

Extra familial harm- An overview of the Contextual Safeguarding Approach

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ExChange

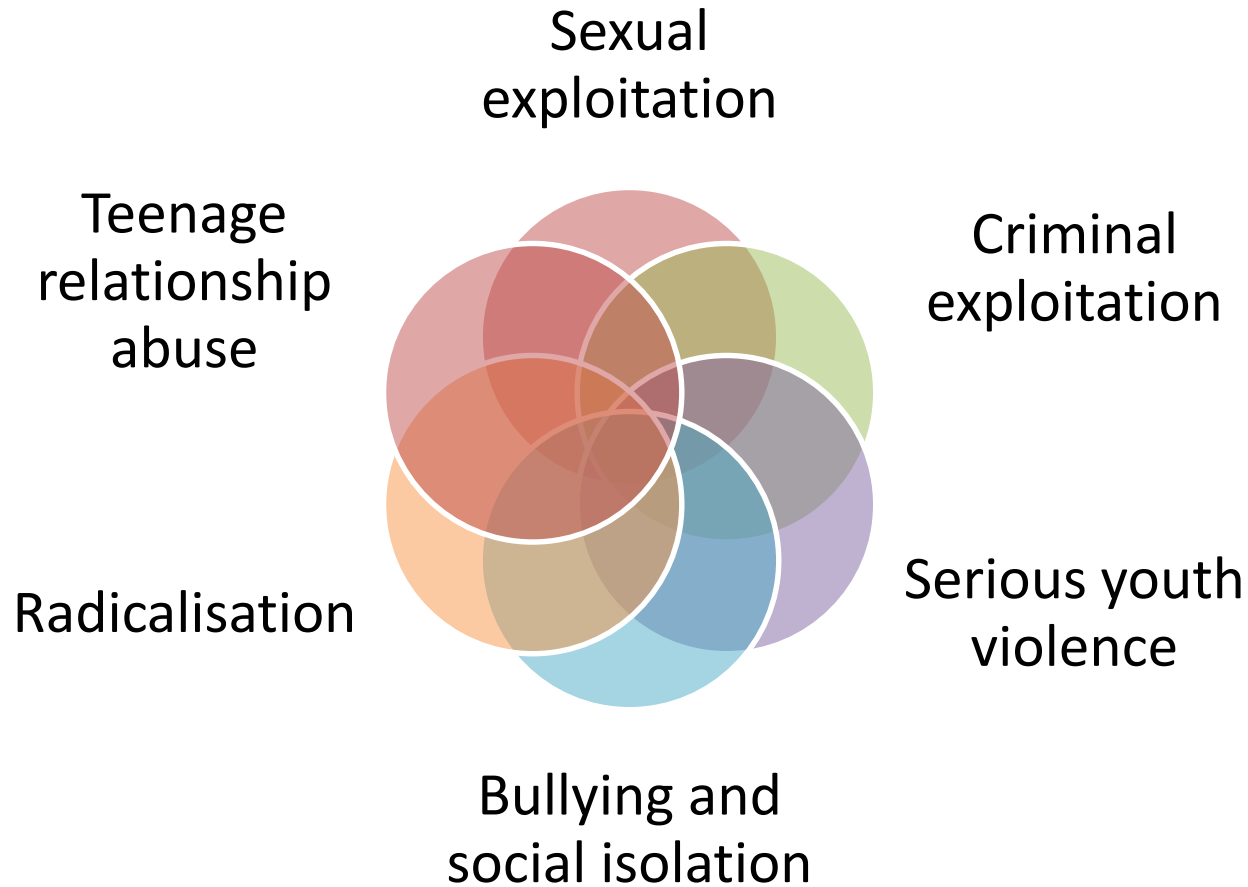
Adeiladu Gofal Cymdeithasol
Gwell yng Nghymru
Building Better Social Care
in Wales



Session overview

- The limitations of the child protection system when working with young people at risk of extra familial harm
- How the system works with young people at risk of extra familial harm and how it can improve
- The Contextual Safeguarding Approach- challenges and opportunities
- What research suggests 'works' with young people at risk of extra-familial harm

During this developmental stage extra-familial forms of harm increase



The Problem

- A review of research in relation to CSE identifies a lack of clarity in relation to what works (Hallett, et al., 2017)
- Inconsistences in practice were identified:
 - Variance in CSE awareness and knowledge levels amongst professionals
 - Limited evaluative research on the use of assessment protocols and their effectiveness
 - Limited evidence around the effectiveness of interventions for CSE
- ‘There is relatively little research addressing what CSE experienced young people have to say about how exploitation can be best understood and addressed’ (Hallett, et al., 2017)

