

### What is Contextual Safeguarding?

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families ([University of Bedfordshire](#), 2020). These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, on high streets, public transport, and other community spaces, from within peer groups and from the wider community and/or online. [It Was Hard to Escape](#) (DfE 2020) states that 'being drawn into exploitative situations where children can be both victims and perpetrators can have severe consequences for them, their friends, families, and communities'.

# Contextual Safeguarding

### Why is Contextual Safeguarding important?

Increasingly, children and young people are facing challenge and risk to their safety and wellbeing from outside the home. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation

### (Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2018).

Practitioners who work with children and families should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life which are a threat to their safety and should look at parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand contextual risk. Contextual safeguarding can involve young people perpetrating, as well as experiencing harm and can



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present as the result of perceived 'choices' a young person has made. (Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2018) states that young people who may be perpetrators should also be supported to understand the impact of contextual issues on their own safety and wellbeing. Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children's social care.

### What to know more?

Try watching this 15 minute [TEDx Talk](#) by Dr Charlene Firmin (founder of [contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](#))

**TEDx**  
x = independently  
organized TED event

### What does this mean for us?

Remember the old adage, 'be curious not furious'? That sums it up. We need to be curious about our children's lives beyond the school gates. We need to ask those follow up questions, show some professional curiosity and take an interest in the things children tell us.

Do they mention hanging around with older children at the park? Do they keep referencing an adult visiting the house that you have never heard mention of before? Be curious, not furious.