

Contextual Safeguarding Responses: Key Features

How do we respond to extra-familial harm? When an assessment is complete - what next? Here we highlight key features of a safeguarding system and key features of practice to support you in creating successful responses

System features

Supportive senior leadership and wider context

When trying new things it's better not to be watching your back

Opportunities to work at a lower threshold of harm

It's harder to innovate when there are very high risks and a lot at stake

Trusting multi-agency partnership who are comfortable with uncertainty

To help you move beyond information-sharing or defaulting to familiar responses

A vision for safeguarding plans that focus on the social conditions of abuse, not the behaviour of young people

We often default to changing young people's thinking and behaviour, so it helps if you can notice when this is happening

Agility to direct resources in response to the the findings of Contextual Safeguarding assessments

Flexibility to design and commission new Contextual Safeguarding responses will lead to better results

Practice features

Begins with Contextual Safeguarding assessment and plan

This involves listening to young people and key relevant partners to scope and assess the harm and develop a welfare-focussed plan

Multi-context

Responses often address multiple, related contexts where its important to respond to their interplay using context weighting

Explicit about targeting the social conditions of harm

It's easy to get drawn away from this - keep coming back to what is causing the harm and name the structural drivers

Delivered by professionals with a positive view of young people and are trusted by them

Central to any Contextual Safeguarding response is empathetic engagement with, and understanding of, the experiences and views of young people

Why it's important