

Contextual Safeguarding
Research Programme

strategy

2024-2029

Aim

Create structural, cultural and practical conditions conducive with the ethical adoption of contextual safeguarding locally, nationally, and internationally.



CREATE CONDITIONS THAT:

WHERE WE WERE

From 2019-2022 we: 

WHERE WE ARE

Since 2022 we have: 

WHERE WE ARE GOING

From 2024-2029 we will: 

1



RECOGNISE AND RESOURCE RESPONSES TO EXTRA-FAMILIAL HARM THAT ARE UNDERPINNED BY ECOLOGICAL AND CONTEXTUAL PRINCIPLES

Enable a shift from behaviour-based and individualised responses to extra-familial harm to those that are ecological and contextual/structural; increasing the extent to which such responses are understood, invested in, and utilised across statutory, private, and voluntary organisations and partnerships.

- Evidenced a gap in contextual alternatives to relocation in the Securing Safety project
- Generated ad hoc case studies of contextual interventions from Scale-Up sites
- Identified a mismatch between commissioned services and local need for Black young men in Lambeth

- Evidenced preferences for exclusionary school cultures and behaviour-focused intervention into contexts in a range of sectors
- Scaled tests of promising contextual interventions in the form of community-facing Family Group Conferences (FGCs)
- Co-produced system solutions with young people in care in Bristol, particularly Black young men, to address structural harm
- Evidenced a need for cultural and systemic alignment in policy and practice for social workers leading welfare-based contextual responses

- Establish the service landscape (need and availability) for responding to extra-familial harm
- Communicate the foundations of contextual intervention in Risk Outside of the Home (ROTH) social work plans
- Identify contextual responses to young people who are seeking asylum or are parents
- Address systemic injustice within systems, policies, and practices with the aim of fewer young people excluded from school
- Enhance peer support for practice leaders engaged in local practice reform

2



BUILD COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD WELFARE BY (RE)SITUATING SOCIAL WORK WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Address the shortfalls in child protection systems focused solely on parental responsibility by promoting community guardianship, enabling social work relationships with non-statutory and community partners to be a common feature of the practice, and advocating for collective responsibility for safeguarding children that meets their needs and affirms support for, rather than punishment of, their parents and carers.

- Worked with government departments to engage businesses and community organisations
- Mapped international trends in child protection systems that remain focused on parenting
- Identified examples of community guardianship

- Commenced training with commercial hospitality and sports organisations
- Identified opportunities for working in partnership with parents via ROTH and FGC processes, and cultures that best facilitated this
- Worked with NGOs in Germany and Tanzania to identify international examples of guardianship
- Generated case studies of contextual responses that advance social justice within communities

- Formalise partnerships with commercial and community organisations to develop guardianship
- Co-produce cultures that facilitate partnerships with parents experiencing additional challenges
- Identify partner implications of ROTH pathways
- Evidence the resource need and a funding framework for collective and community-led responses to extra-familial harm

CREATE CONDITIONS THAT:

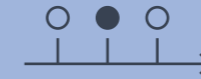
WHERE WE WERE

From 2019-2022 we:



WHERE WE ARE

Since 2022 we have:



WHERE WE ARE GOING

From 2024-2029 we will:



3


POSITION JUSTICE/PUNISHMENT AS SECONDARY TO (OR SUBSUMED UNDER) WELFARE/CARE POLICY TO GUIDE RESPONSES TO EXTRA-FAMILIAL HARM

Identify, evidence and reform wider policy frameworks across justice, immigration and education that contradict and/or undermine the paramountcy of children's best interests and needs, and the safeguarding policies that promote them, that are used in response to extra-familial harm.

- Evidenced the negative impact of child protection policies on young people and families impacted by extra-familial harm
- Established the first ROTH social work pathway
- Designed frameworks to communicate welfare and trust-based responses to young people impacted by extra-familial harm
- Informed revisions to statutory guidance in England, Wales, and Scotland

- Scaled ROTH pathways into four areas and spoke to families impacted
- Explored the negative impact of immigration and justice policy on welfare responses
- Secured further interim revisions to English statutory guidance conducive with CS
- Held the first CS roundtable focused on international policy development
- Developed peer support networks for those championing contextual practices in social work

- Identify ways to enshrine ROTH processes in policy in ways that hold child welfare as paramount for young parents and children in conflict with the law
- Evidence where immigration and Prevent duty policies undermine CS
- Embed contextual assessment frameworks and measures into national safeguarding policy
- Broaden peer support networks beyond social work for those championing contextual practice

4


ROUTINELY INCORPORATE CONTEXTUAL OUTCOME MEASURES INTO COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORKS AND SERVICE REPORTING STRUCTURES

Develop, test and scale ways to measure young people's access to safe relationships and contexts, as well as the structural and social conditions that create/undermine extra-familial safety.