These issues also exist in relation to other forms of extra familial harm and in relation to CCE we have to get much better at recognising the exploitation element

Children's commissioner (England) report on CSE

“Children and young people told us repeatedly that ‘being done to’ by the agencies charged with their care compounded their sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. They want to be partners in their protection and recovery plans and those that had this experience valued it immensely and felt stronger for being involved”. (Berelowitz et al., 2013, p. 56)

Risk taking and Adolescence

A meta-review conducted by Sidebotham et al. (2016) highlighted that while incidents of significant harm for younger children occur almost exclusively within the family, this pattern is reversed in older adolescence, and most fatal and non-fatal incidents of significant harm occur outside of the family.

(Sidebotham P. et al. 2016. Pathways to Harm, Pathways to Protection: A Triennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews 2011 to 2014: Final Report. DfE: London)

What makes adolescents so special?

- The range, nature and causes of adolescent risks are different than those faced by groups younger / older than them → a distinctive set of interconnected needs.
- The impact of maltreatment often manifests differently to that of maltreatment at a younger age.
- Adolescence itself provides a unique array of strengths and opportunities as a result of social and physiological development processes.

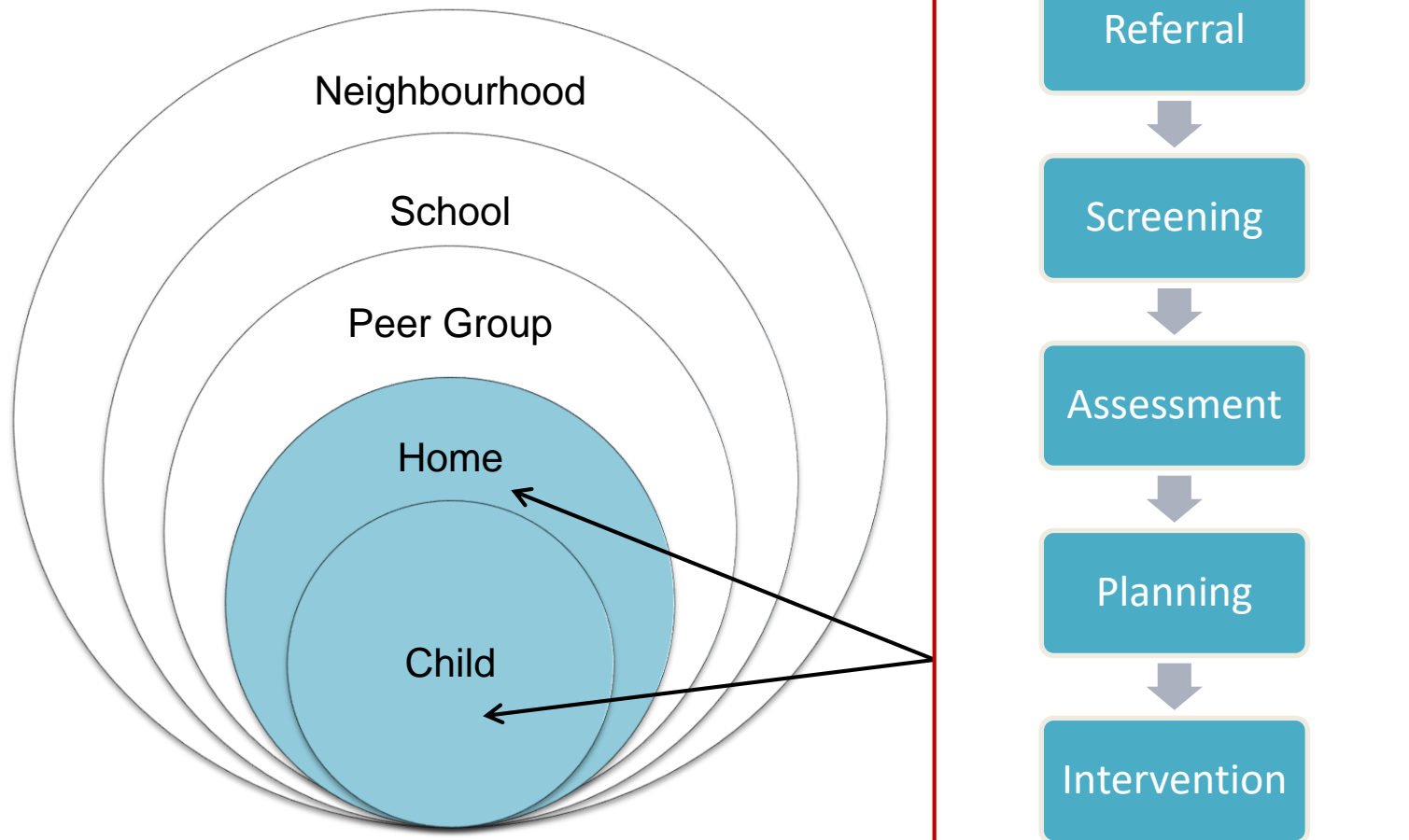
(Hanson and Holmes, 2014)

