

The Voice of Young People on Safeguarding

A multi-agency approach to keep adolescents safe in the city



Adolescent (noun): a young person who is developing into an adult



CARDIFF
YOUTH
SERVICE
GWASANAETH
IEUENCTID
CAERDYDD

UCHELGAI
PRIFDDINAS
CAPITAL
AMBITION





Foreword

In Cardiff, we are committed to ensuring all children and young people are safe, happy and thrive. We recognise that a bespoke approach is required to ensure the safety of adolescent young people in our city. It is crucial that we work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure young people living in Cardiff will feel safe and be safe.

Through consultation with our partners and young people, The Voice of Young People on Safeguarding outlines our commitments, principles and goals in ensuring young people have genuine choices which will empower them to live their best lives in Cardiff. We realise that we need to work together to make positive, systemic changes in order for young people to live safe lives in our city.

Vision:

Young people living in Cardiff will feel safe, and will be safe.

Aim:

Preventing and intervening to address adolescent harm; promoting adolescent resilience and enabling young people to live safely in their families and/or communities wherever possible.



Introduction

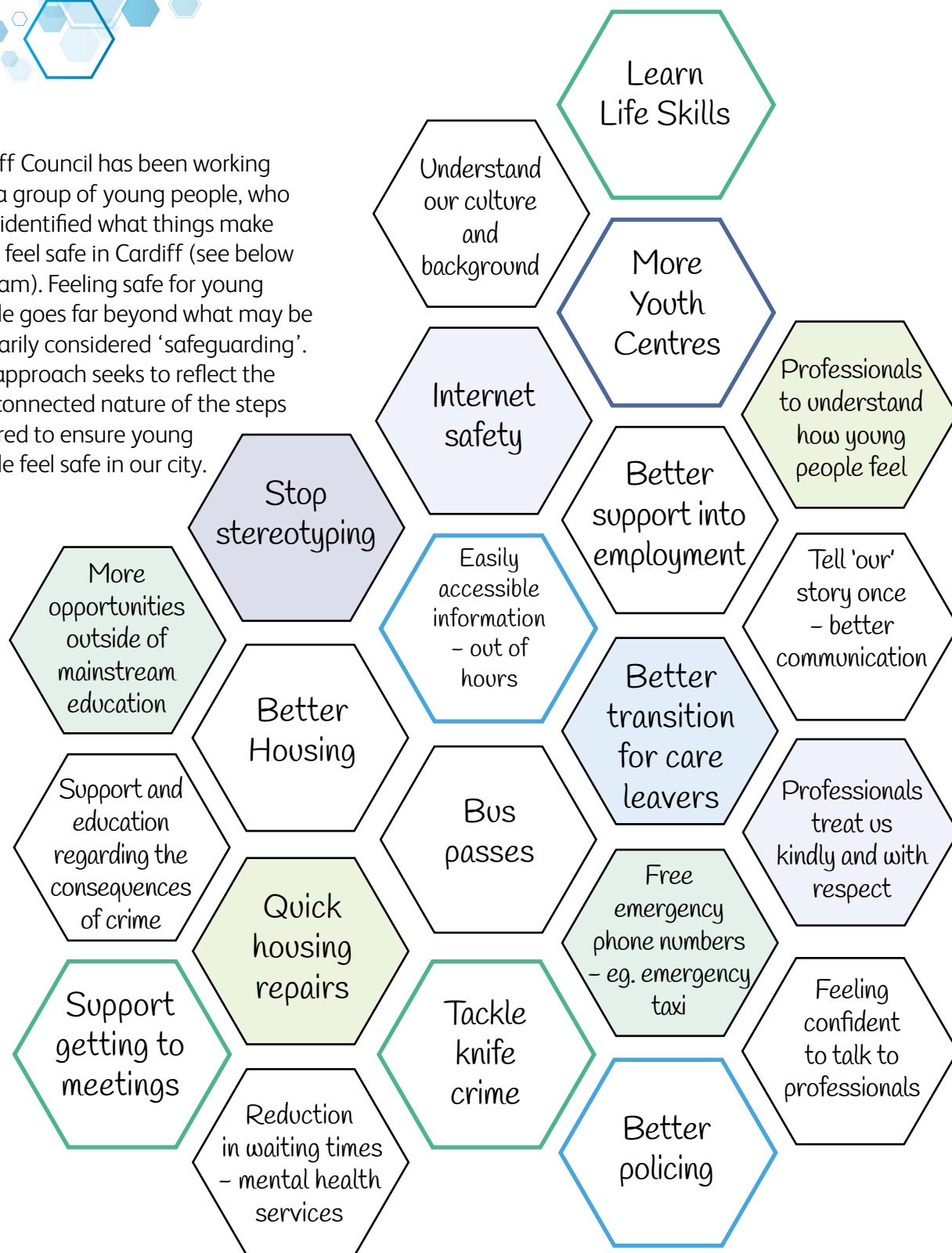
This approach represents the wide range of views, experiences and expertise of internal and external stakeholder professionals and young people. The information has been gathered to form an approach which will support Cardiff Council to progressively configure our services, approaches and policies to safeguard adolescents, emphasise key areas of adolescent safeguarding practice, and enable us to evidence our dedication to keeping young people safe in Cardiff.

