

Contextual Safeguarding

An update on developments in England and Wales

Dr Carlene Firmin, University of Bedfordshire
26/11/20

The Contextual Safeguarding Frameworks offers some resolution to these challenges over *four domains*

(Firmin et al. 2016)



Domain 1: Target
Seeks to prevent, identify, assess and intervene with the social conditions of abuse



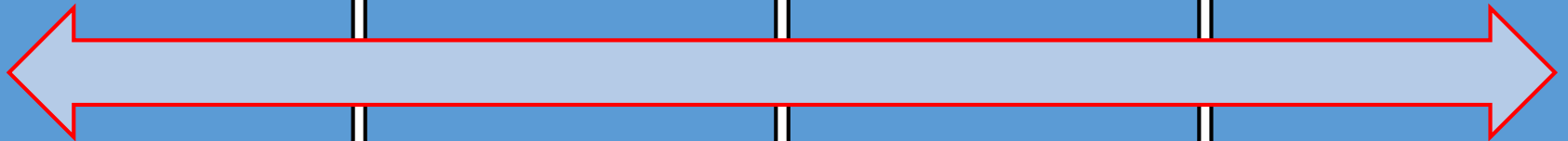
Domain 2: Legislative framework
Incorporate extra-familial contexts into child protection frameworks



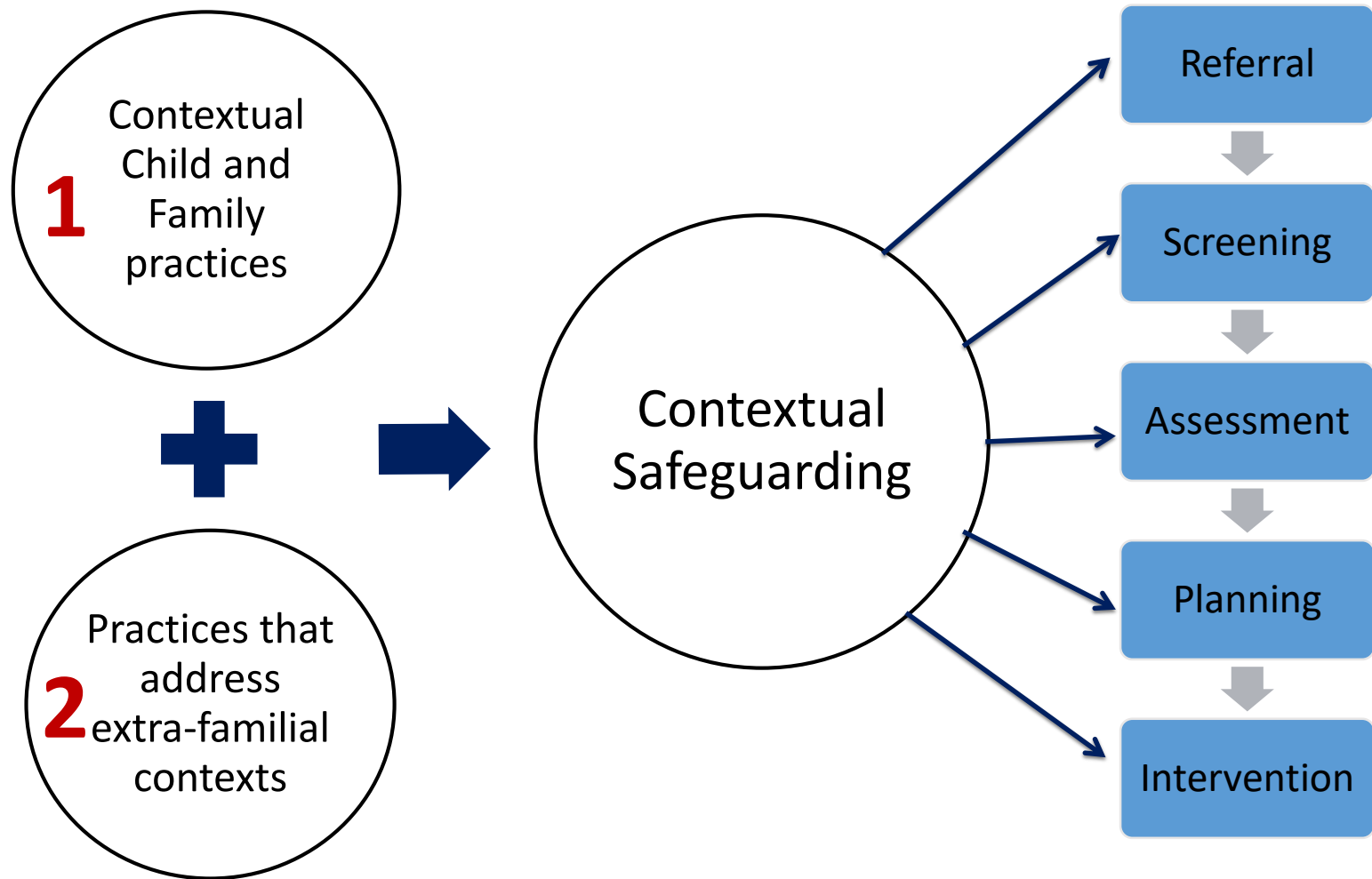
Domain 3: Partnerships
Develop partnerships with sectors/individuals who are responsible for the nature of extra-familial contexts



