

## South Kent Adolescent Pilot

*Using contextual approaches to safeguard vulnerable adolescents*

### What is the South Kent Adolescent Pilot?

The South Kent Adolescent Pilot (January-June 2018) established a multi-disciplinary team to work with adolescents who present concern to their care-givers and/or professionals around extra familial risk. The pilot built on the successful work undertaken in South Kent between the Adolescent Support team and Early Help Units to jointly work on 16-17-year-old homelessness cases which reduced the Looked After episodes in this group, enabled swift step down of cases from Specialist Children's Services to Early Help, and linked young people to the Youth Hub offer for ongoing support.

The multi-disciplinary team consists of the Adolescent Support team, the Family Group Conferencing Service, the Early Help Unit, Youth Hubs, Youth Justice, Inclusion and Attendance staff (PIAS) and Children Social Work team. Partners include Police members from the Community Safety unit, the county council's CSE team, a mental health worker, representatives from schools and a local youth charity.

The pilot has provided a coordinated framework to working with and offering support to adolescents and their families with an emphasis on using a multi-disciplinary approach to edge of care work. To support this work, South Kent has integrated the Contextual Safeguarding framework with their Signs of Safety framework. This briefing outlines how Contextual Safeguarding approaches helped South Kent to better address extra-familial risk and shares initial impacts from the pilot.

Further information is available in a podcast recorded with Bex Roche, Practice Development Lead and Katy Batt, Early Help Unit lead in South Kent, available on the Contextual Safeguarding Network under the Podcast section.

### Benefits of using contextual approaches

#### ***Integrating Contextual Safeguarding with Signs of Safety***

South Kent has taken the Contextual Safeguarding analysis of adolescent vulnerability, which explores the different contexts and dynamics of adolescent safety and vulnerability (see Figure 1), and overlaid it with the Signs of Safety framework (see Figure 2). This was used as tool to support staff analyse risk and design interventions tailored to the different contexts (both familial and extra-familial) that shape adolescents' experiences of harm or safety. By identifying, assessing and intervening within the social conditions in which adolescents may encounter risk of harm, South Kent's model addresses the first domain of a Contextual Safeguarding approach which targets the nature of the contexts in which

abuse occurs rather than just the individuals affected by it. For a description of the four domains of Contextual Safeguarding, see the '[Contextual Safeguarding: An overview of the operational, strategic and conceptual framework](#)' briefing available on the Contextual Safeguarding network.

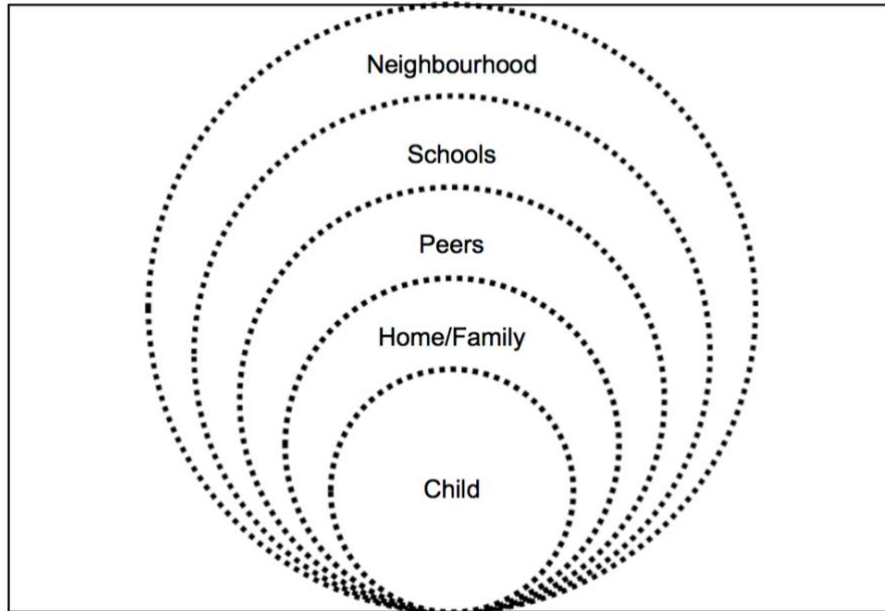


Figure 1: Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability (Firmin, 2015)