Ensuring young people have genuine choices which will empower them to live their best lives in Cardiff.





Cardiff Council has been working with a group of young people, who have identified what things make them feel safe in Cardiff (see below diagram). Feeling safe for young people goes far beyond what may be ordinarily considered 'safeguarding'. This approach seeks to reflect the interconnected nature of the steps required to ensure young people feel safe in our city.



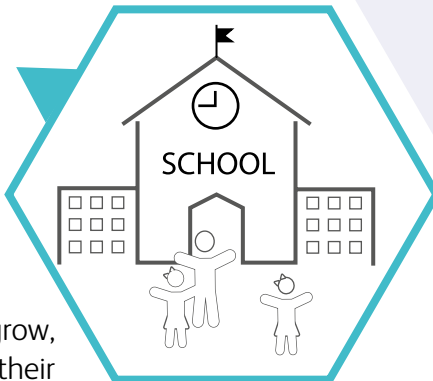
Scope

For the purpose of this approach 'adolescent' or 'young person' relates to children aged 11-18. There will be times when we need to apply the principles to children both older and younger. It has been recognised that this age group in particular requires a bespoke approach. Services within Cardiff will have their own age criteria for referral – however we hope that by working together better, all young people, regardless of age, will be able to access the support they need.

Local Context

What does it mean to be a young person in Cardiff?

There are approximately **21,700** young people in Cardiff schools aged 11-18. These numbers are expected to grow by around 10% over the next five years, so that by 2026 there will be over 23,800 children aged 11 – 18.



The vast majority of them are able to grow, thrive and achieve with the support of their families and universal provision such as schools, youth clubs and community activities. However, a small cohort require more targeted, intensive or specialist support.



Children's Services are working with

1866 young people aged 11 and above.

On 31st December 2020 the Youth Justice Service were working on 174 cases with young people. 58 of these were also being supported by Children's Services.

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Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children (UASC) under the age of 18 have been supported by the local authority.

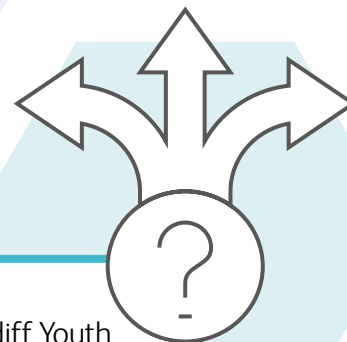
68 young people aged 18-25 have also received support.

Currently, **529** care leavers in Cardiff are receiving support from the Personal Advisor Service.



Unaccompanied asylum seeking children will have traumatic pasts, many separated from their families and forced to make long and dangerous journeys to what they hope will be a place of sanctuary. In Wales, we recognise the rights of all young people, wherever they come from. Underlying everything, these young people are children. Their human rights are protected.

63 families are receiving interventions and therapeutic support from our Adolescent Resource Centre 'edge of care' Service in order to prevent young people 11+ becoming looked after.



Cardiff Youth Service who offer youth mentoring is working with **167** 11 to 16-year-olds to support them in making positive transitions into education, employment or training.



