

# Norfolk County Council Contextual Safeguarding Conferences Guidance

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## **CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING - An alternative approach to working with Young People**

### Background

This procedure applies to agencies working directly or indirectly with Children, Young People and Families.

Norfolk Child Protection Procedures are clear that 'an Initial Child Protection Conference must be convened when it is believed that a Child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm'.

However, professionals working with Young People are increasingly encountering those who are at risk within their communities (e.g. serious youth violence, peer on peer violence, drug and alcohol use). This risk is not caused by the care they are receiving from their parents or carers, which is the paradigm of traditional Child Protection procedures.

This framework is not intended to replace Child Protection Procedures, neither is it to replace other actions that Multi Agency Professionals may take to safeguard a Young Person.

### Framework

Young People need age specific interventions to encourage their engagement, without their engagement it is hard to effect behavioural changes and risk management, and this can leave professionals feeling powerless and unclear as how to best manage this risk.

The Contextual Safeguarding Conference is a way of acknowledging, sharing, managing and reviewing the risk to the Young Person in partnership with the parent/carer and most importantly with the Young Person and the professional network. The aim is to develop a plan with measurable outcomes to reduce the risk to the Young Person, with timescales set and a reviewing process in place.

Contextual Safeguarding Conferences are delivered through a lens of Safeguarding and Child Welfare.

Similar to Child Protection Conferences, the Contextual Safeguarding Conference take place following a thorough Social Work Assessment, which includes assessment of contextual factors. (*Appendix A provides a template*)

Within Contextual Safeguarding Conferences, Social Work Assessments are likely to be conducted at two levels:

**Firstly**, an Assessment needs to have been completed which identifies extra Familial risk (at risk of causing or experiencing harm outside the home). Young People must be engaged in these assessments and furthermore discussions about safety planning outside the family home.

**Secondly**, Practitioners need to assess and plan for interventions outside the family home, in such areas as schools, the local community and online.

*“Contextual Safeguarding does not just limit its assessment to Parental capacity to safeguard but considers the safeguarding duty and capacity of individuals and agencies responsible for those contexts”.*

When it is deemed that the Context is one in which a Young Person is at risk of Significant Harm, a Contextual Safeguarding Conference needs to take place.

#### The Purpose of a Contextual Safeguarding Conference

- To support vulnerable Young People who are at significant risk from their behaviour, the behaviour of others or Young People who pose a serious risk to others;
- To share information to increase the safety and health and well-being of a Young Person;
- To implement a robust risk management plan in conjunction with the Young Person that reduces the risk of harm to that Young Person
- To develop closer working relationships with Partner Agencies;
- To provide a flexible approach to service delivery;
- To improve Agency accountability.

#### Changes to Practice and procedure

- Statutory Child Protection visits may be carried out by the person who is most appropriate to the intervention and has the trust of the Young Person. This may not always be the named Social Worker
- Social Work/Partner Agency reports/assessments need to be amended to include Contextual Safeguarding elements.
- Core group meeting may be arranged more frequently, as often as weekly, dependent upon the identifiable risks.
- The Contextual Safeguarding Conference will be chaired or co-chaired by the most experienced/appropriate people, they may not be Social Work qualified but must be employed or seconded to Children Services, and work under the guidance of the Independent Reviewing Manager (Child Protection).
- Before the Contextual Safeguarding Conference happens, it will be the expectation that a Family Network Meeting (supported by the FGC service) has taken place.
- Furthermore, a Contextual Safety Mapping and Context Weighting Tool needs to be completed.

### When would a Contextual Safeguarding Conference be considered?

- Young Person involved in serious youth violence/exploitation
- Young Person involved in situations which puts their health and wellbeing at risk
- Young Person seriously self-harming or experiencing significant mental health difficulties
- Young Person regularly going missing from home or education
- Young Person becoming beyond parental control
- Peer on peer violence and abuse

### Process

- Practitioners who are concerned about the safety and welfare of a Young Person they are working with, and the above criteria has been met, should complete a referral, using normal procedures, to Independent Statutory Services for a Contextual Safeguarding Conference.
- Once the Contextual Safeguarding Conference Referral Form has been completed the ISS Convening Team will arrange a date for a Contextual Safeguarding Conference. This will be within 15 working days of the request.

### Planning for a Contextual Safeguarding Conference

The Contextual Safeguarding Conference may take place in more than one stage, enabling a Young Person, family and professionals to attend and a further forum to enable agencies to attend who can influence the nature of the context.

For example, if the focus of the Context was a business, then the *place* may become the focus of the second part of the Conference.

### Pre-Contextual Safeguarding Conference Assessment

Before a Contextual Safeguarding Conference takes place, a Social Work Assessment needs to have been completed, by the allocated Social Worker, which incorporates the Child Sexual Exploitation/Child Criminal Exploitation Screening tools.

The Social Worker completing the Social Work Assessment needs to have consulted with Partner Agencies, including other Young People within the Context to ensure that the assessment identifies factors that may increase/promote safety.

The summary of the Social Work Assessment needs to be shared with all relevant parties within 2 working days of the Contextual Safeguarding Conference.

In some situations, it may be advisable to hold a professionals meeting, prior to the Contextual Safeguarding Conference. This would enable agencies to highlight any findings, check information is correct and provide a forum by which to consider Context Planning.

### Location of the Contextual Safeguarding Conference

The Contextual Safeguarding Conference may take place in 2 parts, as outlined above. The part that relates to Context, may necessitate the Contextual Safeguarding Conference taking place in/close to the Context in question i.e. at the School/within a Community setting.