Domain 4: Outcomes measurement
Monitor outcomes of success in relation to contextual, as well as individual, change



Lesson from testing: This work happens at two levels



Testing timetable

Create

- Assess existing response to EFH against the Contextual Safeguarding framework
- Work with group of local professionals to create an on-paper version of their CS approach using the findings of system mapping
- Initiate discussions with young people, parents and leaders on local CS approaches

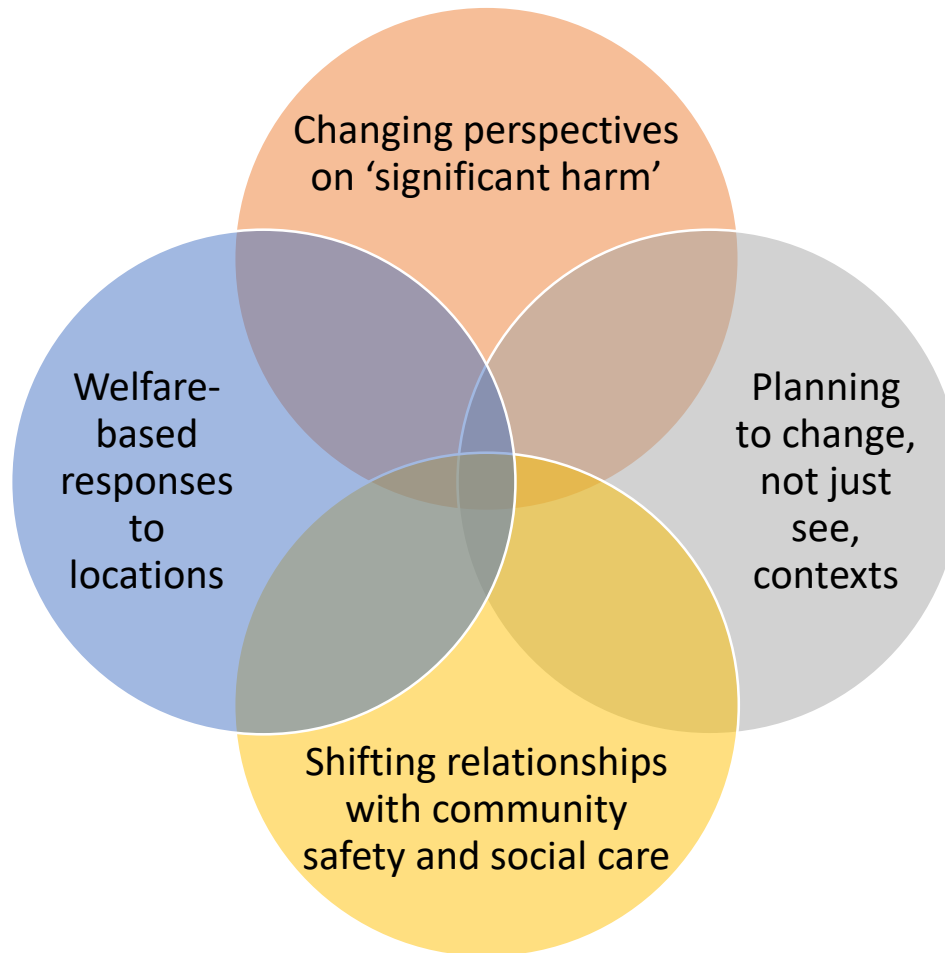
Test

- **Support professionals in the site (local implementation group) to test the on-paper version of the approach**
- **Gradual testing of Level 1 approaches throughout the system and 2-3x formal pilots of Level 2 work**
- **Learning from pilots used to inform final design of approach prior to embedding**

Embed

- Support site to implement and embed the CS approach designed for the site
- Embed a monitoring and evaluation framework to support development
- Create an online toolkit for the site to facilitate national learning

Observed developments across sites during early stage tests



Changing perspectives: Plans for young people on the grounds of significant harm alone

*Whilst working with a young person under a voluntary intervention for acquisitive offences, a youth offending practitioner became concerned about criminal exploitation. The young person was arrested for possession with intent to supply Class A substances. The young person told professionals about a serious incident following his arrest; however, children's services did not consider that the information suggested a significant concern to his safety and decided not to hold a strategy discussion. **Using their knowledge and understanding of extra-familial harm through their work to develop a Contextual Safeguarding approach, the youth offending team successfully escalated and challenged this decision, resulting in a recognition that the young person was at risk of significant harm in the community.** They were then able to co-ordinate a Contextual Safeguarding response, working with safeguarding colleagues, the police and housing to put in place disruption tactics, safe spaces for the young person in the community, and a clear and robust safety plan which addressed the extra-familial harm. A National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral has come back with 'conclusive grounds' that the young person has been a victim of modern slavery. The practitioner commented that taking a contextual approach supported them to pursue this route meaning that the young person will be considered as a victim when criminal matters are considered. **Without this approach they would not have had the level of understanding and evidence to demonstrate the safeguarding response he needed to ensure his safety which he now has.***