How does your team/agency work with young people at risk of extra familial harm?

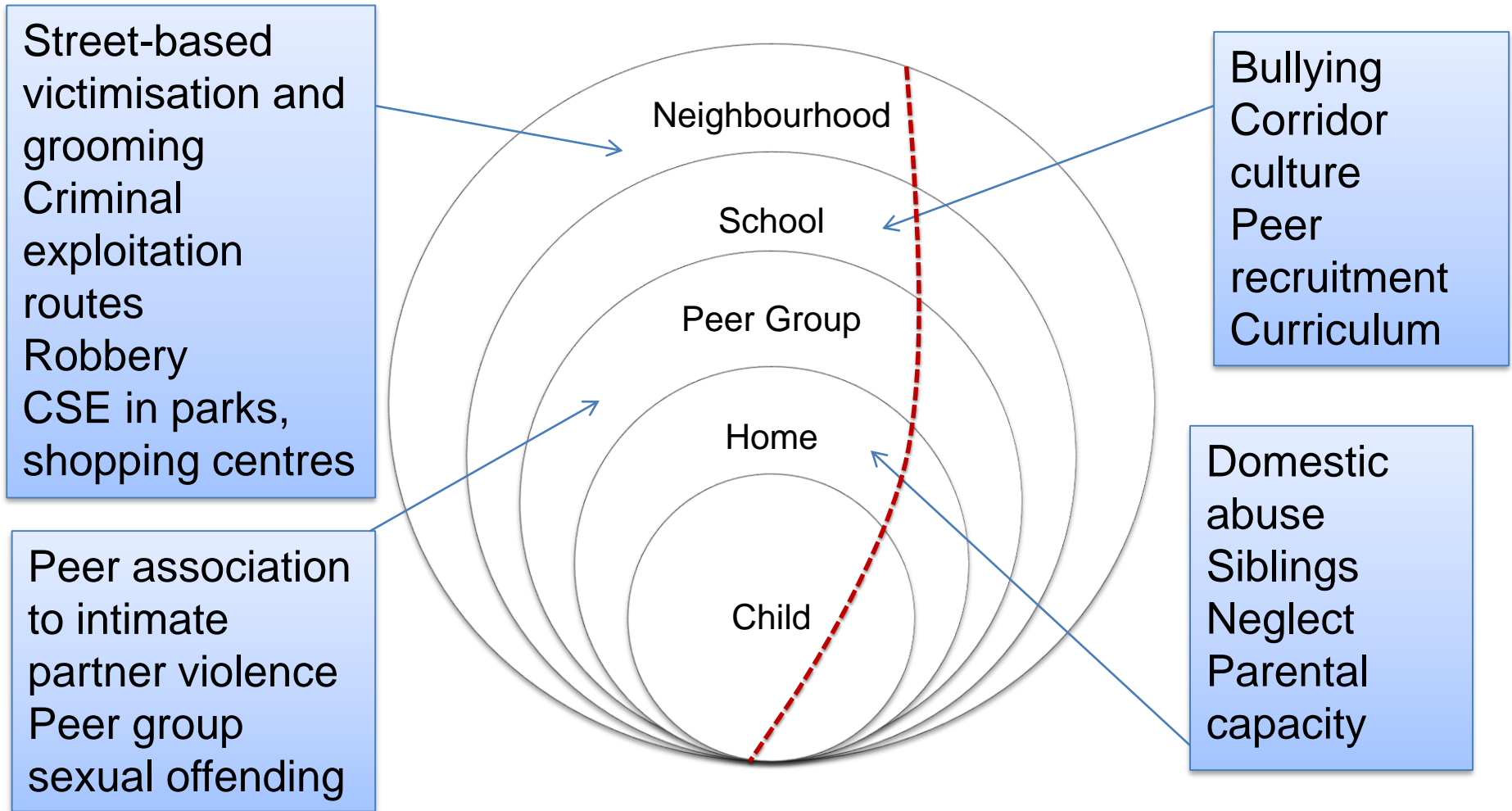
Are you using the Contextual Safeguarding approach?

