

# Appendix A CPD Qualitative Evaluation Report

## 1. Introduction

This evaluation aimed to provide an in-depth picture of the reactions to, learning from, and experiences of applying their learning in practice from a sample of social workers and managers who had attended four of the new CPD courses and programmes developed by the SELTP. The programmes selected were: the Aspiring Leaders Programme, the Practice Supervisors Programme, the Practice Endorsement Programme and the Reflective Supervision course.

### ***1.1 Evaluation questions***

The following evaluation questions were based on the overall aims of the CPD activities developed by the SELTP: From the perspective of a sample of the participants:

- What has worked well or not so well in the organisation of the programmes?
- What, if anything, have they learned from the programmes?
- To what extent have the programmes helped participants improve their capacity to provide reflective supervision?
- To what extent have the programmes helped participants use coaching and mentoring approaches to develop and support practitioners?
- Have the programmes enabled participants to make robust judgements, including direct observation, about the quality of social workers' practice?
- How far have the programmes supported participants to strengthen use of evidence-informed practice?
- Have the programmes supported participants to use the KSS and the PCF to develop and support themselves and others?
- How far have participants been able to identify and achieve their own goals?
- How far have the participants been supported to embed their learning into practice?

## **1.2 Interview and analysis procedure**

Three interviewers (one of the SELTP research and development officers, a senior practitioner from within the SELTP and a PHD student from Goldsmiths) conducted the semi-structured telephone interviews, which took place 3-7 months after the training. (Due to delays in scheduling the final day, the Practice Endorsement programme had not been completed at the point of the interviews, but this gave us the opportunity to present and discuss the findings on the final day.) Interviews were transcribed and analysed line-by-line using a template based on the research questions with new categories developed where needed. Initial analysis was undertaken by each of the three interviewers with the overall analysis conducted by Anna Fairtlough, the author of this report.

## **1.3 Ethics**

Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and were given written information about the study beforehand. They all gave written consent. The CPD Evaluation Plan gives more information about our initial plans, the consent form and the interview schedule.

## **1.4 Sample**

In total 55 practitioners attended the Reflective Supervision course, 27 the Aspiring Leaders Programme, 12 the Practice Endorsement Programme, and 28 the Practice Supervisors' Programme. We selected a first sample of 24 participants, two from each borough in the partnership from each of the different cohorts of the above programmes. Within these parameters the sample was chosen at random. However, it proved difficult to recruit participants to the study and setting up interviews took considerably more time than expected. When a selected participant refused consent (2), had not responded after several reminders (18) or had left their post or was unavailable through sickness (8) an additional participant within the above groups was selected, with a total sample of 41 participants approached. This meant that in the end we interviewed 13 participants, who had attended a total of 15 of the programmes.

**Table 1 Number of courses/programmes attended, interviews and participants:**

Aspiring Leaders	Practice Supervisors	Practice Endorsement	Reflective Supervision	Total numbers of interviews with participants
<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 (two of whom had attended another programme)</b>	<b>13 practitioners were interviewed attending total of 15 courses/programmes</b>

Lewisham	Southwark	Royal Greenwich
<b>4</b>	<b>5 (one of whom attended two courses /programmes)</b>	<b>5 (one of whom attended two courses /programmes)</b>

### ***1.5 Decision not to interview participants' managers***

Our original intention was, where possible and where the participants gave their permission, to speak to their managers. However, given the length of time it took to recruit participants and the lack of response from the first group of senior managers who were approached we decided not to continue with this strand of the evaluation.

## **2. Aspiring Leaders Programme**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

This was a programme delivered by the Centre for Action Learning Facilitation. It comprised a one-day induction, six one-day workshops, two telephone coaching sessions and two days study leave. Participants were given an opportunity to submit a work-based assignment that would lead to a Level 5 ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) Award in Leadership. Three participants were interviewed.

## **2.2 Reactions to the programme**

**2.2.1** Participants identified a number of positive aspects of the programme and some areas for improvement.

**2.2.2** Motivations for coming on the programme were varied. One of the participants was a newly promoted manager who felt that the programme was well matched to his learning needs.

***‘Particularly for me just coming in to a new management role...I think the training matched where I was in terms of my career and my development.’ (Participant 1)***

The other two participants were in senior practitioner/deputy team manager roles both looking to progress their career.

***‘The next step would be team manager ... I thought actually some training or more guidance around what to expect and strategies and tactics would be useful.’ (Participant 2)***

***‘I have been in my current role for a number of years...and I just felt it was time to start thinking about next steps and I think a leadership position...so I thought that this, this course would be, would be a good opportunity to, kind of look at my skills in that area.’ (Participant 3)***

## **2.3 Components of the course that worked well**

**2.3.1** The participants valued having the opportunity to meet with a variety of people from different local authorities and services to share ideas and experiences. They thought that the group were encouraged to learn from each other and apply the strategies and tools to their own practice context. One participant specifically mentioned action learning as being an important component of this as it enabled the programme to focus on what was of most use to the participants.

***‘Learning through the peers and action learning... the days that were more interactive and varied were definitely more – most useful, I think.’ (Participant 3)***

**2.3.2** All three participants welcomed the opportunity to reflect on different theories about leadership and management and to consider their own leadership style, strengths and areas for development.

***‘We could think a bit about leadership and management as a whole, rather than just the day-to-day of the stuff that we deal with... actually, what is the purpose of leadership and how can we better develop things.’ (Participant 1)***

***‘I think for me it was being reflective about my kind of leadership style, my personality type and my strengths and sometimes my weaknesses as well.’ (Participant 2)***

***‘I think learning about the theory and the styles (of) ... leadership and how you know, actually under massive pressure, how you can still be a good leader and speaking about actually the differences between being a leader and a manager and how actually they are quite separate.’ (Participant 3)***

**2.3.3** The wide range of tools and self- evaluation questionnaires provided in the programme were valued. The following were noted as being particularly helpful: ways to motivate staff; understanding different staff members’ practice levels, learning styles and needs; thinking about team dynamics and development; and supporting staff to embrace change.

**2.3.4** One participant noted that the use of imagery (e.g. ‘pillars of leadership’) and video was helpful as it was congruent with her ‘visual’ learning style. This participant also valued the short readings that were made available in the handbook.

