



Contextual Safeguarding: Student Engagement

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Contextual Safeguarding Student 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 student 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.

This student engagement session format 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 a student engagement session with young people, 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 student engagement session
- Appendix A: Session plan
- Appendix B: Student consent form

Student Engagement sessions

Student engagement sessions provide a safe space for young people to freely discuss key issues – positive or negative – that may be affecting their school life. In a student engagement session the facilitator(s) asks the participants a series of questions to prompt informal discussion, which is then anonymously captured and reviewed.

Students should feel able to raise concerns in a safe space without being judged or fear of repercussions. The focus of the student engagement session is on student wellbeing and school environment in general terms, rather than individuals specific experiences. The aim is not to get students to disclose; it should be noted that a group setting is not the right environment for young people to disclose, and could lead to additional harm. However, if any safeguarding concerns do arise at any stage of the session then these should be appropriately followed up.

Before engaging students, it is important that a response is developed in the event that a student does disclose harm. For example, identifying a member of staff – normally the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – through an appropriate referral pathway.

Student engagement sessions can be used on a one-off basis or at regular intervals (annually/bi-annually) to support on-going monitoring of student wellbeing. We advise holding at least four 1- 1.5 hour sessions in total, divided up across each key stage.

Key steps and considerations for setting up and carrying out a student engagement session are provided below.

We also advise listening to the following interview before holding a student engagement session: <http://contextualsafeguarding.libsyn.com/carrying-out-focus-groups-with-young-people>

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

In order to arrange a student engagement session we recommend taking the following steps:

1. Develop a session plan:

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

2. Identify facilitators:

We advise that two facilitators are identified to lead the student engagement sessions. Facilitators could be members of staff who students notably feel at ease talking to, or schools may also choose to train and support students to deliver student engagement sessions themselves.

3. Identify participants:

Sessions should be held with 4 – 8 students, in single sex groups. We selecting young people to participate in the groups within each key stage, with careful consideration taken to whether the young people selected will be appropriate to put together. Consider, for example, if there are any current concerns or problematic peer group dynamics at play before going ahead with the selected group. You may need to make some adjustments to the group. The sessions should involve a diverse range of students from across all school years and from a range of backgrounds and academic ability to capture as many perspectives as possible.

4. Ensuring consent:

Students must be clear that they do not *need* to take part in student engagement: it is an optional activity. We therefore recommend asking the selected young people to fill in a consent form in advance of the session taking place, such as the example provided in Appendix B.

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. While students might assume that 'what is said in the room stays in the room' is it important they know that what they say will be kept confidential unless they say something that suggests they, or a another young person may be at risk of harm. It is important to state at the start what would happen in this event.

6. Finding and creating the right space:

Student engagement sessions should be held in a quiet and private room during class time. It is important that students feel comfortable to discuss challenging issues, and that an informal, comfortable space is created to enable this. This includes allowing the students to leave at any time if it is safe to do so.

7. Capturing the intelligence:

The session could be recorded using a dictaphone or alternatively notes may be taken. Young people 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 captured, 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. All issues reported should be taken seriously. Some of these may relate to concerns outside of the school, for example a particular location where young people feel unsafe. It is important that these are raised with the local authority. The first point of contact within the local authority will vary between local areas. Actions that result from the student engagement sessions should be disseminated to the students so that they know their voice and opinions are being taken seriously.

Group settings are not the right environment for young people to disclose, however, if any safeguarding concerns do arise at any stage of the session then these should be appropriately followed up.

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

Appendix A: Session plan

Student engagement session plan Time needed: 1– 1.5 hours		
Timing	Content	Resources
15 minutes	<p>Introduction and consent</p> <p>Go around the group and introduce ourselves</p> <p>Explain the reason for the group and assessment.</p> <p>Overview of activities</p> <p>Confidentiality- 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 assessment. 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 if you told us that tonight someone was going to get badly beaten up then we would have to tell someone.</p> <p><u>Tooth paste exercise- Explaining limits of confidentiality in group setting</u> (5 mins) Explain that we're going to do a very quick exercise before we start (*ask that if anyone has done this exercise before they don't explain to others).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for a volunteer (or nominate someone). • 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. • Ask them to hand to 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. • Ask rest of group to help them/ give them ideas – the group should quickly come to conclusion that it's not possible. • What this exercise has to do with confidentiality in a group? <p>Prompt if necessary – how is the toothpaste like information that we share? Once information is shared in a group setting we can never completely control what happens to it – while we are all committed to respecting</p>	Name stickers Pens Card Toothpaste Group agreement

