

# The Contextual Safeguarding framework – embedding theory into practice

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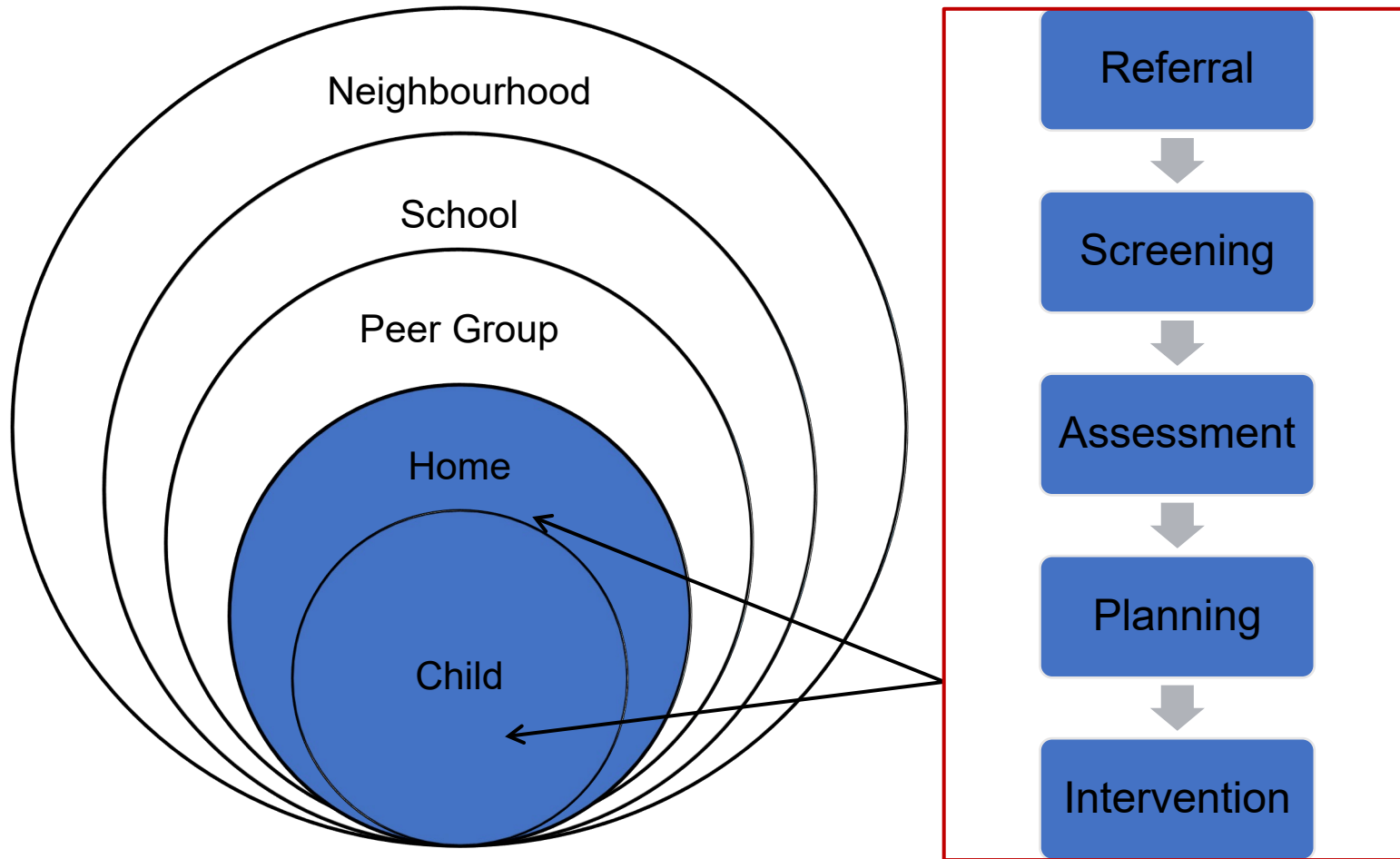