## **2.4 Components that worked less well or could be improved**

**2.4.1** One participant thought that the content of the programme was too generic and insufficiently geared towards social work

***‘I think one of my kind of broader criticisms, if you like, is that there wasn't – the learning was specific to social work, but not as much... there were kind of broader issues like anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice... they weren't integral.’ (Participant 2)***

**2.4.2** Another participant thought there was too long between the end of the programme and the due date for the assignment and suggested that the assignment due date be brought forward.

**2.4.3** This participant also discussed the pros and cons of how the programme was structured but in the end did not strongly propose that this be changed.

***‘We’d have two days on the course in a row.... It’s hard in the context of the work being away from the office for two days...but it’s beneficial in the sense that having two days in a row helps you really get into the frame of mind of thinking about the course. So, I guess it kind of has its pluses and minuses, really.’***

**2.4.4** One participant thought that senior managers could have demonstrated more explicit support and endorsement of the programme.

## **2.5 Embedding of KSS/PCF and research**

**2.5.1** Two participants reported that the KSS and the PCF were brought into the programme to some extent and that it was useful to have the time to think about how these frameworks related to one’s own and others’ professional development. However one felt this was rather limited.

**2.5.2** None of the participants discussed how the programme had used research or helped them integrate use of research into their leadership practice.

## **2.6 Application to practice**

**2.6.1** Participants identified a number of ways they had been able to apply the learning. They felt that the programme had been useful in helping them assess and meet their individual learning goals. For instance, one commented that:

***‘Doing the assignment itself has given me a chance to really reflect on how much I’ve learnt, but also thinking about how I could be applying it more.’ (Participant 3)***

**2.6.2** All three participants cited changes to their supervision practice.

***‘I’ve brought some of the things that we talked about into individual supervision with staff to help think about how I can better support staff and help develop my role... How to better understand the kind of interplay between peoples’ motivations and the work that they’re doing.’ (Participant 1)***

Another described how she was now paying more attention to focusing supervision on enabling professional growth as well as supporting social workers in their day-to-day tasks.

***‘How you change your supervision to really try and ...improve performance, but also sort of assist the person in their own kind of career development, if you like and it, it being, it being more – your role is more about assisting that person with where they’re***

***at, rather than just making sure they're, they're getting the job that they're doing now right.'* (Participant 2)**

The third participant thought she had developed her confidence in being more directive with a member of staff who was experiencing difficulties.

***'I have implemented things within my own supervision with my supervisee and she's someone who's been struggling quite a lot at work, so actually we've put forward an action plan and we've made, you know, very SMART goals.'***

**2.6.3** Participants also identified ways they are working differently within their team to understand and better promote team functioning, change and development.

***'I've also been more aware, I think, in work about how I communicate and how I might come across ... and thinking about people's individual needs, rather than just kind of going along with what I was assuming before.... (I've made) recommendations and suggestions about how we can maybe make the team sort of happier and work more cohesively. (Participant 3)***

***'We've done an exercise on like finding out about the team, team dynamics, you know, the personalities involved in the team and how the, how the team operates, so that's been quite positive.'* (Participant 2)**

This participant considered that, although she was not in a management position, she was now more confident about exercising distributed leadership within her own team.

***'I'm better able to kind of lead on if there's, if there's an issue, I'll – I'm able to kind of gain a consensus from the team and kind of take that forward and I'm a lot more confident about that and I'm a lot more, I'm a lot more clear on actually I can lead without being the team leader or the manager, I can, you know lead within my role.'***

## **2.7 Support to embed learning into practice**

**2.7.1** Two of the participants felt that they had been well supported by their immediate manager to participate in the programme and develop their leadership practice afterwards. One reported that he had been given protected time to attend the course and complete the assignment. The third participant did not feel particularly well supported, conjecturing that this may be because her manager has not attended management training herself.

***'I think my manager means well, but a lot of the time ... things they're not followed through on. So it'll be like, oh that's a great idea, but then when you're trying to push it forward or take ownership, make it happen, she will say actually no, I should be***

***doing that or I should be a part of that and that obviously causes a delay and then it doesn't really happen.'***

**2.7.2** However, a number of other barriers were also raised. The sheer pressure of work meant it was not always possible to take time to reflect.

***'You have good intentions but often emergency situations come up. And you're not always able to kind of spend the time thinking perhaps about the more leadership oriented, the more managerial side of things when you're often quite crisis led, in terms of what we're dealing with.'*** (Participant 1)

**7.3** Another participant (2) identified that there were aspects of the culture of her organisation that meant that there was not always a 'subject climate' that was conducive to making full use of the learning from the programme. Although she could better recognise what needed to change she did not feel that she had the power to initiate this change. This was frustrating at times.

***'I can kind of better identify what's happening through having done the course, but I'm not able to kind of change those things... I think the course helped me to kind of think of strategies ... where, where to go with, with – you know, I've - I now find out this information, now what shall I do with it, you know, but I've tried to do that, but I feel like the response has been a little bit like well you're just a senior social worker.'***

This has made her acutely aware of the importance of senior leadership and the need for congruence between the organisational culture and vision and what is being learned on the training.

***'It's made me aware of the need, the senior leadership, like the, the people at the very top to kind of have a, have a shared vision with how we could go about doing things and...And I suppose I've recognised where the shortcomings in my organisation are.'***

## **2.8 Conclusion and recommendations**

**2.8.1** Generally those interviewed welcomed the opportunity the programme had given them to learn more about leadership theory and practice and to use a range of useful tools and techniques. Participants felt that they had been able to use the programme to take stock of their own strengths and areas for development.

**2.8.2** The visual, experiential teaching and learning approaches were appreciated. A shorter gap between the end of the programme and the assignment hand-in date would have been helpful.

**2.8.3** Participants were able to give some specific examples of how they had used the programme to develop their supervision practice and to work more effectively within their work teams.

**2.8.4** One participant thought that the programme could have been more explicitly rooted in social work practice and values.

**2.8.5** Further visible senior leadership endorsement of the programme would be valuable in the future, which may enhance congruence between organisational culture and programme aims.