Our Key Principles

The key principles and approaches laid out in The Voice of Young People on Safeguarding will underpin the vision of the Council's 'Cardiff Commitment' which seeks to ensure that all children and young people benefit from opportunities, which support them to flourish and thrive, building on their individual ambitions, talents, skills and abilities. We want to ensure that no child or young person is left behind. It will also underpin other key strategies that aim to safeguard children and promote children's rights to ensure they can be viewed through an 'adolescent lens'. Key strategies include:

- [Cardiff Child Friendly Cities Strategy](#)
- [Cardiff and Vale Tackling Exploitation Strategy](#)
- [Cardiff 2030](#)
- [Children's Services Strategy 2019-2022](#)
- [Early Help Strategy](#)
- [Cardiff's Multi Agency Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024](#)

Given the complex nature of adolescent safeguarding, it is important to note that there is not an all-encompassing approach to working with and improving outcomes for young people. Each young person should be considered as an individual, nonetheless within the confines of these overarching guiding principles.

We will focus on young people and put them at the centre of what we do.

We will focus on harm reduction and increasing safety – for some young people we may not be able to remove/ reduce all risk as sometimes challenging young people will push them further away. Sometimes, we can't stop the harm but we can support young people through it.

We will improve our response and understanding of diversity and identity and how this can impact on young people's experiences and lives.

We will continue to challenge our stereotypes and assumptions and how we see young people based on characteristics. It is important to recognise the impact of diversity and identity on young people's vulnerabilities and how they may lead to low identification of issues. Similarly, we must recognise the impact of discrimination and disadvantage and how these can create conditions for enhanced vulnerability.

Young people are multi-faceted and we must ensure we explore and recognise the simultaneous intersections, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, disability and age, a young person will find themselves in. Generational experiences, history and culture of a young person must be factored into our approach. We must test ourselves and our own belief systems in order to best understand and support young people in Cardiff.

We will work with young people to try and make the right decisions at the right time.

Adolescence and the needs of adolescents do not switch on at 11 and off at 18.

In Cardiff, we feel that services for young people should continue to be provided until the person feels ready to exit the service. We should take into consideration executive functioning of the brain and conditions which may impact on this when making our decision to cease support and intervention. We also need to work with colleagues in Adult Services to ensure a smooth and supported transition between services if needed. Evidenced by our 'Early Help' practice model, we are committed to early intervention and prevention where possible. It is no surprise that a child will become an adolescent so where possible we must work in close partnership with services that support children of all ages. Schools in particular are essential to effectively safeguarding and supporting children and facilitating early help, targeted support and education.

We will get to know young people and support them, no matter what is going on. Workers will talk to young people and each other to give them the best support.

Working narrowly with young people around a single difficulty or risk can label and constrain young people; and miss the opportunity to utilise their skills, aspirations and other strengths. We will use relationship-based, holistic approaches with young people. We will not define them by single problems or categorise them by type of harm; but instead properly, deeply, understand young people, their needs, strengths and difficulties.

In Cardiff, we are proud to have a skilled workforce that are passionate about and committed to working with adolescents. We will be proactive in developing more effective ways of working, sharing information, early intervention, mapping intelligence with partners to identify vulnerable/at risk young people, to make our communities safer through more joined-up working.

We will move away from labelling young people as 'hard to reach'. We will work together as professionals and with young people to ensure our services and support are 'easy to reach.'





We will build relationships with young people in order to help meet their needs

We recognise the importance of building meaningful relationships with young people in order to build trust and effectively engage them with any support available. To have the most impact, it is essential that the 'right person' takes the lead in co-ordinating the most appropriate support for a young person and acts as the key worker.

We will think about a young person's family and caregivers

- if they need help, we will be there for them too.

We recognise the need to see young people as individuals and our approach focuses on how we can have a bespoke approach to supporting adolescents. We will take a 'Think Family' approach to our work in partnership with all services working with a child, young person or adult family member in order to build their capacity and resilience in helping young people change how they think, feel and behave.

This means that we will:

- Be alert to any additional needs of parents/carers or other adults we may come into contact with. This includes, but is not limited to, adult mental health, adult learning difficulties, adult learning disabilities, substance misuse and domestic abuse.
- Talk with the specialist adult services that can potentially help meet those additional needs.
- Involve parents as safeguarding partners where it is safe to do so.

