

# Consulting young people and parents

A guide for consulting young people and parents about the development of Contextual Safeguarding systems change

June 2022

# Consultation Guide

What do young people think should change in your safeguarding system? What do parents think about safety meetings? Do young people like the idea of peer assessment? If you are adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach in your organisation, it's important to consult and engage with those who are directly impacted by the changes. This guide provides ideas and resources for consulting with young people, parents and carers when developing Contextual Safeguarding system change.

## Overview

One of the core values of Contextual Safeguarding is being grounded in the views and experiences of young people. This applies just as much to the changes we make to our safeguarding systems as it does to safeguarding practice. We have written this guide to support you in consulting young people and parents about your service design and in taking their views forward into implementation. The background to the learning presented here is a partnership between the Contextual Safeguarding research team and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations. We invited young people affected by extra-familial harm and their parents to consultation sessions, and the resources here were developed from this work.

## Method

We have designed short animated videos and resources to facilitate discussion with young people and parents about elements of CS. These resources should be adapted for your own context.

## 1. Planning and preparation

Considering ethics, choosing your group, gaining consent and carrying out risk assessments

## 2. Consultation

What the consultation process involves including an overview of resources and example questions

## 3. Next Steps

What to do with the information after the sessions

## This guide

This short guide is designed to help you set up and facilitate your own consultation sessions. We have included as many examples as possible but it is vital that these are adapted before use and that you plan carefully to ensure that consultation is safe and ethical. This guide talks you through three phases of the consultation process.

## Planning and Preparation

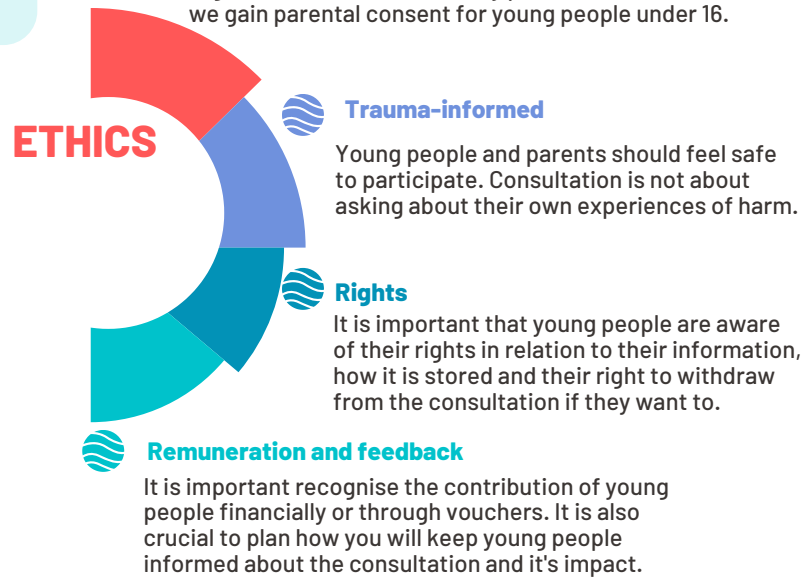
### Ethics

When we consult young people and parents with lived experience of risk outside the home, their safety and welfare is our top priority. It's important to make sure that, before they take part, young people and parents understand what will be involved, feel safe and that the appropriate ethical arrangements are in place. Only include people in a consultation session if you are confident that it would not result in causing any further harm. As part of this process we think about:

- Who is suitable to take part – is it better for them for be consulted on their own or in a group?
- Gaining informed consent- make sure young people have read and understood the information about the consultation.
- Ensure they know that participation is entirely voluntary, know how their information will be used, are aware of what they are consenting to and how they can change their mind if they want to withdraw from the research at any point.
- How to minimise risk of harm through participation and providing a safe space.
- Safeguarding issues that may arise and how to respond to them.
- Making sure people who take part have support available after the consultation.

#### Consent and confidentiality

To give consent young people need clear information sheets and consent forms explaining the consultation activity and that their engagement is voluntary. Parental consent will also be required for some young people, dependent on your organisation or local authority protocols. As a research team we gain parental consent for young people under 16.



