

Overview of Theory and Practice of Contextual Safeguarding



Learning Outcomes

By the end of the training you will have:-

- An understanding of the theory of Contextual Safeguarding
- Discussed how children and young people can be significantly harmed outside the family home
- Explored the 4 key elements in the Contextual Safeguarding approach
- Increased confidence to identify children and young people who present as potentially being vulnerable through the company they keep or the areas they frequent
- Increased awareness of the process used in Barnsley.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:-

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health and development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018 states.....

‘As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse, or exploitation from outside their families’

(This document was amended in December 2020 and the chapter entitled Contextual Safeguarding is now called Assessment of Risk Outside the Home)



Introduction To Contextual Safeguarding

Since 2011, Dr Carlene Firmin from the University of Bedfordshire has developed a contextual framework for adolescents and today this approach is being implemented in a number of Local Authorities.



To Safeguard Young People We Need To Understand Their Developmental Stage

Dynamics Of Adolescents

- Risk and motivation for thrills
- Short term gains
- Emotional regulation
- Increasing desire for autonomy

What Is Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people.



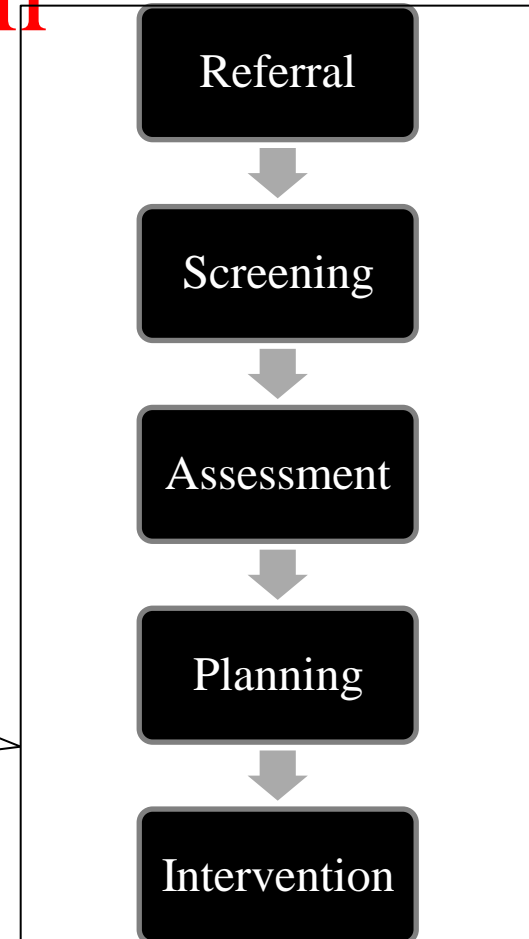
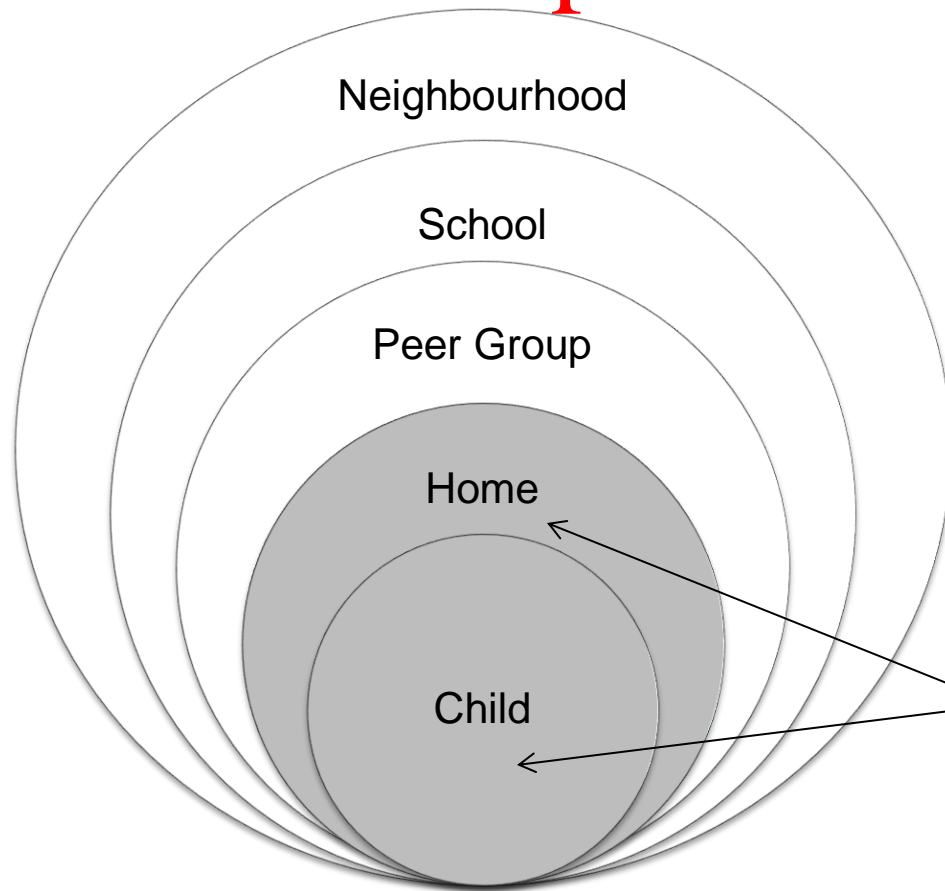
Why It Matters

Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, and don't always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home.





Traditional reach of child protection



#ContextualSafeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding



Domain 1: Target

Seeks to prevent, identify, assess and intervene with the social conditions of abuse



Domain 2: Legislative framework

Incorporate extra-familial contexts into child protection frameworks



Domain 3: Partnerships

Develop partnerships with sectors/individuals who are responsible for the nature of extra-familial contexts



Domain 4: Outcomes measurement

Monitor outcomes of success in relation to contextual, as well as individual, change

Why It Matters

As children move from early childhood and into adolescence, they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. The nature of young people's relationships, that they form in these settings, inform the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse.

Peer Relationships

Research tells us that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence. If a young person forms friendships in contexts characterised by violence and/or harmful attitudes these relationships will be anti-social and unsafe.



What Are The Risks

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Radicalisation
- Human Trafficking + Modern Slavery
- Serious Youth Violence
- Child Criminal Exploitation – including County Lines.



Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

Government definition 2017.



High Risk Indicators

- Multiple missing episodes + school truancy
- Unexplained income/new possessions
- Unexplained relationships with adults
- Change in behaviour/appearance
- Sexualised risk taking.

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour involves one or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. These can range from using sexually explicit words and phrases to full penetrative sex with other children or adults.

(Rich, 2011)

High Risk Indicators

- Disclosure from victim
- Exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- Sexually explicit talk with younger children
- Sexual harassment
- Power imbalance or lack of consent in sexual relationships between under 18's.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support an extreme ideology which advocates violence. This ideology may be religious or political in nature but can also include a social movement for example, animal rights activism.

High Risk Indicators

- Behavioural changes
- Possession of violent extremist literature
- The expression of extremist views
- Advocating violent actions or means
- Associated with known extremists.

Child Trafficking

Child trafficking is the action or practice of illegally procuring and relocating children, typically for the purposes of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation or forced labour (a form of modern slavery).

High Risk Indicators

- Child seen in an inappropriate workplace
- Child living separately to their family with no apparent access to parent/carers
- Child not registered with a school or GP
- Child unsure which town/city they are in.

Serious Youth Violence

Young person involved in crime, whether exploitatively or not, may be at risk of being seriously harmed or causing serious physical injury to another. This could be weapon enabled violence (stabbing, shooting or hit and run type incidents). The risk of serious youth violence may increase when the young person is gang affiliated.

