



EXTRA-CONTEXTUAL/EXTRA-FAMILIAL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach that recognises young people may experience significant harm in environments outside their families. These harms often occur in neighbourhoods, schools, peer groups, and online settings—contexts where parents and carers typically have limited influence.

As young people grow, particularly during adolescence, their social networks widen and begin to shape their understanding of relationships and social norms. A large proportion of child exploitation occurs in public spaces such as parks, stairwells, shopping areas, and online platforms. Therefore, safeguarding responses must extend beyond the family home.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Contextual Safeguarding expands traditional child protection practices by encouraging professionals to assess and intervene in the environments where extra-familial harm occurs. To safeguard effectively, practitioners must engage with individuals and sectors that have influence in these settings, including schools, community organisations, local businesses, transport services, and online platforms.

This approach acknowledges that child protection is not solely the responsibility of parents or carers. Instead, it requires a whole-community response to identify, disrupt, and prevent harm in the places where young people live their lives.

ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents are vital partners in safeguarding efforts. However, when harm occurs outside the home, they may feel powerless or unsupported. Child exploitation can severely strain parent-child relationships and lead to emotional and physical challenges within the home.

Families may experience secondary trauma. Parents may feel guilt, shame, or blame and can face intimidation or threats from perpetrators. It is essential that professionals recognise these dynamics and support parents as allies in protecting their children.

CONCLUSION

Effective safeguarding must address the full range of environments that impact young people's lives. By embracing a contextual safeguarding approach, professionals can better identify risks, intervene earlier, and work collaboratively with families and communities to protect children from extra-familial harm.

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