local Authority; including children's social care, youth justice, early help, troubled families, business intelligence and quality assurance, Safeguarding partnership board, Police, voluntary sector and health.
Number of Local Authority areas covered:	1 local authority area and 1 police force.
Regional Area:	North West
BSP Project Size:	Standard
BSP Methodology/ methodologies	Data
Date BSP commenced:	January 2020 – March 2020
<b>Reasons why the local area requested the TCE Support programme:</b>	
<p>Sefton's partnership requested support to create a performance framework that would improve the data collation and analysis that would enable Sefton's safeguarding partners to respond more effectively to child exploitation and extra-familial harm concerns. Within Sefton there is no specialist child exploitation and extra-familial harm teams or services, and responsibility is cascaded across multiple agencies, meaning there is no central data source currently. The partnership recognised that there was an opportunity to reflect on current data processes and understand how they could work more cohesively to establish the strategic picture of child criminal exploitation and extra-familial harm across Sefton. The partnership also noted that the quantitative data available to them did not reflect the qualitative information understood in the local area.</p>	
<b>Aims of the BSP as identified in the Project Specification:</b>	
<p>The project goals established at the beginning of the programme agreed by Sefton's partnership were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish strategic goals for use of data</li> <li>• To map and review the quality of existing data</li> <li>• To connect analyst capacity across the partnership</li> <li>• To develop an action plan for robust reporting to CE sub-group.</li> </ul>	
<b>Approaches / methods taken to achieve the aims and deliver the BSP:</b>	
<p>The approach adopted in Sefton was one of collaboration, framed in a discursive manner, providing the opportunity to hold time and space for the participants to think and talk about data. Particularly in relation to where the data comes from and what it tells us. This approach was useful in engaging those who do not feel as confident working with data and numbers, allowing them to contribute their knowledge of practice and systems and see the relevance of that knowledge to data analysis and interpretation. Working with the single point of contact during the initial scoping stage of the work, ensured that all relevant agencies were identified to participate; including statutory and non-statutory services and the relevant roles within those services too. The team worked with colleagues in Sefton to including role that would represent practice and data perspectives.</p> <p>Working alongside local colleagues, TCE supported them to identify the current strengths in the system to collate data and to support the partnership to create individual agency (organisation)</p>	

data action plans, as well as a collective partnership data action plan. For this to happen each agency undertook a data maturity self-assessment which considered data collection, recording systems, analysis and decision-making. This allowed the local area and the TCE team to develop a shared understanding of the different starting points and capacity for change in each local area.

Two workshops took place for practice leads and data analysts. These workshops provided an opportunity to engage partner agencies in how they could contribute data and practice knowledge to the process. The workshops were as follows:

- **Data discovery** – a workshop with data analysts and practice leads to explore what data are available across agencies and how this could contribute to our knowledge of child exploitation and extra-familial harm locally.
- **Telling our story** - a workshop for practice leads and service managers to explore key messages and interpretation of the data contained in the current performance framework.

Throughout the project, each local area kept a list of local actions that would help them to develop their data capacity and capability further beyond the time of the TCE support.

What was extremely positive to observe was the dedication and commitment across the partnership in Sefton, and how open to sharing ideas and the transparency between each other, recognising that each agency has something to offer and how collectively they could achieve their goals.

#### **Key issues that arose during the delivery of the BSP:**

- for a local area and those delivering the BSP

What we know about data relating to child exploitation and extra-familial harm is that as a sector, knowledge is continuously being developed to gain a greater understanding. The better data local areas are able to capture, analyse and present, the more informed they are to commission relevant services, target resource and understand the local need and demand.

#### **Data collection**

Data maturity conversations highlighted the importance of the systems used to record data and how the ability to shape these systems to meet local needs provides a foundation for making better use of data. Where service managers and their teams were involved in designing forms and recording practices, these services were able to collect and report data that was relevant to understanding child exploitation and extra-familial harm. For example, being able to add and amend types of child exploitation and extra-familial harm recorded. Other services felt restricted by the systems used to capture data because they didn't "ask" the right questions, or important information was stored as text or documents, rather than searchable data. In some cases, data entry and analysis required manual input, leaving it open to errors. Individual service managers have developed ad hoc processes to fill gaps in data systems through case file audits, manual calculations and supplementary recording on spreadsheets and paper forms. The data produced this way is of uncertain quality and consistency, making it challenging to use it to generate insights or inform decision-making. This low level of system adaptation in relation to child exploitation and extra-familial harm isn't surprising, given the emerging evidence and the pace of change in policy and practice in this area. As work to tackle child exploitation and extra-familial harm becomes more embedded, the systems used need to mature as well.

