

# On the Cusp of Systems Change

THE SAFE & TOGETHER LONDON  
PARTNERSHIP PROJECT EVALUATION  
YEARS 3/4

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## Executive Summary

This report presents evaluation findings from Years 3/4 of the London Partnership Model (LPM) implementing Safe & Together across six London boroughs. It draws on multiple data sources, including: interviews and action learning sets with the project team and CSC professionals; training delivery data and feedback surveys; and CSC monitoring data. All seek to assess changes in social work practice and map the direction of travel towards systems change.

The composition of the partnership has changed across the full project term, originally five East London Boroughs. By Year 3, two boroughs had left and three new boroughs joined; Hammersmith and Fulham in Year 2, and Barking and Dagenham and Barnet in Year 3. Evaluation has had to follow the direction of three different tracks – each at different stages of implementation. Through an embedded evaluation approach we explore the process and outcomes of systems change through a proportionate and contextual lens, taking a reasonable view of what can be achieved in the time frame with the resources, and how broader systems can act as barriers as well as enablers.

A key barrier has been funding insecurity. The partnership project was conceived and core funded in 2021, for eight months with four months match funding coming from participating boroughs: since, the project has battled to survive unknown funding contexts. Operations have been subject to a ‘stop-start’, ‘hand-to-mouth’ trajectory, with the threat of redundancy punctuating the lives of the core project team at the end of each funding period. Despite this, team retention has remained strong and where necessary recruitment to individual posts as well as new boroughs to the partnership has meant the project has thrived in the face of having to periodically rebuild, reorientate and recover. The project’s ability to navigate uncertainty, reshape the partnership and work with ‘hinge points’ for change, means it has moved much closer to effecting systems change in this funding period.

Training delivery has increased, as well as extended beyond the S&T Institutes package of two blocks, a one day overview and a 4 day core, to include refresher sessions, and thematic workshops. Training continues to increase workforce confidence and capacity and with the support of implementation leads to embed the learning, effect ‘green shoots of change’ in newer boroughs, and significant shifts in practice in more established boroughs with clear outcomes of change documented in this report.

- Less mutualising and victim blaming language in case files - a decrease in making victim-survivors responsible.

- Increased worker confidence and capacity to pivot to perpetrators and partner with victim-survivors.
- Increased engagement with perpetrators and documenting of abusive patterns of behaviour.
- S&T practice effecting positive outcomes in family courts and prosecutions.

A unique aspect to the London Partnership Model (LPM) of implementation is an ethos and mechanism of circular learning, as well as the role and function of implementation leads. Through a number of activities detailed in this report, LPM has developed a 'localised' model of implementation, to embed the approach 'beyond training'. Acknowledging the different contexts and stages of implementation is a key strength of the work and through it the project has moved firmly into work streams to effect systems change through an emergent deeper level understanding of it. Specific streams of work focussed on reconciling tensions and blockages to implementation, has meant clear outputs and outcomes of change.

- S&T has been integrated into quality assurance and complaints systems.
- S&T has been synthesised with systems theory
- Case management systems have been revised to embed and monitor the S&T principle of pivoting to perpetrators
- Complaints systems have been fortified to mitigate against the approach being undermined.

There is learning from this funding period to carry into the next.

- Training surveys reflect a need and want for more support to work with perpetrators and highlighted how much emotional burden the principle of pivoting to the perpetrator carries for a largely female and minoritised workforce.
- The use of the word perpetrator, which is central to S&T emerges as welcome for some and a tension for others, across different sites of the CSC system and aligning systems.
- The success of the community of practice should be built on as a cross-borough knowledge and good practice exchange, particularly for new boroughs to take on strategic learnings

A story of survival and tenacity in the face of uncertain funding structures, through skill, commitment and a developing evidence base of change, the S&T LPM continues to emerge

as an example of good practice in responses to domestic abuse worth investing in - as noted by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/dac\\_bcyp\\_main-report\\_V6-DIGITAL.pdf](https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/dac_bcyp_main-report_V6-DIGITAL.pdf)

## Glossary

ALS: Action Learning Sets

CSC: Children's Social Care

DV/DA: Domestic Violence/ Domestic Abuse

LP: London Partnership

LPM: London Partnership Model

MOPAC: Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

S&T: Safe and Together

S&T LPM: Safe and Together London Partnership Model

QA: Quality Assurance

CoP: Community of Practice

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## **6 RELECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from Years 3/4 (July 2023-March 2025) of the evaluation of the Safe and Together London Partnership project. Following two previous reports<sup>2</sup> it traces the direction of travel towards the project's aim; to change systems and responses to DA in children's social care through implementation of the S&T approach in a partnership of London boroughs<sup>3</sup>. In Year 1, we reported on the 'green shoots of change' that were beginning to sprout across practice, alongside the barriers to mobilising and sustaining the project. In Year 2 we outlined how the partnership had developed a unique and emerging model of implementation moving into embedding S&T. This report builds on previous reports to outline similar green shoots of change in new boroughs, and how the London Partnership Model (LPM) of implementation has continued to develop moving the work closer to creating systems change.

A defining feature of the project's life course has been precarious funding. Uncertainties of short term and conditional funding structure resulted in changing time frames and shifting partnership composition over the past 31 months. While we refer to funding periods as Years 1, 2, 3/4, which implies a continuous and linear process we do so in hindsight. This is a story of survival and tenacity in the face of uncertain contexts. The six boroughs we report on here are each at different stages of implementation. Hackney, Newham and Waltham Forest have been part of the partnership since 2021 (Year1)<sup>4</sup> Hammersmith and Fulham since 2022 (Year 2) and Barking and Dagenham and Barnet joined in 2023 (Year 3/4). For this funding period evaluation therefore had to follow three directions of travel towards the change the project sought to affect; we term these 'tracks' and present a relational, and proportionate picture of the progress, process and outcomes for each and in relation to findings from the previous two reports.

The long-term aim of the project was to effect sustainable systems change in responses to domestic abuse in children's social care. In the immediate term, implementation sought to increase worker confidence and engagement with perpetrators, to hold them to account, whilst partnering with victim-survivors. Most implementations of the model attempt do this through training alone: the LPM is unique in its approach, having dedicated implementation leads co-located in boroughs to help embed and do more strategic work. This combined with the circular learning threaded across the project's governance structure and oversight mechanism means the LPM goes 'beyond training'. It is through the iterative responsive and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cwasu.org/resource/green-shoots-of-change/>

<sup>3</sup> see Appendix 1 for a summary.

<sup>4</sup> Hackney and Waltham Forest also had 2 years S&T previous to this

contextual work being done to embed S&T, that the partnership has moved towards systems change.

This funding period followed the core activity structure from previous periods; the delivery of overview and core training; case consultations; learning reviews (previously case audits); and regular meetings of a community of practice and steering group. In Year 3/4, implementation leads working in established boroughs moved firmly into strategic streams of work, and had honed deep local knowledge, as well as an understanding of the complexity of systems change. For the newer boroughs, their pace and progress took a similar trajectory to the earlier life course, albeit with the previously gleaned knowledge. Some of this can be understood as 'localising' S&T; the principles and framework need to be adapted to specific contexts and policy priorities in each borough.

Blending process and outcomes evaluation multiple data sources are drawn on in this report, including findings from interviews and action learning sets with the project team and CSC professionals; training feedback surveys; CSC data and training delivery data to assess changes in social work practice and map the direction of travel towards system change.

## METHODOLOGY: EMBEDDED EVALUATION

Embedded evaluation is an emerging model where evaluation is part of the project from the outset, providing ongoing input in order that adjustments and improvements can take place in real time. It is an approach which recognises that implementation is invariably messy, taking place in contexts of uncertainty making adaption necessary<sup>5</sup>. It requires depth of understanding of implementation, ongoing communication in order to detect problems early and an emphasis on learning and collaboration.

Evaluation has been integrated from the outset and like the project itself, subject to uncertain timeframes and shifting contexts: the process has therefore been iterative, agile and adaptive. While this has posed some practical challenges, it has also afforded an embedded approach. Since Year 1 we have shadowed the life course of the project and worked in partnership with the team on elements of evaluation design, collating existing and collecting original data. In Year 3/4 we moved more firmly into this approach - both generating evidence and providing support to operationalise or implement it <sup>6</sup>. As embedded evaluators we have been able to identify 'evidence-into-use' pathways and build 'relational bridges' for collaborative work to identify roadblocks for implementation and how they may be unblocked.

Some approaches to evaluation seek to understand change through cause-and-effect chains, and attempt to make direct links between goals and outcomes. Such approaches are rooted in a theory of knowledge as being revealed from neutral observations; that knowledge is objective and quantifiable<sup>7</sup>. Systems change is a nonlinear, multifaceted and complex process, located within multi-layered contexts and such approaches may obscure complexities in influencing and effecting long term systems change. Our approach to evaluation, recognises multiple ways of knowing, and that knowledge is culturally, socially and temporally contingent<sup>8</sup>. This approach seeks to explore outcomes in a more spacious frame than cause and effect, to understand why and how change does and does not happen.

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5 <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003021025-12/understanding-practice-embedded-evaluation-christian-van-stolk-tom-ling>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/rev3.3351>

<sup>7</sup> Stuart, K., Maynard, L., & Rouncefield, C. (2015). Evaluation practice for projects with young people. SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917811>

<sup>8</sup> Brisolara, Sharon & Seigart, Denise & Sengupta, Saumitra. (Eds) (2014). Feminist Evaluation and Research - Theory and Practice. Guildford publications: UK.

This required valuing the practice-based knowledge of project staff and the wider partnership.

### Framework of change

The foundational structure of the evaluation was established in Year 1 through a theory of change developed with the partnership, linking project activities to outcomes. The consensus on what the evaluation should address in Year 1 covered:

- increased worker confidence and engagement with perpetrators;
- increased options for behaviour change for perpetrators across the five boroughs;
- increased actions for perpetrators in social care plans;
- increased identification of domestic abuse in children's social care assessments;
- shifts in the language and approach to survivors, a decrease in making them responsible for change.

Subsequent evaluation periods, worked to this in a dynamic way, but with some additions based on key learnings from previous years, and in movement with the nonlinear, contextual, and emergent nature of systems change. Providing findings and learning in real time meant that implementation, as well as evaluation, could be reflexively adapted<sup>9</sup>. This phase of the evaluation highlighted the multiple systems at play that intersect with and overlay how CSC can and do respond to domestic abuse, made even more complex by the multiple sites and that they have changed each year. Assessing outcomes and processes of systems change requires a proportionate and contextual approach, which takes a reasonable view of what can be achieved in the time frame with the resources and how competing and existing broader systems can act as barriers as well as enablers.

