



### CONTEXT

The First Response Service was a new phone service for professionals (e.g. teachers, doctors, child carers) to phone when they are concerned about the wellbeing of a child. The phone service provides an initial triage system where action is then taken depending on the situation being described – for example assigning to a case worker, passing to a supervisor for immediate action, etc.

### CHALLENGE

The First Response service was a new operation using existing and new staff from the child protection department at the Council. The staff members were fairly experienced in face-to-face social work so they commissioned tailored training to focus specifically on phone delivery. The team carry out a diagnostic role, obtaining information whilst using active listening techniques and picking up on subtle cues for further insight.

The desire was to make sure advisors were more confident after the training in their own ability, affirming their skill set and performing well, but also looking at things that could be improved upon, to enhance their learning experience and become more equipped for the role. This particular service also placed much emphasis on self care, including supervision and reflective practice due to the demanding nature of their role.

It was essential from the outset that all staff commenced specialist training at exactly the right level. The training was required to be experiential and work-based, with a possibility of listening in and feedback.

### OUTCOME

Following a thorough consultation a series of training courses were carried out tailored to the needs of the staff and service:

#### **Helpline skills training:**

A one-day course which included a refresher on active listening skills, role plays (with case studies appropriate to the service) – dealing with difficult callers, managing caller expectations, and reflective practice / looking after yourself. This was run twice, so the service didn't need to be diverted for a whole day.

#### **Follow-up training:**

A half-day follow-up course which reflected on how staff were able to apply the learning from the initial training to their work, with a specific focus on effective questioning techniques around a question template used by the service.

#### **Management training:**

A half-day training session for managers, focused on assessment, listening in, coaching skills and giving feedback. The role-plays undertaken throughout the training were considered so effective they are now being considered for inclusion into group/peer supervision in the future to develop their reflective practice.