Before you begin, familiarise yourself with the materials. We have developed documents to help you decide which young people are suitable, where to hold the consultation, and how to facilitate a group. You'll want to begin by thinking about who to involve in the consultation process and if it's safe to do so. Use the risk assessments to help you. Appendix A provides a checklist that should be used before, during and after the sessions. Appendix B is an example risk assessment to use for understand whether its safe for individual young people to participate.

When you approach young people and families, provide them with information sheets and consent forms which talk about what the consultation is about (Appendix C, D & E are example information sheets and consent forms). Before the consultation young people need to have seen the information sheet (Appendix C) and confirmed that they would like to participate (Appendix E). For young people under 16 years old, parents need to provide their consent (Appendix D).

## Consultation

What happens once you have got a young person, group of young people or parents together to talk about CS? We have created four videos (details on the next page) to help you start the discussion.

The following timeline provides an example structure for your session (see Appendix F for a more detailed example):

### Welcome & Introductions

Introduce yourself and let others in the group introduce themselves.

### Consent & Confidentiality

Talk about what it means that the consultation is confidential and under what circumstances would information be shared. Ensure that everyone understands what they are agreeing to be part of.

### Questions

Start by asking some questions about the video. What does the group think about the response, how could it be improved?

### What happens next?

Spend some time going through your notes and make a plan how the information will be used and fed back.

### Overview of consultation

Explain what the consultation is about, remind everyone of what the aim is and what you will do with the information. Talk through the structure of the session and how long it will last. Remind participants that they won't be asked about their own experiences.

### Videos

Introduce the videos - play one or two.

### Close

Thank everyone for their time. Let them know what the next steps are and how the information will be used. What happens if they want to withdraw?

## Consultation

### Videos

Talking about changing safeguarding systems and the difference that CS can make is very difficult! We have made four videos that talk about different elements of CS that can be played to prompt discussion.

We recommend choosing one or two videos to play during the session.

Watch the videos ahead of time to ensure there is nothing that the group could find upsetting or distressing.

If the videos aren't relevant for your work, you might want to make your own case studies to talk about.

**Peers:** This video involves the story of Isaac who meets a group of older boys. Isaac begins selling drugs for them. After Isaac can't pay he is stabbed. In this video a social worker completes a peer group map.

**Safety planning:** This video starts the same as the peers video and includes Isaac who is groomed to sell drugs and is later stabbed. In this video a child protection assessment and then a new safety conference take place.

**Location assessment:** This video includes Isaac's story but involves practitioners conducting a location assessment.

**School assessment:** This video involves Eve. Eve has been bullied and is later suspended from school. Eve meets Jacob who asks her to send a nude picture. Jacob sends the photo around the school. The video talks through a school response, a social work assessment and a new school assessment.

### Discussion

Once you have played a video you can start discussions. We have created some example questions for each video in Appendix F. You can create your own questions depending on what you want to find out.

Remember you are not asking participants to share their own experiences.

### Closing

At the end of the focus group:

- Thank the young people/ parents for their participation and give them the 'follow up' leaflet which explains their right to complain and ask questions.
- Remind them they can still withdraw their consent.
- Give them a voucher or reimbursement.
- Explain that support is available if they need.

## Next Steps

When we find out the views of young people and parents, we need to listen to this and make sure that what they say informs how Contextual Safeguarding is developed.

The next section concentrates on how you can make sure that your consultations are worthwhile and that the views of young people and families are central to informing your approach:

### Create space for reflection

Form the findings of your consultation/s into an action plan, which you return to regularly to reflect on as a team/organisation. Use this space to discuss what young people and parents have told you, the extent to which you have acted on this, and whether there is need for further consultation.

### Practice application

Practice should be informed by what young people and families say about how they want to be worked with. Think about what changes can be made to practice in the short and long term, and how you could incorporate findings into regular training and/or resources.

### Managing feedback

The best time to undertake consultation is before you start to developing a new approach to working with young people and parents, or make a change to the system that will affect them. However, if you conduct a consultation once a process has begun, you may receive challenging responses. It is essential that you take on board what they say and start learning from this process, and in the future engagement of young people and families throughout the development process.

