



Impact of training in practice SSCB Training Focus Group, 08/06/2018

Introduction and Methodology

In 2016, the SSCB introduced a four-stage process to evaluate the impact of training in practice. The fourth stage of the process involves a focus group with front line practitioners and this report analyses feedback received at the focus group that took place on 8th June 2018.

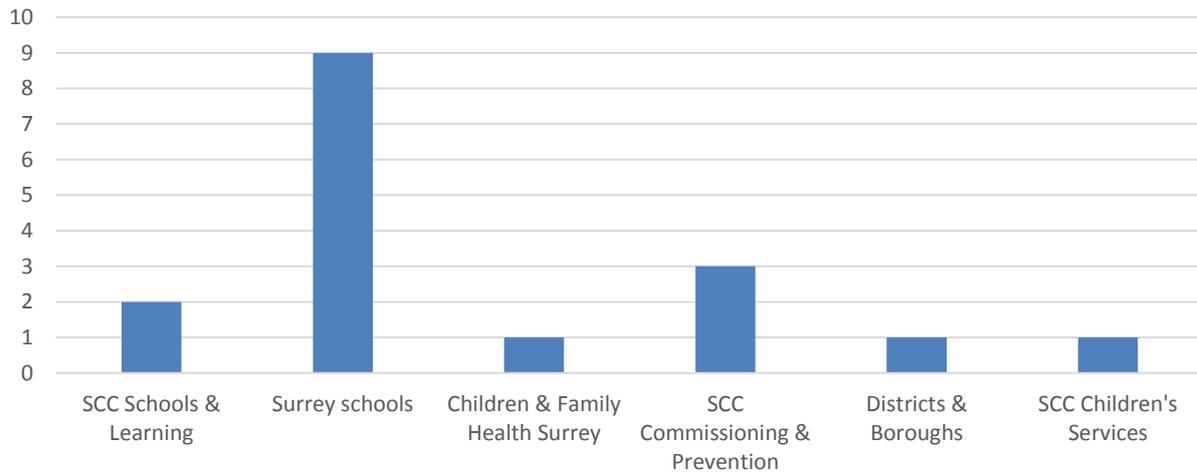
In order to evaluate long-term impact of training on practice the SSCB training team selected a sample of nine courses that were relevant to the SSCB priorities and took place between September and December 2017. These courses were:

- Foundation Module 1: multi-agency safeguarding children (15/09/2017)
- Child Sexual Exploitation Level 2 (25/09/2017)
- Managing allegations against adults who work with children (26/09/2017)
- Disguised compliance (02/10/2017)
- Female Genital Mutilation/Honoured Based Violence/Forced Marriage (18/10/2017)
- Children and young people affected by sexual abuse (06/11/2017)
- Professional challenge (12/12/2017)
- Lessons from Serious Case Reviews and Audits (14/12/2017)
- Foundation Module 2: child protection plans and core groups (20/12/2017)

As the focus group aimed at exploring the impact of training on practice by considering case studies and having in depth conversations with practitioners, the number of attendees was limited to 25. All 382 practitioners who attended the above courses were invited via email in April 2018 to express their interest to attend. Those who confirmed their interest were contacted a week before the meeting and asked to bring with them case studies and also consider the impact of training on their practice in terms of skills, knowledge, confidence and effectiveness. In total, 33 practitioners expressed interest and 17 attended on the day. In other words, as the limit for the focus group was 25 individuals, we achieved receiving feedback from 68% of practitioners. It is important to note that practitioners were not offered any incentives to participate or consequences if they did not. Therefore, participation was entirely on a voluntary basis.

Of the 17 practitioners who participated, two were from SCC Schools and Learning (Educational Psychology), nine from Surrey schools (including independent schools), one from Children and Family Health Surrey (Health Visiting), three from SCC Commissioning and Prevention (Family Support Service), one from Districts and Boroughs (Family Support Programme) and one from SCC Children's Services (Fostering Service).

Attendance at SSCB Focus Group, 08/06/2018

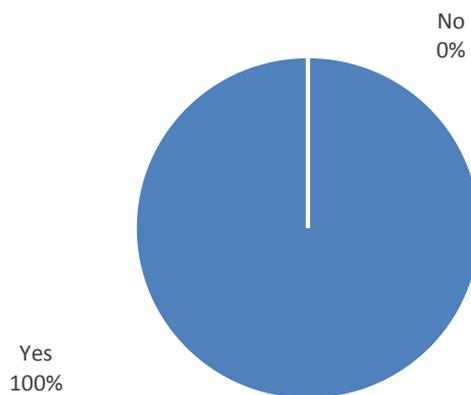


At the meeting, practitioners were first asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 1), that included five statements about their practice, and provide examples of how SSCB training impacted their practice. The questionnaire formed the basis for further discussion and the analysis below is drawn from notes of this discussion and the questionnaires completed.

