



Contextual Safeguarding Local Area Interest Network Terms of Reference

Contextual Safeguarding is a conceptual, strategic and operational framework being used to develop safeguarding responses to extra-familial contexts and relationships in which young people experience, or at risk of, significant harm. In 2025 the team behind the concept launched the [Global Centre for Contextual Safeguarding](#) (GCCS), based at Durham University¹, to facilitate the ongoing development and implementation of the idea.

The GCCS is the world's first research centre dedicated to Contextual Safeguarding. Bringing together expertise from across disciplines, it aims to transform how societies understand and respond to harm beyond the home by developing systems that look beyond parental capacity and make safeguarding a shared responsibility.

The centre is committed to reshaping how safeguarding is understood, researched and practiced. It does this by advancing interdisciplinary research, influencing policy, education and practice and building partnerships that extend beyond traditional safeguarding sectors to support lasting change.

Our Local Area Interest Network (LAIN) brings together over 100 local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland. The LAIN provides a space for local authorities to connect and share learning together and it is the main route through which they can access structured support to ensure that their implementation of Contextual Safeguarding is aligned with GCCS research and resources.

Each member local authority has a nominated strategic lead acting as a single point of contact. Two types of groups have been established to facilitate peer support and learning between member local authorities:

- **Regional Strategic Groups:** All strategic leads in the LAIN have been organised into regional clusters. They meet on a quarterly basis to: facilitate peer learning at a regional level; identify opportunities for joint-working and commissioning; and enable sites who are at earlier stage of adopting Contextual Safeguarding

¹ Previously the Contextual Safeguarding Research Programme

approaches to learn from others. These meetings are chaired by a strategic lead on a voluntary basis, with admin support from the GCCS.

- **Regional Champion Groups:** Each strategic lead can nominate up to five practice champions who are practitioners and/ or practice leaders committed to promoting Contextual Safeguarding approaches in their organisation. These champions meet into their own regional clusters on a bimonthly or quarterly basis to support and inspire one another, share learning and reflect on the challenges of embedding Contextual Safeguarding approaches. These meetings are chaired by a champion on a voluntary basis, with admin support from the GCCS.

Additionally, nominated representatives from English, Scottish and Welsh member local authorities represent the LAIN at the GCCS Advisory Panel, which is part of, and oversees, the external governance structure for the GCCS.

Terms of Reference

This document sets out the Terms of Reference for both the regional strategic groups and the regional champions group, collectively referred to as 'LAIN groups'.

1. Aim of the LAIN groups

The Contextual Safeguarding LAIN regional groups meet regularly as a group virtually to identify opportunities, developments and challenges of implementing a Contextual Safeguarding approach which can be shared at a regional level and with the GCCS.

2. Objectives of the LAIN groups

- 2.1. Provide regional sector leadership for areas invested in developing a Contextual Safeguarding approach
- 2.2. Actively work together to address regional challenges or gaps in knowledge and building sector expertise
- 2.3. Share and discuss resources, approaches and structures that could be tested collectively to advance Contextual Safeguarding practices
- 2.4. Work collectively to inform regional policy and commissioning decisions that are relevant to Contextual Safeguarding
- 2.5. Discuss any practice development issues that have been raised by local champions and identify ways to address these collectively
- 2.6. Promote the voices of children and families when reflecting on potential next steps in implementing Contextual Safeguarding
- 2.7. Identify thematic issues to feedback to the GCCS

2.8. Identify case study examples that can be utilised by the sector and/or shared via GCCS channels

3. Accountability of LAIN members

3.1. **LAIN strategic leads who attend regional meetings represent their local authority. The ‘local authority’ rather than the person is a member of the group. By becoming a member of a regional group (and the wider interest network), local authorities (and their leaders) commit to:**

- Attend regional meetings and, when unable to attend, designate someone to attend on their behalf
- Accurately reference Contextual Safeguarding principles and support its development
- Draw upon learning from the GCCS and the regional groups to develop contextual approaches and report learning in regional meetings
- Identify local champions to build sector capacity in localities
- Complete an annual short survey from the GCCS to support network development and learning
- Keeping GCCS informed of any changes to strategic leads, local champions or membership status
- (Where appropriate) Lead group discussions on specific interest themes that might emerge over the course of the group’s work and/ or present about their work