- Identified barriers and levers for safety in school and youth-facing organisations
- Designed a tool for identifying contextual outcome measures
- Tested tools to assess safety in peer, school, and community contexts
- Supported the schools inspectorate to consider their role in identifying safe school environments

- Identified gaps in understanding contextual outcomes for schools in ROTH pathways
- Trialled and published a contextual outcomes tool and community conferencing guide
- Co-produced measures of service-efficacy and peer safety with young people
- Supported youth-facing organisations to utilise Towards Safety resources in their own settings

- Evidence ways to move beyond zero tolerance policies as a measure of school safety
- Publish a Contextual Safeguarding Funding and Commissioning framework
- Produce a toolkit on using CS to design and evaluate work with asylum-seeking young people
- Illustrate assessments that are co-produced with young people, families, and their communities

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Policy goals as they relate to strategic objectives

The following policy goals intersect with the objectives outlined above:

- 1 Establish the paramountcy of a child's best interest, and child protection legislation, over the serious violence duty, as it applies to under-18-year-olds in the UK
- 2 Reform conflicting messages in national education policy related to addressing extra-familial harm and implementing zero tolerance policies, particularly in respect of their disproportionate impact on racially minoritised young people, young people in care, and young people with special educational needs
- 3 Reword partnership responsibilities in respect of responding to extra-familial harm within child protection procedures to move beyond the provision of services to individuals, and to also include steps to address any system harms caused by those partner agencies, and their role in creating safety in extra-familial contexts
- 4 Include contextual assessment frameworks and outcome measures in statutory safeguarding guidance in England, Wales, and Scotland
- 5 Issue new commissioning guidelines in respect of extra-familial harm, that reference contextually targeted responses from welfare-based organisations
- 6 Reframe reference to parental capacity in England's safeguarding guidance to better reflect the contexts in which people parent/raise children, and the need to address those contextual and structural drivers of harm to safeguard children
- 7 Remove specific reference to radicalisation in association with Contextual Safeguarding used in English safeguarding guidance, so as to reflect the limited evidence base on this area of harm at present

Projects, partnerships, and PhDs

We will pursue our strategic objectives and policy goals via a range of new projects, established partnerships, and PhDs that collectively will create inclusive education environments, rethink legislative and policy frameworks for protecting children beyond the home, take a collaborative approach to various elements of system redesign, broaden and track our reach to build collective capacity to safeguard children beyond the home, and support the ongoing development of contextual intervention.

All of these themes are fundamental to us realising our strategic objectives and policy goals by 2029, and reflect the integrated points of learning we anticipate producing across various strands of work.

Projects

Details of all our projects can be found on the Contextual Safeguarding website. They include:

Planning for Safety	A project tracking the development of 'Risk Outside of the Home' (ROTH) child protection pathways, and scaling learning across our local authority networks and into national policies.
Resourcing Safety	A project where young people, their families and communities, local authority commissioners, and voluntary sector funders will work with researchers to develop a Contextual Safeguarding Funding and Commissioning guide, contributing to a service provision landscape that is better able to build safety around young people.
Capacity to Context	A project bringing together two consortia of parents impacted by extra-familial harm and relevant professionals: one focused on parents of adolescents and the other on parents who are adolescents ('young' parents), to co-produce new ways of overcoming system/service barriers, including testing new practice frameworks that support practitioners to work with the context of parents' lives.

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Projects *continued*

Crossing the Divide

A project working with students, teachers, parents, voluntary sector organisations and wider education partners to explore how schools balance the need to address violence and harm between young people against the reality that exclusionary approaches disproportionately impact minoritised young people.

Everybody's Business

A project to conduct whole system implementation of Contextual Safeguarding in hospitality settings for the first time, forging partnerships with the hospitality sector and local safeguarding partnerships to sustain implementation beyond the pilot period.

Scaling and Supporting Readiness for Contextual Safeguarding

Dedicated support to our existing networks of social work champions, strategic local area leaders and voluntary sector representatives, and growing networks of schools and youth work champions, to scale practical application of Contextual Safeguarding principles, increase opportunities for peer support, and build sector readiness to engage in new learning from the 2024-29 programme.

Seeking Safety

A first pilot of Contextual Safeguarding in organisations supporting young people seeking asylum in the UK, who are also impacted by extra-familial harm; with a specific focus on young people fleeing violence, abuse, and exploitation in Albania. The project will identify opportunities for practical support in voluntary sector organisations, national policy implications, and transferable learning for an established European Special Interest Group.

Contextual Safeguarding and Cultural Sensitivity

A project to extend and apply the Beyond Referrals toolkit for schools in respect of cultural sensitivity; working to create resources so that systems change underway in respect of extra-familial harm supports wider scaling of contextually and culturally safe school contexts.

Our Partners

We will work with a range of partners to deliver the projects above including: the Ivison Trust, Power the Fight, the Shpresa Programme, the Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit at Islington Law Centre, and a range of local authority and school pilot organisations; particular those who participate in regional groups of our Local Area Interest Network and Contextual Safeguarding Practice Champions. As new partners join the programme, they will be named on project pages on the Contextual Safeguarding website unless they are confidential.

PhDs

The Contextual Safeguarding research team is supporting a growing group of Postgraduate Researchers who are completing PhDs on a range of issues that will inform the 2024-29 strategy. Their areas of study include: the ethical implications of tasking social workers enacting the Prevent Duty; processes of decolonisation that may create social, service and policy cultures that sustain an ethical application of Contextual Safeguarding; relationships between multiple forms of teaching training in the UK and induction activities; and the ability of UK schools to be culturally sensitive, allowing Black Caribbean students to flourish; the role of love and protection in peer relationships and how this can contribute to children and young people's safety when they experience harm outside their home.

We will be running a number of new studentships during 2024-27 and the details of these opportunities, as well as the names and profiles of our PGR group, can be found on the Contextual Safeguarding website.



Find out more about
our projects in detail by
scanning this QR code



Find out more

www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk



www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/toolkits