**2.8.6** There was little evidence that the programme explicitly supported the use of evidence-informed practice.

## **3 Practice Supervisors programme**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This was a programme delivered by the Centre for Action Learning Facilitation. It comprised a one-day induction, eight one-day workshops, two telephone coaching sessions and four days study leave. Participants were given an opportunity to submit two work-based assignments that would lead to a Level 5 ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) Certificate in Leadership. It was designed for staff currently in practice supervisor or leader roles and so geared for those with more experience. Three participants were interviewed.

### **3.2 Reactions to the programme**

**3.2.1** All three participants had had considerable practice supervision experience prior to coming onto the programme. They were eager to make use of this opportunity because, as one of them put it, ‘opportunities for training linked to practice supervising are ...quite few and far between’. A desire to gain a qualification did not come out strongly amongst their accounts. One participant put it like this:

***‘The key thing that I wanted was to think about the quality of my supervision... I don't think any of us necessarily went for it because it had a qualification attached. I think we all went for it, because we are interested and invested in improving our leadership...for my team and for my service. (Participant 2)***

**3.2.2** Participants reported very diverse views about and experiences of this programme. One participant was almost entirely positive, whereas the other two were positive about some aspects of the programme but very negative about others.

For instance, participant 1 reported:

***'It came at the right time for me...it was very appropriate to where I was up to and what was going on for me.'***

Whereas participant 2 had this to say:

***'I say, unfortunately I, I could not recommend this course....Some of it was really useful, but there was a chunk of it that just didn't meet my needs on a more general basis and you know, I wouldn't want someone else to commit to something and not find it useful.'***

### **3.3 Components of the course that worked well**

**3.3.1** Participant 1 was highly positive about virtually all aspects of the programme. For her one of the strongest elements was the opportunity to work with a variety of other people doing similar work from across her organisation and the partnership:

***'That was interesting....Finding out how they were working and what they were doing and I think the opportunity of doing group work, sharing ideas and... it was quite a close-knit group really and we had some really good relationships and sort of tight relationships with each other.'***

This meant that she was able to learn from other managers in a really helpful way:

***'When I see...another manager do something in a slightly different way, thinking about what that looks like and if that looks like it could be successful and what I could learn from that and use.'***

**3.3.2** This participant felt that the facilitators were 'prepared and organised' and 'did a brilliant job'. This included both the more didactic elements and the action learning sets.

***'I think the facilitators are absolutely brilliant. In terms of the programme, in terms of how it was put together, in terms of, being able to meet learning needs and let us have our views and opinions.'***

**3.3.3** All three participants appreciated having opportunities to reflect on their practice, evaluate their own strengths and areas for development and being introduced to a range of theories, concepts and tools to help them in their practice supervision work.

***'Having an awareness of different management styles and the theories around it. It really sort of opened up my eyes...a lot more aware really of what other people were doing and whether***

*it was working and if I thought it was successful. So, it's like developed a huge awareness for me.'* (Participant 1)

*'The first day where we were doing the, you know, your emotional intelligence questionnaires and sort of looking at yourself as a leader. I think that was the sort of most important part, really. So, you know, reflecting on yourself as a leader and understanding yourself.'* (Participant 3)

*'I wanted time to reflect and because of, you know, the information, the first three days... I do feel that I got quite a lot out of it.'* (Participant 2)

**3.3.4** All three participants found the one-to-one coaching sessions valuable.

*'I think there's sort of ample opportunity that if you were struggling and you wanted to put something in place, then actually you could use one of the tutors to actually be able to unpick that.'* (Participant 1)

*'What was really useful was the coaching sessions. They were really, really good, because I could think specifically about my learning, my leadership style, what I wanted to progress and how I wanted to progress my team, how I wanted to develop.'* (Participant 2)

*'We had a mentor that phoned us up and we had the sort of reflective sessions. That person was really helpful to me and I did tell her that was how I was feeling.'* (Participant 3)

### **3.4 Components that worked less well or could be improved**

**3.4.1** As highlighted above there were very diverse views about this. Participant 1's only criticism of the programme was the amount of printing and photocopying that she had to do.

**3.4.2** However, participant 2 was disappointed that the programme was not as attuned to social work as she would have liked:

*'The first three days was very much about leadership theory and there was some.. but potentially not enough application of that to social work practice and.. use of it in supervision. That probably could have been more specific or more useful.'*

**3.4.3** Both participants 2 and 3 had major criticisms of the way in which the action learning had been introduced and facilitated. One participant was at pains to point out that it was not action learning 'per se' that she was critical of – indeed she had been involved in facilitating an experiential learning group

herself for some time – but the way in which it had been used in this programme.

***‘The second three days were about action learning, which I kind of maybe hadn't read...or didn't understand enough about and those three days were not as useful as the first three.’ (Participant 2)***

***‘I also didn't find the actual action learning set that I was in very useful or productive.’ (Participant 3)***

The participants thought that the transition into the action-learning phase had not been well facilitated.

***‘It started off really well...the looking at ourselves but, I didn't feel that we got onto the next stage, which was about how you develop yourself.....I didn't think there was enough about exploring how we may be able to develop ourselves as leaders. I felt it was very much more about, right okay, so you've explored yourself but now here's action learning and get on with it.’ (Participant 3)***

***‘The expectation was that we would – we'd launch straight into action learning groups, when actually most of us didn't even know what action learning was.’ (Participant 2)***

They thought that action learning as a method and technique, and its theoretical foundations, had not been clearly enough explained.

***‘We went straight into the action learning set and without knowing any of the background to it.....The thing is, we are social workers, we are very hot on the theory and reflective practice and things like that...It is our learning style, we look at theory, we reflect on theory. We take the theories that mean the most to us, in terms of our day-to-day practice and then we then might put it into practice.’ (Participant 3)***

These two participants also had some very specific criticisms of their action-learning facilitator.