We will help young people discover their strengths and build upon them

The focus is on the young person's strengths as opposed to difficulties.

Strengths-based approaches will be used to empower young people as they are at the centre of support planning. This will equip the young person to understand how to be safer and how to assess risks, which will help them to practice safer behaviours, contributing to them feeling safe and being safe.

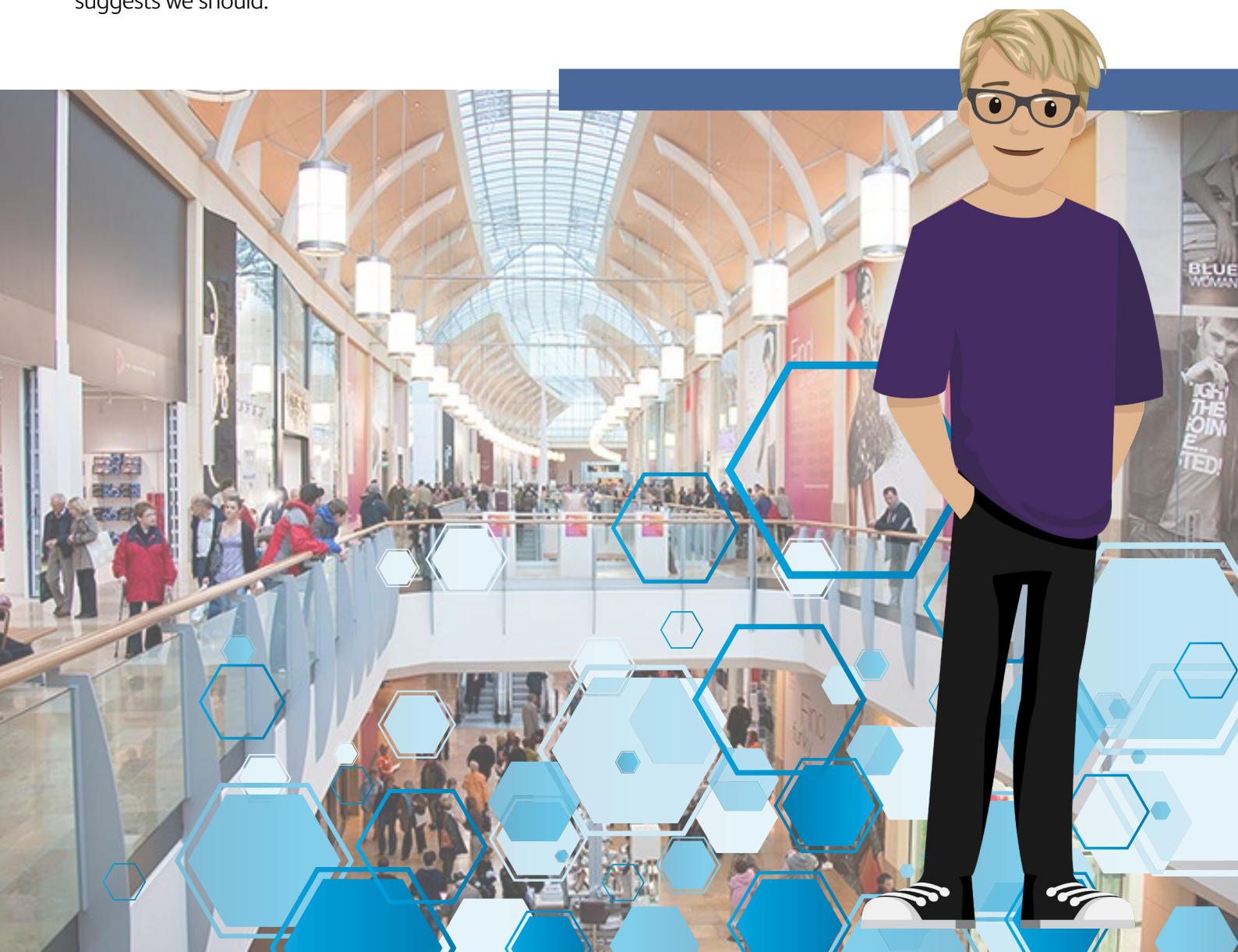
Working in this way with staff is essential for strengths-based practice to work with adolescents.