In Year 3 /4 evaluation sought to monitor and explore several emergent issues:

- complaints from perpetrators of abuse;
- quality assurance as a site to embed and evaluate S&T;
- whether and how S&T principles align with systemic frameworks for social work.

These were new strands of enquiry sitting within the continued attention to agreed topics.

### Data collection

A multi-methodological approach combining both process and outcome evaluations, and multiple layers of data was used for Years 1 to 3. Qualitative and quantitative data were

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cordisbright.co.uk/admin/resources/evaluating-systems-change.pdf>

gathered to enable triangulation and strengthen findings. Existing data sources were identified during a theory of change workshop in Year 1, along with those that needed to be created to monitor and evidence process and progress. These have been adapted across time in response to learning.

**Baseline and change data** were provided by each borough, on key indicators in children's social care.

**Surveys** were administered to all those attending trainings, with a pre and post for the Core training.

**Activity logs** of implementation leads were sources to explore the process of embedding S&T, including case consultations as well as contextual strategic activities.

**Phased interviews** were undertaken with the project team to capture perspectives at different stages of the project: these were also used to explore the usefulness of a range of project activities.

**Action Learning Sets:** Thematic cross borough action learning sets (ALS) were convened with relevant CSC professionals to explore the three themes noted above. Action learning sets are time limited facilitated problem-solving spaces, focused on learning and moving to action.

A rolling action learning set between implementation leads and evaluators was also convened, initially to adapt case audit method, morphing to a live learning and evaluation reflective space.

### **Ethical approach**

We work to the British Sociological Association's ethical framework which pivots on professional integrity and building relationships characterised by trust. As far as possible our approach is based on collaboration and building partnerships. Ethical approval was granted by London Metropolitan University's Faculty of Social Sciences and Professions research ethics review panel. A data sharing agreement across all the boroughs was devised early on and was adhered to throughout, and all data is anonymised to ensure confidentiality<sup>10</sup>. Data was stored on a firewalled section of the university data storage system only accessible by CWASU staff and IT support.

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<sup>10</sup> Quotes from the project team are cited as 'project team member' and includes, borough leads and the Respect staff team.

Interview, ALS and survey participants were provided with clear information about what taking part would involve, enabling them to give informed consent, which was renegotiated at different stages of data collection. Research activities were planned to be accessible and flexible so as not to encroach too much on work time, and to afford some form of reciprocity: both interviews and surveys were designed as reflective spaces in which participants were encouraged to think with us.

## PROCESS EVALUATION

This section presents key findings from the process evaluation, outlining the contextual factors that enabled and constrained implementation across this funding period. Findings here are drawn from interviews and action learning sets with the project team, as well as broader observations gleaned through our embedded approach to evaluation.

### Navigating uncertainty

The S&T London Partnership Project is a story of survival and tenacity. From the outset the funding structure has meant that the project has been characterised by a 'stop-start', 'hand-to-mouth' trajectory, and activity has been subject to gearing up or winding down. Team capacity to hold firm, both professionally and personally whilst on a funding cliff edge cannot be understated.

*... we weren't winding down. We were picking back up again. So in those boroughs it was getting the message back out there - 'consultations are still available, you can still talk to your implementation lead about booking onto training, there will be more training available from September'. Just sort of undoing all of the messaging that we'd had to do over the three months prior to that (Project team member, interview).*

Each funding period has been punctuated by a period of tense unknowns towards the end, shaping operations and entailing a stark reality for core project staff of job insecurity and redundancy processes. The core team within Respect and boroughs have honed an ability to work in multiple modes and be ready to switch and focus at short notice, forward facing with delivery, whilst at the same time 'winding down' and sustainability planning. At project management level securing continued funding has been a tense jigsaw made up of multiple interdependent pieces, which even when successful remains precarious.

*Having multiple strategic plans on the go, balancing and plate spinning.... and you're again trying to say to people, "I think this is going to be alright," but that's not enough when bills have to be paid and jobs need to be secure (Project team member, interview).*

Maintaining team morale and cohesion in these contexts is a challenge.

*The dual position of trying desperately to secure this funding, but also having to administer the redundancy process, – they were at odds with each other and obviously that's a really mixed kind of presentation from one person to be giving to*

*the team, and we are a team that has a lot of trust, I think, previously, and, that can have impacts that* (Project team member, interview).

There are personal and emotional costs to such tense working contexts, which in the main are borne by committed women. By the end of this funding period, like previous periods the team remained committed, but the emotional exhaustion and frustration at lost opportunities were palpable.

*It's these funding systems and the way that we're required to jump through these hoops, there's just a complete disconnect from the idea that the people doing these jobs, as well as being expert professionals, also have lives and families and bills to pay... torturous, absolutely torturous, so much grief... we're being cut off before the ending...and there's no way to separate the emotional responses that you have to go through- from the professional responses and processes that you are required to go through, it's almost like being punished for doing something that's new and innovative.... we bounced back the first time but I'm not sure we're coming back from this again* (Project team member, interview).

There are also operational costs where no matter how strong team commitment is, financial realities mean key members of teams leave to secure jobs elsewhere.

*...yes, there was a huge sense of relief at the redundancy process being called off, but it was called off after we'd already done the interviews, where everyone interviewed for each other's jobs, and some had been given notice* (Project team member, interview).

*...you have to balance needs of continuing project delivery with the human recognition that people's jobs are at risk and they can't wait around forever for confirmation - and the emotional and operational side of it always, is always really tough* (Project team member, interview).

Such processes sever momentum and risk losing the accumulated practice-based knowledge and experience, and in effect takes time away from strategic planning and continuation. Similar to the previous years, Year 3 began with a period of re-orientation, recovery and rebuilding.

*We did get the energy back up. We got the motivation back up, because we are blessed with an incredibly passionate and dedicated team who didn't want to have to stop doing this work, because they felt we were on the cusp of tides – not entirely changing, because systems change is a very long process, but shifting; shifts in*

*practice, shifts in attitudes, and they were very excited to get this work going again*  
(Project team member, interview).

Towards the end of the funding period, and as the project moves into the next, a similar but more complex funding landscape unravelled. One issue being that while core funding continued, it remained at the same level as previous years, not accounting for increments in cost of living to fund core staff, placing more pressure on match funding from boroughs at a time of 'national crisis' in local council finances, with 35% of local authorities facing probable bankruptcy over the next five years<sup>11</sup>.

*...the challenging aspect is that the pot hasn't increased at all and where our costs have increased because we want to allow for cost of living increases for staff, we're a charity but we want to fund staff to be able to live in this city, most of our team live in London, and that ask falls to the local authority, and it's obviously a tough time for them* (Project team member, interview).

That funding continued and the project successfully onboarded two new boroughs, is in part due to tenacious and skilled project management and team commitment and resilience. It is also in large part testament to the success of the project to continue to improve responses to DA in children's social care in London and stand as an example of best practice worth investing in, as noted by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner<sup>12</sup>.

## Reshaping the partnership

*All the plate-spinning and a lot of relationship management which is not a quantifiable part of the project, but with these funding structures it's something that is just vital, and you spend a lot of your time and energy doing it... we're excited, relieved, and ready but you know... there's lingering frustration at the systemic barriers and how hard you have to work to keep going* (Project team member, interview).

One of the key successes of the project is the way it has adapted to challenging and uncertain contexts. Towards the end of Year 2 two boroughs left the partnership raising complexity in funding structure and partnership composition. However, that Respect's project manager had strategically invested much time, and energy into showcasing the project work and building relationships, meant that two new boroughs were onboarded in a tense and unknown

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<sup>11</sup> <https://lgiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-State-of-Local-Government-Finance-in-England.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse/victims-in-their-own-right-babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-accessible>

context. The skill this involves and how central it is to sustainability and success should not be underestimated. Joining 3 years in meant that Barnet and Barking and Dagenham joined at a time when core activity and operations were well established, and accumulated learning could be shared to support their own implementation. That said financial precarity affected staff retention albeit minimally, and losing an implementation lead at the end of Year 2 meant lost time to recruitment and a period where both new boroughs were without a lead. Once in post, the lead met with similar challenges reported in Year 1, in terms of gaining access to borough systems and needing time to map the layout and get to know the cultural climate in each borough. Years 1 and 2 evaluations revealed that what can be achieved by leads in boroughs is contingent on varying levels of 'buy in' and how much 'scaffolding for change' there is in terms of commitment to cultural change.

*For me buy in is commitment outside of financial commitment as well. Financial commitment is important but it's a commitment to holding your hands up and saying, "Actually, the way that we've done this so far, we've tried our best but we're not doing what we need to do for adult and child survivors and also to support people who use harm to change their behaviour. We've tried but we weren't trained well enough or we weren't, you know, there are various reasons why our response isn't working, but we owe it to our families to try a new way of doing this (Project team member, Interview).*

There are also links between how much 'space for intervention'<sup>13</sup> leads have and where and how joining the project is located within the local authority system more broadly. Barking and Dagenham committed to S&T as part of a wider programme of work to improve responses to DA across the borough, and had already had a remote learning package of S&T training in 2020. Barnet joined the partnership at the tail end of an Ofsted improvement journey which had instilled a reflective, open, and proactive approach to implementation, while in Barking and Dagenham it took longer for the implementation lead to build momentum in a context of multiple new initiatives. The older boroughs were also subject to shifting contextual factors, including organisational restructure, key S&T advocates moving on and financial austerity. At the end of Year 2, the project manager in lead borough Waltham Forest left, leaving a key post vacant with non-one holding varied and evolving activities. This post proved difficult to fill and was taken up, along with other duties, by a member of the Waltham Forest

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<sup>13</sup> Butterworth, L., (2023) Holding the Space for Intervention: Exploring the Impact of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Complaints on Social Work Practice. Unpublished MA dissertation, London Metropolitan University.

VAWG team. She brought a refreshed approach, and one which has been particularly buoyant, working with the Respect lead, to re-build partnership cohesion.

### Hinge points and systems change

*It's great to be able to keep doing this, working on all those sorts of key hinge points in children's social care...and thinking about the systems, that sit outside of the system we're trying to change (Project team member, interview).*

One of the aims of the project was to increase professional's confidence and capacity to respond to DA. Having more time meant that by Year 3 there was a discernible shift in the team's own confidence and capacity to effect the change they sought, evident in interviews, operations and activity. Evolving across time and through learning about contextual barriers and enablers in each borough the project team had developed a deeper level understanding of the complexity of systems change. This is a strength and success of this funding period; an ability to see the detail of the bigger picture in systems change work as it draws into focus, and adapt and respond. Continuation meant the project could confidently identify the 'hinge points' to do deeper level, more strategic work.

