**Contextual Safeguarding**

Live and Learn Sports

Safeguarding Children

Partnership 2020

Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, and don’t always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home.

As children move from early childhood and into adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. The nature of young people’s relationships, which they form in these settings, informs the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse.

2. Why it matters

Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people.

This idea brings together practitioners, researchers and policy makers who are committed to protecting young people from harm outside of the home.

1. Background

Identify the ways in which young people can change the social conditions where abuse has occurred, and encourage self-responsibility for making these changes. Engage with individuals and sectors that have a bearing on social contexts, i.e shopkeepers, local policing, and community leaders, to make environments safer.

A Contextual Safeguarding approach aims to disrupt harmful extra-familial contexts rather than move young people away from them. The approach seeks to identify the ways in which professionals, adults and young people can change the social conditions of environments in which abuse has occurred.

7. What to do =



**Influence- Peer relationships**

Research tells us that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence.

If a young person forms friendships in contexts characterised by violence and/or harmful attitudes these relationships will be anti-social and unsafe.

3. Information

**The most important thing to remember is to report any suspicions you have, even if you aren’t certain.** You must know which member of staff you should be reporting these concerns to and the procedures that are in place. Scenario A Beth, Aged 8, Beth is known for being an inquisitive and chatty member of the class. Recently, however, you have noticed a complete change in her behaviour. For the last couple of weeks, Beth has been much quieter and withdrawn. You also notice that although it is a very hot summer and Beth wore dresses a few weeks ago, she has recently been consistently wearing clothes that cover her whole body. Safeguarding Issue? **This has the potential to be a safeguarding issue.** Here, you have no evidence that Beth is at risk of harm. However, as her teaching assistant, you know the child well. You have your suspicions that Beth’s drastic change in personality may be a result of physical abuse occurring. This is coupled with the fact that Beth is standing out wearing what is considered winter uniform in hot temperatures when a few weeks before she was wearing summer dresses. You should be reporting this to your DSL and making a full report on the issue.

6. Questions /understanding scenarios

Contextual Safeguarding has been developed by Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire over the past six years to inform policy and practice approaches to safeguarding adolescents. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Young people’s experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

5. Information

**Potential Risks?**

There are a wide range of potential risks where the prime cause of harm is outside of the family.

This list isn’t exhaustive but includes: peer on peer abuse; exploitation and online abuse; missing episodes; gang involvement; radicalisation; trafficking and modern slavery.

**How to Report Concerns** If, having reported your concerns, you do not think that the appropriate action has been taken, you can call the**NSPCC’s Whistleblowing Advice Line** on **0800 028 0285**, or email**help@nspcc.org.uk**. This service offers free, confidential advice and support to anyone concerned about how safeguarding concerns are dealt with. Or 999 if a child is at serious risk.

4. Information

RSCB

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board –

7-minute Briefing