	<p>each other's privacy we need to recognise that we can't guarantee that someone might accidentally share something. For this reason we all need to make sure we are only sharing information in a group that we feel comfortable to share. Remind group again that we won't be asking personal questions. Thank volunteers and group for taking part.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your agreement to take part – Everyone within the session has submitted a signed consent form, now you know more about the session we need to know if you are happy to continue, and to remind you all that you can leave at any time. • Check people are happy to be recorded 	
15 minutes	<p>Words about feeling safe at school</p> <p>When we described the project in our introduction, and when we talk about safety at school, what do you think about? What types of harm happen to students?</p> <p>(map out words on paper)</p> <p>What does it look like in school? Where does it happen? What happens, is it challenged? How does school usually respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using stickers provided identify the things that are most relevant/ happen most frequently at school? 	Flip-chart paper Stickers
30 minutes	<p>Statements exercise – Do something, Do nothing, Don't know</p> <p>Ask the students to move to different parts of the room along a line depending on their response to each statement:</p> <p>Do something – e.g. tell an adult at school Do nothing – e.g. Ignore it Don't know – e.g. Don't know what I would do, Don't know how to help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student was being bullied, would another student at the school.....? • If a naked photo of a student was shared on social media, would another student at the school.....? 	3 Signs – Do something, Do nothing, Don't know Label 3 different areas of the room with signs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a female student is pushed against a wall and groped, would another student at the school.....? • If a student threatened physical violence, would another student at the school.....? • If a student was thought to be using drugs, would another student at the school.....? • If a student was thought to be dealing drugs, would another student at the school.....? • If a student was being forced to take part in sexual activity, would another student at the school.....? • Can you think of your own scenarios that happen in school? <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What happens, tell us more about that? ▪ Why don't people respond? ▪ How would it make someone feel? ▪ How should it be responded to? ▪ How do young people intervene? ▪ Are there things that young people consider safe that adults might think are unsafe? <p>*See further follow-on questions below</p>	
20 minutes	<p>Mapping</p> <p>Are there places in school that this happens? Can you identify areas on a map? – Corridors, toilets, Stairs, playground, travel to school.</p> <p>Are there times of day that are more/ less safe?</p>	Floor plan of the school
20 minutes	<p>School response</p> <p>Sit at table:</p> <p>When something like this happens how has your school responded?"</p> <p>What do you see the school doing?</p> <p>How do they respond to the young person doing it/ effected by it?"</p> <p>Have you seen any changes since?"</p>	

	<p>Are parents notified?"</p> <p>Do you feel like you know who to speak to?"</p> <p>What does the school do well?"</p> <p>What can they do better?"</p> <p>We don't want this to happen in the first place, is anything done to prevent it – assembly, posters..."</p> <p>What 3 things would you do if you were in charge?"</p> <p>What one thing do adults need to know about what life at school is like for young people?</p>	
<p>15 minutes</p>	<p>Close</p> <p>Review what we did</p> <p>Thank everyone for taking part</p> <p>YP feedback – what did you like/ dislike about taking part in the session, is there anything we could do to make it better in the future?</p> <p>Follow up support sheet – young people can speak to a teacher, or services available in the school/ local area. This may bring up thoughts later on – that's very normal, but we will provide information about support services that might be able to help.</p>	<p>Follow up sheet leaflet.</p>

Appendix B: Student consent form

Student engagement Consent Form

You have been selected to take part in a student engagement session. This will be an informal discussion with facilitators and other students across the school about safety and wellbeing.

You do not have to take part in the session if you do not want to.

The data collated will be anonymised, however if there is a risk of harm to you or others the school will need to follow safeguarding procedures and may need to share your personal information.

By completing and signing this form you agree to take part.

Details	
Name	
Form	
I am happy to take part in the student engagement session.	
I agree that staff can share personal information about me with another person or agency so I will receive further help and support. I have discussed this with a member of staff who has explained why my information is going to be shared.	
Signed	
Date	

Audio recording consent:

We may record feedback/ engagement sessions with young people to accurately represent their views. Please tick the appropriate box below:

- Yes, I am happy to participate
- No, I am not to participate

Thank you. A member of staff will let you know further details of the student engagement session.