### Strategic application

Think about which strategic leaders or bodies will benefit from hearing what participants have said during the consultation/s. Consider which pathways, forums, or strategic panels to attend where your findings could inform strategic change. Use these as a foundation to consider how young people and parents could have increased engagement at a strategic level.

### Making changes

The purpose of consultation is to gather views that inform practice and support you to implement or embed Contextual Safeguarding. You might get some insight into issues you need to explore further, or ideas of things to try out. Insights and suggestions should be reflected on and part of an ongoing process.

### Feedback process

Feedback processes are really important for valuing participants' contributions and will enable further conversations about how the work might develop. Think about the best way to feedback to those who participated and how you can showcase the changes you've made that reflect the suggestions and feedback that young people and their families have provided.

## Appendix A - Check list for sessions

Prompt questions	Y/N	Possible action?
<b>Venue</b>		
Have you consulted with participants about where they might like to meet?		
Is the space you're using private?		
Could attendance at the venue be exposing or stigmatising for participants?		
Is the space comfortable? Can you do anything to increase comfort?		
Is there enough space for the type of activity you're planning? (Are there 'break out' rooms in case someone wants to have some time away from the main activity at any point?)		
<b>Participants</b>		
Are all participants known to the facilitators?		
Are all participants known to each other?		
Are there potential challenges predicted with group dynamics?		
Think about whether people could be emotionally triggered by the things that are discussed in the consultations, if, for example the case studies remind them of past experiences. Think too about the impact on workers of the distressing content of the case studies. For group-based consultations you will also need to plan for how you will respond if the topics under discussion surface challenging attitudes towards gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Think carefully about these things when setting up the consultations and prepare facilitators so that they feel equipped to respond during the sessions in a way that is safe and restorative.		
How will emerging conflict within the group be responded to and dealt with?		
Have all participants had access to information about the group or consultation prior to attending?		

Prompt questions	Y/N	Possible action?
How/when are group-based 'ground rules' established and what will happen if these are not followed?		
<b>Confidentiality</b>		
Are all group facilitators aware of the young peoples' rights to confidentiality and any parameters around that?'		
How will these be explained and managed by facilitators?		
How will facilitators respond to any unanticipated disclosure in a group setting (both in terms of supporting the person making the disclosure AND supporting those present)?		
<b>Travel</b>		
Is it safe and easy for participants to travel to/from the venue?		
Are there any resources available to support participants to travel to the workshops?		
Have you planned refreshments: snacks, meals and drinks?		
Is there a separate space to eat food?		
<b>Timing</b>		
Does the timing of the project activity prevent anyone from attending?		
<b>Staff &amp; additional resources</b>		
Are there a minimum of two facilitators for any group work?		
Are additional staff needed before/after or during activities?		
Do you need any additional resources to help create a safe space or respond to distress?		
Do any potential participants require any specific resources, e.g. wheelchair access; a prayer room; a space to take medication?		



# Appendix B - Risk and needs discussion guide

Young Person	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the young person aged 12 – 18?</li> <li>• Young person has existing relationships with other potential participants through the service for group based consultation</li> <li>• If not: the service considers it safe to bring participants together who do not have prior knowledge of working together</li> </ul>	
Parent/Carer	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/carer has received information about the project and the consultation aspect of the project</li> <li>• Any conflict of interest/anything practitioner should know when interviewing young person and their parent/carer (separately)?</li> <li>• Consent from young person to approach parent/carer for participation (required)</li> </ul>	
Access and communication needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of communication preferences and requirements</li> <li>• Any translation of young people’s information materials required?</li> <li>• Anything else researcher should be aware of to ensure young person can participate meaningfully and safely?</li> </ul>	
Remote participation needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific access considerations for remote/online participation?</li> <li>• Specific wellbeing risks/needs for remote/online participation?</li> </ul>	
Safety Needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for emotional distress? If so, could this be mitigated?</li> <li>• Risk of someone finding out about involvement &amp; this leading to potential harm?</li> <li>• Negative impact on any therapeutic/support work?</li> <li>• Interfere with any current legal processes?</li> <li>• Specific risks in online environment?</li> <li>• Specific risks in group environment and/or due to group composition?</li> <li>• Anything else practitioner should be aware of to ensure sensitivity of approach?</li> </ul>	