High Risk Indicators

- Suspected of carrying a weapon
- Involvement in drug trafficking or dealing
- Previous victim or perpetrator of violent crime
- Associates who are involved in violence.

Child Criminal Exploitation

CCE involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a child receives ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them completing a criminal task on behalf of another individual or group of individuals.

CCE often occurs without the child’s immediate recognition, with the child believing that they are in control of the situation. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them.

Violence, threats, coercion and intimidation are common.

(There is no official Home Office definition, however this definition is commonly used).



High Risk Indicators

- Frequent missing episodes
- Unexplained income/new possessions
- Unexplained relationships with older adults
- Criminal behaviour eg possession of drugs/weapons.

Sheffield SCR

Sam Baker aged 15 years. Died 24th May 2018



Fatally stabbed in the chest by another 15 year old boy at
Lowedges, Sheffield

Sam's Story

- Sam came to the UK in 2014 with his mother and siblings
- He presented no offending behaviour for the first 2 years in the UK
- In December 2016 he was detained with a boy of a similar age for shoplifting. This was his first offence.
- By February 2017 he was involved in a street robbery. He was part of a group that threatened a young male at knife point and took his jewellery
- Four days after the robbery he was arrested for burglary. He was also in possession of cannabis....

Sam's Story

- His offending behaviour became both serious and frequent and included assaults on his former teachers, being part of large groups fighting with weapons, further drugs offences, making threats to stab people , carrying knives and other offence weapons, setting fire to motor vehicles, smashing house windows and being present when firearms had been discharged.

From a minor shoplifting offence his offending quickly escalated to serious and frequent criminality.

Sam's Story

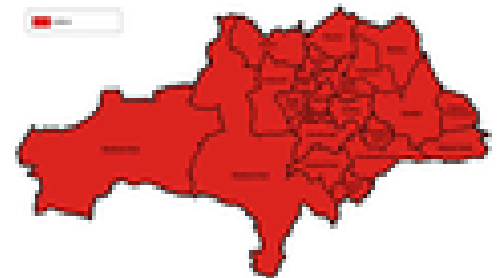
- There were over 400 separate contacts with agencies in less than 3 years.
- Sam was the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- The Child Protection Plan was insufficiently focussed on **context** and Sam's offending behaviour and the possible reasons for it
- Practitioners involved did not fully pull together a comprehensive picture of the risks to Sam
- Interventions focused on the family and home environment rather than the wider **contextual risks** that Sam was exposed to and which were becoming his focus.

Victim Or Criminal



Victim Not Criminal

- Nationally children who suffer CCE are often viewed as criminals and less sympathetically than victims of other types of abuse.
- Harm caused by CCE can be significant and life changing/ threatening and children should be considered as victims.
- Children's Commissioner Report – *Keeping Kids Safe* (February 2019) said ' I find that all the mistakes that led to serious safeguarding failings in relation to CSE in towns up and down the country are now being repeated. Local areas are not facing up to the scale of the problem.' Ann Longfield – Children's Commissioner



Responding To Critical Moments

When a decisive response is necessary to make a difference to their long-term outcomes:-

- The point at which they are excluded from school
- When they are physically injured
- When they are arrested.

Indicators

Here is a list of common indicators associated with extra familial risks for adolescents

- Poor mental health – Stressed, angry, depressed
- Frequent missing episodes
- Young people connected with a place where there are existing concerns about safety eg park, residential block, school
- Substance misuse
- Concerns about CSE and/or Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Breakdown in relationship between child and caregiver
- Concerns about individual/peer group being involved with offending/involvement with Youth Offending Team

Indicators Continued....

- Concerns about online behaviour/ use of social media
- Learning difficulty or disability (either assessed or queried) which may increase vulnerability
- NEET, poor attendance record or repeated exclusions and school moves
- Experience of abuse at home including witnessing domestic abuse.
- Concerns about gang involvement/gang coercion and criminal exploitation via 'county lines'



What Should We Do

A Contextual Safeguarding approach aims to disrupt harmful extra-familial contexts rather than move young people away from them. The approach seeks to identify the ways in which professionals, adults and young people can change the social conditions of environments in which abuse has occurred.

