

Planning for Safety

Expression of Interest Form

Background

When young people are at risk of *significant* harm in peer, school or community contexts, and that harm isn't attributable to their parent or caregiver, how should social workers coordinate plans that keep them safe?

Because harm in these situations can be 'significant' they are in theory child protection issues – as defined by child protection legislation. But in practice, and reflected in statutory guidance, child protection procedures often focus on changing the behaviour of parents/caregivers to keep young people safe. Information is shared about young people and their parents to build child protection plans, the harm a young person experiences is often categorised in relation to parenting, and plans require parents/caregivers to undertake actions that increase safety for their young person.

As a result, if the harm a young person experiences is significant but not associated to what a parent/caregiver is doing, or not doing, people have debated the suitability of existing child protection procedures. On one hand child protection procedures aren't appropriate – as they are often focused on changing the actions of parents as a source of protection instead of changing peer, school, and community contexts where this type of harm occurs. On the other hand, child protection procedures offer a point of escalation and increased oversight, communicating to partner agencies, young people, and families that the harm a young person is facing is significant, and that a plan must be resourced and implemented in response.

In grappling with this conundrum, from September 2021 – April 2022 Wiltshire Children and Families Service piloted a 'Risk Outside of the Home' (ROTH) planning and conference pathway. The pilot took place as part of a wider plan to adopt a Contextual Safeguarding response to extra-familial harm, and as such was tracked by the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at Durham University and the University of Bedfordshire.

In May 2022 the Independent Review of Children's Social Care final report recommended a 'a bespoke child protection pathway – through a Child Community Safety Plan – so that the police, social care and others can provide a robust child protection response' with a s.47 legislative basis.

In this context, as part of its *Planning for Safety* project, Durham University is seeking three additional areas interested in developing/adopting the ROTH pathway to increase how we understand the features, feasibility and impacts of developing child protection pathways focused on significant risks/harms beyond family homes.

This Expression of Interest (EOI) document is designed to assist areas who may be interested in participating. It provides some information about funding available to participating areas, the ROTH pathway, what Planning for Safety requires of areas (and what they receive for participation), and a form for areas to complete to be considered as a participating site.

EOI forms must be submitted by 12:00 on Friday 30th September 2022

Funding

The Department for Education will provide funding of up to £60,000 per local authority as seed funding to support this local change programme.

Funding will be distributed through a section 31 grant agreement. A Memorandum of Understanding will be in place between participating LAs and DfE to agree expectations during the funded period.

Funding is for activity planned and delivered in the 2023-23 financial year, up until 31st March 2023. Sustainability planning will therefore be required at the outset, given that funding will only be provided for this period.

Funding may be used to cover set up costs and implementation. This may include staff costs during the set-up phase and initial implementation, for example the capacity of conference chairs to undertake training, operational oversight of the pilot during the first six months and staff capacity to work with the University of Durham to adapt the ROTH model to local circumstances and/or to develop contextual intervention options.

Local authorities will not be required to contribute funding to the University of Durham for their role.

The ROTH Pathway

The ROTH pathway was designed for young people at risk of *significant* harm, where the primary source of harm was 'extra-familial', and may involve exploitation, peer or intimate partner violence/abuse, for example. This means that the harm in question, is not occurring between the young person and their parent/caregiver, and plans produced through this pathway target whichever extra-familial contexts or relationships warrant intervention. In Wiltshire, traditional child protection pathways were retained for young people who were both at risk of significant harm in extra-familial contexts and had challenges in their families that were a significant contributing factor.

The ROTH pathway aimed at resolving three areas where either child in need or child protection pathways appeared limited for responding to extra-familial harm:

Challenge 1 Engagement: young people and families seem to engage better with more flexible, and non-parent focused, child in need plans whereas professionals tend to engage better with the statutory requirements of child protection processes.

Challenge 2 Significance of harm: the legislative basis for child protection systems suggests these issues should be managed through a child protection pathway (when they pose a risk of significant harm), and the idea of significant harm is widely understood creating an opportunity for consistency. But labelling these issues as 'significant harm' may have resource implications that areas can't manage.

Challenge 3 Structures: the structures of child protection pathways are not well-suited to extra-familial harm. The categories or definitions of harm that are used don't always apply, the types of reports partners are asked to produce (about children and parents) do not surface information about extra-familial contexts, and timescales for child protection review processes do not reflect the dynamic and quick-changing nature of extra-familial harm.

Wiltshire designed their ROTH pathway over a series of months, in consultation with a wide range of partners. Conference chairs also participated in a workshop with the Contextual Safeguarding team to reflect on how best to chair a ROTH focused meeting. Key features of the pathway to date have included:

- A publicly available guidance document, explaining the ROTH pathway and how it was to be used
- A definition (and associated 'category') of significant extra-familial harm that would be applied to referrals made into the ROTH pathway
- Reporting templates for partner agencies
- Scaling templates for young people, parents and partner agencies associated with risks outside of the home
- ROTH conference template agenda

Wiltshire representatives also liaised with DfE and Ofsted prior to, and during, the pilot period to discuss the use of a 'ROTH category' and any implications for numbers of young people subject to child protection plans as a result of the pilot.