3.2. **LAIN practice champions commit to:**

- Attend regional meetings. At least one champion from each local authority should be present at each regional meeting to ensure consistent representation
- Accurately reference Contextual Safeguarding principles and support its development
- Draw upon learning from the GCCS and the regional champions groups to develop Contextual Safeguarding approaches and report learning in regional meetings
- Notify their strategic lead and the GCCS team if they cease to be champions

3.3. LAIN strategic leads and champions are accountable to their member organisations.

3.4. **In addition to regional groups, strategic leads and champions have access to:**

- Free introduction to Contextual Safeguarding training (online) once a year
- Regular verbal and written updates from the GCCS team
- Priority bookings onto GCCS events
- Opportunities to participate in and inform various research projects within the GCCS team
- An online portal on the GCCS website to connect with LAIN members across the country.

4. Chairing of LAIN regional groups

- 4.1. Each regional group is chaired (or co-chaired) by a self-nominated member(s)
- 4.2. Attendance, key discussion points and actions from meetings are recorded by the chair (bullet format/using Copilot if preferred) and circulated in a timely fashion to the regional group and the GCCS
- 4.3. The GCCS provides admin support to chairs (see Functioning below)

5. Functioning

- 5.1. LAIN Regional groups meet virtually quarterly or bimonthly.
- 5.2. **Core agenda items for regional strategic groups will normally include:**
 - a) Brief updates from each member local authorities of any key activity since the last meeting
 - b) Core challenges in implementation
 - c) Regional policy or commissioning matters
 - d) Any matters to raise with the GCCS team
 - e) GCCS updates (provided verbally and/ or via email by the GCCS)

The group may also identify thematic issues they wish to discuss, individual local authorities may wish to present some work or discuss a particular topic, or the group may be contacted by GCCS team to consider an emergent national practice or policy theme.

- 5.3. **Core agenda items for regional champions group will normally include:**
 - a) Brief updates from each member local authorities of any key activity since the last meeting
 - b) Key trends/ themes from practice related to Contextual Safeguarding
 - c) Core challenges in implementation
 - d) Any matters to raise with the GCCS team
 - e) GCCS updates (provided verbally and/ or via email by the GCCS)

The group may also identify thematic issues they wish to discuss, individual local authorities may wish to present some work or discuss a particular topic/

GCCS resource, or the group may be contacted by GCCS team to consider an emergent national practice or policy theme.

- 5.4. Membership of LAIN regional groups is coordinated by the GCCS team – the key contact from the GCCS team is gccs.lain@durham.ac.uk
- 5.5. The GCCS will set up the meetings on MS Teams, send out invitations and manage group membership.
- 5.6. The GCCS will provide chairs of groups with an updated list of members.
- 5.7. The GCCS will provide regular GCCS updates to each regional group via email and/or attending meetings.
- 5.8. Chairs of each regional group will chair the meetings, take brief notes (attendance, key discussion points and actions from meetings – in bullet format/using Copilot if preferred) and circulate them in a timely fashion after each meeting to the group and gccs.lain@durham.ac.uk
- 5.9. LAIN meetings are grounded in the following **key principles**:
 - Psychological safety
 - Reflective practice
 - Respectful engagement
 - Non-hierarchical participation
 - Non-identifiable case discussion
 - Anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice

6. Information sharing and confidentiality

- 6.1. Group members are required to treat personal information in confidence; to store and dispose of in accordance with safe data handling procedures.
- 6.2. Group members will uphold confidentiality unless prior agreement has been given to share outside the group.
- 6.3. Personal information about young people and families should not be discussed.

7. Complaints

- 7.1. Should you have complaints about the GCCS team please contact Professor Nicole Westmarland, Director of Research in the Sociology Department at Durham University: nicole.westmarland@durham.ac.uk