*... a frontline social worker or early help practitioner, with the best will in the world, will only get so far in the system if the hierarchy in the system is not also on board with shifting practice... Reaching the decision makers, the people who will back good frontline practice, so managers, child protection conference chairs, and then the broader system, quality assurance, complaints (Project team member, interview).*

In Year 3 the project was building and fortifying the 'scaffolding for change' identified in Year 1; through work to bolster supervisor knowledge and aligning different parts of the CSC system with S&T.

*... from service heads to front line practitioners, we're trying to think about the way that people approach this work...we're inputting into guidance and thinking about whether that's complaints strategies, thinking about DA practice guidance, things like that... so we're looking at the structure and saying, "OK, who holds power here?". That's why we target people like CP chairs, because within the structure of that system they're influential and we need to think about that. And then systems... like perpetrator mapping, the perpetrator engagement form that we're trying to put onto case management systems, how we're improving the actual systems (Project team member, interview).*

Learning was being cemented into a firm but malleable strategy rooted in a recognition that systems change is a non-linear, emergent, and dynamic process. This had clear benefits for new boroughs.

*We're always thinking, "and then what?" which means that iterative learning that we talk about in this project - you're responsive to the local authority's needs, that's why we have different work happening in different sites, because something will happen and then we say, "OK, what can I do from here? I've explored this avenue in this area, great, how can I use this to jump onto something else or think about what needs to happen to properly cement this into practice?", so it's always, "And then what?"... because we know training isn't enough (Project team member, interview).*

At the end of Year 2, the bi-weekly cross borough meetings were redesigned as a community of practice (COP). The intention was to create time and space to explore more strategic issues as they emerged to capitalise on shared expertise and experience across the partnership. The space was used well and enabled strong cross-borough connections and shared learning, which was key to enabling new boroughs to pre-empt and identify possible blockages and work to meet them from the get-go. The project also organised cross borough and cross sector learning events, and invited practitioners to share work and experiences at the COP. These were a valuable source of learning, knowledge exchange, and garnering buy in for S&T.

*The community of practice is key for me, because that's where everybody comes together and then you are able to do that iterative learning and embedding and you're not waiting until the end of your funding to say, "Oh, actually we might do something a bit different next year." It's every fortnight, that's incredible buy in, for people to come every fortnight to a meeting and really get involved in this (Project team member, interview).*

*... one of the things that I love about the London Partnership, is that, once we've nailed things, we can pass them on, we can share that learning among the boroughs and it almost evens up, I wouldn't say 'evens up' that might be an exaggeration but to some extent I think equalises the cultural buy-in across the Partnership. Because you have people perking up and thinking, "That borough is doing that, that would make this easier for us to implement" (Project team member, interview).*

It was also a site for us as evaluators to share emerging learning from data collection, and devise and collaborate on streams of work. The space also afforded acknowledgment that while they were all working towards the shared goal of change their journeys and work was at times different.

*It's about feeling fine when things verge in different directions in different sites because of the life cycle of a project like this is going to look different in each area, and some will get to certain milestones first but they'll loop back round to something else, and then others will do it the other way around. There is a level of natural progression that you would imagine, but you can get there in lots of different ways and that's OK and not everybody needs to be doing the same thing if you're working across multiple sites (Project staff team, interview).*

This section demonstrates that an evaluation approach based on an 'implemented as intended' could never hold the shifting sands of this partnership. There is so much that has been learnt since through an evaluation stance that is flexible and contingent.

In Year 2 we reported on how the London Partnership had developed a unique, evolving and emerging implementation model comprised of four pillars: training; Implementation Leads; the Marketplace and professional hub, and oversight and reflection. Due to resource and capacity issues, the Marketplace, intended to increase behaviour change options for perpetrators available cross borough, was lost. This funding period, however, saw the LPM develop considerably across the three other pillars. The community of practice and a rolling ALS with implementation leads fostered opportunities for productive reflections and shared learning culminating in material outputs to help build capacity, embed learning and effect change. Through this approach the partnership has not only gone beyond training, they have extended the offer (see the next section), based on their ethos of shared circular learning and crucially acknowledging the different contexts and stages of implementation each borough is at – a localised implementation model.

## OUTCOMES EVALUATION

In this section we report on the outcomes achieved in this funding period, given that much of what can be achieved is dependent on process and context, discussion here refers back to the process evaluation. Material is drawn from training delivery data and surveys; our work with implementation leads; learning reviews; professional hub data; and interviews and action learning sets with CSC professionals and the London partnership project team. We also present indicator data from CSC across the boroughs.

### TRAINING

Despite insecurity the project has retained the same training and resources manager across all funding periods. This continuity has enabled a responsive, adaptative and efficient training delivery process to develop, a strong benefit for new boroughs. Across the three years the postholder has honed and refined a process as enabling as possible to ensure maximum completions. That she also delivers core training, means she has a front-line sense of how the training offer lands, feeding this back into adaptations and learning development. A notable strength is the use of data to identify gaps in efficiency and learning, in the latter developing learning opportunities, and content for the professional hub. This embedded aspect has meant gaps in knowledge can be both identified and filled as work advances.

*We're thinking about how we plug this gap of people who were trained with the blended model [online during Covid] at the start of the project... this is only really a problem for Hackney, Waltham Forest, and Newham, because Hammersmith & Fulham joined while we moved to live delivery, and obviously Barnet, and Barking & Dagenham were new - having identified this problem, we can offer refresher sessions (Project team member, interview).*

Training is a foundational pillar of S&T, and many implementations have rested solely on this. The London Partnership model has additional pillars which aim to embed the model to enhance, sustain and incubate a changed institutional culture conducive to systems change. The training offer across the six boroughs in this time period was the introductory Overview one day course, the Core four day course, and the two day supervisors training all developed by the Institute. While the supervisor training was not an intended nor resourced part of the training offer in this funding period, learning reviews highlighted a need for supervisor training to support change, and in response the partnership arranged for the Respect team to be certified as trainers.

An addition this funding period was also a ‘refresher’ for managers in the more established boroughs. Implementation leads also developed and delivered bespoke workshops, including on engaging with perpetrators and Domestic Abuse informed documentation.

The number of trainings and levels of attendance are presented in Table1 (for borough level data see Appendix 2)<sup>14</sup>.

TABLE 1: TRAINING DELIVERED AND ATTENDED YEARS 1 – 3/4

Training	Blocks Yr 1	Blocks Yr 2	Blocks Yr 3/4	Total	Attendance Year 1	Attendance Year 2	Attendance in Yr 3/4	Total
Overview	6	6	12	24	286	258	717	1261
Core	10	12	14	36	195	347	455	997
Working with perpetrators	10	12	-	22	123	137	-	260
Supervisors	-	4	2	6	-	31	25	56
Refresher training	-	-	4	4	-	-	33	33
<b>Total</b>	26	34	32	<b>92</b>	604	773	1230	<b>2607</b>

The project delivered 32 trainings across the 6 boroughs from July 2023-March 25, with 1230 professionals attending from across CSC, alongside external agencies such as NHS, CJS, and Education. Across the project period as a whole, the partnership has trained over two and a half thousand people, within the eight London boroughs that have been members of the partnership. There is a noticeable increase in training delivery over time, made possible by the increase in completions of the training for trainers course offered by the Institute: training is now delivered by implementation leads and borough-based practitioners.

In line with the project’s localised approach to implementation, the training offer is responsive to emerging and contextual needs, the refresher sessions for managers were

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<sup>14</sup> The partnership composition has changed across funding periods.

created to fill gaps and strengthen support for those trained in Year 1 through blended remote delivery.

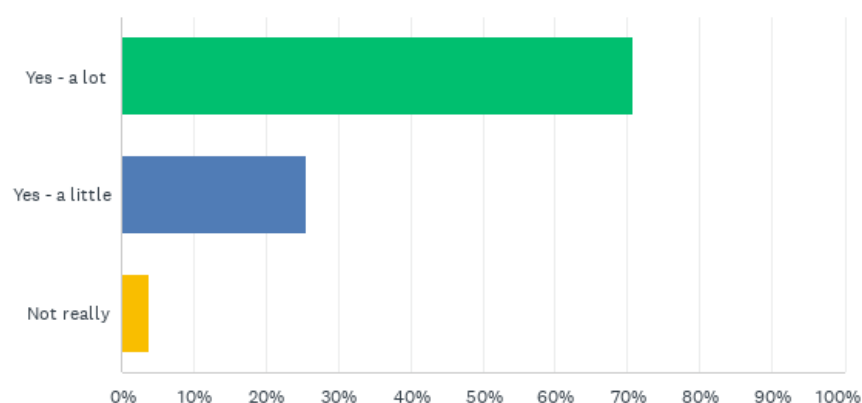
All S&T training is intended to increase worker confidence and knowledge in how to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse, to shift a focus in practice which makes victims-survivors responsible, to one which 'pivots to the perpetrator'. The training survey findings are presented here, to outline how far these aims were being met. All our feedback surveys combine forced choice and open-ended questions, with the latter designed to elicit the extent to which the key messages and content have been absorbed by requiring participants to present their understandings in their own words.

### Overview training

There were 12 overview trainings delivered from July 2023- May 2025: 342 (48%) participants completed the feedback, with slightly more from Barnet and Barking and Dagenham as this was year one for them. Whilst staff from Children's Social Care (CSC) were the majority (41%), 14% came from health, 7% education and the voluntary sector respectively and 3% from adult social care. Over a quarter (27%) came from other sectors – some of this would be complaints and quality assurance staff in local authorities who were also encouraged to attend in this period. This reflects the intention to widen the training cohort to build awareness and buy in to S&T. The majority (92%) were female, and 76% aged 36-65. Participants were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity: 35% White British; 08% Black African; 09% Black Caribbean and 13% Black British respectively and 15% Asian. Over a tenth (12%) reported having a disability. In terms of sexuality there were three lesbians, three gay men and eleven bi-sexuals. Six identified as non-binary and/or queer.

Participants were asked to rate the knowledge about perpetrators on a scale of 1-7: this increased from an average of four at the outset to 5.5 following the training. Figure 1 shows that the training changed perspectives on the role of children's social care, with 96% reporting it changed a lot or a little.

FIGURE 1: DID THE TRAINING CHANGE HOW PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTOOD THE ROLE OF CSC IN CASES INVOLVING DOMESTIC ABUSE?