Wrap around support needs	Y/N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What level of wrap-around support is required (i.e. telephone or in-person)</li> <li>• Is there someone within the organisation who can provide this support? Is there a conflict of interest (please state)</li> <li>• If not, will it be safe and possible to commission an external partner/agency to provide the support?</li> <li>• Is the worker willing to actively follow up with young person or parent/carer after all interviews to see if they are ok?</li> <li>• Are there any additional forms of follow-up support required – who could provide this?</li> </ul>	
If consultation is conducted in person	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If in-person, how will this be managed in line with Covid-19 regulations regarding social distancing? Is there a local risk assessment face to face work (please include)</li> <li>• Transport or workshop space requirements</li> <li>• Potential need for third party to be present during workshop</li> <li>• Anything else researcher should be aware of to ensure a child or young person can participate meaningfully and safely</li> </ul>	
Consent	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is young person assessed as able to provide informed consent if information is given in appropriate format?</li> <li>• Are parent/carer/ guardian consents required? Anyone under 16 , or where it is appropriate to for older young people (i.e. if learning disabilities)</li> <li>• Any risks associated with asking for parental/carer consent?</li> <li>• If parent/carer/guardian consents are required, can the worker facilitate getting this?</li> </ul>	

## Appendix C - Information sheet (young people)

Young people spend more time outside their home than they did when they were younger. They go to school, travel on public transport, see their friends in parks and shopping centres etc. Most of the time they are safe in these places, but sometimes they can be harmed. We are trying change how workers (like social workers and youth workers) support young people so that they are always safe from harm when they spend time outside of their homes.

Its really important that we find out what young people think about the changes we are thinking about making. We would like young people to be part of deciding how how workers and communities keep young people safe. That's what this project is about.

We have made some animations that tell the story of a young person facing harm in a situation outside their family setting. They show different ways of helping the young person. If you are happy to take part, after watching the animation you'll have a chance to talk with other young people about what you think works or doesn't work, and share your thoughts about how you think it could be done better.

### What will taking part involve?

Before the group you will need to:

- Read this information sheet
- Read the document which explains how we will use and store your information
- Complete the consent form

During the focus group you will:

- Take part in a discussion with a worker and the other young people in your group (maximum of one hour). You will be shown a short animation which explains a new way of working to keep young people safe outside the home. \*Please note that we would like to take notes and audio record the discussion, if agreed by all young people involved. This is for sole use of the team and one copy will be stored securely on the system.

After the session:

- You will be given a follow up letter after the group. If you would like to be kept updated about the project then let your worker know.

### Do I have to take part?

No! It is totally up to you whether you want to take part. If you do take part it is also up to you what you tell us. We won't ask you for personal information and you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. If you've said something during today's group that you don't want us to include in our project that's fine. Please tell your worker as soon after the group as possible.

### What will you do with the information I provide?

If you do take part, we will store the information you share very carefully in a password protected file. Audio recordings are made on an encrypted Dictaphone and one copy is stored on the [NAME] secure storage system and can only be accessed by the team.

We will use what you tell us to improve the way we keep young people safe. We won't use your name, the name of your organisation or anything else that would reveal who took part.

If you have any questions about the project, you can contact the project directly: [CONTACT DETAILS]

#### Complaints

If you are unhappy about how you are treated as part of the meeting observation, or anything else to do with the research, please get in touch with [NAME AND CONTACT]

# Appendix D - Information sheet (parental consent)

A team of [NAME] from [NAME] are carrying out a project about keeping young people safe from harm that happens when young people are outside of their family and home settings. Our work is about trying to make the places that young people spend time in - like school, parks, shopping centres and public transports - safer.