***‘Our facilitator...basically, took over the action learning set too much, I felt. And never let us sort of develop our own styles. It was their way or no way. And even so much so that in the end they ended up presenting their own problem and it wasn't us presenting our problem. And I felt that we were learning more about that facilitator's personal life and journey...than our own.’ (Participant 3)***

This acted as deterrent to completing the second assignment:

***‘One of the tutors was also part of the assessment of the assignments.... it felt that actually it was very difficult to kind of question or criticise.’ (Participant 2)***

**3.4.4** These two participants also criticised the assessment process and outcomes. Both participants expressed concern about the high number of people in their organisation who had not passed the first assignment on first submission. For participant 3 this had been a profoundly demoralising experience (though she acknowledged some relief that she was not the only one) and this had been one of the factors leading to her withdrawal from the programme. She felt that the requirements of the assignment had not been clearly enough explained. She was puzzled about why she had not reached the required standard, given that she had already successfully completed M level modules at Goldsmiths. She felt that the programme could be taught and assessed more effectively by staff at the university.

***‘I felt completely deskilled and, you know, demotivated....I felt, okay, maybe it wasn’t the best assignment but, to be honest, it was supposed to be an assignment of what you took from it (the programme) and your reflection and I just felt a little bit that it was almost like, well okay, that might be your reflection but that’s not good enough. And I just feel, well, actually it’s a very personal thing...so I feel that actually it wasn’t a reflective essay, it was an academic essay. And I think that that’s what they wanted us to do. Was to produce an academic essay as opposed to a reflective essay.’***

Participant 2 made some similar points, speaking both on her own behalf and articulating her beliefs about how other people in the group felt.

***‘I think the assignments have been a particular frustration, the way other people that are doing it have shared.... It can get to the point where you're thinking I don't know if this is worth the amount of time and effort I'm putting into - it is not being recognised and I don't know if it's worth doing.... you don't actually get any time to do any resubmissions, so fitting those in is really difficult.’***

### **3.5 Embedding of KSS/PCF and research**

**3.5.1** For one of the participants the embedding of the KSS and PCF was a useful and noteworthy part of the programme. The course helped her make the link between these practice frameworks and her management approach. It raised her awareness and understanding of how to help staff use these frameworks to think about their practice. However, the other two participants either did not remember this element of the programme or did not find it useful.

**3.5.2** None of the participants discussed how the programme had used research or helped them integrate use of research into their leadership or supervision practice.

### **3.6 Application to practice**

**3.6.1** Participants gave a variety of responses when invited to reflect on how they had used the learning from the programme. Participant 1 could identify a number of positive outcomes. It had helped crystallise for her the importance of supervision and by using some of the tools provided on the programme she had received some valuable feedback from her supervisees and others.

***'It's just made me aware of what I'm doing and how I work with people and how I try and get the best out of people and if I'm not getting the best out of people, what can I do in a different way to actually generate that motivation. You make sure that your supervision's good quality because it all has a real knock on effect in terms of the work that you're doing....From being on the course, it really pulled everything together... So, it's three hundred and sixty degree learning really, which is quite valuable and interesting'***

**3.6.2** Participant 2, despite her serious reservations about the programme was also able to identify a number of positive outcomes for her supervision practice. In particular, she was able to use her coaching session to make an action plan to help her ask for what she needed in her own supervision and also improve the supervision she was able to offer to others. She had also created a new supervision template that had made her recording of supervision more specific and accessible.

***'I was able to explore in those individual sessions...what areas I didn't feel confident in, why I didn't feel confident in those and how I could then make sure... that I was getting the supervision that I need... A lot of my learning and my development was about the supervision I provide – what I get, but also supervision I provide. So I was also able to kind of create... some better quality recording of those, but also to get better feedback from team members on their experience of my supervision, so that we can kind of explore, what – if anything needs to be different or if anything they, they want more – so yes, I think it was a combination of me making sure that I got what I needed, but also that I was providing what my team needed.'***

She thought she is now taking more a conscious approach to being available for reflection and supporting the emotional well being of staff within and outside of supervision.

***'I think there was a combination of making sure that there's enough time for reflection and emotional wellbeing of the worker – obviously there needs to be a certain level of case management***

***– but maybe some of that case management can be done outside of a supervision session.’***

She has also instituted some changes at team meetings that she feels have been valuable.

***‘We start now with a check in, so everyone will either – just see how people are after anything that's been difficult, that they want to share or anything that's really positive...so we've got regular opportunity to celebrate... and then what we try and do more often is have a case discussion or a space for case discussion and reflection that can be presented by a member of the team, so there's encouragement of peer and group supervision and reflection.’***

**3.6.3** The third participant was, perhaps because she was still feeling raw about her experiences of the programme, was not at the time of the interview able to identify any particular outcomes for her own practice from attending the programme. Nonetheless she had found it useful to have the opportunity to think about herself as a leader.

### **3.7 Support to embed learning into practice**

**3.7.1** All three participants thought that their organisation had supported them to attend the programme and were generally supportive of staff's continual professional development.

**3.7.2** Participant 1 had some very positive things to say about the way she had been supported by the organisation to put her learning into practice. Firstly by her supervisees who welcomed her bringing back the learning into the team, secondly by her peer group of managers and finally by her service manager who was particularly interested in her development. She felt that the culture that was being developed in her service was very much in line with the learning she was taking from the programme.

***‘Yeah, well support from my colleagues, who I manage because they're interested in what I was learning and what I was doing.....So, I'd come back, and I'd say, this is what I've done and what do you think about this, they were supportive and supportive with the questionnaire. My peer group of team managers were supportive as well because they, I think I was on the training with two of them. So, we were sharing ideas and letting the other team managers know and also my service manager was really interested in what was going on...and if I needed any extra support and do I need any time to do anything. So, yes, everybody was very supportive in terms of being able to put things in place.’***

**3.7.3** Participant 2 felt that the programme had helped her clarify what she needed from her line manager, who had been able to take this on board and had given her opportunities to discuss her learning on the programme.

***‘What I was able to do was, was explore some of this...within my supervision, I was expected to bring back feed back on, on what we'd been learning and what – how, I was kind of using it within, within my area.’***

**3.7.4** As for the other programmes in this evaluation participants, identified that the day-to-day pressures at work sometimes made it difficult to find the time for reflective practice. Participants reported that, although they welcomed having study days, this was still not enough time to complete the assignments, and this meant that they had to use their own time to do this.