We will be here to support and guide you with your **future** dreams and goals

We will be future focused, as adolescents are emerging adults and we need to work with young people to help prepare them for adulthood.

We will **stay curious** and use evidence to make sure we are doing the right things for young people

Cardiff Council's services are committed to using evidence to inform our approach. 'Evidence-informed' is using robust research and theory, alongside practice wisdom and knowledge as well as expertise from lived experience. Being evidence-informed involves using those three sources; staying curious and reflective, adopting a mind-set of critical thinking and being brave enough to change our minds when the evidence suggests we should.

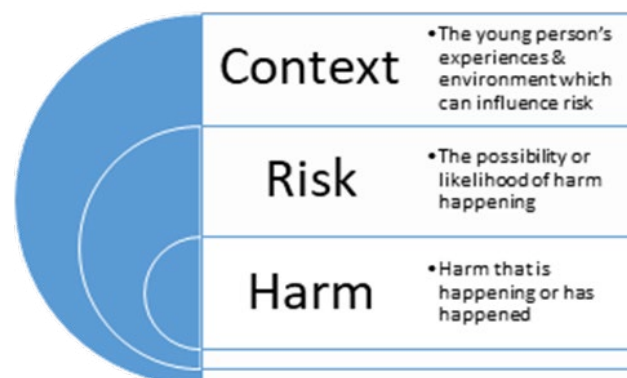




Risk and Harm

We need to ensure we are clear on the distinctions between risk, harm and context to ensure a more effective approach to safeguarding young people.

Services can work together to create safe contexts in order to reduce risk and can work to address harm. We need to focus on all three aspects to effectively keep young people safe.



Peer on peer abuse

Peer on peer abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse of young people by their peers. It can impact any young person, although the characteristics/experiences of some can be exploited by their peers, or missed by services, making them more vulnerable to abuse than others. Peer on peer abuse is influenced by the nature of the environments in which young people spend their time and hinges upon young people's experiences of power, and ultimately the notion of consent.

An Adolescent approach

Adolescence can be a confusing and challenging time for many young people, their parents and the professionals working with them. The increased importance of their peers is a natural part of the transition to independence. By identifying with peers, adolescents start to develop moral judgement and values and to explore how they differ from their parents. Their ability to act independently – their agency – develops over time and varies significantly between young people. Maturation, agency, capabilities, etc. are all influenced heavily by internal and external factors (i.e. experience and environment), reinforcing the need for an individualised and needs-led approach.

Encountering and engaging with risk is a normal part of development and most young people are able to negotiate this period of transition from childhood to adulthood without serious consequences. However, research tells us that for young people whose lives have exposed them to adverse childhood experiences such as neglect, maltreatment, domestic violence and parental substance misuse, there is an increased likelihood that their own risk taking may raise safeguarding concerns.

Many of the existing safeguarding services and structures were designed to address familial risk, (that is, risk or harm occurring within the family), while young people's needs and experiences may be very different.

As children mature, risk may also come from their own behaviours and that of their peers as well as schools, neighbourhoods and the wider environment. We also know that the transition to adulthood is a particularly challenging and vulnerable time and that needs do not end when a young person turns eighteen.

Context is key

Adolescence is a push-pull time when children move into a different attachment relationship with their caregivers – pulling them close and needing to be connected – and pushing them away to form their own identity and learning to survive in the world without such proximity. Often, for adolescents we forget the importance of the ‘pull.’ Brain growth and identity formation needs real connection from caregivers.

An awareness and response from a wide range of partners addressing these different contexts and issues is required when working to safeguard adolescents. We need to ensure that we promote resilience and young people’s ability to respond to changing challenges. Our role is not only to protect, but also to prepare young people for adulthood.

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families, within their communities. Contextual Safeguarding pushes us beyond focusing on ‘how to keep this young person safe’ to ask ‘what can we do to ensure safe places, spaces and contexts for young people?’