We want to take a new approach to keeping young people safe in these places. We are trying out lots of different ways to do this and talking to different workers (like social workers and youth workers) about how best to do this.

As part of this we want to find out what young people think and feel about this new approach and the ways we are trying to keep young people safe.

Please read the information below to help you make an informed decision as to whether you are happy to let your child take part.

## Why am I being contacted?

We would like to invite your child to be part of in a focus group about keeping young people safe from harm outside the home. Giving consent for your child to take part in the focus group is entirely voluntary and you/they can choose not to take part anymore at any point. They can also withdraw the information they give in the focus group if they let us know at the end of the focus group.

The young people taking part will not be asked anything about their personal experiences, or the experiences of their friends. They will just be asked to generally discuss:

- What they think happens generally about harm young people may experience outside the family home and how we can make these young people safe.
- We will take time at the start of the focus group to make sure that all young people taking part understand what the focus group is about and what will happen to the information they share.
- We will make it clear to the young people that they don't have to take part. We will also let them know that they can change their mind at any point during the focus group.

Responses in the focus groups will be anonymised. If your child does take part, we will store the information they provide in the survey very carefully in a password protected file.

We will use what your child tells us to create learning resources to improve the way we keep young people safe in contexts outside their homes. We won't use their name, identifying information of anyone else, the name of organisation your child is involved in, or anything else that would let people know who took part.

## What do I do now?

If you have any questions about the project or about your child taking part in a focus group, please get in touch with one of the project [CONTACT DETAILS]

If you agree that your child can take part, please write your child's name below and sign the form. Please give this to [name]

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that I have read the information above about participation in the 'Keeping young people safe from harm outside the home' project and by signing below I indicate that I am happy for the child named above (who I have parental responsibility for) to take part.

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E - Consent form (young people)

Before you participate in this focus group, we need to be sure that you are happy to take part in our project. Please read or listen to these things and tick the box if you agree. If there is anything you're not sure about, please just ask. Please put a X in the box to confirm that you understand the statements:

I know that the research project is about keeping young people safe from harm that happens outside of the home	
I am being asked to take part in a focus group discussion with other young people that will be audio recorded using a secure device	
I will be asked questions about safety and responses to keeping young people safe outside their home	
I can stop participating at any time or change my mind about you using what I tell you, if I let you know up to two weeks after the focus group	
You will use what I tell you to help develop your work but you won't use my name or anything that would let people know that it was me	
If I tell you that someone (including myself) is being hurt or is in danger, you will have to tell someone to get help	
I can talk to a worker if I have any worries or questions after taking part	
I understand that the information shared will be saved in electronic format and will be saved in password protected folders that only the project team can access. The folders will be deleted when the team no longer needs them.	
I have received a copy of the privacy statement	

I confirm I would like to take part in this\_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

Name:

Age:

Signature:

Name of worker:

Signature of worker:

# Appendix F - Example consultation

## Introduction & Consent (15 mins)

Worker(s) to introduce themselves. Introduce the project. Exercise to explain limits of confidentiality in group setting.

The toothpaste exercise was designed by Camille Warrington. It helps people to think about what it means to share something in a group and the limits of confidentiality in these settings.

1. The facilitator explains that the group will do a quick exercise before the session starts. (\*ask that if anyone has done this exercise before they don't explain it to others).
2. Ask for a volunteer (or nominate someone).
3. Hand them a sheet of card and tube of toothpaste – tell them their task is to empty the contents of the toothpaste onto the sheet of card.
4. When they have done this ask them to hand the card to the person sitting next to them. Tell that person their task is to put all the toothpaste back in the tube – but explain that they can't cut the tube and there can't be a single bit of toothpaste left on the card or their hands.
5. Ask the rest of the group to help them/ give them ideas – the group should quickly come to conclusion that it's not possible.
6. Questions for the whole group: a. What has this exercise got to do with confidentiality in a group? b. How is the toothpaste like information that we share?
7. The group may come to this conclusion, but if necessary explain the following points:
  - a. Once information is shared in a group setting we can never completely control what happens to it
  - b. While we are all committed to respecting each other's privacy we need to recognise that we can't guarantee that someone might not accidentally share something.
  - c. For this reason we all need to make sure we are only sharing information in a group that we feel comfortable to share.