What Should We Do

We should aim to engage with individuals and sectors who have a bearing on social contexts, ie shopkeepers, local policing and community leaders to make environments safer.



What Should We Do

Therefore, practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra- familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices.

What Should We Do

Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

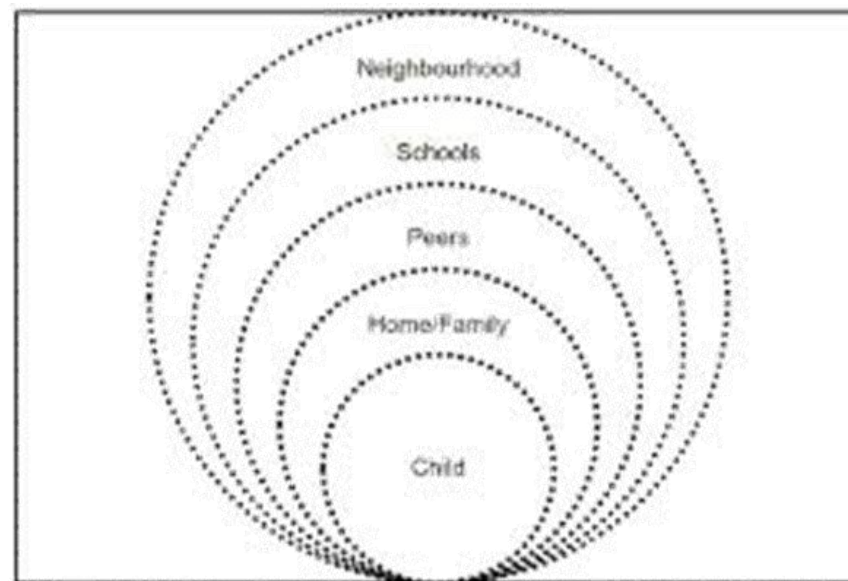


Figure 1: Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability (Firmin 2013:47)

Contextual Safeguarding Network

The Contextual Safeguarding Network has been established which encompasses a range of assessment tools and guidance for social care practitioners and partner agencies, which can be accessed from Barnsley Safeguarding Children Procedures and the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership website.



Barnsley Context

Barnsley Council has been developing its approach to Contextual Safeguarding with partner agencies since 2018.

Our approach has five main elements:

- **Awareness Raising and Training**
- **Safety Planning**
- **Information sharing**
- **Reviewing our policies and procedures**
- **Quality Assurance**

What To Do If You Have Concerns

If you have concerns regarding young people who might be subject to harm outside of the family home, please contact Barnsley Social Care to discuss your concerns.

Quick Case Study.....At the Skate Park

Zac is keen on skateboarding, so when he receives one, he goes to the local park

Depending on the people he meets, this could turn into a positive experience or a negative one.



At the park he meets Tom, a popular young man and an excellent skater. Tom starts to be friendly to Zac and teaches him all he knows about skating. The two start to become friends and before long Tom encourages Zac to take more and more risks, including smoking the odd spliff.



Zac starts to be better known at the skate park. He meets other teenagers, some he knows from school and some from elsewhere. Zac hangs about there more and more.



Under the influence of Tom's girlfriend, Zac starts to run errands as he wants to impress her, moving on to deliver drugs for others.



At school, Zac's attitude and behaviour starts to deteriorate, raising concerns, especially as he appears to smell heavily of cannabis as he arrives at school.



In a traditional model of safeguarding and child protection, the focus would be on Zac and how he is going to be specifically supported but a Contextual Safeguarding approach looks more widely at the issues in the area, protective factors, as well as negative influences.

This could include:-

- Meeting with other agencies eg Police, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Park Rangers, Transport Services etc
- Linking together data and knowledge
- Talking to other young people
- Building up a map of hot spots



Any Questions