An open-ended question explored what had changed, six key take aways were coded: the importance of language/re-framing and documentation - this included stopping using victim-blaming language (noted 83 times); seeing abuse as a parenting choice requiring perpetrator accountability (mentioned 41 times); how living with domestic abuse affects children (mentioned 20 times); mapping perpetrator patterns (mentioned 16 times); seeing survivor strengths/partnering (mentioned 15 times).

*The way we speak and view the victim survivor, the training was transformational to my practice and viewpoint (Overview survey response).*

*That it (Children's Social Care) is often ineffective and reductive. Personally, it made me think much more how I can challenge it in my role as a Statutory Complaints Investigator (Overview survey response).*

*The way I will initiate my contact I will be more descriptive writing notes instead of vague terms. Emphasis more on fathers' engagement. Hold father accountable and shift more responsibility onto him. The way I devise my questions I will be more careful with language... more based on curiosity and to encourage conversation. My approach will be more purposeful (Overview survey response).*

*Blaming and re-victimising mother by imposing our view as CFS versus partnering with her, respecting her as the expert and holding perpetrator responsible for their actions rather than focusing a plan on what the victim can do to achieve positive outcomes (Overview survey response).*

*I think the main point I have been reflecting on to take away and use in practice is reframing how we talk about and record domestic abuse - to focus on the abusive behaviours and not victim blame (Overview survey response).*

*Remembering to describe the impact the behaviour of the perpetrator has had on the victim/children rather than victim blame (Overview survey response).*

*It helped me develop a language to frame instances through perpetrator patterns rather than falling into traps of victim blame (Overview survey response).*

*Realised how many of own notes didn't centre around perpetrator behaviour and missed opportunities to better risk assess because of this (Overview survey response).*

*The main thing that changed for me is how I use language in my assessment. I will also keep the perpetrator focus throughout my future work with families and how perpetrator behaviour is affecting children and partners (Overview survey response).*

*The language and narrative that need to change in order to shift responsibility (Overview survey response).*

These responses illustrate that many participants saw the connections within the course content, especially the ways language and documentation influenced the work that follows. For the minority who said they were not affected, most noted that the training echoed a perspective they already worked with, but even here some of the clarity of language was welcomed.

These themes were echoed in response to a question asking what the three things they had learnt from the training and the changes in practice that they saw stemming from them. Across both, issues about language and documentation, pivoting to perpetrators, holding children at the centre and ceasing victim blame were recurring themes. An important addition here were the many calls for the training to be compulsory across all agencies and even within university qualification: the issue here was that everyone needed to be working from the same framework.

### Core training

Table 2 shows that before and at completion of core training trainees were overwhelmingly female CSC staff, with over two thirds aged 26-50. The trainees were extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, with close to two thirds minoritised. Disability was much more

represented in that diversity than sexuality. 348 pre and 54 opened the post survey, but 15 of these did not answer most of the questions.

**TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHICS ACROSS PRE AND POST CORE SURVEY**

	Pre %	Post %
Proportion CSC	91	100
Female	91	88
Aged 26-50	74	67
White British	31	35
Black British	14	06
Black/Caribbean	12	09
Black /African	14	18
Asian British/Indian	12	17
Disability	16	24
Gay	0.5	0
Lesbian	0.5	0
Bi-sexual	07	06

The average assessment of knowledge about perpetrators was under 4 pre training and 5 in the post survey, showing clear gains. An open-ended question asked what they wanted to learn from the training, the most common response by far was how to hold perpetrators to account and work with them.

Before the training participants saw the role of CSC in terms of child protection, family functioning with some focusing on risk. Post training there was an emphasis of holding perpetrators to account, creating safety for children and victim-survivors and partnering with non-abusive parents. These are shifts in thinking within the S&T framework that pivoting to perpetrators requires.

At pre and post-test, a question asked what three emotions surfaced when thinking about working with perpetrators, presented as word clouds in Figures 2 and 3.

FIGURE 2: WORD CLOUD EMOTIONS THINKING ABOUT WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS PRE-TRAINING



FIGURE 3: WORD CLOUD EMOTIONS THINKING ABOUT WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS POST-TRAINING



Whilst the post training word cloud had some of the same words, there were interesting qualifications – more fear of getting it wrong, rather than fear of entering into engagements with perpetrators. What the word clouds do show, however, is how much emotional burden the principle of pivoting to the perpetrator carries for a largely female and minoritised workforce. It is unlikely, therefore, that a reliance on training alone can shift practice in the ways that S&T principles require: hence the critical importance of implementation leads - who allow the fears and anxieties to be recognised and then enable a shift beyond to more principled practice.

Additional questions in the post survey asked what they would seek to communicate to perpetrators with responses reflecting the core elements of the S&T approach: the impacts of their behaviour on children (mentioned 19 times); that perpetrators need to be accountable (mentioned 16 times); their behaviour is a parenting choice (mentioned 11 times).

We also asked the three things they had learnt with the most frequent responses being: the importance of naming, language and documentation; mapping perpetrator behaviours and recognising victim-survivor strengths. These are all key S&T principles.

*No blaming the victim, hold perpetrator accountable, strength-based approach* (participant, post Core survey).

The final question asked how they would change their practice as a result of the training, the examples below show how clearly the ambitions of the training had been met for this participant.

*I will be more prepared with a clear agenda. Through case notes, outlining the patterns of abuse and the impact on individual children* (participant, post Core survey).

*To name the behaviours. To focus on how the victim is keeping the child safe. To ensure split meetings are used and be careful what is on file* (participant, post Core survey).

*Hugely [how practice will change] - engaging with perpetrators directly and focus in on their behaviour, changing plans and wording* (participant, post Core survey).

*I will definitely explore behaviour patterns more, use the mapping tool more often and ensure to include the strengths of survivors in documentation* (participant, post Core survey).

*How to keep the perpetrator focused on their own behaviours and list the behaviour clearly. To consider how DA can be the cause of the intersections [with substance misuse/poor mental health], to partner with the non-offending parent and record their strengths* (participant, post Core survey).

*I will look at patterns of behaviour and be onside with the victim-survivors and see their protective effects* (participant, post Core survey). *I have understood the importance of naming the behaviours, aligning with the survivor and affirming the steps they are using to keep their children safe* (participant, post Core survey).

We end this section with a long contribution in answer to this question which shows the places participants got to if they engaged fully with Core training.

- *Use less neutralising language like DA relationship*
- *Be intentional and specific in naming the behaviours*
- *Be conscious about partnering with survivors -both mum and children*

- *Find a safe way of recording safety planning that will not be shared with the perpetrators*
- *Be clear about how the perpetrator directly impacts the behaviour of the children*
- *Holding both mum and dad to equal parenting standards*
- *Know more about the intersections (participant, post Core survey).*

### Supervisor Training

Late Into this funding period 2 blocks of supervisor training were delivered as a direct response to findings from learning reviews (see learning reviews section), which detected good practice at social worker level being undermined by a lack of supportive scaffolding at supervision/ manager level. The partnership administered a feedback survey to participants asking: what their key takeaways from the training were; two things they feel they have the power to change, and what the first thing they would put into practice is.

The feedback highlighted the value of the mapping tool to support a pivot to perpetrators and the importance of a strength based focus on victim-survivors. There was also a recognition from participants of their role in supporting worker anxiety, and coaching teams in S&T principles more broadly.

### Refresher training

The responses below are a selection from the questions asked at the end of training by Respect, there was not a separate evaluation questionnaire here, although the questions reflected those in the bespoke surveys. Participants were asked what their key takeaways were and things they could change as a consequence. The training content encouraged managers/supervisors to draw on the S&T tools more in their practice, as these responses show, that message was definitely heard.

*The quality of SW practice and support for families where DV is a presenting concern. Also embedding the learning from today within my team and across the service to ensure consistency (participant on refresher training).*

*The power to change static thinking. Referencing all domestic abuse cases to be similar. I will be implementing the pivoting practice tool (participant on refresher training).*

*Use of perpetrator mapping tool and use of pivoting within supervision (participant on refresher training).*

*SW to utilise the strength base approach and mapping tool when assessing DV cases (participant on refresher training).*

*Two things that I will put into practice, sharing resources with my practitioners and getting practitioners to work with survivor. Thank you for this lovely training (participant on refresher training).*

*Pivoting was extremally helpful, and the mapping tool is something they will start using immediately. Intersectionality is also helpful (participant on refresher training).*

*Supporting workers to use the perpetrator pattern of behaviour tool to identify which behaviours are contributing to the multiple pathways to harm for the child and how we document to keep perpetrators accountable from assessment plans all the way through to case recordings (participant on refresher training)..*

*Use of reframing tools and questions within a supervision context to be curious about the pattern of DA, not just what is on the surface/referral. I also liked yesterday's discussion about the difference between values, beliefs and behaviours when working with abuse (participant on refresher training).*

*I'll take away the importance of exploring the wider situation and not focusing on a single incident. Also being curious about patterns of abuse as well as the adult survivors' strengths reflections (participant on refresher training).*

There is something to be noted here about how implementation, especially embedding, cannot be taken for granted – principles need to be reinforced and managers and supervisors are key actors here.

## Reflections

All of the previous evaluation reports have found that trainings increased knowledge and confidence and shifted participants to focusing on perpetrators and recognising survivor strengths; this is repeated here. The messages about language and documentation were clearly received as was the shift in thinking about victim-survivors as doing their best rather than 'failing to protect'. Survey responses also reflect a professional appetite and need - that practitioners are committed and curious to gain the skills and confidence to work with perpetrators. The anxiety, fear and concerns that many still expressed after training are part of why implementation leads are a vital part of S&T implementation in the London partnership model. The refresher training responses suggest that the project team have honed their messaging and emphasised the tools that are available to support practice. We also note that hardly any responses in open ended responses questioned the use of the term perpetrator, rather the majority used it unapologetically, it was understood as a

source of clarity and focus. The increased use of the concept of survivor (or victim-survivor) also provides space to recognise strengths and efforts to protect children.

## EMBEDDING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

*There's lots of different stuff going on this year, that's not just, "How can we get people on to training" We're systems change managers fundamentally, and so our work is gearing deeper to this end I think with more time, of course our foundational activity is there... case consultations, workshops but this year feels different (Project team, interview).*

A central pillar of the LPM is the role and function of implementation leads, and it is through them that much of the strategic learning and work streams are developed to embed the approach and build capacity to practice in line with S&T. The role has evolved considerably since Year 1. Having a dedicated person located within boroughs with expertise on S&T to support implementation through a number of activities, the leads have helped build a 'scaffolding for change' through a sustained and evolving programme of work. Two of the leads have been in post from Year 1, and in this period, they advanced their work with a deeper level of confidence, expertise and experience, moving firmly towards systems change. The new boroughs lead spent much time familiarising herself with the landscape of each borough, building relationships, and delivering the core activity of case consultations, workshops, and delivering training.

