Contextual Safeguarding: An Introduction
Kingston and Richmond Conference

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@C_S_Network
Session overview

- Extra-familial harm and adolescence – a summary of the evidence
- The limitations of traditional child protection frameworks
- The components of a Contextual Safeguarding Framework
- Practice and policy implications – learning from test sites
To safeguard young people, we need to understand their developmental stage.

Dynamics of adolescence:
- Emotional regulation
- Increasing desire for autonomy

'S Risk' and motivation for 'thrills':
- Short term gains
Recognised integrated forms of harm experienced during this time:

- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation
- Serious youth violence
- Bullying and social isolation
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Radicalisation
Towards attempts and holistic system and service design (Firmin, Wroe and Lloyd, 2019)

- Often feature grooming, coercion, criminality and serious risks of significant sexual and physical harm, which create climates of fear and reduce engagement with services (McNaughton Nicholls et al, 2014; Pearce, 2013; Pitts, 2013)

- May involve young people perpetrating criminal offences, including the exploitation of others, as well as experiencing harm themselves (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; Home Office, 2017; Pitts, 2013)

- Can present as the result of perceived ‘choices’ a young person has made, and/or continues to make, despite professional or parental intervention (Gearon, 2018; Pearce, 2013)

- Are often beyond the control of parents, and rarely instigated by parents, although familial context and childhood experiences may well play a part in exacerbating (or mitigating) vulnerability and risk (Young et al, 2013; Hudek, 2018; Shuker, 2017)
Holistic account (2)  (Firmin, Wroe and Lloyd, 2019)

- Can lead to multiple relocations following a rapid escalation in risk including children coming into care for the first time at age 12 or over and/or managed moves across schools (Hudek, 2018; Ofsted, 2018; Shuker, 2013)
- May continue into adulthood, particularly young people during the 18 to 25 transitional period (Young et al, 2013; Coy, 2009; Holmes & Smale, 2018)
- Often manifest within, or are facilitated by risks within young people’s environments, including schools, public spaces and online platforms (Firmin, 2017a; Smallbone et al, 2013)
- Are shaped by peer norms and relationships (Ashurst and McAlinden, 2015; Barter, 2009; Firmin, 2017b)
- Interact with (and responses should be informed by) social and economic trends including gender norms and poverty (Featherstone et al, 2018)
To address these forms of harm, we need to look at the context of risk and vulnerability (Firmin, 2015)

Street-based victimisation and grooming
Criminal exploitation routes
Robbery
CSE in parks, shopping centres

Peer association to intimate partner violence
Peer group sexual offending

Bullying
Corridor culture
Peer recruitment
Curriculum

Domestic abuse
Siblings
Neglect
Parental capacity
A holistic approach to addressing extra-familial harm therefore:

1. Engages with peer relationships and influence
2. Understands processes and impacts of grooming/coercion
3. Works *with* young people’s sense of agency and desire to make choices
4. Makes an offer-counteract the gain
5. Mitigates the risks of ‘debt’

Firmin, Wroe and Lloyd, 2019
The challenge we face....
Increased awareness of ‘extra-familial’ partners

Referred into children’s social care

- Health
- Youth and community
- Housing
- Licensing
- Policing and CJS
- Schools
- Transport
Refer into a system which traditionally focuses on the child and family:

- Neighbourhood
- School
- Peer Group
- Home
- Child

Processes:
- Referral
- Screening
- Assessment
- Planning
- Intervention

Contextual Safeguarding Network
University of Bedfordshire
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
RESEARCHING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING
‘It hasn’t reached a threshold’

Vulnerable adolescents vs. Vulnerable children

Risk outside the home vs. Risk within the home

Abuse by young people vs. Abuse by adults

Unsafe social spaces vs. Unsafe individuals

The system deprivitised extra-familial harm to adolescents because it does not know how to identify and respond to its contextual dynamics.
Contextual Safeguarding – Moving towards implementation
A Contextual Safeguarding system will make changes across four domains

(Firmin et al. 2016)

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
A CS system will look beyond the parents’ capacity to safeguard

Neighbourhood
School
Peer Group
Home
Child

Whose capacity, in which space?

AND

Which space is impacting which service’s capacity?

(Firmin et al. 2016)
‘Everyone’s responsibility’ will mean creating safe spaces.