***‘My head is full of social work and you get pulled in so many different directions...To be able to undertake and achieve your job and that is stuff to take priority. So, you know, you stop to do your assignment and your head is still in the place of work. It takes a while to, to be able to cut off from that.’ (Participant 1)***

### **3.8 Conclusion and recommendations**

**3.8.1** What is striking about the feedback on this programme is the diversity of opinions expressed about its value, with some extremely positive views and others quite negative.

**3.8.2** One participant thought that the programme could have been more explicitly rooted in social work practice supervision and leadership rather than, as she perceived it, in generic leadership and management concepts and practices.

**3.8.3** All three participants considered that the early part of the programme where theoretical perspectives were discussed and some self-evaluation and practice supervision tools introduced had been useful. The one-to-one coaching was also positively evaluated. There was divergence of views about the value of the action-learning component, with two people strongly critical about this. One possible explanation of this could be that there were different cohorts and action learning sets with different personnel delivering the various components.

**3.8.4** Again as for other programmes there was little evidence that the programme had explicitly supported the use of evidence-informed practice.

**3.8.5** The high proportion of people who did not pass their first submission is of great concern, both because of the damaging and demoralising effect on the individuals but also because it seems the requirements of the assignment had not been articulated sufficiently clearly and, at least as far as was possible to tell from the data presented, it did not seem to be an effective way to gauge the candidates' learning and development.

**3.8.6** In general, participants thought that they had been well enough supported by their organisations to participate in the programme, though, unsurprisingly, the pressure of day-to-day work was a barrier to full engagement. Two out of the three participants were able to give an impressive description of how they had used the programme to develop their practice supervision and leadership.

**3.8.7** It seems that there were a number of positive features of the programme, which for two of the participants were outweighed by the negative features. Nonetheless, a clear need and desire for a programme for experienced practice supervisors was expressed. If the programme is to run again a substantial review of the teaching, learning and assessment strategies is indicated. It would be helpful if senior managers within the SELTP were to be involved in that.

## **4. Practice Endorsement**

**4.1** SELTP has worked with Skills for Care to develop a four-day training programme for experienced practitioners wishing to develop their skills in direct observation and practice assessment or endorsement as it has been termed in the NAAS. This programme was conceived as contributing to the development of a pool of social workers with the capability to act as practice endorsers for the NAAS. However, not all the practitioners who attended the programme were from children's services, so the programme had a generic focus as well as a specific application to implementing the NAAS. During the development of the programme the conclusion of the consultation on the NAAS was published, and subsequently full roll out was delayed. This led to something of a policy vacuum in terms of the purposes of the programme as originally conceived. Particular features of the programme included the development of paperwork to use for the practice endorsement process and the provision of devices so each participant could video record practice securely and ethically. Skills for Care were seen to have particular expertise in the legal, ethical and technological issues surrounding video recording of social work practice given that they have been involved in a major national project on the topic. The hope was that having a video recording of practice would both be an educational tool to use with practitioners and would also support moderation of endorsement decision making and report writing.

**4.2** Four participants were interviewed. At the time of the interviews the final day (which had been postponed) had not yet taken place. This gave us an opportunity to report the results with the whole group. There was general agreement that the findings accurately represented their range of views and experiences.

### ***4.3 Reactions to the course***

**4.3.1** All four participants reported that they had welcomed the opportunity to reflect on and develop practice supervision and endorsement skills with a group of colleagues from across the partnership. Generally the programme

was seen as relevant to their job role, pitched at the right level and appropriate for people with varying degrees of experience in practice supervision.

***‘Being able to meet other people from other boroughs and having learning through the interactions and discussions.’ (Participant 4)***

***‘I’m really enjoying it. It’s been a really good, thought-provoking course.’ (Participant 2)***

**4.3.2** There was strong support for the value of direct observation as a tool to support and assess staff, and to improve and quality assure practice.

***‘The thing that interested me was the use of direct observation in the supervision and development of staff and the course has had some really interesting discussions around that and the role of direct observation of staff, and it’s been really thought provoking and interesting.’ (Participant 2)***

This participant went on to say that direct observation adds another dimension to a social worker self-reporting about their practice.

***‘I think direct observation is really effective.... in that doesn’t just depend on how you write about yourself, but it’s how others see you.’***

Another participant particularly valued how direct observation enables her to give specific, concrete feedback to social workers that she supervises, which is rooted in direct evidence that she has observed.

***‘For example, to the person I supervise, I can actually give very concrete information. I can say, I actually observed you talking with the service user. ...Or the thing that you said, I find it very helpful. So I can actually quote examples.’ (Participant 1)***

Another compared social work unfavourably with other occupational groups, arguing that social work should focus more attention on the skills involved in direct practice.

***‘This is the thing that we just don’t do – we don’t look at our practice, you know. Plumbers and welders and horse riders and sports people or whatever they look at what they do, do they? They look at their practice and they look back and they talk about it and sports people look at their goals over and over again, don’t they?’ (Participant 3)***

**4.3.3** However, the participants gave somewhat mixed feedback about the programme as a whole. Some aspects worked well but there were difficulties with others, particularly with the use of the video technology.

## **4.4 Components of the course that worked well**

**4.4.1** Participants reported that the programme had provided emotional support, enhanced their skills, and boosted their confidence in their role as practice supervisors and endorsers responsible for making judgements about others' practice. One participant noted that the self-evaluation questionnaire she had completed at the beginning of the programme had been a valuable tool.

**4.4.2** Positive comments were made about the trainers' knowledge and skills in the area. Participants felt well supported by SELTP staff who had been helpful if problems emerged.

**4.4.3** The interactive elements of the programme were felt to be useful. One participant particularly valued the use of role-play as a learning tool during the programme and found that the specific feedback that a colleague had given him to be very helpful. Here, the learning method used directly reflects the skills that the programme seeks to develop.