How we worked with implementation leads took on a new approach in Year 3, moving from phased individual interviews to a rolling action learning set meeting every 6 weeks. Initially this was convened in order to rethink the case audit process and tool provided by the S&T Institute, the sessions became a valuable site of embedded evaluation, shared learning and development. As the sessions developed across time, they became a reflective space where leads could share experience, strategise and bring issues to the group as and when they emerged. This gave rise to a number of important advances in the project's work overall, it also created a protected space for the new lead to speak on and work through frustrations and early-stage uncertainties, drawing reassurance and knowledge from other leads. Given the different working contexts and stages of implementation for each borough, the work of the leads varies, but case consultations remain a central part of implementation.

### Case consultations

Having one to one expert facilitated space to discuss and work through cases has enhanced confidence to apply S&T and strengthened understandings. The sessions afford more space

to unpick what had been learnt through the training, and workshop and apply it to specific cases. It has proven to be a central and crucial part of embedding S&T and building confidence and capacity for professionals to change their practice. Across the life course of the project case consultations have organically extended their function as a practice support space, to a space for work stream development and learning for the partnership. For new boroughs consultations have been invaluable site to build borough commitment and relationships, and as reported in Year 1, builds foundations to move into more strategic streams of work. Whilst this activity has different functions across stages of implementation, the core focus remains - to support professionals to put what they learnt in training into practice.

Table 3 shows the number of case consultations delivered across the project as a whole broken down into each funding period. Given the different borough contexts, and time spans with the partnership it is not possible nor valuable to draw meaningful comparisons across boroughs. It is possible however to note that for new boroughs it takes time for leads to establish themselves and mobilise this aspect of implementation

**TABLE 3: CASE CONSULTATIONS ACROSS YEAR 1-3/4**

<b>Borough</b>	<b>N in Year 1</b>	<b>Across N of months</b>	<b>N in year 2</b>	<b>Across N of months</b>	<b>N in Year 3/4</b>	<b>Across N of months</b>
Hackney	81	9	63	8	113	18
Waltham Forest	99	9	63	8	214	18
Newham	38	7	93	11	184	18
Hammersmith and Fulham	-	-	27	8	112	18
Barnet	-	-	-	-	75	12
Barking and Dagenham	-	-	-	-	76	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>218</b>		<b>246</b>		<b>774</b>	

The difference case consultations can make to practice was shown in learning reviews (see next section) where in more established boroughs victim blaming language was more likely to be found where practitioners had not had a consultation.

The case study below also shows how the text on what was expected from a perpetrator was adjusted following a case consultation to more accurately reflect S&T practice principles. In particular a firmer pivot to the perpetrator with more clarity in language to frame domestic abuse as a parenting choice with negative impacts for children.

**Case study: the difference case consultation makes**

Original text in case file

*We remain concerned that [father], you have not engaged in any work to reduce the risks of domestic abuse towards [mother]: [father] to understand the impact of children witnessing domestic abuse on the children. [father] to find a service provider that can assist him to address his abusive behaviours.*

Case file text after consultation

*[father], we are worried that the children are at risk of emotional harm by being exposed to your abusive behaviours in the home. We are worried that the children may be witnessing or hearing [mother] being hurt by [father]. We are worried that they will come to see violence as a 'normal' way of solving problems. [father], we are also worried about your parenting choices in physically chastising the children, which can lead them to be upset and frightened. We want the children to be safe and to feel safe. For this to happen, no-one in the family home should be hurt, either physically or by other people's words and behaviour. We want [father] to understand that his behaviour can be frightening to [mother] and the children and want him to stop his aggressive behaviours towards them.*

*We want [mother] to feel safe in her co-parenting relationship with [father] and in her own home and that if she doesn't she is able to say this... A Safeguarding Agreement to be completed with [father] around expectations of his behaviour with his family at home and safety plan with [mother] following [father] seeking legal advice as deemed necessary by him."*

Learning reviews in more established boroughs also showed links between the trajectory of family support, and whether or not workers had had a case consultation. In one borough for example, cases where practitioners had not had a case consultation, were more likely to be closed after assessment, and where practitioners had been supported through consultations were more likely to progress to Child Protection. This is important when considered alongside the 2024 Domestic Homicide Review finding that poor assessment means that cases are closed too early and without any real evidence of change.

In more established boroughs, implementation leads were able to work more closely with practitioners to support practice and enhance learning and also effect clear outcomes for victim-survivors and their children. Two social workers from Hammersmith and Fulham have demonstrated what taking on S&T can mean for child and woman protection. They used the perpetrator pattern tracking tool in three recent cases to document behaviours and their impact on the mother and children for the Family Court. In each case previous decisions about contact were over-turned based on this evidence. In one case it was shared with the police and contributed to a prosecution and conviction. These are clear outcomes of the LPM of implementation, with case consultations and the support of implementation leads giving space and time to develop learning into concrete practice change with life changing impacts for victim-survivors and their children.

*Without Safe & Together, I can fully see how this could have escalated to the child being removed from his mother's care. The model provided a framework that allowed us to re-evaluate the situation through a lens of perpetrator accountability and survivor strengths... using Safe & Together, we were able to reflect that the mother's parenting was more than good enough. Despite the abuse she was enduring, she was doing an excellent job of keeping her child's development on track and maintaining as much normalcy as possible, as well as doing things that protected the child from the abuse... This approach allowed us to focus our safeguarding efforts where they were most needed—on the perpetrator... Nine months after I began working with the family and introduced Safe & Together, they stepped down from both the Child Protection Plan and pre-proceedings for the first time since the child was born... The mother received specialist domestic abuse support, the child has not witnessed violence for 13 months and now enjoys safe, supervised contact... The family is thriving, with strong ties to extended family and no ongoing child protection involvement... The case closed after 18 months, with the mother expressing sadness at the end of support due to the positive relationships built with professionals .... We initiated Public Law Outline (PLO) proceedings but made a deliberate and unusual decision (now becoming standard in these cases for us): to assess only the father.*

*Traditionally, assessments would be conducted on both parents. However, using the Safe & Together Model, we were able to reflect that the mother's parenting was more than good enough. Despite the abuse she was enduring, she was doing an excellent job of keeping her child's development on track and maintaining as much normalcy as possible, as well as doing things that protected the child from the abuse. This approach allowed us to focus our safeguarding efforts where they were most needed—on the perpetrator. The PLO process also enabled us to request that private court proceedings be temporarily adjourned. It was not appropriate to make recommendations while the father's abusive behaviour continued unchecked. The PLO framework gave us the space to conduct meaningful safeguarding work and return to private court with a clearer, safer plan (Consultant social worker, case reflective analysis ).*

### From case audits to learning reviews

In Year 1 the intention to complete case file audits to explore changes in practice, was not possible due to time constraints and workloads. In Year 2, the implementation leads took on delivery of core training, which meant that while case audits were completed this activity was again subject to pressure and time constraints, without adequate time for piloting and reflection. That said, valuable lessons were learned which strengthened a commitment to improve the process in the future. Developing an approach to case audits was the theme of the first action learning set with implementation leads. The consensus was that the process needed to benefit boroughs and the project beyond a measurement tool: it needed to not just act as a means to detect change through S&T orientated practice across files but also to identify and explore areas which needed strengthening. One of the outcomes of the work together was a reframing from 'audits' to 'learning reviews'.

We worked together to create a new template and agreed a sampling frame to pilot for one quarter. The template was redesigned from a RAG<sup>15</sup> system where practice was rated across a scale in terms of S&T principles, to a leaner but more spacious form to record: context and compositions of cases reviewed; evidence of S&T practice - drawing on S&T principles; consideration of how case consultations had shaped practice; and areas for improvement and key learnings. The premise being that the process would feed directly into focussed borough-based work streams.

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<sup>15</sup> Red Amber Green

The sampling frame was agreed as cases closed in the period where DV was a factor, five where practitioners were S&T trained and had had a case consultation and five where workers had not been trained and no consultation.

This was piloted for one quarter with a view to re-drafting if necessary. While partly intended to create a uniform approach to case reviews, given the different stages of implementation, in practice following the first round, the leads localised the process to fit their borough contexts.

Here we include discussion of a sample of learning reviews undertaken over this funding period, through the lens of newer and more established boroughs. Our analyses here do not seek to measure change across time, but rather explore the depth of change based on stage of implementation.

#### [Barking and Dagenham \(LBBD\) and Barnet](#)

The first learning review undertaken in LBBD was for Jan-March 24, only 6 months into the borough joining the partnership, and given how early in post and delays in getting into the borough and its systems, the implementation lead had not yet begun case consultations. The review demonstrated problems in practice the project sought to meet: language which mutualised abuse; an incident based rather than patterns based lens; scant actions for perpetrators in plans; and victim-survivors being responsibilised for their own and their children's safety. Cases also reflected missed opportunities to recognise protective efforts of victim-survivors'. While more evident in cases where practitioners had not been Core trained, it was also detectable across cases where the worker had been trained. This highlights the value of case consultations to embed learning, especially early on.

The lead decided to review two cases from the same practitioner one case prior to Core training and one post Core training. The post training case file showed some improvements with less victim blaming language and a firmer lens on the actions of the perpetrator. The second period of reviews, found more evidence of partnering with victim-survivors, but with safety plans that still responsibilised victim-survivors, as well as a lack of pattern-based framing. The third period also showed progress and change in terms of more evidence of partnering in the trained practitioners but with little S&T aligned practice across other areas, such as safety planning, and documenting perpetrator behaviours and patterns.

The first quarter of learning reviews undertaken in Barnet found mutualising language across all cases, but this was markedly more common across the cases where the worker had not attended Core training. By the second round of reviews, most cases reflected less mutualising

language and stronger partnering work. Across both periods, reviews showed very little work on files to frame DA as a parenting choice, but actions for perpetrators on child protection plans were present. By the third learning review mutualising language or victim blaming language was far less evident.

While this is a small sample, it reflects the green shoots of change to be expected at this stage of implementation, with a core shift being changes in language and focus. Findings here also reflect the importance of case consultations to embed learning.

