Staying Silent: Adult Disclosures of Child Sexual Abuse

Webinar Feedback and Early Impact Summary



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Webinar Overview

> "It was incredibly impactful and really made me stop to think about the barriers to disclosure that people face and what I can personally do to try and reduce /eliminate these"
>
> - Webinar Participant, Children's Services Professional

This webinar used a short lived-experience film *Staying Silent* as the stimulus for a conversation with Jeremy Indika about adult disclosures of child sexual abuse, including why it can take many years, and sometimes decades, for an adult to tell another person what happened to them.

The film and facilitated conversation explored some of the barriers that can make disclosure difficult, including shame, fear of not being believed, concern about the consequences for other people, relationships with the person who abused them, and uncertainty about what will happen after someone tells. Participants were also encouraged to consider what the experience of disclosure asks of the person listening, and how professional responses can support or compound the difficulty of telling.

This report draws on immediate feedback from 188 participants. It presents the headline responses before exploring themes that emerged particularly clearly across both sources: understanding disclosure as an ongoing process; the significance of the response someone receives; what participants valued about the learning experience; and their intentions to share or use the learning.

The verbatim quotations included throughout have been selected to illustrate these themes. The feedback provides evidence of immediate learning, reflection and intended action.

Key Indicators of Learning

The following figures are based on responses to the post-webinar feedback survey*.

We asked: *How would you rate the webinar overall?*
Response: Average **4.8 out of 5,** and **98.9%** rated the webinar **4 or 5 out of 5**

We asked: *Did you find the speaker engaging?*
Response: 100% said yes

We asked: *Did the session provide a meaningful learning experience?*
Response: 98.9% said yes

What we asked: *Did you hear anything today that challenged your thinking of gave you a new perspective?*
Response: 59.6% said yes, **25.5%** were unsure

We asked: *How likely is it that you'll recommend the Staying Silent short film to friends and/or colleagues?*
Response: 9.8 out of 10, 94.7%rated their likelihood 9 or 10

We asked: *Did the webinar prompt you to reflect on your own practice, or practice you're responsible for?*
Response: 98.9% said yes

We asked: *Do you intend to add your attendance at this webinar to your CPD log?*
Response: 78.6% said yes. **12.8%** were unsure.

These responses provide strong evidence that participants experienced the webinar as meaningful and reflective. Importantly, the reflection measure is supported by qualitative evidence: **172 of the 188 respondents went on to describe what they had been reflecting on.**

The 59.6% of respondents that said their thinking had been challenged should be understood alongside this wider evidence. Some respondents who already work closely with child sexual abuse described the webinar as deepening, reinforcing or adding new complexity to existing knowledge rather than giving them an entirely new perspective.

These are immediate post-webinar indicators of learning, reflection and intention.

*Data taken from 188 post-webinar feedback survey responses.
Note: Percentages are based on valid responses to each question. One respondent did not answer the CPD question.

Understanding Disclosure as a Process

"I work for an organisation that specialises on response to child sexual abuse but there were still aspects of survivor experiences that I'd not thought of enough - like the intrusiveness of flashbacks during professional engagement, and the continuous nature of disclosing throughout life."

A strong theme across both the survey and live conversation was a shift away from asking why someone did not tell sooner, towards considering what can make disclosure so difficult in the first place.

Participants reflected on fear of not being believed, shame and self-blame, grooming, concern about the impact on family and other relationships, attachment to the person who abused them, and fear of what might happen once something has been said.

The responses also show participants recognising disclosure as a process rather than a single event. They considered the prospect of having to tell and retell an experience to different people, the possibility of flashbacks and triggers during professional encounters, and the emotional consequences that can continue long after an initial disclosure.

A particularly important strand of reflection concerned the complexity of memories and relationships. Participants recognised that positive memories, affection or connection can coexist with abuse, and that this may complicate both the person's own understanding of what happened and other people's expectations of how somebody who has experienced abuse should feel or behave.

""when I have heard about cases where victims did not speak out for years. I have also thought 'why now' why did they speak out before'. Attending this webinar has been insightful and I have learned that non disclosure could be as a result of many factors. It does not matter how long. Receiving the appropriate support when a disclosure is made is key."