*'The session where we role-played was really interesting.... So, I had a really good bit of feedback from someone who actually works within our organisation. And our colleague was videoing us. And it was really interesting .....there was a particular point where the conversation had been challenging. And he said, the thing you didn't say was you acknowledged the behaviour and the body language. And I thought, that's so true... So, I've really taken that on. You know, the organisational behaviour, how people behave, don't be afraid, you know, the stuff you will pick up from a video or pick up from an observation. Don't be afraid to just name that. So yes, that was really helpful. So, I think we've got real potential as a group but we just need the raw materials now and we bring our videos back to look at each other.'*

*(Participant 3)*

## **4.5 Components that worked less well or could be improved**

**4.5.1** Participants reflected that if the purpose of the programme had been to contribute to the development of their organisation's response to the NAAS then the wider political context had not been supportive of that aim.

*'The national political context ... so we had a bit of a fall off, which was unexpected.'* *(Participant 3)*

*'I think one of the problems with the course has been that it's not set within a really clear context because we don't know how it's going to be implemented. We don't quite know what the government's saying in terms of social work learning and development. We don't know if people are definitely going to have*

***to do this every year, so there's a vagueness around that.'***  
***(Participant 2)***

**4.5.2** Participants expressed a good deal of frustration about the video technology. There had been significant delays in the equipment becoming available and then some of the passwords that had been issued did not work. At the time of the interviews not all of the participants had been supplied with the means to undertake a video recorded direct observation.

**4.5.3** Some criticism was also made of the forms that had been developed by Skills for Care. Although it was useful to have a structure for feedback from the direct observation, the forms were described as sometimes being repetitive and confusing. They would benefit from being condensed. Participants feared that the forms as they stand might deter others from conducting direct observations at all.

***'It needs to be something achievable and not daunting for managers to achieve.'*** ***(Participant 1)***

**4.5.4** One of the participants would have liked the trainers to orient them as to the purpose and outcomes of each day rather than just at the beginning of the programme.

***'They did say, to start, these are the things we are going to cover. But I think maybe some kind of reminder, by the end of the day, have we achieved this or have we not achieved this. ...So then I know that's for today, that's what I was supposed to learn. But by the second day, I totally forgot what we were supposed to do or what we were supposed to learn. It might be just me who is the type that needs a very clear system or something to remind me.'***  
***(Participant 1)***

## **4.6 Embedding of research and KSS/PCF**

**4.6.1** As for the other programmes in this evaluation the development of evidence-informed practice did not feature strongly in the accounts of these participants.

**4.6.2** Participants reported that the KSS and PCF had been integrated well into the programme. For some, this had been a valuable component in that they had been supported to understand better how these standards could be used to make judgements about practice. One participant reported that he finds the KSS more attuned to childcare practice than the PCF. The programme had supported him to embed the KSS in his supervision and appraisals.

Nonetheless, another view was expressed by one of the participants. She found the different standards confusing and would very much like there to be just one set of standards with which to assess practice.

## 4.7 Application to practice

**4.7.1** All four participants reported being motivated to make use of the learning opportunities to improve practice in their services and teams. All had used, or had plans to use, direct observation in their work with supervisees or mentees.

One had this to say:

***'I've been doing direct observations with my own team and using some of the ideas and some of the paperwork and also being more aware of some of the pitfalls and drawbacks of it. I just feel I've had time to think about it more properly and hopefully to do it better and to make sure it's a more useful process for everybody.'***  
(Participant 2)

Another reported that she had made it a goal to observe staff in her team at least once a year, and that she already made a start on doing this.

**4.7.2** However, at the point of the interviews, none of the participants had yet been able to video record one of their direct observations. This had resulted from a combination of practical and technological problems. One participant expressed a degree of frustration about the 'preciousness' of social work in terms of avoiding the use of technology to record their practice.

***'The computer is sitting in my locker right in front of me. I'm staring at it now. It's waiting to go..... As social workers, you know, we sometimes don't get off sitting on our hands and that is, quite rightly, something that people say about social workers. We have to be reflective, we have to be contemplative but, at some point, you've just got to act....And you've got to make mistakes. I know there's all this stuff around consent but ..... How many surgeons are there filming themselves cutting someone open? You know, yeah you do have to get consent and you have to do it as much as possible but, you know, police operations when they've got their cameras on. Do they need consent when they're out?'***  
(Participant 3)

## 4.8 Support to embed learning into practice

**4.8.1** There were somewhat mixed views about how far participants felt enabled by their organisations to embed their learning into practice. One participant commented that her manager had been particularly supportive.

***'Well, my manager was keen for me to go on the course...we've been talking about it in supervision and she's quite keen that I do something on it with other managers at my level when I've completed the course, to spread the thinking and learning as well.'*** (Participant 2)

However, she went on to make the point that she wasn't sure if this was the case in all services in her organisation. She stressed that if the programme is to be successful in the future the principles being taught need to be understood and promoted by staff at all levels, and to be championed by senior management.

**4.8.2** In contrast, another participant thought:

***'There hasn't been any particular departmental guidance on how I am expected to use my learning.'* (Participant 1)**

This had given her a free hand in how she has undertaken observations, which in some ways she appreciated. However, it has also meant that she wasn't sure if she had been doing it in the 'right' way. Although her direct manager had supported her application there had not been much in the way of discussion about the programme either in her supervision or in other forums in the department such as management meetings.

Another participant was also critical of how her organisation had engaged with the content of the programme. She believed:

***'There could be more support within the workplace as a whole to be able to put the learning into practice and to prioritise learning with more time.'* (Participant 4)**

## **4.9 Conclusions and recommendations**

**4.9.1** Participants were strongly supportive of the principle of using direct observation to support and develop staff and assure the quality of practice.

**4.9.2** In general, participants thought that the programme had enabled them to develop their understanding of and skills in using direct observation. Some specific suggestions for how the programme could be improved were made.

**4.9.3** All of the participants had used, or had plans to use, direct observation with staff they supervised.

**4.9.4** The video recording component of the training had been less successful. Considerable frustration about delays in being provided with functioning equipment was expressed. At the point of the interviews no video-recorded direct observations had yet been done.

**4.9.5** The wider political context and the delays in implementing the NAAS meant that it was difficult to get a clear picture of how practice endorsement would work. This had diminished the value of the programme in terms of supporting the implementation of the process.