Changing perspectives: engaging with contexts as part of the planning process

This case example refers to a 16-year-old male who was arrested for Possession with Intent to Supply class B/A drugs. Following a multi-agency screening process, which used a Contextual Safeguarding approach, support was put in place for the young person and his mother, and action taken to address wider concerns regarding a location and adult males who posed a risk of harm to his safety. The practitioner involved reported that prior to receiving any briefing or awareness of Contextual Safeguarding, she would have focused her assessment on the home life and the parents' capacity to meet his need. Using a Contextual Safeguarding approach expanded her professional curiosity and also meant she looked at the push and pull factors for this young person in a different way. She identified three significant areas of risk for the young person:

- a location he visited regularly and spent time with his peers (not where he lived);*
- some adults who were also in that location; and*
- the impact of domestic abuse and drug use at home.*

The worker identified strengths in other extra-familial contexts where the young person spent their time – like his school and another community setting – that could be built upon in planning. This resulted in child in need plan for this young person – as well as wider strategic activities to address individuals who pose a risk to his welfare.

Shifting relationships between community safety and children's services

Site A

A young person who is on a Child in Need plan due to experiences of exploitation has also come to the attention of community safety for 'anti-social' behaviour. A joint meeting is arranged to discuss the options in relation to the ASB, its links to vulnerability and agreed a shared approach

Site B

A peer group is identified where there are escalating concerns about exploitation. A peer assessment is conducted as part of the response. By discussing the peer assessment with the local authority, community safety partners agree a different response to those young people – and have agreed to consultation with children's services in similar cases in the future

Coordinated welfare responses to public places

Numerous young people are identified by the police and schools as carrying and selling drugs in and around a local fast food restaurant. In response the restaurant disables its WiFi connection.