### Suggested Contextual Safeguarding Conference agenda

- Introductions and apologies
- Brief overview of the purpose of the meeting – to be delivered by Chair
- **Current Harm** – what triggered the referral – to be delivered by the allocated SW  
Include summary of any Past Harm/former CSC involvement.
- **Outline of vulnerability** - including risk and resilience factors – all parties to contribute
- **Contextual Strengths & Safety** - all parties to contribute
- **Professional involvement**
- **Decision making**
- **Agreement of a plan** – Priority interventions/actions that intend to increase protection/safety. (*Appendix B provides a template*)
- **Review arrangements** – timescales

### The role of the Contextual Safeguarding Conference Chair

It is vitally important that a Pre-Contextual Safeguarding Conference case consultation takes place between the Social Worker and the Chair.

During the meeting the Chair will need to focus on safeguarding arrangements for the Young Person.

The Context Intervention Catalogue provides some useful prompts, which the Chair may wish to draw on:

<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/publications/intervention-catalogue>

In addition, the Chair may find it useful to refer to the text contained within Working Together 2018:

- **Chapter 1, Para 12** entitled “Provision of effective early help services”.
- **Chapter 1, Para 33-34** entitled “Contextual Safeguarding”.

- **Section 11 of the Children Act 1989** – “A range of agencies have a duty to create cultures of safety”

Section 11 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

[http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/chapters/chapter\\_two.html#section\\_eleven](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/chapters/chapter_two.html#section_eleven)

### The role of the Social Worker

The Social Worker is to share pertinent information that has been gained within the Social Work Assessment.

Key issues to be presented include: Themes/trends/identified risks/safety/protective capacity/vulnerabilities/resilience and strengths.

The Chair will request that a clear analysis is presented, using a SOS format.

The Lead Social Worker should come to the Contextual Safeguarding Conference with an outline plan, taking account of Context Weighting Factors that have emerged during the assessment.

### Attendance

Attendance will be dependent upon the issues raised within the Assessment.

If several Young People are affected by the identified Context then the lead Social Worker for the presenting Social Work Assessment should liaise with all relevant workers known to the other Young People, prior to the Contextual Safeguarding Conference.

The following is a list of attendees to be considered:

- Young Person, where applicable/School Council
- Family members, where applicable/Parents Forum
- Children’s Social Care
- Council/Parish representatives
- Operational Partnership Teams (Deal with ASB and in some localities are a combination of partners and/or housing
- Education/DSL’s/Schools
- Police/Safer Schools Officer/Local Beat Manager
- Youth Justice Service

- CAMHS
- Youth Provision
- Voluntary Organisations
- Health/GP/School Nurse/Any other health organisation that may be involved
- Housing
- Local Community Business
- If this is a Contextual Safeguarding Conference in relation to a Looked After Child, it is expected that the IRO would be invited to the meeting and/or included in discussions.
- Other – Any other specialist services not included above.

If the Young Person/Parents are not able to attend, or this is not felt appropriate when considering Context circumstances, consideration must be given to how they will be consulted and involved in the planning/actions agreed.

#### Expectations of Partner Agencies

Partner Agencies must provide written reports/findings about the Context in question and their interpretation of the risks as a result.

Partner Agencies will be expected to contribute to the decision making and planning within the Contextual Safeguarding Conference.

#### Information sharing Policy

The same expectations apply as they would for a Child Protection Conference.

<https://www.norfolkscb.org/about/policies-procedures/1-7-information-sharing-and-confidentiality/>

When considering the Context part of the Contextual Safeguarding Conference, personal level information is not to be disclosed, as these meetings may involve Non-Traditional Safeguarding partners such as a local business. Therefore, the focus must remain within these parts of the meeting on the nature of the Context itself and the impact upon the welfare of Young People.

#### Minute taking

The Chair will use flipchart paper to capture the main points using the agenda headings which will act as a visual reference during the meeting, similarly to SOS Child Protection Conferences.

#### What happens next?

The Contextual Safeguarding Conference Action Plan will be provided to attendees within 5 working days.

Minutes will be provided to the Social Worker for distribution within 15 working days.

The Contextual Safeguarding Conference Action Plan will be reviewed at a Review Contextual Safeguarding Conference – this will ideally be no later than 3 months after the initial meeting and then further reviews at 6 monthly intervals (mirroring the Statutory Child Protection timescales). There is an expectation that there would be 6 weekly smaller meetings led by the Social Worker mirroring those of a Core Group. These may take place at more frequent intervals, dependent upon the agreed plan.

If at a Review Contextual Safeguarding Conference, it is agreed that the risk has been reduced sufficiently to no longer require meetings under these procedures then the case can be stepped down, with the expectation that the Contextual Safeguarding approach would continue to be used within the agreed support plan/next steps plan.

**What needs to be considered within the Social Work Assessment?**

A Social Work Assessment should encompass, but not be exhaustive to the following:

1. Summary of initial concerns that triggered a context referral and the young people and families affected (overview of numbers of open to service)
2. The Community affected, or associated to, that context
3. Young People's Views on the context gathered during assessment
4. Thematic Contextual Issues
5. Resources, services and potential guardianship in the context
6. Assessment Conclusion – including context weighting and identified priorities
7. Suggested Contextual Safeguarding Plan

Appendix B to  
Norfolk County Council  
Contextual Safeguarding Conferences Guidance



Child Protection Chair:

Date:

Please see below an outline of the Contextual Safeguarding Conference Action Plan for .....which has been agreed at the conference held today:

What are we worried about?	What Action or Support Needed?	Who is going to do it?	Timescales (start)	Review Date	How will we know when things are safe enough? (Safety Goals)	Progress (To be updated by the SW)

**Frequency of Social Work Visits:**

**Next Core Group Meeting date, time and venue:**

**Contingency:**

**Next Review Conference date time and venue:**

**N. B. Whilst conference starts at 10/2 professionals and parents should arrive 30 minutes earlier than the stated start time.**

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