

Is your organisational culture aligned with Contextual Safeguarding?

Contextual Safeguarding often seems like ‘common sense’, yet our research shows that organisations can struggle to implement it if their culture doesn’t support it. This tool sets out four key questions to help organisations reflect on whether their culture enables Contextual Safeguarding.

How to use this tool

This tool can be used and adapted in reflective supervision, team discussions or service reviews.

1. Consider the ‘basic assumptions’ under each of the four questions on the next page. These are shared, rooted beliefs that need to be in place within your organisation in order for you to answer ‘yes’ to the question. Where does your organisation fall on each? You can rate on a scale 1–5 how well each assumption is embedded in your organisation (1 = not at all, 3 = partly in place, 5 = fully in place).
2. Reflect as a group:
 - Which assumptions are strongly embodied in our organisation?
 - Which assumptions feel weaker or unsupported?
 - How do these assumption show (or not) in our systems and practice?
 - What support/change is needed at organisational level?
3. Agree on key areas you want to prioritise and next steps.

Find out more:

This tool is based on our paper, available in open access: Firmin, C., Peace, D. & Wroe, L. (2026). Why ‘Common-Sense’ is Complicated: Unearthing the Cultural Facilitators of Contextual Safeguarding Structures. *Journal of Social Work*.

1

How does your organisation frame state responsibility in respect of young people's safety?

Basic assumptions

- The state has a duty to protect young people from extra-familial harm
- The state has a duty to intervene beyond individuals
- Extra-familial harm is principally a child welfare issue



2

How does your organisation perceive young people and their social relationships?

Basic assumptions

- Young people are liked
- Young people are cared for
- Young people are more than the risks they face



3

Does your organisation look beyond individuals when describing extra-familial harm?

Basic assumptions

- Professional intervention can change contexts
- It is not possible to understand extra-familial harm without understanding the contexts where it takes place



4

Does your organisation's response to extra-familial harm show a belief that contextual change is possible?

Basic assumptions

- Extra-familial contexts can be safe for young people
- Safety can be built in contexts where young people have faced risks