Findings

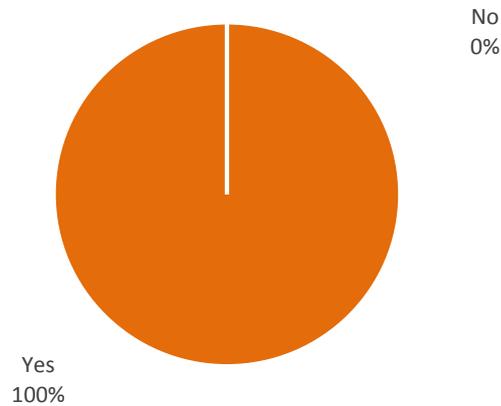
17 out of 17 practitioners agreed that the SSCB training has increased their knowledge and skills when working with children, young people and families.

The training has increased my knowledge and skills when working with children and families



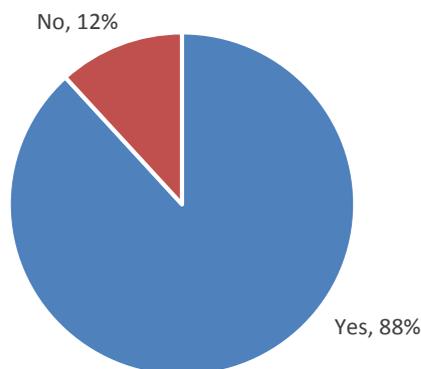
17 out of 17 practitioners agreed that they have made changes to their practice in response to what they learned on the SSCB training. The practitioner who did not agree with the statement clarified that they were new to role and therefore the statement was not applicable to them.

I have made changes to my practice in response to what I have learned on the training



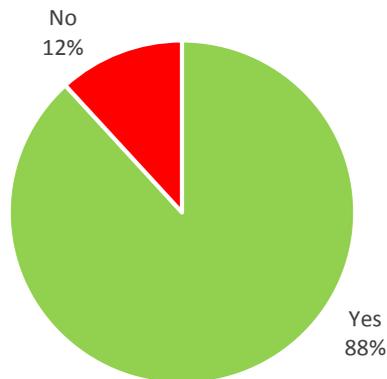
15 out of 17 practitioners agreed that the training had improved their confidence when working with children, young people and families. The practitioners who did not agree with this statement remarked that as experienced practitioners they are sufficiently confident in their practice.

The training has improved my confidence when working with children and families



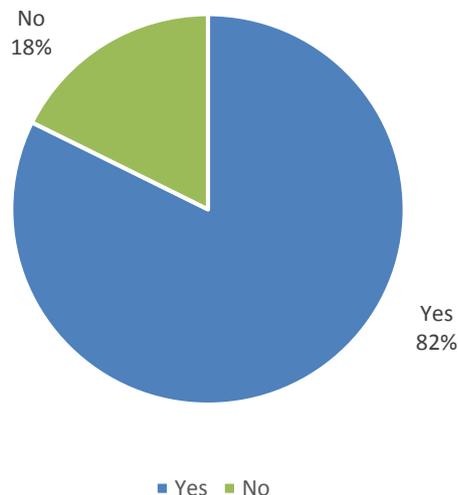
15 out of 17 practitioners agreed that they are more effective in their role as a direct result of the training session(s) they attended. The practitioners who did not agree with this statement noted that the training expanded their thought process and increased their awareness of systemic problems but felt that this in itself does not make them more effective.

I believe I am more effective in my role as a direct result of this training



14 out of 17 practitioners agreed that SSCB training has enhanced multi-agency working and understanding of professionals' roles to improve outcomes for children and families. The practitioners who did not agree with this statement felt that not all agencies work well together and therefore some children do not receive the right support at the right time. They also expressed their concern at 'changes within Surrey that has made people unsure of the new roles and where they fit in to the workplace.'

I believe SSCB training has enhanced multi-agency working and understanding of professionals' roles to improve outcomes for children and families



Comments from practitioners included:

- Helps to refocus back to the child.
- I feel more confident about the issues children and families face.
- Worried some families are still being failed, e.g. lack of resources, lack of communications.
- Don't always get updates/refreshers.

