



7 Minute Briefing: Contextual Safeguarding



1. What is it?

Contextual safeguarding seeks to understand, identify and respond to risks posed to children outside of their home; either from adults or other children.

2. Why is it important?

Traditional safeguarding models and practices to protect children from harm focus on familial harm. This is generally abuse within the family and doesn't always address the time that children spend outside of their family home.

3. Why does it matter?

As children develop into adolescents it is typical that they will spend increasing amounts of time in the community and socialising with friends. The nature of young people's relationships at this age can lead to them being more vulnerable in society to those who will harm or exploit them.

4. Peer influences

Research helps us to understand that peer relationships are influential during adolescence. If a child with vulnerabilities forms peer relationships with other vulnerable children; this increases their likelihood of experiencing harm in the community.

5. What are the risks?

There are a number of potential risks to children outside of the family home. This isn't an exhaustive list but includes; sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, trafficking, gang involvement, modern slavery and radicalisation.

6. What next?

A contextual safeguarding approach aims to disrupt harm caused to children in extra-familial context; rather than moving children away from them. The model seeks to understand and identify ways in which professionals, adults and children can change the social conditions of the community which abuse has occurred.

7. What should we do?

Professionals building trusted relationships with children identify places and spaces within our community where children are vulnerable and encourage self-responsibility for making these changes. Engage with individuals and agencies who have influence on social context i.e. shopkeepers, community leaders, local policing etc to make environments safer.

Links: <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/en/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>