#### Hammersmith and Fulham

Hammersmith and Fulham joined the partnership at the start of Year 2 and recent learning reviews show they were moving beyond the green shoots of change, detected in newer boroughs. While weaknesses were evident, practitioners were able to clearly name perpetrators specific behaviours and hold some level of accountability with some good documentation of harms, notable in newly qualified social workers which is significant. There was also stronger practice in documenting survivor strengths and protective efforts. Supervision was also noted in places to be S&T informed. There were also correlations between good practice across files where workers had been trained and had accessed case consultations. Necessary improvements included more consistency in language, higher expectations of behaviour change for perpetrators and a need to provide more evidence of perpetrator pattern-based plans. Change was more evident over time across a broader range of S&T principles.

#### Hackney, Waltham Forest and Newham

The most established boroughs showed much stronger evidence of changed practice, across a broader range of S&T principles.

In Hackney there was evidence of perpetrators being held to account, framing DA as a parenting choice alongside strong use of behavioural expectations across both trained and non-trained staff, suggesting that the longer the approach is being implemented the more likely it is to become embedded practice. There was also evidence of strong supervision enhancing S&T congruent practice. One case, for example, with a new practitioner who had not had Core training but was supported through supervision to hold high parenting expectations for a perpetrator, showed they used the pattern-based lens and clearly documented engagement with the perpetrator. There were however missed opportunities identified with respect to behaviour specific goals in case plans.

Waltham Forest learning reviews showed strong correlations between training plus case consultations and improved S&T informed practice. The reviews identified more evidence of partnering, more documentation of perpetrator patterns and some examples of DA being understood and framed as a parenting choice. There were some weaknesses in the considerations of worker safety.

In Newham strengths were found in documenting perpetrators patterns of behaviour and partnering with victim-survivors including through collaborative safety planning and support from supervisors. There was also important learning that misalignments in approach from partner agencies such as police and schools, can undermine good S&T practice within CSC.

Good practice was also detected in Hackney and Newham in understanding the multiple pathways to harm, which account for the impacts of the perpetrator's behaviour on family functioning, and the inclusion of children's voices.

Overall learning reviews highlighted that through the LPM practice shifts to be more in line with S&T principles: case consultations and S&T focused supervision are both key to embedding learning and effecting deeper change. They also revealed the links between the breadth and depth of change that can be achieved across stages of implementation. Examples below<sup>16</sup> reflect the difference training and case consultations can make, as well as breadth of change across S&T principles.

The examples from case files in newer boroughs show, in the first two extracts, the ways in which victim-survivors are responsibilised for the perpetrator's behaviour and protecting children. The last two show the green shoots of change following S&T training.

*Mother said she shuts the door to prevent the children from overhearing the arguments when they become heated. Mother does not seem to fully grasp that by not reporting the matter to the Police she is putting herself and the children at risk. Her actions are saying she is not able to keep the children safe (Case file extract from untrained social worker).*

*I remain concerned about mother's inability to make the right choices in order to safeguard the children. Mother has never called the Police and she refused to make a statement when child called the Police. It is clear that if child did not call the Police,*

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<sup>16</sup> We have represented them as newer and established boroughs to retain anonymity.

*we would not be aware of this family* (Case file extract from un-trained social worker).

*[Father], we are worried that the children are at risk of emotional harm by being exposed to your abusive behaviours in the home. We are worried that the children may be witnessing or hearing [mother] being hurt by [father]. We are worried that they will come to see violence as a 'normal' way of solving problems* (Case file extract from trained social worker).

*We want [father] to understand that his behaviour can frighten you and [child]* (Case file extract from trained social worker).

These examples from more established boroughs show the shift that S&T informed practice makes to what is noticed, how it is interpreted and how it is written in case notes.

*[Father] you were spoken to during a previous social care intervention with your family in xx; on that occasion you were seen to have physically assaulted [mother] before fleeing from the flat. As part of the assessment you were contacted and spoken to about the violence that you had inflicted on [mother] in full view of [the children]. [father] it was noted that you were not willing to fully take responsibility for the outcome of the argument that was had at that time and the actions that you chose to perpetrate against [mother], choosing rather to focus on what she was doing and how she asks you for too much money and how she was not good for you. The way you chose to act towards [mother] during your relationship resulted in [child] not wanting a relationship with you ... [father] it is understood that outside of the financial contribution that is given by way of child maintenance, there is little active involvement with your children* (Case file extract from trained social worker in established borough).

*What is working well: [mother] despite [father's] pattern of behaviour, you continue to meet the basic needs of [the children] / [mother] you consistently managed the household in a way which reduces the children's exposure to trauma (e.g. sending them to bed when [father] gets aggressive)... [mother] we believe that you have consistently avoided speaking with statutory professionals about the abuse in order to maintain your safety.. [mother] has provided warmth and nurturance consistently to the children despite the impact of [father's] behaviour* (Case file extract from trained social worker in established borough).

*Our ideas about what the children's experiences have been gathered from information we're receiving via other agencies as well our understanding from previous assessments. We've not been able to engage you [mother] in this assessment as you are taking a position of resistance, which we wonder is in response to fear or shame and worry about you being portrayed/perceived as a bad parent. It's likely that the decision to have an Initial Child Protection Conference reinforces this worry and so you might feel you need to continue to not want to work with a social worker. We've attempted to reassure you [mother] that if we could speak to you and the children, perhaps our worries could be contained. We hope that through longer term work, this will have an impact on your sense of trust and therefore your feeling of safety to work with us (Case file extract from trained social worker in established borough).*

### Professional hub

The professional hub reflects a will to leave a legacy to sustain the S&T approach through an implementation beyond 'just another training'. An online portal that hosts tools and resources that can be accessed by all staff across the boroughs, it has been live from the beginning of Year 2. It has worked to streamline booking for training and case consultations alongside providing a resource that can be accessed and grown across time.

Table 4 shows the number of visits per page across Years 2 and 3/4. There has been a drop in visits to all bar one of the hubs resources pages over this funding period, with a notable increase in visits to the 'engaging with perpetrators' resource page. This highlights an appetite to learn more on this, as already shown through training survey findings. The hub was an ambitious undertaking as part of an already time pressured workload, the drop in use may reflect a need for more time and focus to promote and develop its use and value.

**TABLE 4: VISITS TO THE PROFESSIONAL HUB BY PAGE Yr 2-3/4**

Professional Hub Page		Number of visits	
TRAINING		Yr2	Yr3/4
Training and Events		679	243
S&T: core training		491	591
S&T: E-Learning courses		202	88
S&T: Overview training		115	142
RESOURCES			

Main landing page	1503	703
Resources for practitioners	477	202
Engaging with perpetrators	317	909
Perpetrator marketplace	278	22
Resources for managers	241	70
Partnering with Survivors	236	77
Events	225	84
Contact us	216	130
Evaluation	171	166
Working with perpetrators	123	11
Working with Children	114	59

## ON THE CUSP OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

This period saw the project make strong strides towards systems change through specific streams of work focussed on reconciling tensions and blockages to implementation and identifying and seizing opportunities. This work was especially pronounced in boroughs with the longest histories of working with S&T, with newer boroughs also benefitting from and integrating the learning into their work from the off. Through an embedded approach to evaluation, we were able to follow the tensions and blockages and feed findings into work streams in real time. Action learning sets, were the chosen method to create in depth and ‘in process’ embedded insight. Convening a regular, rolling and iterative set with implementation leads and three thematic sets with CSC and borough professionals meant our work and that of implementation leads were mutually developed, and culminated in outputs and outcomes with clear systems change implications.

Year 2 evaluation highlighted three points of tension and opportunity which we explored in more depth during this funding period. In the first we set out to explore complaints from perpetrators of abuse as a potential indicator of success; second quality assurance as a salient site to effect and monitor change and third, the tensions and opportunities of embedding S&T in context to existing systemic practice frameworks. Each action learning set culminated in a briefing paper (see Appendix 3), subsequently shared with partnership boroughs through a webinar open to practitioners, and going forward will be used to support implementation.

## Fortifying systems: S&T and complaints

*When we do start to work [with] perpetrators, they'll complain against the practitioner by saying that they are on mum's side... it's really uncomfortable for our workers to constantly be dealing with complaints and I think it's making them not want to work with perpetrators (CSC team supervisor).*

In Year 2, we reported on an increase in complaints from perpetrators of abuse in boroughs with the longest history of working with S&T as evidence of changing practice. A clear resistance to being held to account we noted increased complaints should be an anticipated part of implementing S&T, congruent to the way perpetrators use systems to extend their abuse such as family courts<sup>17</sup>. If not handled carefully they risk undermining the change the approach is affecting, potentially narrowing the space for intervention<sup>18</sup>. Complaints impact worker confidence, wellbeing, and capacity to maintain the 'pivot' to perpetrators; the impacts are especially acute for minoritised and newly qualified practitioners. Boroughs with longer histories with S&T had already begun responsive streams of work to fortify systems to complaints. The implementation lead in Hackney and Waltham Forest, for example, had developed workshops, in Year 2, and in Year 3 worked with complaints teams on a task and finish working group. This work, combined with evaluation findings meant we repositioned complaints, from an undermining blockage to change to an acknowledged and to be expected part of implementation, requiring tools and work to meet the impacts. That they increase should be regarded as an indicator of success.

The action learning set with complaints professionals revealed that there is no current system in boroughs to record complaints from perpetrators of abuse, and in this no way to monitor this aspect of implementation. Participants were keen to develop a template to use in their work and sessions were spent formulating findings from our discussions on the nature, scale and responses of complaints, into a proforma to record them (see Appendix 3).

The proforma captures a set of conventions which were noted as common to complaints more broadly, such as: being lengthy and overwhelming; unrealistic expectations for wait times for a response; and unreasonable numbers of emails and calls. Many of these patterns

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-family-court-and-domestic-abuse-achieving-cultural-change/the-family-court-and-domestic-abuse-achieving-cultural-change-accessible-version>

<sup>18</sup> Butterworth, L., (2023) Holding the Space for Intervention: Exploring the Impact of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Complaints on Social Work Practice. Unpublished MA dissertation, London Metropolitan University.

were in line with perpetrator strategies of abuse, extending from a domestic to a systems space. These included, denial, minimisation, counter allegations, attempts to manipulate the system and individuals by playing them off against each other and threats. Concerns were also raised about victim-survivors being manipulated into making a complaint themselves, potentially severing the partnering work of the social worker and effectively isolating the victim-survivor further. We, along with implementation leads recognised opportunities here to integrate complaints more deeply into practice, by including complaints and abuse of systems as part of the mapping work on case files. This is currently being explored in Hackney and Waltham Forest. There is also a need to address the ramifications for professionals, both CSC and complaints, of being the targets of manipulative and at times threatening behaviours.