A Key Theme: How We Respond When Someone Tells

> I think you're raising the mirror to us as professionals and asking us to be curious about why."

One of the clearest themes in the feedback was not simply what participants learned about disclosure, but what they began to ask about their own response when someone tells them about abuse.

Participants repeatedly referred to listening, believing, allowing time, avoiding judgement and victim-blaming, paying attention to body language and non-verbal responses, and giving the person space to proceed at their own pace.

The live chat gives particular insight into how this reflection developed. Initial responses to the film focused strongly on anger, sadness and frustration at the professional response being depicted. As the conversation continued, participants increasingly turned that scrutiny towards themselves and their own practice: what they communicate through their questions, pauses, attention and body language, and what disclosure might feel like from the other side of the conversation.

This suggests that the session moved beyond identifying poor practice in others and created space for professional self-reflection.

"Reflect on how I currently respond to disclosures and consider whether my language, body language, or questioning style could unintentionally appear dismissive, judgemental, or victim-blaming."

"So important for us to be mindful of non verbal communication. And pauses so that we are not rushing people through that process."

"Reflecting how busy I can be in my job role and "always" offering the space, support and time for someone to reflect on a disclosure."

What Participants Valued

Participants particularly valued the combination of the short film, lived experience and the reflective conversation that followed it.

The film gave participants a way of encountering some of the emotional and relational complexity of disclosure rather than only hearing it described. Jeremy's openness and willingness to reflect on his own lived experience then helped participants explore what they had seen and connect it with the realities of professional practice.

The conversation that followed the film was an important part of the learning experience. Feedback repeatedly refers to the combination of the film and discussion, rather than to either element in isolation. Participants valued being able to first experience the film, then to interpret what they had noticed, hear Jeremy's reflections and consider what it might mean for their own work.

"The discussion between the host and Jeremy after the film - it was nuanced and conveyed the complexities really well."

"The video was very powerful which was added to by the interactive discussion after"

"Real life - real context - real language."

"the film followed by the structured discussion and getting us to interact. Was a brilliant formula."

Participants' Intentions to Share and Use the Learning

"Thank you so much, this has had such an impact and made me feel a huge range of emotions and will stay with me for a long time. I am now sharing your video with my team..."

Participants described a range of intentions to take the learning beyond the webinar. These included sharing the film with colleagues and teams, incorporating it into existing training, using the learning within safeguarding supervision, and opening wider conversations about how professionals respond when people disclose sexual abuse.

In some cases this had already begun during the webinar itself. The live chat contains at least 20 explicit messages saying that the film had been, or would be, shared with colleagues, teams or wider professional groups. Other participants discussed inviting Jeremy to contribute to further professional learning.

This is stronger than a general willingness to recommend the webinar. Participants identified particular groups, learning settings and professional contexts in which they intended to use what they had encountered.

"I have already written to 3 people about follow up and possible further actions as a result of attending the webinar and watching the video."

"I deliver CSA share and learn sessions using the materials I was trained in from the CSA Centre. I plan to incorporate this video into our session on working with adults survivers"

"Such a powerful piece of training in one hour! Massive conversation starter. I will be sharing your video with my team."

These are early indicators of learning beginning to travel beyond the individual participant.

Why Engage with the On Demand Recording?

This webinar offers valuable learning for professionals who may encounter disclosures of childhood sexual abuse across a wide range of roles and settings.

Participants' feedback suggests that the recording may be particularly useful for professionals who want to:

- Deepen their understanding of why disclosure may take many years or decades
- Think about disclosure as an ongoing process rather than a single event
- Explore the complex emotions, relationships and consequences that can make telling difficult
- Reflect on how language, questions, body language and pace can shape the experience of disclosure
- Consider how to respond in ways that reduce judgement, blame and pressure
- Use the film and lived experience as the stimulus for supervision, team reflection or multi-agency learning.

The recording can be used for individual CPD or as the starting point for a facilitated team conversation. CareKnowledge's accompanying resources can help move the learning from the immediate emotional response to the film towards consideration of what disclosure means for everyday professional practice.