How is this working for you and your organisation?

Traditionally Child Protection system (Firmin 2015)



To address these forms of harm, we need to look at the context of risk and vulnerability (Firmin, 2015)



A Contextual Safeguarding system offers some resolution

(Firmin et al. 2016)



Domain 1: Target
Seeks to prevent, identify, assess and intervene with the social conditions of abuse



Domain 2: Legislative framework
Incorporate extra-familial contexts into child protection frameworks



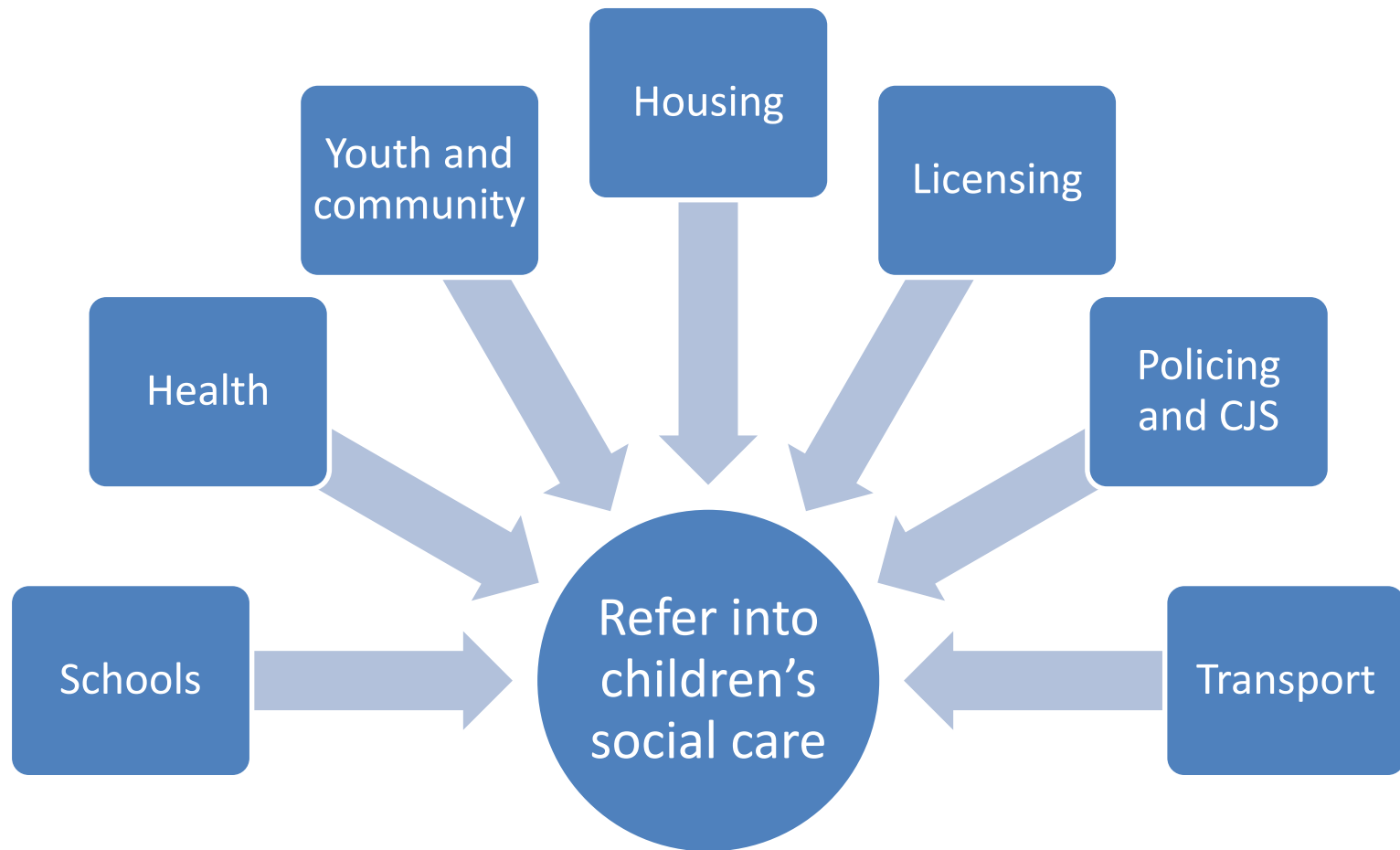
Domain 3: Partnerships
Develop partnerships with sectors/individuals who are responsible for the nature of extra-familial contexts