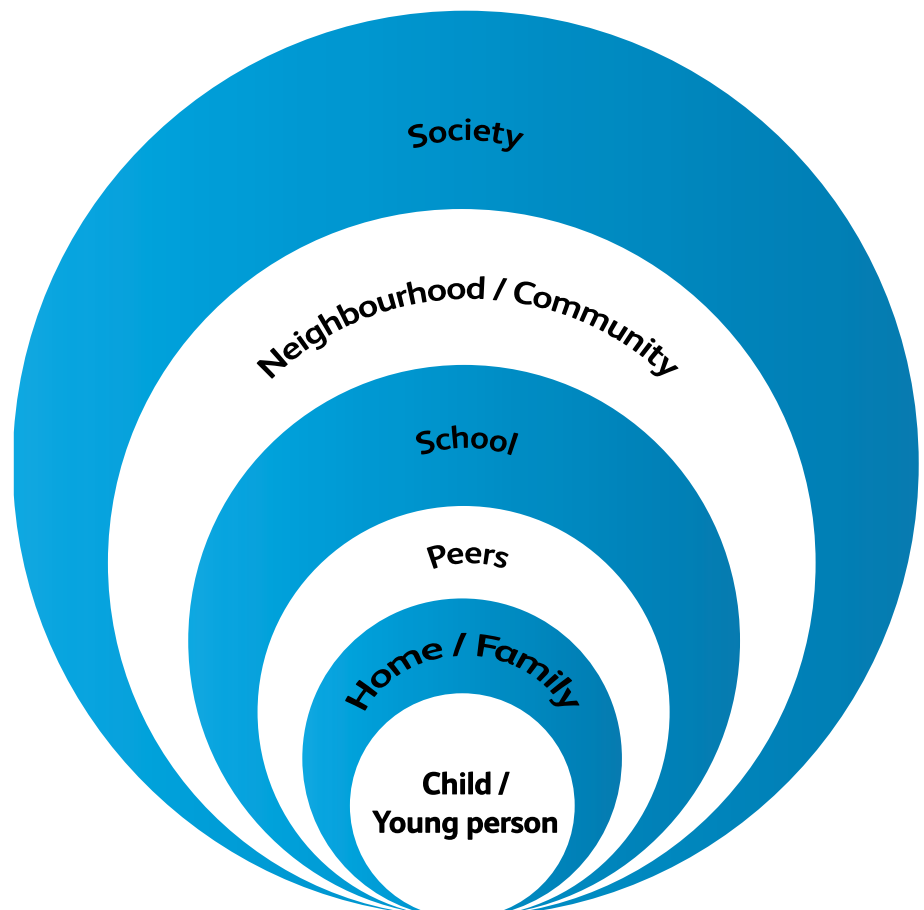
Contextual Safeguarding is relevant to a range of risks which can possibly cause significant harm to young people, where the primary cause of harm is outside of the family. It is important to note that extra and intra-familial harm are not mutually exclusive. Many of these can be enabled / exacerbated by intra-familial factors.

This list is not exhaustive but includes:

- Child Sexual Exploitation – including peer-on-peer exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation – including County Lines
- Risks associated with gangs
- Modern Slavery and Trafficking
- Missing young people
- Radicalisation (PREVENT)

Contextual Safeguarding requires assessment, intervention, and outcome review to happen at the contextual level rather than an individual level.

Understanding these risks has resulted in the Regional Safeguarding board identifying the need to review our meeting structures, remits and approaches in light of what we now know. Contextual safeguarding is one of the 3 key priorities for 2021.





Importance of Peers

During adolescence, peers become progressively more important because young people spend more time with them and because their relationships with caregivers change as they develop greater autonomy and independence. With peers, adolescents can find security and a sense of belonging. Peer groups and relationships can play a significant role during adolescence in shaping young people's social norms and the decisions they make. We need to understand a young person's peer group to better understand a young person and more effectively safeguard them in the long term – this may include direct work with peer groups. Using peer on peer support can be an impactful tool we need to enhance.

For some, peer influence is another distinctive aspect of risks faced by young people in adolescence and peer groups can become settings in which abuse and exploitation occur.

