



Contextual Safeguarding: Staff engagement

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Contextual Safeguarding Staff Engagement

Background

Contextual Safeguarding (CS) is an approach to safeguarding that supports practitioners to recognise and respond to the harm young people experience outside of the home.¹

This staff engagement guidance forms part of the Contextual Safeguarding schools assessment toolkit and has been developed by The University of Bedfordshire with Hackney Children and Families Services. This part of the toolkit has been designed to help schools carry out a contextual assessment of harm. For more information on carrying out a contextual school assessment please visit the Contextual Safeguarding Network.

Staff engagement sessions can be used by schools to help form a broader assessment of risk in the school environment or used on its own. In this toolkit we provide key pointers on how to conduct an engagement session with staff, as well as example questions that can be adapted to suit the concerns and needs of individual schools.

The document includes:

- Guidance for carrying out a staff engagement session
- Appendix A: Session plan

Staff engagement sessions

Engaging staff is an important part of assessing and identifying harm and safety within school settings. Staff engagement sessions provide an opportunity for staff to discuss key issues – positive or negative – that may be affecting the students they work with. In a staff engagement session the facilitator(s) asks the participants a series of questions to prompt informal discussion, which is then anonymously captured and reviewed.

Staff should feel able to raise concerns in a safe space. The focus of the sessions is on valuing staff experiences and knowledge of student wellbeing and school environment in general terms. The aim is not to discuss individual students but themes and trends affecting the staff and student body. However, if any safeguarding concerns do arise at any stage of the session then these should be appropriately followed up.

Engagement sessions can be used on a one-off basis or at regular intervals (annually/bi-annually) to support on-going monitoring of staff and student wellbeing. Key steps and considerations for setting up and carrying out staff engagement sessions are provided below.

In order to set up a staff engagement session we recommend taking the following steps:

1. Develop a session plan:

The staff engagement session should follow a session plan. Appendix A provides an example session plan which we advise schools to use and adapt for their individual needs if necessary.

2. Identify facilitators:

We advise that one to two facilitators are identified to lead the engagement sessions. Facilitators could be members of staff or from an external agency.

¹ Visit www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk for more information.

3. Identify participants:

Sessions should be held with 4 – 10 staff. Consideration should be given to who is invited to the groups: do you want staff with specific knowledge of safeguarding issues or a wider representation across the staff? It is important to ensure that staff feel comfortable and able to speak. This might mean ensuring separate groups for senior staff or ensuring managers are not present.

4. Ensuring consent:

Staff must be clear that they do not *need* to take part. It may be advisable to produce a short information sheet explaining the reason for the group, how the information will be used, and how or if information will remain anonymous.

5. Establishing confidentiality protocols:

Both facilitators and participants must be clear on confidentiality protocols. This includes establishing what confidentiality means and what procedures and processes are in place if a disclosure is made. For example, what information would need to be passed on if it was felt that a young person was at risk of harm.

6. Finding and creating the right space:

Staff engagement sessions should be held in a quiet and private room. It is important that staff feel comfortable to discuss challenging issues, and that an informal, comfortable space is created to enable this.

7. Capturing the intelligence:

The session could be recorded using a dictaphone or alternatively notes may be taken. Staff should be asked if they are happy to be recorded before doing so. When recording the session, it should remain anonymous, however it is important that any individual concerns arising are noted and appropriately followed up.

8. Follow up:

Once the session has been recorded, it can then be transcribed, analysed and reviewed by appropriate members of staff. An intervention plan should then be developed for issues that arise from the intelligence gathered. Any issues reported should be taken seriously and appropriate protocols/procedures followed.

We would value any feedback you have once you have used the staff engagement guidance and session sheet. Please send your feedback to the Contextual Safeguarding team.

Appendix A: Session plan

Staff engagement session plan Time needed: 1– 1.5 hours		
Timing	Content	Resources
5 mins	Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful to go around and share everyone’s names • Reason for and aim of session • Explain process of recording the focus group/writing notes • Explain issues relating to confidentiality and consent 	Recorder/note pad to make notes
10mins	Types of harm Exercise <i>We know young people experience harm, inside and outside school- what types of harm are young people experiencing today? (Map on flipchart)</i> Go through the key issues they have raised- <i>Where do these occur – schools/community/home/online- Anything else you can think of that occurs specifically in schools?</i> <i>Which of these issues/concerns feel most relevant here for you? (Top two/three concerns, tell you; use circle stickers to priorities)</i> Ask about patterns within these key issues – <i>who affected/times of day/places/escalating</i>	Flip chart paper and pens Colour stickers
30mins	Responding to harm (Based on what was identified as greatest concern) <i>Of these concerns relating to in school –</i> Disclosure <i>Would a student who experienced harm, know what to do and who to go to for support? How would a young person find out about this information?</i> <i>-If staff observed or have harm reported to them- how confident would all staff feel in responding to this incident?</i> <i>-What is good about current response?</i> <i>-How could it be improved? (you mentioned earlier that there is a particular issue with – what could be done...)</i> Training <i>Thinking about your relevant policies and training, how well do you think they support a good response – what’s good/what could be improved</i> <i>Thinking beyond the individual incidents and focusing on the wider ethos around safety, respect – prevention/education/acceptability/unity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How are staff supported in promoting this?</i> - <i>Whose responsibility would this be?</i> - <i>YP involvement in improving/changing?</i> - <i>What training needs to do you feel you have (as we will develop training)</i> 	Flip chart paper and pens

10mins	<p>Partners and multiagency support (may not be relevant depending on group)</p> <p><i>How do agencies support your response to harm in terms of the</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Individual referrals</i> – display/experience - <i>Wider school support</i> – pupils/staff - <i>Keeping you up to date on what is happening and following up with any concerns</i>- Communication loop – know what happened/how your role fits in bigger system <p>Recommendations of how the multiagency partners could provide more support- could do this on post its or in small groups?</p>	<p>Flip chart paper</p> <p>Post-its and pens</p>
5	<p>Ending-</p> <p>Provide participants with information on what to do if they have any questions.</p> <p>Inform participants about next steps over the pilot period.</p>	