Workforce development was identified as a requirement to support with improving the quality of data collection. For example, although information about referrals into the MASH are recorded - there was some concern about the consistency of practitioners understanding the difference between forms of child exploitation and extra-familial harm. It was identified as an action for the local area to take forward to develop training and audit processes with regard to this information across agencies.

### **Data analysis**

Nationally, there is currently no comprehensive system that enables data specifically about child exploitation and extra-familial harm to be captured and analysed across partners, therefore traditionally, silo datasets are collated across partnerships. In Sefton, some data sources were relied upon more heavily from particular agencies, which meant that the data held by the partnership was not as consistent, rich or robust as it could be. The partnership were encouraged by the TCE team to consider adopting a systems wide view across boundaries (agencies) and for datasets to be evidence-informed.

Undertaking the TCE programme was the first time that many of the organisations and individuals involved had been in the same room together, with a clear focus and shared agenda, especially bringing together practice and data leads.

The programme enabled the partnership to map out all agencies' methods of data collection and datasets to then reflect which part of each agency's data set could add value and meaning to effectively inform strategic responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. This led to the identification of data and analytic capability across the partnership that could be marshalled to better understand child exploitation and extra-familial harm. As a result of the project it was recognised by the local authority as an example that their Business Intelligence team's skills and resources could be wider utilised if work streams were aligned and there was a consensus of responsibilities and types of data collated.

### **Joining the Dots.** Key reflections on:

1. Leading with care
2. Blurring boundaries
3. Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity

### **Leading with Care**

When undertaking this Project with Sefton we have noted that discussions about data need to demonstrate care for the young people represented in the data, and for staff working with young people. As such,

- We need to continuously challenge ourselves to see risk as coming from outside the family home and check our language about 'risk factors' and 'vulnerability factors' when talking about data.<sup>1</sup>
- Young people's vulnerabilities are often a result of the context in which they live and the responses of services to their needs. Looking at broader datasets, beyond those focused specifically on child exploitation and extra-familial harm, helps strategic leaders to consider how they promote stability and a caring response.
- Practice expertise adds richness to our understanding of young people's lives, makes us ask different questions and makes connections between datasets that promotes a more holistic picture. However, conversations about data often take practitioners out of their comfort zone and they need support to make the most meaningful contribution.

- People in business support roles, supporting decision-making and recording of work with young people being exploited, need to be supported to reflect on and emotionally process the information they hear in meetings.

In addition to a partnership data set it was identified as essential to work to embed the data set within services working directly with children, young people, families and the community. Enabling this could support the development of Sefton being able to tell the story of child exploitation and extra-familial harm using qualitative data. Recommendations were made for arrangements to be established to retrieve feedback and also to develop processes for sharing the data and insights from and with services working directly with children, young people, families and the community. This would help the partnership to inform operational decision-making and to review the use of resources and capacity, as well as contributing to strategic conversations about child exploitation and extra-familial harm and the lives of young people in Sefton.

### **Blurring boundaries**

Child exploitation and extra-familial harm and perpetrators of child exploitation and extra-familial harm don't operate within the clear administrative boundaries of a local authority, or police force. In Sefton, the police, health and local authority boundaries are not adjoining. This poses both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges include:

- agencies spanning multiple local authorities having to work with different sets of procedures or requirements for data
- the need to be able to unpick datasets covering a larger geographical area to identify people resident in a particular local authority, this is particularly challenging with health providers and emergency care.