Domain 4: Outcomes measurement
Monitor outcomes of success in relation to contextual, as well as individual, change



Increased awareness of 'extra-familial' partners



Extra Familial risks or Parenting?

Major question over how children's services and other key agencies respond to the following situations- which agency would lead work with these young people? At which level?
Care and support/child protection/CIN

- a) Child at risk of significant extra-familial harm + significant concerns about parenting?
- b) Child in need in extra-familial settings + significant concerns about parenting?
- c) Child at risk of significant extra-familial harm + no concerns about parenting (appropriate care and concern)

Still too much focus on parenting and not enough consideration of risks that adolescents face in the community and from peers

Great deal of variance

- Some Local Authorities require concerns about parenting for a CP plan others do not
- Some have an alternative plan (safety plan) overseen by social care for Extra familial risks (EFR) where no concerns about parenting
- Others use child in need/care and support plan for EFR where no concerns about parenting
- Some link plans across systems to 'statutory' contextual plans
- Government is demonstrating increasing interest in this – they recognise a need for some oversight of these children regardless of where the risk sits

How we work with young people at risk of extra familial harm?

‘Findings reveal that despite experiencing significant harm most of the young people and families in the data set were not progressed for further social care support. Rather decisions applied a legislative and practice framework that viewed risk, and protection, through the lens of family – and in this regard, a nuanced account of whether parental control, support and/or concern (or a lack thereof) was attributable to the extra-familial risks young people faced’ (Lloyd and Firmin 2019).

‘It hasn’t reached a threshold’ (Lloyd and Firmin 2019)

The system does not prioritise extra-familial harm to adolescents because it does not know how to identify and respond to its contextual dynamics (Firmin 2020)

Who should step in if a child is being abused outside of the family? Who should co-ordinate a plan if CSC do not?

Summary so far – the challenges of the current system

- Adolescents can experience various forms of *extra-familial* harm that have integrated impacts or and drivers
- To The system deprioritises extra-familial harm to adolescents because it does not know how to identify and respond to its contextual dynamics
- Our legal framework is focussed on parents
- Child protection systems only reach as far as the child and their family
- Rather than referring the contexts of harm we have referred individual children harmed in multiple contexts- eg stairwell

Our research

- Interviews and focus groups with practitioners and senior managers in two local authorities
- We asked them about their understanding of Contextual Safeguarding
- What were their views of CS and the barriers and enablers of effective implementation?
- What were the strengths and challenges of the CS approach?
- First independent research into the implementation of the CS approach

Key findings

Enablers/positives

- 1) Practitioners in both LA discussed mapping of peer groups and locations- they found it helpful to gain an understanding of links between risks, perpetrators and particular locations eg stairwells, parks, takeaways
- 2) In one LA they were working with railway stations, takeaways, park wardens however more work including training needed to ensure consistent and effective response

The CS approach- Positives

‘There were promising examples of professionals from both authorities working creatively and collaboratively with completely new partners to identify, assess and intervene in the extra-familial contexts which were not safe for young people’ (Wilson and Diaz 2020).

The CS approach requires engagement of a far wider range of actors including the fast food worker, the bus driver and the general public form part of a wider network’

The benefits and opportunities of CS approach

‘Now, the shift is, we're seeing this as a community issue. We're really utilizing the kind of, you know, The Children Act, it's everyone's responsibility. So, we tap into the local mosques, local churches, local hotspots, places like (Fast-food chain)’ (Team manager)

‘We’ve done bespoke trainings to a housing association ... the firefighters, (railway) station, we're engaging with different kinds of partners. And the general response that we get is: why haven't we done this sooner’ (Senior manager)

Key findings

Challenges

- 1) Do SW have the capacity to work in this new way? In one LA in particular high caseloads made the extra work required in terms of carrying out assessments and plans of locations (including schools) and peer groups very difficult- extra paperwork
- 2) Senior managers and social workers felt that there needed to be a change to national legislation and guidance as currently the focus is on risks YP face at home and generally from parents
- 3) Some issues in terms of role confusion- which agency should take the lead?