## Example script

*"Before we go on to talk about the project and how we will run the focus group we will just go around to share everyone's names.*

*The research is about keeping young people safe from harm that happens outside of the home. We know that young people are usually safe, but sometimes they experience harm in places like school, parks, shopping centres and on public transports.*

*We want to take a new approach to keeping young people safe in these places. We are trying out different ways to do this and talking to lots of workers about how best to do this.*

*We want to know what young people think and feel about this new approach and the ways we are trying to keep young people safe.*

*We're not here to talk about your own experiences but want hear from you about your thoughts about these issues and how we can make places safer for young people.*

*We keep all information confidential. We will not tell anyone outside this group who said what and we will make sure that no one's name is used in the research. In fact we won't even use the name of the organisation. The only time that we would have to break confidentiality is if you told us something that makes us worry about you or someone else being seriously harmed. If this happens we will have to talk to someone about that but we will always try and let you know we will do this. For example, we will not have to tell anyone if you tell us you have been smoking, but we if you told us that tonight someone was going to get badly beaten up then we would have to tell someone".*

## Films (5 mins)

Explain that the animated video will run between 3- 6 minutes. The video is inspired by the experiences of young people and the professionals who work with them.

## Questions (30 mins)

Agree with young people that the discussion will focus on young people's views on hypothetical scenarios and/or the impact of Contextual Safeguarding on broader groups of young people/families (no personal experiences asked for). The focus is to learn about how we improve the approaches of adults responsible for responding to risk outside the home. The following questions can be used depending on the video:

### Peers and peer mapping

- Do you think Isaac and his parents should be told that professionals are talking about him?
- Do you think it would have been helpful to draw this map before Isaac was stabbed? (yes/no/why)
- What do you think about the idea of social workers talking about friendships and people Isaac has got in trouble with?
- When do you think it is ok to talk about friendships/people you spend time with?
- When is it not ok to talk about people you spend time with?
- What do you think might be some of the good things about peer mapping?
- What would worry you about peer mapping?

### Location assessment

- What do you think about the idea of asking young people about how safe they feel at the park?
- Do you think it is a good idea to talk to people that live and work there?
- If professionals went to the park, what do you think they should look out for?
- Do you think a plan for the park would help?
- What do you think about the idea of increased CCTV and patrols by police? Do you think this would help?
- What do you think about the youth workers idea for more lighting and improving the sports area?
- Sometimes young people get blamed for anti-social behaviour by residents/business owners. What might help to restore trust between young people and other people that live and work locally?
- Do you think parents should be consulted on location assessments?

## Close (5 mins)

- Anything else?
- Thank you to all who participated and presentation of vouchers.
- Give follow up information sheet
- Reminder that:
  - Young people can withdraw their contribution
  - You will be able to support them if needed now and if thoughts come up later on

### School assessment

- What do you think about the idea of a school assessment?
- What did you think about Mr Wilson's reaction?
- Do you think teachers need more support to deal with situations like this?
- Could a group like this make school safer for students?
- How might this approach help students like Eve?
- Do you think Eve would want to take part in the school assessment? Why/why not?
- What would help Eve to feel comfortable at school?
- What should a school assessment or meeting be trying to do?
- What would be good to happen for Eve (what would be a good outcome?)

### Safety conference

- What do you think about the idea of safety plans and safety meetings?
- How do you think Isaac's parents might feel going to a child protection conference?
- How do you think Isaac's parents might feel going to a safety conference?
- Isaac's parents don't have to go to the safety conference if they don't want to, do you think they will (and why/why not)?
- What would the social worker need to do to make Isaac's parents feel happier about going?
- What impact might the safety plan process have on the relationship between the parent and their child?
- Do you think Isaac would want to go to the safety plan meeting? Why/why not?
- What would help Isaac to attend? Before the meeting? After the meeting?
- What should a safety plan or meeting be trying to do? What would be good for Isaac to happen? (what might be a good outcome?)