The benefits are in the shared learning and connections that these overlapping boundaries bring. Agencies in Sefton working across Merseyside are able to share intelligence and track people over boundaries in their data, providing richer information about criminal histories and travel patterns. As the project was delivered in a unitary local authority area but with a regional police force the police were keen to consider how the learning from TCE in Sefton could be shared across pan Merseyside to promote a consistent approach to improve data relating to child exploitation and extra-familial harm at a strategic level. The TCE team supported the local area to unlock capacity and capability held within the partnership providing them with the tools and reflections to promote and encourage efforts to be shared Merseyside wide.

Young people can be both victims of child exploitation and extra-familial harm and involved in drawing others into child exploitation and extra-familial harm. This blurring of the line between victim and perpetrator makes it vitally important that Youth Offending Teams are involved in supplying and interpreting data. The Youth Offending Team is at the centre of Sefton's partnership with the team being practiced at seeing the needs behind criminal behaviour and understanding peer groups and networks that provide intelligence on the nature of child exploitation and extra-familial harm locally.

### **Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity**

The project demonstrated the value of curious conversations about data in highlighting the complexity and uncertainty inherent in understanding child exploitation and extra-familial harm. Bringing together different datasets and understanding the overlaps and gaps between them highlights that data often serves to prompt more questions, rather than provide concrete

answers. The conversations are ongoing, part of business as usual, bringing in new data, new stakeholders and other forms of evidence to provide a rich and iterative narrative about what child exploitation and extra-familial harm looks like in the local area.

Using data in this way needs support from strategic leaders and decision-makers. The conversations at a strategic level set the tone and provide momentum for more detailed conversations among those closer to practice and to the data. Sefton and other areas might find it helpful to review how child exploitation and extra-familial harm data and activity is reported into wider governance structures, e.g. the corporate parenting board, to avoid duplication and promote curious conversations. This might include considering what support elected members and others might need to understand what data can and can't tell us about child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

#### **Significant learning and transferability from the BSP for other areas:**

##### **Relationships matter**

What underpins the successes of the project is the long standing relationships that the partners have with one another, and the willingness to engage with complex issues and to learn from each other. As there is no dedicated child exploitation and extra-familial harm team or service in Sefton, collectively the partnership have and continue to work together regularly in a collaborative way with children and young people being at the forefront of their work to tackle child exploitation and extra-familial harm. Not only across agencies but within agencies there was observed strong and productive relationships between service managers and analysts in which both worked closely together to understand the data analysis needs of the service and to undertake bespoke ad hoc analysis to meet those needs. These particular relationships also promoted curious conversations about what data means and how colleagues might learn more.

##### **Investing in recording systems and processes**

In Sefton there is a robust process for managing exploitation flags for children, which are aligned to multi-agency processes. The process for 'flagging' young people with a multi-agency child exploitation plan (MACE plan) on police systems is well-established and the data collected on children with multi-agency child exploitation plans provides an avenue for more in-depth analysis of this cohort. Among agencies without flags, work is ongoing to improve data capture about children and young people who might be at risk of child exploitation and extra-familial harm (i.e. those known to early help or to the Youth Offending team). What TCE considered with the partnership was how to incorporate the child exploitation flag into their recording systems that would allow more detailed analysis of data relating to those children and young people.

Many of the agencies involved in the programme had access and use of data for operational purposes which is well-supported by technical infrastructure. For others, reporting systems were a barrier to getting insights from data, because expectations about what data is required and at what frequency has changed, without IT to support recording. The lack of consistency was a challenge in core services, and in commissioned services from the voluntary sector. Services commissioned for young people in general need support to collaboratively work with commissioners to develop data recording and reporting on child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

##### **Building on existing analytic capacity and capability**

In each agency or service we found valuable skills, data or techniques that would increase the partnership as a whole's ability to visualise patterns and trends. There is significant analytic capability within the local authority and police intelligence teams, including the ability to access a

wide range of data from relevant services, make links across databases and present data in a number of useful formats. There is huge potential for cross-agency and team collaboration, and professional development to support the use of data to tackle child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

The workshops facilitated by the TCE programme enabled a peer led working group to be identified of analysts and business intelligence staff coming together. This is now operational beyond the lifespan of the programme, with the aim to continue developing the data set and analytical abilities, which is underpinned by principles of collaboration, reflection and clarity of purpose. An analyst network allows for the sharing of promising practice and the generation of important insights as to how collation and use of data could be progressed, to better inform strategic responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm in the future.