Transition

Transition is a process not an event

It is important to note that transition does not only relate to young people moving from children's to adult services, but may include moving between other services such as moving from temporary to permanent accommodation or moving from one educational establishment to another or transition towards a service ending. There may be circumstances where a young person needs additional support to enable the process of transition to be positive. For example, we need to be responsive to the needs of young people involved in the Criminal Justice System, including prisons, secure homes and under probation/Youth Justice Service (YJS) supervision.

Crucially, as with all plans, the young person should be fully involved in transition planning, which should include identifying and establishing networks of support prior to the end of statutory services. A further point to note is that transitions are often needed after a young person has reached adulthood. This is particularly evident in the case of care leavers.

Reinforced by Cardiff's Multi Agency Corporate Parenting Strategy, we understand that good transition from care is about being supported through quality relationships with the people that are important to them, being supported in decisions and helped with achieving aspirations.

Young people need a sense of control. Affording as much voice and choice as possible is a key means of helping a young person recover from trauma, responding to their emerging independence, and is especially important where a young person has experienced coercion. It is also important that young people have a sense of control regarding the timing and decision to leave care. For some, taking the next steps in life is positive, for others, independence comes too soon. Decisions need to be made at the right time and at the right pace for young people

The Voice of Young People on Safeguarding - This is YOUR approach

The involvement of young people will be at the centre of delivering the goals and objectives laid out in this approach and ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation.

Young people have written our Principles and Goals to ensure that this approach is understood by all.

There is no substitute for lived experience and young people are the experts in their own lives. Young people need to be involved in service planning and development and review as far as is reasonably practicable.

We want young people to have ownership of this approach and in order to do this we will:

- Work with young people to produce a young person friendly campaign to raise awareness of the approach
- Hold more events such as workshops and focus groups where young people can have their say. Disseminate participation training to young people to support this engagement.
- Facilitate anonymous online surveys or an app where young people can say what is important to them.
- Involve young people alongside professionals they trust, in monitoring and evaluation activities.



Our Goals are that -

- 1** Young people feel safe.
- 2** Young people have good health (physical and mental) and wellbeing.
- 3** Both young people and families are educated about risk, the signs to spot and how to resolve them.
- 4** All young people will have access to education and activities that will help them prepare for their future.
- 5** A stable home for all young people and support from a community.
- 6** Young people have positive transitions, they will receive guidance to overcome their struggles and help to adapt to changes.



Supporting our Workforce

Our workforce are experts in supporting adolescents and this expertise is essential for successfully safeguarding young people.

We aim to have a highly resilient, skilled, well-supported, multi-agency workforce with high rates of retention and access to regular reflective supervision

Messages from professionals tell us that in order to achieve the above we need to ensure the following values are established:

- Access to good-quality, **evidence-informed training and other learning** to sit alongside and to enhance practice readily available for internal staff and external partners to utilise.
- A commitment to supporting **sustainable recruitment** across the workforce to reduce changes in practitioner for the young person.
- The ability to truly **reflect on practice**; time to accommodate reflective activity.
- Good **quality supervision** at all levels, seen as a 'spectrum of supervision' – this could mean informal, peer supervision through to formal, clinical supervision at the opposite end of the spectrum.
- **Open, honest communication.**
- Seamless **ethical information sharing** (on a multi-agency basis and across internal departments/teams) – better use of information sharing agreements to enable us to do this.
- A **flexible and responsive approach** to practice; to enable practitioners to work in a flexible manner and to apply flexibility to solution-focussed practice – working in a way that best suits the young person.
- **Greater autonomy**, which could facilitate practice flexibility, increased proactive multi-agency working and better communication on an internal and external basis.
- Integrating the **views of young people and families** into professional decision making so that decisions are co-produced wherever possible.
- **Time** to effectively work with young people – small manageable caseloads are key.
- Build **multi-agency teams** with staff from a wide range of professional expertise. We need to utilise the joint workforce to ensure manageable caseloads, effective interventions and shared peer supervisions.
- **Support Apprenticeships and Traineeships** to actively encourage and attract new staff into the workforce.
- Use the '**Thinking Together Framework**' to help those who have developed a relationship with a young person to provide appropriate support.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- We will work with our key partners, young people and families to develop a clear set of success measures so that we can establish if our joint approach is making a difference to young people's lives.
- We will capture and celebrate the positive outcomes young people have achieved. These will be specific and personal to each individual young person and success and progress towards achieving goals should not be compared.
- We will use our monitoring and evaluation to identify and highlight both the things that are going well and those things that have not gone to plan and are not working. We need to learn from these and identify opportunities for improvement and development.
- We will ensure that our values to support our workforce are monitored and evaluated in equal measure to our goals.
- We will ask ourselves "what do we want address?", "how do we know we are on track?" and "how can we measure this?" whilst ensuring we consider the story behind the baseline and be mindful of unintended consequences of any performance indicators we embed.