Young people stop spending time at the fast food restaurant and instead start to spend time at the library – sometimes up to 80 young people after school. Complaints of anti-social behaviour in and around the library increase. There is a concern that young people are using and selling drugs in and around the library and that some unsafe adults have been seen approaching young people in the library space. Some fights have also broken out in the library. The library seeks help from the local authority and the police about what they should do

Response: *Pop-up youth club in the library to co-create ideas with young people and training for library staff on bystander intervention and adolescent development*

Reflection: *Looking at responding to young people in this situation through a contextual safeguarding lens allowed all key partners to work together and understand their role in supporting and safeguarding young people in this space. This response led to a decrease in anti-social behaviour and helped to form a stronger relationship between the young people and the library staff, ultimately, creating a safer space for young people to socialise. This in turn has had a longer impact on safeguarding young people engaging in this space as the library staff are more confident in engaging with young people and identifying and raising safeguarding concerns.*

(Test Site F, recorded impact of coordinated response across plans that advocated for location based work)

Developments beyond test sites and LAs



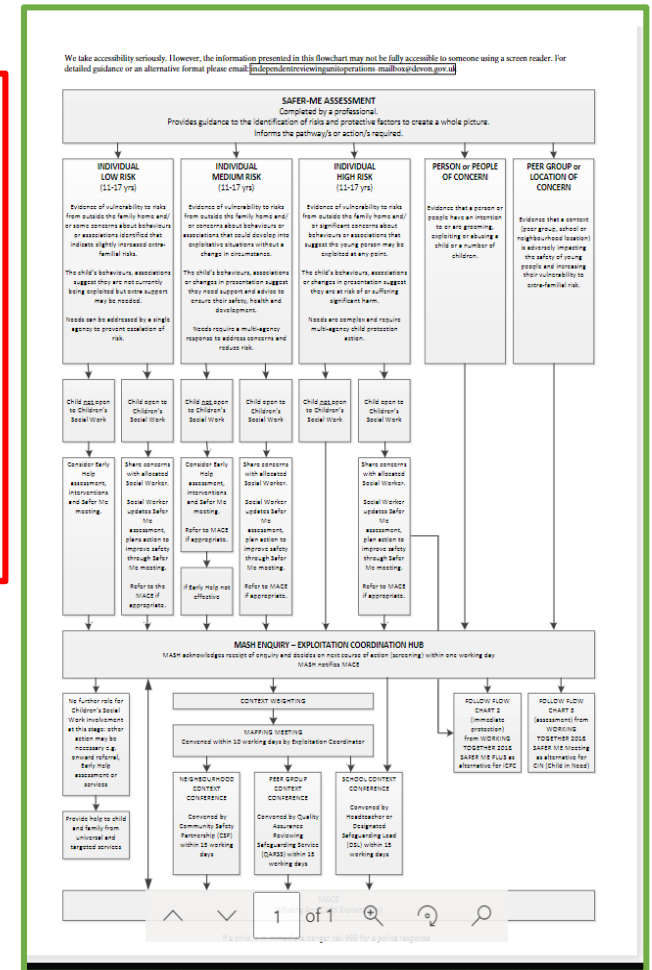
Changes to case management systems



Safer London Strategy

System change underway in:

- 50 local authorities in England and Wales
- 15 national and local VCS organisations
- Using the resources from the CS Network



Devon Adolescent Safety Framework

Questions, contact, feedback

Contextual.safeguarding@beds.ac.uk



@C_S_Network

#ContextualSafeguarding

For more information about our programme website:

<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

For toolkits, infographics, blogs, podcasts and more visit:

www.csnetwork.org.uk