Broader systems barriers such statutory guidance paying limited attention to the system being weaponised by domestic abuse perpetrators and independent adjudicators and the ombudsman being unfamiliar with S&T principles, were also highlighted, and streams of work to meet these barriers are already in process. Hackney for example have targeted independent adjudicators for overview training, as part of a strategy to fortify systems.

Complaints professionals are remarkably skilled at understanding perpetrator strategies to manipulate systems, and had already devised their own practices to manage them and had ideas about ways to fortify worker confidence and narrow space to manipulate.

Acknowledging and integrating complaints as part of everyday practice through joint working across social workers, quality assurance, supervisors and complaints teams was a central plank of this approach. Along with recognising that complaints can be de-stabilising, whilst at the same time are to be expected which means attending to emotional needs of professionals. Aligning systems by ensuring S&T congruent policies and practices across adjoining systems and processes was the recommended pathway.

This work on complaints is evidence that the project is interactively and responsively embedding S&T into CSC, and working to mitigate the approach being undermined by gaps in the system. This work is ongoing, the proforma to record and monitor complaints is being implemented and integrated into systems to support embedding S&T and to track complaints consistently and comparatively. The tool will be piloted in the partnership over the next year and a regular meeting to link complaints staff across the boroughs co-ordinated by implementation leads.

## Aligning systems: S&T and quality assurance

*I think it is really difficult to change cultures in institutions and Safe and Together asks for a cultural shift ... I think CP chairs, people in quality assurance, in a sense, are people where it matters, because they're the people evaluating what is good work (Social worker, interview).*

Working with QA professionals we set out to explore in more depth whether their work could support embedding S&T, but this very quickly moved to a question of how. Professionals were so keen to ensure their work helped support the approach that we immediately set out to work together on a tool to help them do this. This was remarkably pronounced for new boroughs, who understood that QA was central to embedding the approach. This speaks to findings from Year 1 evaluation, where for experienced practitioners S&T represented a legitimising and anchoring framework for practice which had historically been fractious or blocked by a lack of alignment and consistency.

The sessions were spent exploring what would be valuable for QA processes; and mapping where material could sit within them. That QA processes differed across boroughs meant that the material had to be broad enough to be contextually applied, but specific to S&T principles and practice. The final product was a S&T practice check- list (see Appendix 4), an adaptation of an existing tool developed by implementation lead for Hackney and Waltham Forest. It draws on the core principles of S&T; defining domestic abuse as a harmful parenting practice, pivoting to perpetrators to hold them to account and offering an invitation to change alongside recognising that victim-survivors are endeavouring to do their best to protect children in a context where their space for action is constrained.

The checklist has already been implemented into some borough QA systems and processes to track and encourage the change the project seeks. It is intended as a multi-functional tool to be contextually embedded, but with the aim of ensuring quality assurance in partnership boroughs are aligned with S&T practice principles. The tool is at various stages of implementation across boroughs. In Hackney and Barnet, for example, work is underway to integrate the tool within existing practice standards; used as an audit tool and thinking prompt in supervisions, and CP chairs are using it in pre-conference discussions with social workers. Beyond audit the check list is becoming a lever for practice development.

This is a strong step towards ensuring organisational scaffolding to embed S&T into practice and systems.

## Synthesising frameworks: S&T and systems theory

Perceived tensions between systemic practice frameworks and S&T emerged in the first two years of implementation, alongside a sense from others that the two could work together. Through evaluation, the ALS with CSC professionals and work with the clinical team in one borough culminated in a briefing paper which outlined our findings. The paper has been welcomed as an implementation tool to support work to dislodge blockages to implementation.

Our work revealed that for CSC professionals the shift in focus to perpetrators and being able to locate, name and record abusive patterns of behaviour through a set of tools has been welcomed. Similarly, that S&T offers a vocabulary of harm, through victim and perpetrator was a welcome shift for social workers, as demonstrated in evidence in this report. At clinical level, for some 'pivoting to perpetrators', and specifically naming those causing harm was perceived as creating barriers to relationship building and therapeutic intervention, since it risks evoking shame and defensiveness, some S&T tools were thought by some as too manualised and at odds with the curiosity that underpins systemic approaches.

In practice however, what we learned was that professionals, had developed a skilled and paced application of S&T. Whilst recognising the unease around the term perpetrator, it is an invitation to language which can and is being used strategically: in most direct engagements social workers focus on behaviour and harm and only use 'the p word' in a context of denial and resistance. The most likely place it will be encountered is in case files, but even here people's names are also commonly used. At social work practice level, clarity of language has represented 'an invitation to responsibility', a way to disrupt denial, minimisation and defensiveness. But such intervention is contingent on pace and agility, how and when to use the term perpetrator and draw on a systemic framework. Similarly, social workers have used mapping tools to explore 'what sits underneath the word perpetrator' which then offers a space to reflect on parenting, a potential 'in road' to work with experience and complexity

Year 3 saw realised a synthesis of the frameworks in Newham where tensions were addressed systematically and the implementation lead, clinical team and principle social worker co-produced practice guidance and tools which wove S&T principles into the borough's systemic practice framework. An agile and contextual blending of the S&T approach and principles of systems thinking is an emerging aspect of implementation, offering potential for cross borough learning and development. It suggests that S&T can be aligned with other practice frameworks if the frictions are explored openly and in a spirit of co-production, in the way it has been in Newham. This strand of work has also been showcased across the partnership and garnered interest and support for similar to happen in other boroughs, with the

evaluation briefing paper a valuable tool in this. This is evidence that the project is affecting systems change, and testament to the time needed to do the in-depth work of embedding S&T, beyond training.

### Documenting engagement with perpetrators

Year 1 evaluation revealed that no borough had any way other than free text, to record children's social care actions/interventions that were specific requirements or expectations of perpetrators. Since a core principle in the S&T approach is a 'pivot to perpetrators' there needs to be a way to document and measure this. Embedding a method to record this information within case management systems is another concrete move towards systems change. In Year 2 a template was developed and went live for pilot in Hackney in Mosaic, other boroughs were invited to adopt/adapt it in Year 3.

The pace and success of this aspect of implementation varies across the boroughs, Table 4 shows the progress made to implement the form across the boroughs in this funding period.

**TABLE 5: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PERPETRATOR ENGAGEMENT FORM ACROSS BOROUGHs**

Borough	Status of form
Hackney	Live with 12 completions
Waltham Forest	In process
Newham	Unknown
Hammersmith and City	Unknown
Barnet	Live and currently being piloted
Barking and Dagenham	Unknown

Barnet having only joined the partnership in this funding stream, implemented the form without any barriers and the form was live on the system within 10 months, and is currently being piloted. Waltham Forest one of the original partnership boroughs are still navigating the process for having the form embedded. Resistance had a number of layers and players, including the use of the word perpetrator and the functionality of the case management system; this was unlocked following the May 2025 webinar on the evaluation briefing papers.

In Hackney having the form integrated into the case management system held very few barriers, the challenge however has emerged that it is not being routinely used. Currently, it is not mandatory to complete which may mean that in an already busy workload it is not prioritised. One way that has ensured completion is when managers have assigned the form to practitioners, and the implementation lead has pursued work to support managers to encourage completion, but unless the form is made mandatory, it sits within a number of processes/assessments that have to be completed as part of statutory requirements. Reflections from boroughs who have been successful in this, highlight that a communications and implementation plan for the addition to the system is needed to support the form being used.

### Children's social care data

Through a theory of change in Year 1, linked to the original funding application, a set of indicators from children's social care data were agreed to track change across time. As noted in the first evaluation report the boroughs have different case management systems and varying intake processes; both make generating comparable data for the key indicators problematic. The change data indicators were, therefore, refined at the start of Year 2.

- Number of new cases in this period where DA is the referral issue on intake
- Number of new cases in this period where DA is flagged after assessment
- Number of new child protection plans in this period where DA was a factor/issue of concern
- Number of children taken into care in this period where DA was a factor

This data has, however, continued to pose challenges in terms of comparability and whether any changes can be said to demonstrate the specific impact of S&T.

- Some local authorities use the legal definition of DA, which combines IPV and family violence, but S&T is designed to address IPV cases only. No boroughs were able to just select IPV cases.
- The DA flag on cases does not distinguish between identification at intake or assessment, and there is limited opportunity to update other than in open text fields. Assessing increased identification after intake, is therefore, virtually impossible.
- DA is rarely selectable as a factor in either a care plan or a decision to take a child into care, so analysts are correlating two fields without knowing if they are in fact connected. It is possible, probable even, that the decision to take a child into care is

connected to substance misuse, mental health which may or may not be linked to DA.

- The presumed relationship that the partnering of S&T with victim-survivors will decrease care orders was disconnected from the intention to increase identification. The latter could dampen the impact on the former or even offset it.

The partnership has therefore refreshed the indicators to track change through CSC data for 2025/6 evaluation, and indicator 4 will be replaced with: number of re-referrals into children's social care for DA.

These caveats mean that we do not think the original indicators should be the only metric through which S&T is assessed. The fact that the partnership has been through two changes of membership means we have a four-track data collection; Hackney and Waltham Forest who began S&T work prior to this project; Newham a founder member of the current partnership; Hammersmith and Fulham joining in Year 2; Barnet and Barking and Dagenham joining in Year 3. We are therefore presenting the data for each borough separately.

**TABLE 6: INDICATOR DATA FOR HACKNEY JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>HACKNEY</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 24</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases where DA is the referral issue on intake	294	245	263	255	253	256	230
New cases where DA is flagged after assessment	158	186	181	204	195	171	133
New child protection plans where DA was a factor/issue of concern	37	42	40	53	67	29	21
Number of children taken into care where DA was a factor	2	4	6	6	5	2	3

No consistent patterns, apart from noticeable decreases in the last two quarters across all four indicators.

**TABLE 7: INDICATOR DATA FOR WALTHAM FOREST JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>Waltham Forest</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 24</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases in this period where DA/DV is the referral issue on intake	94	57	50	56	86	49	
New cases in this period where DA/DV is flagged after assessment	325	295	292	287	284	300	
New child protection plans in this period where DA/DV was a factor/issue of concern	14	15	6	17	18	14	
Number of children taken into care in this period where DA/DV was a factor	19	18	15	6	11	10	

There is no consistent pattern on some of the indicators but there is a definite reduction in the number of children being taken into care.