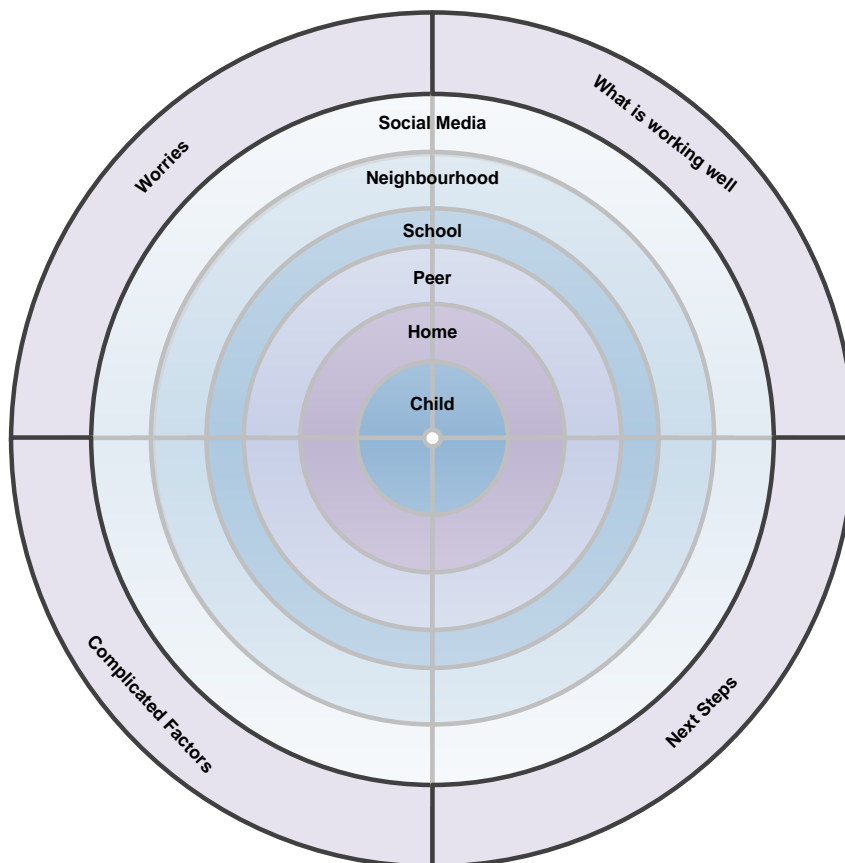


Figure 2: Contextual Safeguarding overlaid with Signs of Safety (South Kent Adolescent Pilot, 2018)

### **Peer Group Mapping**

The South Kent Adolescent Pilot team now conducts regular peer group mapping, one of the key contexts of adolescent safety and vulnerability. Discussing relationships and dynamics within peer groups represents a new and proactive way of understanding and planning interventions that are tailored to each peer group. Mapping relationships within these groups can create opportunities for engagement and outreach work. By identifying which workers have the best relationship with the young people they are concerned about, staff plan for relationship-based interventions and this has resulted in reduced duplications between Early Help and Children Social Care services.

Guidance for conducting peer group mapping and assessments can be found [here](#) on the Contextual Safeguarding network.

South Kent's weekly Multi-Agency Discussion and Planning Meeting (MADP) provides a structured setting for peer group mapping to take place. The meeting facilitates the sharing of professional knowledge and expertise, enabling staff to gain a better understanding of each other's services and how each service can support young people, their peer groups, and their families. Through this approach, peer group mapping has provided professionals with a more detailed picture to develop multi-agency plans involving, for instance, licensing or police and community safety units.

According to South Kent's internal evaluation of the pilot, workers, particularly from youth outreach, would not have been able to support young people as well as they did without the information provided from the MADP meeting about their family backgrounds, peer relationships and known risks.

*'If a case gets referred to a social work team, the social worker is the primary lead and it relies on them to understand what all of the networks are to make sure they get the right service. So if they don't know it, they don't get it. We wouldn't necessarily be safeguarding in the best way. The mapping exercise and the opportunity for regular discussion about those cases ensures that it does happen so there is always someone saying 'hang on have you thought about this' or that person does X & Y.'*

(Integrated Family Service Manager for Social Care Services)

While Contextual Safeguarding responds to safeguarding concerns through a child protection lens, partnerships with sectors and individuals who manage extra-familial settings where young people encounter risk are essential and constitute another domain of Contextual Safeguarding. Through the MADP, South Kent has developed key partnerships which have enabled them to extend the concept of 'capacity to safeguard' beyond families.

#### **Use of Facebook during multi-agency meetings**

South Kent's Youth Hub Facebook page is used during MADP meetings to help panel members identify peer groups of the young people discussed at the panel, a quick and efficient way of checking which other young people the young person concerned may be connected with. Facebook is also used by youth workers to engage with young people.

### ***Safety mapping***

Safety Mapping is another tool used by worker to help them understand where the young person feels safe. In one of the MADP meetings observed by members of the Contextual Safeguarding team, for example, one worker shared that the community areas they thought would be considered the least safe by the young person they were working with were in fact considered to be the safest by this young person. More information on conducting safety mapping with a young person can be found [here](#) on the Contextual Safeguarding network.

