

1

Background

Contextual Safeguarding

has been developed to inform policy and practice approaches to safeguarding adolescents. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have less influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

2

Why it matters

Practitioners who work with children and families need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within community contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices.

Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that children are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

3

Information

During adolescence the nature of the risks faced by young people, and the way that they experience these risks, often differs from earlier childhood – as do their needs. Specifically, young people may be faced with a new set of complex risks – ones not posed by families, but instead by peers, partners and adults unconnected to families.

4

These risks:

Often manifest in extra-familial environments including schools, public spaces and online platforms are informed by peer norms and relationships

Involve young people perpetrating, as well as experiencing harm.

Can present as the result of perceived 'choices' a young person has made.

5

Often feature grooming, coercion, exploitation, criminality and serious risks of significant sexual and physical harm that create climates of fear and reduce engagement with services.

Are beyond the control of parents and rarely instigated by parents.

Research tells us that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence and the choice of relationships formed at this time can either be beneficial or harmful.

7

Questions to consider

Can the young people change their social conditions?

Can we assist with different activity choices?

Do we know local hotspots for young people?

Have we made local connections in the community?

Do parents have an awareness of the child's peer group and hang outs?

6

What to do

If you are worried about a child please initially consult your designated safeguarding lead to discuss what action and procedure you should follow.

There may be a need to discuss your concerns with children's social care: Blackpool dial 01253 477299 or Lancashire 0300 123 6720