**TABLE 8: INDICATOR DATA FOR NEWHAM JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>Newham</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 24</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases in this period where DA/DV is the referral issue on intake	289	283	287	280			
New cases in this period where DA/DV is flagged after assessment	483	489	472	498			
New child protection plans in this period where DA/DV was a factor/issue of concern	31	47	45	42			
Number of children taken into care in this period where DA/DV was a factor	5	9	15	2			

- Analyst notes there would be no plans/LAC due to DV, cases with CP and LAC flags during the defined period have been identified and back matched to the original assessment.

We do not have the most recent data but there was a large drop in children taken into care in the most recent data return.

**TABLE 9: INDICATOR DATA FOR HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>Hammersmith and Fulham</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 24</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases in this period where DA/DV is the referral issue on intake	45	67	70	63	53		
New cases in this period where DA/DV is flagged after assessment	12	10	4	1	7		
New child protection plans in this period where DA/DV was a factor/issue of concern	2	9	16	13	3		
Number of children taken into care in this period where DA/DV was a factor	0	4	4	9	2		

Hammersmith and Fulham is a much smaller borough than the others in the partnership, with a smaller CSC caseload. We lack the final two quarters data, but there was a noticeable reduction in the children taken into care.

**TABLE 10: INDICATOR DATA FOR BARNET JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>BARNET</b>	<b>July-sept 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>April-June 24</b>	<b>July-Sept 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases in this period where DA/DV* is the referral issue on intake	183	184	172	191	99	127	150
New cases in this period where DA/DV is flagged after assessment	79	101	100	112	74	98	77
New child protection plans in this period where DA/DV was a factor/issue of concern	27	31	46	22	30	30	33

Number of children taken into care in this period where DA/DV was a factor	16	9	9	4	15	4	1
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- Note from analysts; There are three types of DA that can be recorded on the form: 3A (DV where a Child is the Subject), 3B (DV where the Parent/Carer is the Subject), and 3C (DV where Anyone Else in the Household is the Subject). IPV can therefore be identified as 3B, but this data covers all three categories

There are no consistent patterns in this data across most of the indicators, but it needs to read through the reality that Barnet has only been part of the partnership for this funding period. There does however appear to be a reduction in children being taken into care across time, with one quarter being an outlier.

**TABLE 11: INDICATOR DATA FOR BARKING AND DAGENHAM JULY 23-MARCH 25**

<b>Barking and Dagenham</b>	<b>Jul- Sep 23</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 23</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 24</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 24</b>	<b>Jul-Sep 24</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 24</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 25</b>
New cases in this period where DA/DV is the referral issue on intake	763	869	814	704	714	708	583
New cases in this period where DA/DV is flagged after assessment	472	492	377	477	481	407	446
New child protection plans in this period where DA/DV was a factor/issue of concern	53	39	40	42	46	73	64
Number of children taken into care in this period where DA/DV was a factor	12	15	15	21	15	35	18

Again with LBBD, there is no clear pattern across any of the indicators, and the data needs to read through the reality that LBBD has only been part of the partnership for this funding period.

## 6 RELECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

While the project continued to work in a precarious funding context, through tenacity, skill, and commitment the team continued to effect change at varying levels across existing and new partnership boroughs. A story of survival and persistence the S&T LPM continues to demonstrate that this is a model worth investing in - as noted by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales.

There were benefits for new boroughs joining an established project in terms of operations and core activity being well established and they benefitted from previous learning. That said, time was lost to recruitment of a new implementation lead. Nonetheless, changes in practice were evident and work had already begun for deeper level embedding through the implementation lead. Barnet made firm strides in aligning systems to fortify S&T in the borough and are one of only two boroughs to have revised case management systems to include the S&T principle of pivoting to perpetrators through recording engagements with them.

In line with the LPM's localised approach to implementation, the training offer is responsive to emerging and contextual needs, and this funding period, even though due to funding the project reduced the amount of core training, they made up for this through locally devised training and the project in fact increased how much training it offered, as well as extending their offer to include the refresher course.

Training feedback surveys continue to show that practitioners are keen to learn and find ways to develop their skills in how to work with perpetrators and hold them to account. Some of the feedback from Core participants extended the issue of alignment beyond CSC and local authorities to police, health and education, which was also picked up as an impediment in learning reviews.

There is something to be noted here about how implementation, especially embedding, cannot be taken for granted – principles need to be reinforced both within and outside of the system you are seeking to change. Managers and supervisors are key actors here, as well as external partners. This funding period has already seen targeted training across both these sites, as well as tangible deeper level understanding of systems change work across the project with work streams to clear blockages. While CSC practitioners have honed a paced and skilled use of the word perpetrator in their work, it continues to create tensions for some across different parts of the system which we will explore in the next period.

The evaluation findings for this period are summarised below.

- Training continues to appeal to and affect practitioners in significant ways, with operational effectiveness ensuring all of the possibilities on offer are fully subscribed.
- Training increases worker confidence and capacity to pivot to perpetrators and partner with victim-survivors, both of which need the support of implementation leads and S&T informed supervisors.
- The impact is evident in less mutualising and victim blaming language noted in learning reviews in newer boroughs, and in more established boroughs deeper level of change across S&T approach is being achieved.
- Deeper level strategic work to effect systems change is taking place in more established boroughs and new boroughs are benefitting from this.
- The community of practice is working well in achieving its aims of fostering shared learning to feed into systems change: implementation leads are able to identify and address blockages to change as well as gaps.
- The project is moving firmly towards effecting systems change, with tangible outputs and outcomes such as new tools and approaches to embed the practice principles of S&T: local authorities are more aligned with S&T and fortified to mitigate risks of it being undermined.
- S&T practice having positive outcomes in family courts and criminal prosecutions.

We are taking learning into the next, and possible final, phase of this evaluation.

- To track how the tools developed in this funding period are being implemented: the S&T practice checklist, complaints pro forma and work to align S&T with existing practice frameworks.
- Exploring how to build commitment to completing the perpetrator engagement form.
- Investigating tensions in the use of the word perpetrator in CSC.
- Explore how S&T principles can be applied in the short term engagements of MASH teams.
- Develop an approach with implementation leads to assess how victim-survivors experience the S&T approach.
- Reflect on and develop the learning review process.

## Appendix 1: The Safe and Together Approach

Safe and Together is an internationally recognised systems change intervention, combining a training programme with linked tools and resources to improve responses to domestic abuse. S&T seeks to change both practice and systems through three basic principles: keeping children safe and together with the non-offending parent; partnering with the non-offending parent; intervening with the perpetrator. The model was developed in the US to apply specifically to child protection, as it is here that a large proportion of DA cases become known to statutory agencies.

S&T is a trade-marked programme, meaning any take up of the model has to be linked to the Safe and Together Institute<sup>19</sup> through a formal partnership. S&T now has global reach with significant adoptions in the US, Australia and the UK. Previous implementations according to the Institute have seen a 44-66% decrease in domestic abuse related removals of children and almost a third reduction in re-referrals into children welfare organisations

Recent evaluations show that it can reduce the throughput into formal child protection procedures<sup>20</sup> and that it changes the framing of victim-survivors reducing the extent that they are held responsible for protecting their children. A core concept in this evaluation is ‘responsibilisation’ – the ways in which people are made responsible for change in their lives: it has been applied to DA to illustrate how policy and practice, through an emphasis on risk assessment and short-term risk reduction, has increasingly held women responsible for their own and their children’s safety <sup>21</sup>Hadjimatheou (2022<sup>22</sup>) makes a similar argument, showing how domestic abuse disclosure schemes, originally envisaged as an empowerment process, are increasingly shaped by children’s social care, and used as a lever to make victim-survivors responsible for protecting children. Both studies document a shift away from the recognition in the 1990s that woman protection could be the best form of child protection, and both note that in the process perpetrators become invisible – a reality S&T explicitly seeks to change.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/>

<sup>20</sup> Humphreys, C. & Nicholson, D (2017) Implementing Stage 3 of the Multi-Agency Triage Model. [[https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MAT-Final-Report\\_6Feb\\_2018-2.pdf](https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MAT-Final-Report_6Feb_2018-2.pdf)]

<sup>21</sup> Coy, M & Kelly, L (2019) The Responsibilisation of Women Who Experience Domestic Violence: A Case Study from England and Wales. In Hageman-White, C, Kelly, L & Meysen, T (Eds) Interventions Against Child Abuse and Violence Against Women: Ethics and Culture in Practice and Police. Verlag, Barbara Budich.

<sup>22</sup> Hadjimatheou, K (2022) ‘Social Care Told me I Had to’: Empowerment And Responsibilization in The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. British Journal of Criminology, 62: 2

## Appendix 2: Training data by borough

**TABLE 12: OVERVIEW: ATTENDANCE NUMBERS BY BOROUGH**

OVERVIEW	Year 1 N attended	Year 2 N attended	Year 3 N Attended	Total N for Year 1- 3
Hackney	46	29	96	179
Waltham Forest	41	47	107	195
Newham	74	29	153	256
H&F	-	56	64	120
Barnet	-	-	159	159
LBBD	-	-	138	138
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>1039</b>

**TABLE 13: CORE: ATTENDANCE NUMBERS BY BOROUGH**

CORE	Year 1 N attended	Year 2 N attended	Year 3/4 attended	N Total
<b>Hackney</b>	18	60	63	141
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	31	57	71	159
<b>Newham</b>	43	57	87	187
<b>H&amp;F</b>	-	49	66	115
<b>Barnet</b>	-	-	86	86
<b>LBBD</b>	-	-	82	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>770</b>

**TABLE 14: SUPERVISOR: ATTENDANCE NUMBERS BY BOROUGH**

Supervisor	Year 3/4 N attended
Hackney	1
Waltham Forest	4
Newham	6
H&F	4
Barnet	7
LBBD	6
Total	<b>25</b>

**TABLE 15: REFRESHER: ATTENDANCE BY BOROUGH**

REFRESHER	Year 3/4 N attended
Hackney	3
Waltham Forest	25
Barking and Dagenham	5
Total	33

## Appendix 3: Links to Briefing papers

S&T Briefing 1: [https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file\\_asset/file/2740/s\\_t\\_briefing1\\_systems.pdf](https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file_asset/file/2740/s_t_briefing1_systems.pdf)

S&T Briefing 2: [https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file\\_asset/file/2741/S\\_T\\_briefing2\\_QA.pdf](https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file_asset/file/2741/S_T_briefing2_QA.pdf)

S&T Briefing 3: [https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file\\_asset/file/2742/s\\_t\\_briefing3\\_complaints.pdf](https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/respect/file_asset/file/2742/s_t_briefing3_complaints.pdf)