### **Initial impact of the pilot**

#### ***Initial outcomes***

The pilot was piloted across South Kent and data was collected from the Ashford district. An internal evaluation of the South Kent Adolescent Pilot in Ashford has identified the following initial outcomes:

- ***65% reduction in missing episodes for young people***
- ***Reduction in out-of-court disposals*** (down 20% compared to same period in previous year)
- ***Reduction in Adolescent Social Work referrals*** (reduction 21% in Ashford compared to 13% for Kent)
- ***Decrease in CSW caseload*** (up by 3.3% in Ashford compared with 6% decrease for Kent)
- ***Reduction in CP cases (28 to 25) and increase in CP episodes ending*** (167% by in Ashford compared with 9% in rest of Kent)
- ***Reduction in Adolescent SWS re-referrals within 2 months***

#### ***Identifying alternatives to child protection processes***

The MADP meetings enabled staff to have a wider discussion with a range of multi-agency partners on what kind of work would best support young people outside of the child protection process. This resulted in a number of cases being stepped down from Child Protection to Children In Need (CIN) or Early Help (EH) in instances where CIN or EH workers had the most meaningful relationship with this young person.

*'It challenges some of the structural processes, it's challenged our silo mentality that one size fits all for adolescents and it doesn't, and we need to think flexibly about what we do and also the worker who needs to do the work doesn't necessarily mean that a social worker is the best person to do it.'*

(Integrated Family Service Manager for Social Care Services)

The following case study shares an example of a case that was stepped down to CIN. This case study was provided by the South Kent Adolescent Pilot team.

### Case Study

Ian is 16 years old and has a history of offending and anti-social behaviour. He was arrested in March 2018 for criminal damage. He hasn't attended school for over a year and has been known to stay out overnight at an address where there is significant concern of activity associated with 'county lines'. He has an EHCP and has been diagnosed with ADHD, ODD and PDA. He lives with his mother, older brother and younger sister. He and his siblings have witnessed severe violence and domestic abuse to his mother from his father which has resulted in his father receiving a prison sentence. There are concerns that he is vulnerable which increases his risk of exploitation.

Ian's social worker has not been able to engage Ian and Ian was referred to the South Kent Adolescent Pilot Multi-Agency Discussion and Planning meeting (MADP). At the MADP, Ian's social worker learnt that Ian had developed a good relationship with an Early Help (EH) worker through attending the Boys Group at the local Youth Hub. Due to the good relationship that this EH worker had established with Ian, the MADP decided to allocate Ian's case to him. The MADP further undertook a mapping session for Ian's peer group. This exercise identified that the majority of Ian's peer group was already known to the service and that concerns around association with young people linked to 'county lines' were minimal.

It was agreed to step Ian down from CP to CIN and to focus on getting him back to full time education and reducing his offending behaviour. The EH Key worker established a trusting relationship with Ian, liaising between services (SCS, YJ, CAMHS). PIAS worked closely with Ian's school and SEN to ensure re-engagement with education and that Ian's needs were appropriately met. Ian was also encouraged and supported by his EH Key Worker to attend the Ashford Youth Hub Mixed Adolescent group as well as continuing to attend the Boys Group.

Ian's case was then transferred to the Youth Justice team. Ian's EH Key Worker liaised with Ian's Youth Justice worker to ensure a seamless transition. This has included inviting the Youth Justice worker to attend Unit case supervision when Ian's case is discussed.

### Outcomes of the case

- Joint working between EH and Youth Justice who now hold the case has ensured seamless transition of Ian's case.
- The decision for the EH Worker to remain Ian's key worker has ensured continuity for Ian with a worker whom he trusts.



- The EH Key Worker who previously worked with Youth Justice delivered the intervention as part of his Referral Order.
- Ian attends a weekly Boys Group where he has access to his EH Key worker. He also attends the Friday evening Mixed Adolescent Group and has been observed as mixing well and is popular with his peer group.
- His EH Key worker has established a trusting relationship with Ian which has enabled him to consider an alternative education programme to support re-engagement back into education.
- His EH and PIAS workers have liaised with the school and agreed a tailored phased programme for Ian starting school again the fall of 2018. Ian attended an education programme 2 days a week and 1 day a week over the summer while waiting to start school again.
- Ian's SEN needs were reviewed following his CAHMS assessment.
- Ian complied with his CBO (12 Months) and Referral Order.

### Diagram 1. 'Contextual Mapping for Ian'

A picture of the mapping exercise undertaken for Ian is shown below. This was completed by practitioners in the Early Help unit weekly supervision meeting by integrating the Contextual Safeguarding framework with Signs of Safety.