**4.9.6** Participants reported varied degrees of support from their organisation for embedding their learning. Overall, although individual managers were

supportive, there was not a strong sense that organisations had developed policies to promote the use of direct observation or processes to work towards implementing practice endorsement.

**4.9.7** This programme has the potential to support organisations to roll out more wide spread use of direct observation and to become ready for practice endorsement in the NAAS. However, a review of the programme is warranted to ensure that it best meets the needs of participants and organisations to achieve these ends. Technological and consent issues need to be sorted. The forms that have been developed need to be reviewed. Further organisational and senior management ownership of the programme is indicated.

## **5. Reflective supervision course**

### **5.1 Reflective Supervision**

**5.1.1** this was a two-day course for those in practice supervisory roles delivered by Research in Practice (RIP). It was not formally assessed. Three participants were interviewed.

### **5.2 Reactions to the course**

**5.2.1** All three participants considered the course relevant to their job role and gave positive feedback about the quality of the trainer and the training.

***‘I took quite a lot from it as a whole’ (Participant 1).***

***‘I think the programme was good, I think the teacher was very good’ (Participant 3).***

**5.2.2** The participants valued the opportunity to reflect on their supervision practice and to be supported in what can often be a difficult role. During the course they were able to express and share how work pressures sometimes impinged on their capacity to provide good reflective supervision.

***‘It’s really very, very difficult to find the space to continue your learning because there’s so many demands do this, do that’ (Participant 2).***

**5.2.3** Although all three participants had considerable experience of practice supervision – one had been in the role for twenty years – they recognised that, given the huge pressure they are under, their supervision practice had become somewhat routine. The course had been helpful in reinvigorating this. Participants put it like this:

***‘Because you’ve only got so much time with each social worker you don’t go into much depth to be honest...reflective practice and learning is, it just becomes sort of rote.’ (Participant 3)***

***‘It sort of makes you enthused again when you get a bit stale. Quite often it is really difficult to take that space to look at the supervisees that we work with and their learning needs...and how best to develop and....encourage our workers’ (Participant 2)***

### **5.3 Components of the course that worked well**

**5.3.1** The role-play and in-depth discussions of particular supervisory situations were viewed as being particularly helpful.

***‘The role-play was about how to help someone think about an incident and how that helped their learning’ (Participant 1).***

***‘I think it's the reflective stuff and really prying into that was great (Participant 2).***

**5.3.2** Another found the psychodynamic framework the most valuable aspect of the course:

***‘The feelings and emotions side of reflection yes, I think it was a reminder that we do need address that and enable the social worker to get in touch with their feelings, which lessens the risk of burnout’ (Participant 3).***

**5.3.3** One practitioner found the range of practical tools that were provided to be particularly valuable. She reported that there was a strong focus on reflecting on one’s own development and making personal goals. She found the two-day structure useful and valued the gap between the training days to apply her learning. She also thought that, although this was not formally marked, doing a reflective account about her learning had been a useful task.

***‘The way it was structured, it was quite good in that it expected you to be doing work or thinking about the course until the next session. So it wasn’t just you go and you listen, and you go home....you are continuously trying to keep this in mind and embed it in your practice’ (Participant 1).***

### **5.4 Components that worked less well or could be improved**

**5.4.1** Generally there were few criticisms of the course. Two of the participants felt that some of the introductory part about setting up supervision, using supervision contracts etc. was a bit basic for them as they are experienced practice supervisors but they recognised that this would be needed for those with less experience. One participant would have liked a bit more input on working with difficult performance related issues. However, another participant felt that the course had been particularly helpful in managing precisely that issue.

## **5.5 Embedding of research and KSS/PCF**

**5.5.1** Although all three participants remembered that research about the positive value of reflective supervision had been discussed on the course, none had detailed recollections of this. One participant acknowledged that research did not feature much in her supervision practice, and although she was aware of the RIP(FA) resources she rarely used them. She felt that busy supervisors and practitioners did not have time to use research, describing it as a 'luxury'.

**5.5.2** Similarly, although all three participants noted that, there had been a discussion of the KSS and PCF standards, this was not a particularly valued feature of the course. Skills development was perceived to be more useful.

## **5.6 Application to practice**

**5.6.1** All three participants were able to give specific examples of how they were able to use the programme to reflect on and improve their reflective supervision practice. Two participants identified that they had been supported to use more of a coaching rather than a directive style with their supervisees.

***'You do have to make time to do it you do because it's difficult but it really is... quite beneficial to staff and instead of saying to save time ... I suggest you do this, this and this, I'm much more trying to make them more aware. What do you think you should do? How would you best learn to do it? How are you going to find those resources? Rather than giving the answers.'*** (Participant 2)

***'I think there was a lot of learning generally from the course that supervision is about asking questions and supporting staff to find out the answers themselves. Taking a minute to stop and say, well, what do you think is best and asking questions to support them to come up with an answer for themselves on casework, because that will then eventually reduce your time in them coming to you ...for advice, because they're more able to figure it out themselves.'*** (Participant 1)

**5.6.2** This participant also made the point that this style of working models how we would want a social worker to work with families.

***'If you're supporting a social worker to come up and problem solve themselves, they'll then go on and help families do the same. It was that modelling that you do in supervision and how you supervise people, to how then they can work with families.'***

**5.6.3** One participant considered that the course had been very timely because she was able to directly use the learning to address a specific dilemma with a member of staff with whom there were performance difficulties. She described it like this:

***'I was working with staff with performance difficulties and there were a few tools and exercises that came up around that...One was looking at if there are difficulties, what are they from and looking at whether it's motivation.... whether it's workload pressures and giving you tools and resources to promote perhaps the worker's motivation and just explore those difficulties with them. I think it really highlighted the importance of like, if you're concerned about staff performance, you need to start off with, why is the performance deteriorating or why are there problems and I hadn't really thought about that enough, I don't think, before that course'. (Participant 1)***

**5.6.4** Another participant gave an example of how she had used learning from the programme to work with a social worker on how his own values and beliefs and cultural expectations about family life and marriage were getting in the way of him being able to identify abuse and assess risk. She had this to say about how the course had helped her.