Governance Arrangements

The Voice of Young People on Safeguarding is a partnership, citywide set of principles and goals that we hope frame the direction and approach we need to take together in order to safeguard our young people.



GOAL 1

Young people feel safe

- Young people feel safe, understand how to keep safe and how to assess risk.
- Increased cultural awareness and professional understanding of a young person's life history.
- Improved information sharing between professionals, utilising existing tools (i.e. My Concern) to share concerns, collate and map 'collective risk' and reduce the number of times young people need to 'tell their story'.
- Reviewed policies relating to safeguarding adolescents and re-developed process and procedures linked to extra-familial risks.
- Established opportunities for multi-agency partners to discuss and share information and intelligence relating to extra-familial contexts and overlapping vulnerabilities.
- Increased peer led support work for young people, because- a lived experience can be more valuable than professional expertise.

GOAL 2

Young people have good health (physical and mental) and wellbeing

- Staff have the skills to recognise and respond effectively and appropriately to young people's mental and physical health needs.
- Practitioners are aware of the services available to young people and support young people to access what they need. Staff remain involved as a supportive factor throughout.
- Staff are aware of relational and trauma informed approach to practice.
- Develop support for young people and their families who are living with substance misuse (CRAFT Programme).
- Young carers feel they are supported and have access to opportunities and respite.

GOAL 3

Both young people and families are educated about risk, the signs to spot and how to resolve them

- Professionals, family carers and young people themselves have a sound understanding of contextual safeguarding and associated risk factors.
- That young people are supported and know how to stay safe online, increased awareness of cyber-crime, grooming and mate crime.
- Improved and adapted risk assessments and interventions to routinely provide opportunities for adolescents' own views and perspectives to be reflected.
- Improved mechanisms and processes developed to better work with parents / caregivers as partners in order to safeguard adolescents.



GOAL 4

All young people will have access to education and activities that will help them prepare for their future

- Increasing access to meaningful social, non-formal, informal learning via youth services for young people in their communities.
- An embedded prevention and 'place-based' system that ensures key 'adolescent services' are collaborating in order to target services to the right person at the right place and at the right time.
- Improved governance and alignment of adolescent services - pulling together all key services working with young people across the City including voluntary and third sector organisations.
- Enhanced education, support and mentoring for young people, with particular reference to good relationship and sex education, employability skills and education which is directly linked to an offer of employment, including young people who may be excluded from education/on reduced timetable.
- Enhance the Into Work offer to provide support.
- Increased co-ordinated services for supporting young people in to work.
- Improved connections with employment services to support young people who are not wishing to transition into further education.

GOAL 5

A stable home for all young people and support from a community

- Better accommodation options for young people, situated in areas that they know, close to the centre of networks and support.
- Practical, ongoing tenancy support.
- Development of preventative programmes and improving early identification and intervention in order to prevent young people becoming homeless.
- Increased mediation with families at the right time to avoid crisis.
- That young people are supported to feel confident and emotionally prepared to live independently if required.

GOAL 6

Young people have positive transitions, they will receive guidance to overcome their struggles and help to adapt to changes

- Better transition, with specific reference to transitions for care leavers and young people after the age of 18.
- Improved services to support young adults 18+ who are or have been exploited.
- Extended support beyond 21 years into adulthood if needed.
- Improved transition and transfer of cases to adult safeguarding.
- Improved working between Youth, Children's Services and Adult Services to share best practice.
- Improved transition support for the needs of young people involved in the Criminal Justice System, including prisons, secure homes and under probation/YJS supervision.
- An improved package of support for young people as young parents.