Following an initial pilot period Wiltshire have decided to continue to test their ROTH process, noting that parents and young people appear to engage well with it, and that it is producing differently focused plans for addressing extra-familial harm. The research team also noted advocacy for young people and families in meetings, and a need to further explore whether this was the consequence of the ROTH design/category or was reflective of Wiltshire's service culture more widely.

Planning for Safety

Planning for Safety is a workstrand of the 'Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter' project run by the Contextual Safeguarding team at Durham university. It is led by Professor Carlene Firmin, and is seeking to identify:

the features, feasibility and impacts of developing child protection pathways focused on significant risks/harms beyond families

To achieve this Carlene will coordinate work with three additional local areas who are interested in trialling a ROTH pathway as part of their response to extra-familial harm. Researchers in the Contextual Safeguarding team, under the leadership of

Carlene, will track the process of implementing the ROTH pathway in these three new areas through a range of research methods (listed below). In addition, the team will remain in touch with the process in Wiltshire to speak with young people and families that they involve in the ROTH pathway; as well as observe some traditional child protection conferences to understand whether/how extra-familial factors can also be accommodated in these meetings, given that some young people will experience risks both within and external to their families. The research team will remain in contact with DfE throughout the process, providing a report on the learning from this initial pilot period.

The research team will analyse the data collected across participating sites to identify:

- Shared features of the ROTH pathway (as we expect from variation based on local design), especially those that might need to be reflected in any changes to safeguarding guidance
- The local and national conditions that are needed for a ROTH pathway to be sustained (impact on capacity, resources, wider partners)
- The initial impact on safety for young people involved, including how they and their families experience the ROTH pathway

Each participating area would need to:

1. Complete all planning and preparation activities to pilot a ROTH pathway during October and November 2022 including:
 - a) Identify a lead to manage the pilot process, and establish a delivery group to support the process
 - b) Review the activities and documents developed by Wiltshire and adapt them to suit their own setting. In the process consulting with stakeholders that they identify as key to their local context
 - c) Inform social care practitioners and partner organisations of the new pathway including timescales and criteria for use
 - d) Identify chairs who will participate in the pilot process and create space for them to participate in preparatory workshops
 - e) Have the capacity to identify young people and families who would meet the criteria for a ROTH pathway
 - f) Secure consent from young people and families to participate in the pilots
2. Pilot the ROTH pathway from December 2022 – March 2023
3. During the pilot period provide the Contextual Safeguarding research team with access to:
 - a) All paper-based resources that explain the ROTH pathway – such as local guidance documents, report writing templates etc.
 - b) A sample of redacted assessments for ROTH and traditional child protection pathways
 - c) A sample of redacted ROTH plans
 - d) A sample of redacted partner reports
 - e) At least three ROTH conferences for the purpose of observation

- f) Staff from children's social care and partner agencies to participate in post pilot focus groups
- g) Young people and families who consent to interviews or who are willing to complete a feedback survey following participation in the pilot
4. Meet with DfE in accordance with agreements outlined at the start of the pilot process, along with Durham University, to keep them apprised of the pilot process
5. Participate in reflective workshops after the pilot period
6. Attend quarterly strand advisory group meetings with a strategic group convened by the Contextual Safeguarding team who are interested in this project; as well as operational check-in meetings every six weeks (approx.) to monitor pilot progress

By participating in the project each area would receive:

1. Strategic support from the Contextual Safeguarding team, and peer support from each other, to establish and pilot a ROTH pathway
2. A verbal briefing from the Contextual Safeguarding team after the pilot to update senior leaders and managers to emergent findings from the process
3. A confidential briefing document by the Contextual Safeguarding team summarising messages shared at the verbal meeting

Expression of Interest Form

Should you wish to participate in the Planning for Safety project please follow [this link](#) to complete a brief EOI form. In addition to collecting administrative information (contact, local area etc.) form asks the following questions:

1. What forms of extra-familial harm do you currently respond to in your local area? (150 words maximum)
2. Can you summarise your current response to young people who are at risk of significant extra-familial harm? (150 words maximum)
3. Have you adopted a Contextual Safeguarding approach to extra-familial harm to date? If yes, please describe what this looks like in your area? (300 words maximum)
4. Have you used any other approaches to design your response to extra-familial harm? Please explain what they are and how you have used them? (300 words maximum)
5. Why do you want to participate in the ROTH pilot? (150 words maximum)
6. How will you sustain your ROTH pathway after the funded pilot period (150 words maximum)

You are also asked to please provide a full cost breakdown for how funding would be used up to 31st March 2023, including the total funding sought (the maximum funding available to each local authority is £60,000).