***'It was a good piece of work and real honesty from the worker, so yes, I thought that was really good and maybe I wouldn't have done that before ... made the time to actually pick this to pieces with him.' (Participant 2)***

**5.6.5** This participant also described how she had used learning on the programme to support a supervisee's learning by taking a complex case and intensively analysing re-occurring patterns to assess what intervention might be most effective.

***'For example I've highlighted a case ... quite complicated, quite a lot of history and we're using that really as a learning exercise as to why, what's the pattern, why do you think these things are reoccurring, what could we have done to change things'.***

**5.6.6** Another participant described how her manager had suggested she go on the programme following feedback from a supervisee that her supervision practice could be more reflective. Although she felt that this could have been more sensitively managed, she thought that coming on the course had been very beneficial. Since then she has more consciously been focusing on addressing reflective practice in more depth and has been reminded of the need to focus on feelings as well as facts. She described this as:

***'Getting back to the basics – the relationships – the emotions.'***  
***(Participant 3)***

## **5.7 Support to embed learning into practice**

**5.7.1** All three participants reported that they had had opportunities to discuss learning from the course with their own supervisor. However, there were differences in the degree to which this had been helpful and how far they thought their organisation as a whole was supporting them to embed their learning. For instance, one participant felt that it was up to her to ensure that she raised the issue of how to use the learning from the course to enhance her

reflective supervision practice, rather than this being a consistent, integrated item in supervision with her manager.

**5.7.2** Another participant reported that initially she had an excellent manager who really supported her to consider what she had learned and how she would use it in her supervisory practice. However her subsequent manager was not so skilled at reflective supervision, and who has now left as well, which has left a gap in organisational support.

**5.7.3** The third participant spoke highly of her organisation as one that supported staff to attend CPD opportunities and provided her with good supervision and professional development. Nonetheless she recognised that the onus on her was to sustain her learning and good practice, but acknowledged this was something that she found difficult to prioritise. A group of staff in her local authority left the course fully intending to meet together regularly but they had not yet managed to do this.

**5.7.4** The biggest barrier highlighted by all three participants was the sheer pressure of their workloads, which meant that it was difficult to provide the reflective practice supervision that they would like to and that had been promoted on the programme. One participant felt that the practice culture that had developed in her area of practice and in social work more widely over the past decade did not really encourage reflective practice, which meant that what they had learned on the programme did not fit well into this culture.

**5.7.5** Participants thought that an organisational culture that created an expectation that practitioners and practice supervisors would regularly meet in their own reflective practice groups, and enabled people to prioritise this, would be a helpful way forward. Good reflective supervision practice should also be modelled throughout the organisation.

## **5.8 Conclusion and recommendations**

**5.8.1** This was a well-received course that was perceived to be relevant and well delivered.

**5.8.2** Skills development and the opportunity to discuss real work dilemmas and find solutions to these were the most valued components of the course.

**5.8.3** Participants thought that the course was mostly pitched at the right level, though one of the sessions on setting up supervision was felt to be a bit basic for experienced practice supervisors.

**5.8.4** The rich, detailed examples of how participants have used the training to develop their supervision practice are a testament to the relevance and quality of the course.

**5.8.5** Participants thought that there was support in the workplace to transfer their learning but this could be improved by more systematic embedding of reflective practice in supervision throughout the organisation and by a

practice culture that encourages reflection. Reflective groups were thought to be a good vehicle to achieve this. Organisations and individuals need to take responsibility to make this a priority.

**5.8.6** Although the course was delivered by RIP as for other programmes it is interesting that positive use of research-informed practice in supervision did not emerge in these participants' accounts. It might be helpful to think about how a future course could even more actively encourage integration of research into reflective supervision.

## 6 Overall conclusions and messages

**6.1** This evaluation has aimed to provide an in-depth picture, from the perspective of those who have participated as learners, of four of the new CPD programmes initiated by the SELTP. These four programmes were designed to provide a range of CPD opportunities, some of which carried recognised qualifications for practice supervisors, leaders and managers at different stages of their careers. This report needs to be used alongside other sources of data about the value or otherwise of the programmes.

**6.2** A obvious caveat to this report is that only a sample of the learners on the programmes were interviewed and our participants may not be representative of all of the learners. We were only able to recruit 13 out of the 24 participants we originally planned to interview. Nonetheless, the sample does provide a good spread of participants from across the four programmes and the three LAs and some rich and valuable data have emerged.

**6.3** There is clearly a demand for good quality CPD opportunities, attuned to social work practice and environments, for practice supervisors, leaders and managers. The vital role this group of staff play in providing support to social workers to provide an effective social work service emerged strongly from the interviews. Participants gave some powerful and concrete examples of how the programmes have contributed to enhancing their supervision and leadership practice. Those on the practice endorsement programme have started to embed direct observation into their teams and services. Practitioners welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their practice as supervisors, leaders and managers, which is all too frequently neglected given their day-to-day work pressures. In general, the interactive, skills-based components of the programmes were the most valued components of the programme.

**6.4** Each of the four programmes has been reported on separately to inform decision-making about which programmes, if any, should be offered in the future for this group of staff. The degree to which participants gave a positive evaluation about the programme they attended differed widely between participants on the same programme, though overall the reflective supervision course was highly appreciated by all of the participants. This indicates that each programme may have its own strengths and limitations, and that careful consideration of the suitability of each programme for a particular individual is indicated.

**6.5** Participants did not identify that support for research-informed practice was a strong feature of any of the programmes.

**6.6** In general, with a few exceptions, participants felt that they had been well supported by their organisations to attend and put into practice what they had learned on the programmes. For the practice endorsement programme delays in the implementation of the NAAS has reduced the value of the programme in supporting organisational readiness. Participants reported something of a local vacuum in policy in this area, reflecting perhaps a sense that the drivers for implementing practice endorsement processes have diminished. However, Lewisham is one of the second phase pilot sites so the programme may now have an enhanced significance for them.

**6.7** Unsurprisingly, participants felt the biggest barrier to their ability to develop themselves and enhance their supervision and leadership practice was the pressure of work and the competing priorities they face.

**6.8** A full review of the CPD offer to this group of staff is indicated. The new Practice Supervisor Development Programme is a major policy initiative that, as it develops, will also contribute to this discussion.