### **Linking data with practice experience**

Practitioners and managers have rich knowledge of their local communities and the young people they work with, that contributes significantly to the narrative that sits alongside the data. Examples of this work include examining the impact of locality working, identifying hotspots and trends. For example, police were able to identify areas with higher numbers of children known to be being exploited, and practitioners were able to discuss their experiences of working in these areas. This then led to the identification of contextual data that helped to provide a picture of what life is like for young people in that area, to refocus conversations away from individual children and towards strategic responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm . Finding ways to combine insights from data and learning from practice to form a narrative about child exploitation and extra-familial harm gives a richer picture to better inform strategic decision-making.

### **Emerging evidence of how the project has positively disrupted the system response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm :**

- Before the TCE project completed the local partnership in Sefton began to make significant progress to implement the actions identified in maximising the data available to strategic leaders to support decision-making, which include: The creation of an analyst network, bringing together analysts from across the local authority, police and health, provides a foundation for further development of the way data is collated and reported. This group has been tasked with producing a child exploitation and extra-familial harm profile that reflects the broad range of data available.
- A commitment to investing in recording systems to link data on children being exploited with wider social care and early help data to understand children's journeys to receiving help
- The development and refinement of information -sharing protocols currently used to support individual case work to cover sharing of individual and aggregate data for the purpose of informing strategic decision-making.

The project explored various ways of recording and reporting young people's needs related to child exploitation and extra-familial harm (and the needs of young people more broadly). The partnership were particularly interested in the recording and analysis of Adverse Childhood Experiences data to provide insight into the different outcomes for those with high numbers of ACEs. This data set promoted good conversations about the holistic needs of young people and the need for a trauma-informed approach, and how other agencies were looking to adopt and develop their models of practice. The partnership agreed that there was a need to explore how

and which needs are recorded across services, and to achieve greater consistency across different systems.

The partnership is committed to understanding how agencies could report on data relating to perpetrators of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, and not just children, young people or families. The police evidenced capacity to analyse and map data using software they had developed which enables the force to hold detailed data about adults suspected or known to be perpetrators of child exploitation and extra-familial harm. This data is readily shared amongst the partners, which the partnership acknowledged feeling grateful for, but it was acknowledged that the conversations about what to do with this information were mainly operational. The partnership plan for future work includes the review and refinement of current analysis of perpetrator activity to consider how this might inform strategic decision-making about prevention and disruption.

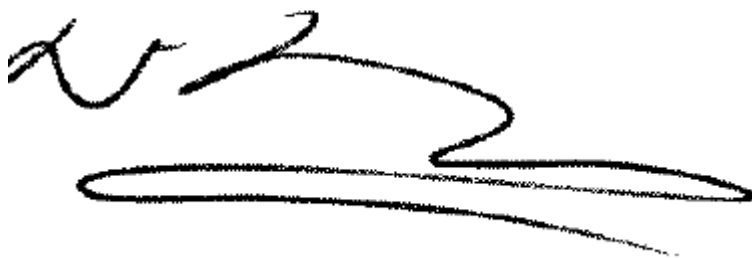
**Immediate reflections from the local area:**

This was a great opportunity as the report indicates to bring partners together to interrogate data. It provided us with the space and time to develop an analyst network and provided the basis for ongoing work. The local area will be using the findings of the project locally and across the neighbouring authorities.

**Please tick this box if there is an agreement for the Project Learning Report to be shared via the TCE Support programme's Microsite for other local areas:**

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Signed by local area:**



<sup>i</sup> See Beckett, H. and Walker, J. (2017) 'Words Matter', in H. Beckett and J. Pearce (eds) *Understanding and Responding to Child Sexual Exploitation*. London: Routledge; also Brown, S., Brady, G., Franklin, A. and Crookes, R. (2017) *The use of tools and checklists to assess risks of child sexual exploitation: An exploratory study*. Available at: <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/exploratory-study-on-the-use-of-tools-and-checklists-to-assess-risk-of-child-sexual-exploitation/>