- Youth and community
- Housing
- Licensing
- Policing and CJS
- Health
- Schools
- Transport

Work alongside children’s social care.
Recognising the significance of peer relationships

(Firmin, 2015)
What testing has taught us (so far)
We found that system change requires two types of development work

1. Contextual Child and Family practices

2. Practices that address extra-familial contexts

Contextual Safeguarding

- Referral
- Screening
- Assessment
- Planning
- Intervention
Working at Level 1 Contextual Safeguarding:

1. Contextual Child and Family practices

2. Practices that address extra-familial contexts
• Support the young person so heat map their local area to initiate a conversation about where they feel safe or unsafe.

• Engage a young person in a conversation about the different circumstances/situations around them – and identify what is positive or concerning about this

• Give parents the space to think about the impact that extra-familial contexts may be having on their young person and/or the relationship they have with their young person.
Working at Level 2

1. Contextual Child and Family practices

2. Practices that address extra-familial contexts

Contextual Safeguarding

- Referral
- Screening
- Assessment
- Planning
- Intervention

Contextual Safeguarding Network

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
RESEARCHING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION,
VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING
Assessing and intervene with locations:

- Emotional and behavioural development
- Self-care and wellbeing
- Social relationships (in neighbourhood)
- Young person/peer group needs
- Ensuring safety
- Trusted relationships
- Knowledge and understanding of safeguarding role
- Caring investment
- Opportunities and choices

Environmental and community factors:

- Recent or recurring incidents
- Systemic factors
- Community resources
- Policy
- Resilient public integration
- Partners/businesses and agencies
- Neighbourhood safety
- Use of space
- Use of accessibility

Information can be generalised/anonymous.
Mapping and understanding peer relationships:

- Work with a young person to map their friendships and peer associations.
- Map connections between young people open to the service and consider the implications for individual plans and potentially shared activities.
- Identify what policies you might need from your service or wider partnership to identify how to engage with peer relationships safely and ethically.
Intervening with peer relationships

- A peer intervention does not equate with ‘group work’ – you can intervene with relationships via 1:1 work delivered with reference to peer dynamics.

- Do you have access to people who a) know about and b) have reach into peer-relationships and do you discuss this with type of information during meetings?

- Are there locations where these relationships play out and if partnerships focus on these is that a route to peer intervention?
We have converted this into a free implementation toolkit

Hackney’s Contextual Safeguarding system since 2017. The toolkit shares emerging learning, resources and tips with areas that are developing their own Contextual Safeguarding systems.

Embedding Contextual Safeguarding in:
- Referrals and screening
- Assessment processes
- Planning and review
- Support, help and intervention
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Policy, strategic engagement, training and commissioning

https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/toolkit
Working Together to Safeguard Children
A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

July 2018
33. 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. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking, online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered.

34. Assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare. Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children's social care. Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each child. They should look at the parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand any risks and support them to keep children safe and assess potential risk to child.
There are 5 additional, related details elsewhere in the document

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<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>early help services will typically include … <em>responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts</em></td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>information sharing is also essential for the … <em>when multiple children appear associated to the same contexts or locations of risk</em></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Social workers…understand the level of need and risk in, <em>or faced by</em>, a family from the child’s perspective</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>[organisations] should have arrangements in place for: ‘<em>creating a culture of safety, equality and protection within the services that they provide</em>’.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>YOTs…are therefore well placed to identify children … <em>and the contexts in which they may be vulnerable to abuse</em>.</td>
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Beyond changing contexts this changes the ‘expectations’ of child protection

- Broadening capacity and responsibility
- Holding risk on context – rather than solely individual plans
- Trusting partnerships beyond the usual three
- Working with peer dynamics
- Stating and changing contextual dynamics
- Bringing strategic work directly into plans
Keep in touch and join the network

We have also created a Local Area Interest Network – 23 are members – Portsmouth is one

- Nearly 6,000 by Autumn 2019
- Place to access all resources shared during the training for free
- We want to hear from you! Blogs, case studies, podcasts that capture and share your practice and lessons learnt
Take home activity: QA Language (on paper and in meetings)

- Promiscuous
- Manipulative
- Streetwise
- Risky choices
- Risky behaviour
- Placing themselves at risk / lifestyle choices
- Absconder
- Sexually aware / experienced
- Aggressive
- Liar
- Boys being boys
- Glamour
- Will not engage
Questions, contact, feedback

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For more information and resources visit our the Contextual Safeguarding website: https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/