For team use, the recording is likely to be most valuable when participants are given time after the film to reflect together on what they noticed, how they responded, and what this might mean for their own practice.

Why this learning matters for organisations now

Delayed disclosure of child sexual abuse is not unusual. Evidence considered by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse identified a wide range of barriers including fear of not being believed, shame or guilt, grooming, fear of consequences for family relationships and concern about losing control of what happens once abuse is disclosed. IICSA also cited research suggesting an average delay of around 24 years among those who do disclose.

Understanding disclosure as a process
The CSA Centre describes disclosure as a process influenced by relationships and interactions with others which may extend over a considerable period of time. Disclosure may be partial, non-verbal or develop gradually, and the way professionals engage with someone can help or hinder the process. It also highlights that negative responses can compound shame and guilt.

The response matters
This means that good organisational responses cannot depend only on practitioners knowing the correct procedure. People also need the knowledge, confidence, time and support to listen carefully, respond without blame or judgement, recognise that accounts may emerge gradually, and understand the potential impact of asking somebody to tell their experience repeatedly.

A changing safeguarding context
In England, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 explicitly identifies child sexual abuse among the hidden harms practitioners should consider. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 has also legislated for new mandatory reporting measures in specified roles, reinforcing the wider focus on how institutions recognise and respond to child sexual abuse.

This webinar creates space for practitioners to ask a related but different question: not only whether they understand their procedures, but what it actually might feel like to disclose to them and their service, and what their response communicates to the person who has chosen to tell.

Evidence and policy context checked October 2026. Working Together references apply to England; wider learning about disclosure may be relevant across jurisdictions.

Using the Learning in your Organisation

Staying Silent gave practitioners space to consider what disclosure may ask of the person telling, what can make that process difficult, and how the response they receive can shape what happens next.

The strongest early learning signals were:

1. A deeper understanding of why disclosure of child sexual abuse may take many years and continue to unfold over time.
2. Greater awareness of the conflicting emotions, memories, relationships and consequences that can surround disclosure.
3. Reflection on listening, language, body language, pace and the importance of being believed.
4. Recognition that professional responses can support disclosure or compound shame, blame and distress.
5. Immediate intentions to share the film and use the learning within teams, training, supervision and professional development.

Questions for teams

- What assumptions might we make when a disclosure is delayed, partial, changes over time or is retracted?
- What might our language, questions, body language and use of silence communicate to someone who is telling us about abuse?
- How do we create enough time and attention for a disclosure in services where practitioners are under pressure?
- How can we reduce unnecessary retelling and explain clearly what will happen after somebody discloses?
- What support and signposting can we offer after disclosure, including when the abuse happened many years ago?
- How do we support practitioners when hearing disclosures connects with their own experiences or has a significant emotional impact?

The replay of **Staying Silent** is available On Demand for CareKnowledge members here.

Not yet a member? Visit CareKnowledge at www.careknowledge.com or drop as an email at info@careknowledge.com to find out how a subscription could benefit your organisation.

About CareKnowledge

CareKnowledge strengthens reflective and ethically confident practice across care, safeguarding and support systems.

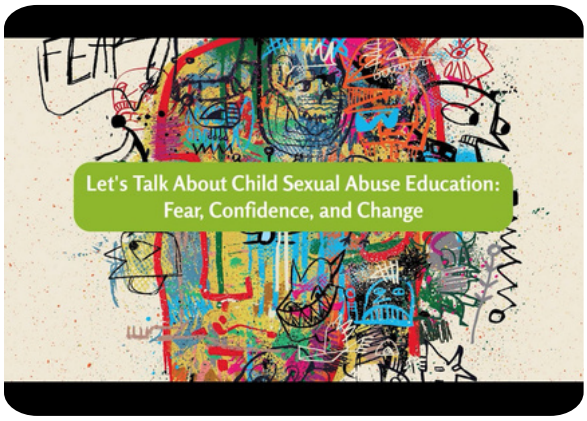
We create learning spaces and resources that help practitioners engage seriously with evidence, ideas and lived experience, and consider what these mean for their relationships, decisions and practice.

Also available now On Demand

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