



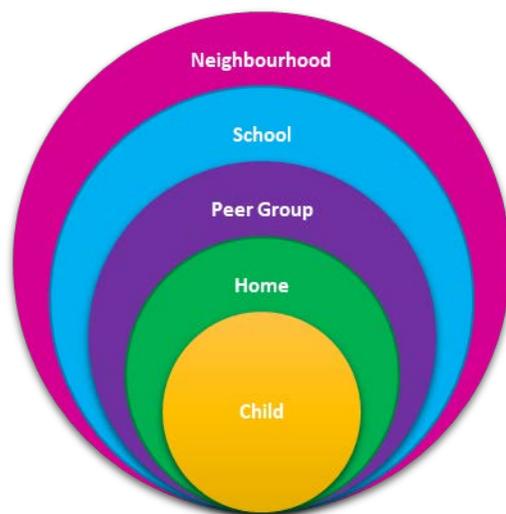
Learning from the Contextual Safeguarding Audit, October 2020

Contextual Safeguarding

Children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families.

These threats might arise at school or other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online.

These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.





Purpose of the audit

The audit was undertaken for the Warrington Safeguarding Partnership to gain assurance that agencies are working together to identify and support children at risk of contextual safeguarding.

The audit process was also an opportunity for the WSP to hear directly from practitioners about good practice, challenges they face and their views on how multi-agency practice can be further developed.

What worked well?

- Risks around contextual safeguarding were understood and identified for most of the cases. Schools were identifying risks and completing the screening tools in response.
- Some practitioners had showed persistence and a consistent approach to engage young people who were often challenging to engage.
- Good multi-agency work was evidenced in the majority of cases, with professionals having a good understanding of the young person and the plan in place.
- The lived experience of the child was clearly considered by the majority of practitioners, even if the audit tools had failed to evidence this.

What are we concerned about?

- The role of the contextual safeguarding operational group (CSOG) was not well understood. There were often gaps in communication to and from the group.
- The impact of CSOG was not evidenced.
- Closure of cases due to disengagement remains a concern. This was seen in the previous WSP audit.
- Professional challenge in response to closure of cases was not evident.
- Lack of resources required to deliver time intensive interventions with young people.
- Consistency of workforce. Multiple changes in either social worker or school health in particular led to challenges in building a relationship or following up on issues for the young person.
- Professional's lack of understanding of the full professional network led to missed opportunities and a failure to understand the full picture for the young person and their family.
- Plan doesn't always address the underlying reasons for the behaviours.
- Assessment of risks needs to improve, with the use of tools to evidence concerns



Recommendations

- WSP to use the learning from the audit to shape the response to All Age Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding work. This should include ensuring that practitioners understand the role of any panels that are established, pathways to support and direct work, and the impact on children.
- Improve practitioners understanding of the role of CSOG, including roles and responsibilities and the practicalities of referring to CSOG. Within this practitioners need to be reminded of the importance of using tools to evidence risk to support their assessments.
- All practitioners involved with children at risk of CS should have a complete history to inform their plan and decision making. WSP to get assurance that lead practitioners are appropriately sharing information and are involving all appropriate practitioners within the planning.
- Improve practitioners understanding of the role and remit of the 0-19 health service provided by Bridgewater.
- Increase practitioners' knowledge and confidence in using professional challenge, especially in relation to closure of cases.
- WSP to get assurance that when using virtual meeting technology, practitioners to ensure that they are protecting confidentiality and ensuring that meetings are held in a professional manner.

Further information

Please see the links below for further reading and tools for screening and assessing Contextual Safeguarding in Warrington.

- [Pan-Cheshire Contextual Safeguarding Pathway](#)
- [Link to the Contextual Safeguarding Screening and Assessment tools](#)
- [Contextual Safeguarding Network](#)
- [Criminal Exploitation and Gangs – NSPCC](#)
- [Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines - The Children's Society](#)