



Bluestar Project

An evidence-based Pre-Trial
Accreditation Programme

Background to the Bluestar Accreditation Programme

In 2022, the Bluestar Project was funded by the Home Office Childhood Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation Fund to develop research exploring the barriers to pre-trial therapy and develop some best practice guidance surrounding the new CPS guidelines. Pre-Trial Therapy is any kind of therapy service accessed when a report of a crime is made to the police, while that case is under investigation, awaiting charge or a court date. Our research report “Keeping Secrets” found that there were multiple barrier’s to accessing pre-trial therapy for survivors of sexual assault – while the study focussed on childhood sexual abuse, we are aware that these challenges are faced by victims of all crime types. The research found that:



There is a widely held mistaken belief that accessing therapy before the criminal justice process finishes will cause a criminal case to fail



The lack of clarity or shared understanding of what pre-trial therapy is results in inconsistent support for victims in need of care. What support is available is often hard to find and has very limited availability nationally



Victims are wrongly being advised that they should not access therapy until the criminal justice process has ended



When pre-trial therapy does take place, victims are often told not to talk about the incident under investigation



Therapists delivering pre-trial therapy are often working within a culture of fear that their involvement could damage the criminal case for their clients – they are particularly concerned about notes being taken as a form of evidence and being called to court



At that time, there were no Accredited Training Programmes or Accreditation Services that can support therapy services to develop best practice in this area.

We found that nationally, many services don’t have a clear or consistent policy around pre-trial therapy and there is much uncertainty and variation in practice. To address this, with Harewood Consultancy, we created a number of resources which are available for all therapy services to use on our website – www.bluestarproject.co.uk.

Accreditation Programme: What is available?

The Bluestar Pre-Trial Accreditation is a three-day programme to assess an organisation's readiness to deliver pre-trial therapy and support service users through a case note request as part of an investigative process.

This interactive three-day onsite evaluation can be offered as an assessment to meet the Bluestar Accreditation Standards or as a supportive process that will equip you with knowledge and resources to deliver a pre-trial therapy and support service according to the Bluestar National Best Practice Standards. The programme includes a desktop audit of policy and practice, a case note audit, and interviews with staff, service users and partner organisations.

The accreditation is designed to support organisations delivering pre-trial therapy to victims and families within the criminal justice process regardless of offence type.

Bluestar offer two accreditation pathways:



Bluestar Accreditation Assessment – by the end of the three days your organisation will have been assessed and provided with an Accreditation, where the standards are met. Where gaps are identified your organisation will have three months to complete a small number of outstanding actions.



Working Towards Bluestar Accreditation – this three-day supportive process will enable your organisation to work through the accreditation pack with the assessor and access resources, expertise and support to work towards the accreditation standards. Further time will be required for the assessor to return to undertake the Accreditation Assessment within six months of the date of Working Towards Accreditation. The cost will vary depending on the level of additional work required.

The Accreditation Standards have been generated from our National Research and includes feedback from victim's and survivors about their experiences of pre-trial therapy services and the criminal justice system.

What to expect during the Accreditation Assessment



Day one – Desktop review of Pre-trial therapy policies, procedures and associated resources



Day two – Case note audits, interviews with staff and service users



Day three – Interviews with partners from police and CPS, summary recommendations and Accreditation report write up

Getting ready for Accreditation Assessment

It would be beneficial for you and your team to attend the Bluestar Pre-trial Therapy training day and to use the key guidance documents and Bluestar Resources to create local policies, procedures and resources prior to going for accreditation. All free resources can be found at www.bluestarproject.co.uk.