The Contextual Safeguarding approach

Challenges:

4) Issues with implementation- expertise and understanding of staff, training, organisational culture

5) Practitioners still very focused on parenting capacity- senior managers more focused on peers and context

Challenges in relation to implementation

- Proctor (2012) argues that the greatest impediment to providing evidence based care is the limited research and knowledge relating to policy implementation.
- Proctor (2012) outlines that the way in which a policy is implemented in an organisation is highly complex; there are facilitators and barriers to the process of implementation and different organisations are likely to react to new policies or ways of working in different ways.

Very important therefore to consider the ways in which policies are implemented in practice by different teams/agencies.

The contextual safeguarding approach

But do social workers have the capacity to consider all the environments where a young person spends their time? or all the peers a young person may interact with outside of the child's home? Do they have capacity to carry out assessments and interventions of not just families, but of peer groups and contexts which may increase the prevalence of harm such as parks, train stations or even schools?

The Contextual Safeguarding Approach

‘I think if you just turned up to a social worker and said, we’re really concerned about this shop, you have to do something about it, that would be overwhelming, like if I was a social worker, like, what the hell do you want me to do?’ (senior manager)

Key issue regarding capacity, training and confidence of social workers to lead this work and should it be social workers that are leading this work?

The Contextual Safeguarding Approach

‘In the context of a child protection system with already high caseloads and overwhelming levels of bureaucracy, the Contextual Safeguarding approach requires liaising with multiple agencies. Such time laborious assessments and interventions may be perceived as an additional pressure on the time and resources of an already strained system’ (Wilson and Diaz 2020)

The CS approach

‘CS is all about partnership working, strain on services has hit other services as well, the youth service has been 'decimated', the police have had huge cuts, and community services have lost their funding. So its labor intensive, needs everyone to buy in, but everyone is already overwhelmed and exhausted’.

What works with young people at risk of extra familial harm

Scott et al (2019) recently completed a comprehensive review of what works in responding to CSE. This review concluded that:

- 1) Quality of relationships is key to engagement with young people and that trust building is the key foundations of effective direct work with young people who are at risk of CSE.
- 2) Involving young people in setting the agenda for meetings and visits and the pace of direct work can assist with engagement and 'buy in'.

What works with young people at risk of extra familial harm

- 3) Support needs to be flexible and high intensity when necessary, young people and families value having 'on call' support when they need it most.
- 4) Young people need stability, continuity and persistence and that most young people prefer having one key worker who cares and who does not give up on them when they disengage or act up (Scott et al 2019).

What can practitioners do?

(Shemmings, 2011)

- Understand the **state of mind** – “*I’m rubbish, I don’t matter, I’m unlovable*”
- YP who have developed this internal model are more likely to reject practitioner support
- Be aware of own attachment experiences and their impact
- Relationship with practitioner is a key protective factor- all about the relationship

Always try to be:

available, loving, caring,
interested, responsive,
sensitive, accessible,
co-operative, trustworthy

Aim never to be:

unavailable, unloving,
uninterested, unresponsive,
neglectful, hostile,
rejecting, inaccessible,
ignoring, untrustworthy

Next steps – what will you take away
from today?

References

- **Essential Reading**
- Arnett, J. J. 1999. Adolescent storm and stress reconsidered. *American Psychologist*, 54 (5), pp.317-326.
- Ringrose, J. 2013. Girls negotiating postfeminist, sexualised media contexts. (Chapter 8) In *Postfeminist education: Girls and the sexual politics of schooling*. Abington: Routledge, 86-112
- **Recommended Reading**
- Carskadon, M. 1999. When worlds collide: Adolescent need for sleep versus societal demands, in *Adolescent Sleep Needs and School Starting Times*, editor Kyla Wahlstrom, Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation,
- Dahl, R.E. 2004. Adolescent brain development: a period of vulnerabilities and opportunities. *Annals of New York Academy of Sciences*, 1021, pp.1-22.
- Lincoln, S. 2012. *Youth culture and private space*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan - Available: Library ebook
- Miller, P. H. 2011. *Theories of developmental psychology* (fifth edition). Worth: New York
- Morgan, N. 2013. *Blame my brain: the amazing teenage brain revealed*. London: Walker Books
- **NB:** Morgan book provides an accessible overview of processes in the brain

Thank you for joining us

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