- I feel more confident in my role/practice.
- Don't feel approaches are always universal across agencies which can be challenging.
- I feel more confident in knowing what to look out for / be aware of and what to do about any concerns.
- More knowledgeable about recording tools e.g. domestic abuse, CSE etc.
- Training is a good start. In practice resources, follow up and communications from some professionals can hinder effectiveness.
- I like being able to learn with and from other agencies.
- I enjoy the face to face aspect and opportunities to work with other professionals and sometimes network.
- Good to be able to ask questions and clarify understanding.
- I don't always feel the approaches are universal e.g. in CIN social worker didn't appear to use Signs of Safety.
- Communications between some professionals not always good/timely.
- Some children don't seem to get any service e.g. early help, MASH. Also some early help services aren't aware of the full range of offers so referrals aren't triaged appropriately.
- I think I am more aware of the problems in the systems but this does not really make me feel more effective.
- It is great to have face to face training as online can be technically tricky to rely on. Discussions support reflection which is often what we do not have time to do.
- I hold meetings late in the evenings to accommodate working parents.
- It is a continual and evolving learning that gives confidence and therefore leads to better practice, improving outcomes for children.
- Making sure any concerns, no matter how small/trivial, are noted and shared with appropriate colleagues. [In response to the statement about changes in practice].
- I am able to advise colleagues on correct procedure and what to do with concerns. Was able to give updates to colleagues and keep them informed of current practice e.g. put together current sheets for noting concerns, for example body parts maps.
- Understand remit of role.
- Regular DSL meetings to ensure continuing support and development.
- Building communications pathways to ensure all staff feel confident sharing information properly.
- Excellent preparation for new roles and responsibilities.
- I have invited parents in to meet with me about a disclosure and knew how to address the concern. I did not have the knowledge and confidence before the training.
- Attending the training with colleagues from a range of agencies gave me the opportunity to discuss their roles and responsibilities and share best practice.
- It is important to know how the professionals get involved in the process of resolving a case. The 'hands-on' training (2nd module) was particularly useful to understand this.
- The training has increased my knowledge and skills, especially the core group and conference training because it used role play and gave a specific example to work through.
- With Signs of Safety, the danger statement allows me to really home in to my main concerns so I can concentrate on getting the support the family needs.
- I have set up weekly meetings with the DSL team so that communication is improved and specific cases can be reviewed.
- The restructuring of services leads to confusion.

Themes and concluding remarks

It is clear that professionals feel confident in identifying needs and escalating concerns. They state that training familiarises them with policies, procedures and tools which in turn enables them to engage better with families to understand their needs. It also increases their confidence in dealing

with concerns or disclosures. This, in principle, is one of the intended learning outcomes of the SSCB foundation training. However, it raises the question about where concerns are escalated to. The latest OFSTED inspection report of children's services comments on 'too many unnecessary low-level contacts and referrals, overloading social workers in the multi-agency safeguarding group (MASH).'¹ It also highlights poor understanding and application of thresholds by agencies as the reason for that. In light of the new 'Effective Family Resilience' document, which redefines the levels of need and thresholds for referrals, it is important that the SSCB offers workshops to familiarise practitioners with the process of escalating concerns and how to refer cases in for statutory services. This ties in with the acknowledged need by practitioners for practical examples of 'what a good MARF' looks like. In other words, the workshops should focus on working through case scenarios at different levels of need and asking participants to complete a MARF where necessary.

Following from the above, it seems that whereas practitioners highlight the benefits of training in increasing their skills and confidence, there does not seem to be significant feedback on the response to concerns and support to children and families. This is not to say that it does not happen or that the quality of it is poor. Rather it highlights the gap in training around early help and the lead professional role. The OFSTED inspection report also stressed that 'not enough children are helped by lead professionals in universal services.' Whereas training on early help assessments and lead professional role was available, this ceased in February 2017 and there has not been any offer on early help training at multi-agency level since. It is necessary to re-introduce early help multi-agency training in conjunction with workshops on thresholds to ensure that practitioners have the understanding, skills and confidence to effectively form teams around families and provide support at the earliest possible stage. This can in turn reduce the number of children who require statutory interventions.

Finally, another theme that emerged from this focus group was around confusion among practitioners due to frequent changes and restructures within Surrey. Those changes refer to a variety of agencies as well as practice models. The solution would again be a series of frequent workshops to front-line practitioners and first line managers within the partnership to communicate the changes and introduce new structures and practice models. In addition, enhanced communications between and within agencies during times of rapid transformation would help keep up the momentum for change while ensuring that practitioners would remain motivated because they would have clarity about changes and feel included in them.

To conclude, whereas there will always be areas for improvement, SSCB training is overall valued by partners and front-line practitioners and significantly contributes to upskilling practitioners and improving practice within the Surrey children's workforce.

Anastasia Drenou-Aslam
August 2018

¹ Surrey County Council: [Re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers](#), 16 May 2018

Appendix 1

**EVALUATION AND IMPACT ANALYSIS OF SSCB TRAINING
FOCUS GROUP MEETING, 08/06/2018 (QUADRANT COURT, WOKING)**

Name	
Organisation	
Role	
SSCB courses attended	

Please answer the questions below. We would be grateful if you used examples from your practice to support your comments.

Question 1

The training has increased my knowledge and skills when working with children, young people and families. **Yes** **No**

Please comment and provide examples.

Appendix 1

Question 2

I have made changes to my practice in response to what I have learned on the training.

Yes **No**

Please comment and provide examples.

Question 3

The training has improved my confidence when working with children, young people and families. **Yes** **No**

Please comment and provide examples.

Appendix 1

Question 4

I believe I am more effective in my role as a direct result of this training.

Yes **No**

Please comment and provide examples.

Question 5

I believe SSCB training has enhanced multi-agency working and understanding of professionals' roles to improve outcomes for children and families. **Yes** **No**

Please comment and provide examples.

Thank you! Your help is much appreciated.

SSCB Training Team