Accreditation Activity	Preparatory work for the organisation
DAY ONE: Desk top review of Pre-trial therapy policies, procedures and associated resources	Please provide electronic or hard copies of the following, ideally one week in advance of the assessment: * Pre-Trial Therapy Policy/procedure * Pre-Trial Therapy leaflet for service users * Organisations website * Consent and contracting guidance and documentation for individual and group sessions * Pre-Trial Therapy group protocol/guidance * Staff induction programme/handbook * Pre-Trial Therapy notes request form
DAY TWO: Case note audit	Please ensure access to case notes for 10 service users who worked with therapist and/or ISVA and/or support worker for at least three months on morning of day 2 of the assessment. Aim for a representative group of service users for your organisation including range of age, gender, ethnicity, type of assault, practitioners. Preparation of 10 sets of redacted case notes for audit: * Identify case notes for 10 service users * Extract case note and anonymise/redact identifiable information about the service user or third parties * Collate extracted case notes for assessor
DAY TWO: Interviews with staff and service users	Identify and invite a representative group of therapists, ISVA, support workers to attend an in-person/online forum for 1 hour on day 2. Send out staff survey two weeks before accreditation with a closing date the day before accreditation starts. Identify and invite service manager, administrator (involved in responding to notes requests) and information governance lead (if available) to attend an in-person/online forum for 1 hour on day 2. Identify and invite service users – adults, parents, young people to attend an online forum or for individual interview for 1 hour on day 2. Please aim for all interviews/sessions to be between 1pm and 5pm where possible. Speak to your assessor if you need more flexibility for an early evening event for parents/young people.

Accreditation Activity	Preparatory work for the organisation
DAY THREE: Interview with representatives from partner agencies	Identify and invite a representative from police (lead officer for rape and/or child abuse) and CPS (RASSO team) to attend an in-person/online forum for 1 hour on day 2. If you do not have contact details for individuals in the police or CPS, we will aim to send a survey to your local CPS RASSO team and your Police team that investigates rape and sexual offences.
DAY THREE: Summary of the findings and recommendations	Please identify an hour with the service manager to meet the assessor for a summary of the findings and outline recommendations. Assessor may request desk space to remain onsite or travel for the remainder of the day to write up the Accreditation report.

Planning for Working Towards Accreditation



If you have opted for the Working Towards Accreditation route, this three-day supportive process will enable your organisation to work through the accreditation pack with the assessor and access resources, expertise and support to work towards the accreditation standards.

The format of the three days is likely to follow a similar pattern to the accreditation but it would be ideal for the service manager to jointly undertake the assessment to provide opportunities for learning throughout the process.

At the end of day three, the assessor and manager will agree a workplan of development and any training require to meet the accreditation standards. The service will have six months from the date of Working Towards Accreditation to complete the workplan.

Further time will be required for the assessor to return to undertake the Accreditation Assessment within. The cost will vary depending on the level of additional work required to review and reassess, but it is anticipated that this will be one day.

During the three-day assessment

Your assessor will be onsite at your organisation for three days and will need to be provided with desk space to work and access to a meeting room or facilities for confidential online meetings. Access to the organisations facilities and refreshments would be greatly appreciated.

The draft schedule for the day is:

Day	Activity	Resource
DAY ONE	Desk top review of Pre-trial therapy policies, procedures and associated resources	Desk space
DAY TWO	AM – Case note audit of 10 sets of redacted case notes PM – Interviews with staff – a forum with therapists and/ or ISVAs PM – Interview with service manager/admin/information governance lead (if available) PM – Interviews or a forum with service users – including adults, young people and/or parents as appropriate to reflect the organisations client group	Desk space Interview room for individual, online or group sessions
DAY THREE	AM – Interviews with representatives from partner agencies – including police and CPS AM – Meeting with service manager to provide a summary of the findings and recommendations PM – Accreditation report write up	Interview room for individual or online meetings

After the assessment

After the assessment, you will receive the Bluestar Accreditation Certificate for delivery of pre-trial therapy and support services according to our National Standards. You will receive a PDF copy of the certificate, and access to advice on three topics in the first year.

If you have a small number of outstanding actions, you will be given three months to provide evidence of completion and then will receive your certificate. If you opted for Working Towards Accreditation, the team will be in touch to agree an assessment date within six months of working towards.

You will be asked to complete a short feedback form which enables us to continue developing the training for other services.

You can contact the Bluestar Project team about any follow-up questions on info@bluestarproject.co.uk.