## **Extra-familial harm**

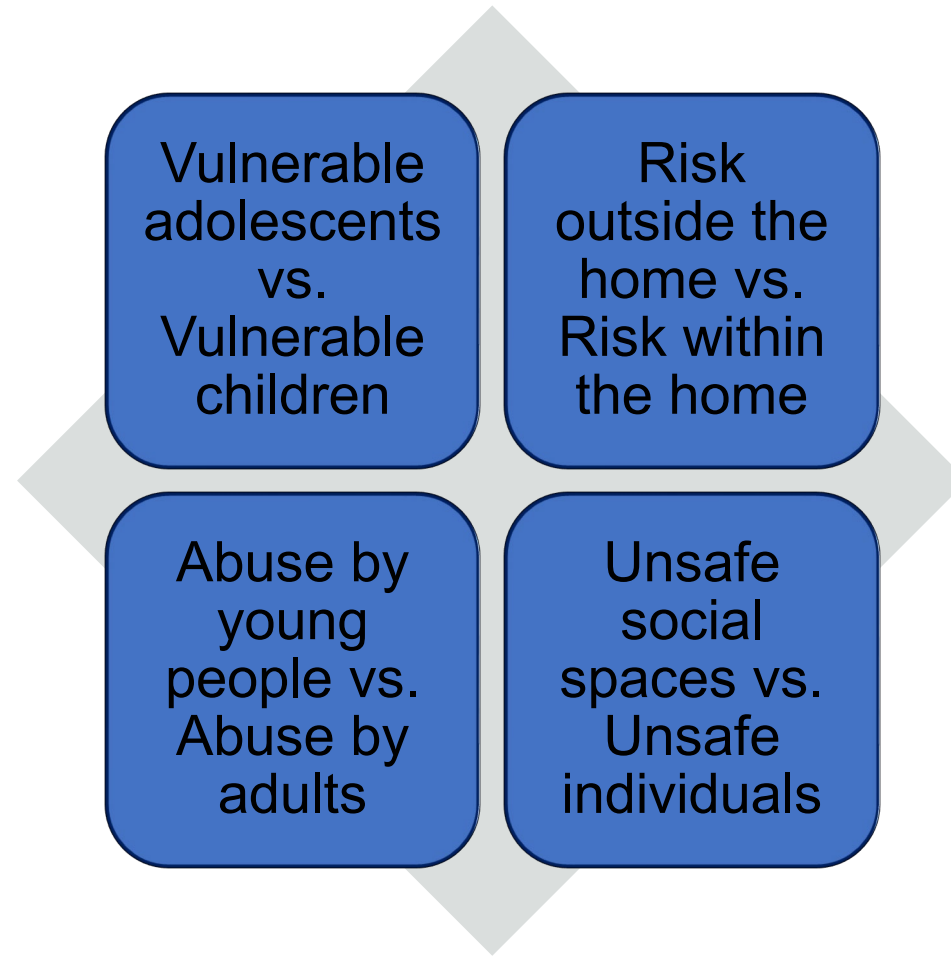
- Child criminal exploitation
- Child sexual exploitation
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Serious violence
- Peer-on-peer forms of harm
- Online and offline

# Child protection systems have been designed to respond to risks in families/homes



(Bilston, 2006; Firmin, 2017 Hanson and Holmes, 2014)

# Resulting in debates about ‘thresholds’ for support and barriers to young people accessing services and achieving safety



(Lloyd and Firmin, 2019; Firmin 2020)



# The Contextual Safeguarding Framework offers some resolution to these challenges over *four domains*

(Firmin et al. 2016)



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



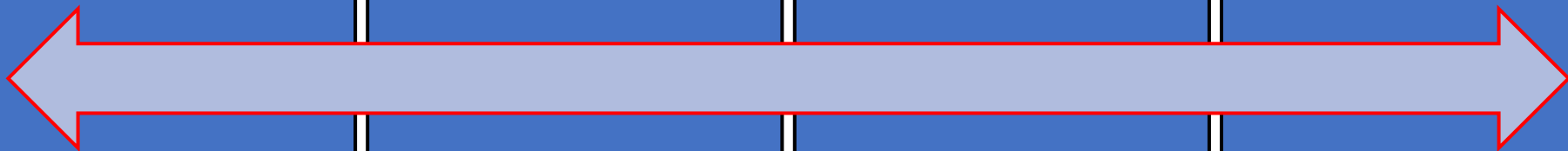
**Domain 2: Legislative framework**  
Incorporate extra-familial contexts into child protection frameworks



**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



# 1. Bringing context into work with individual young people

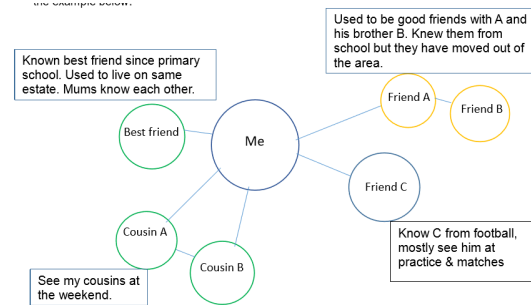
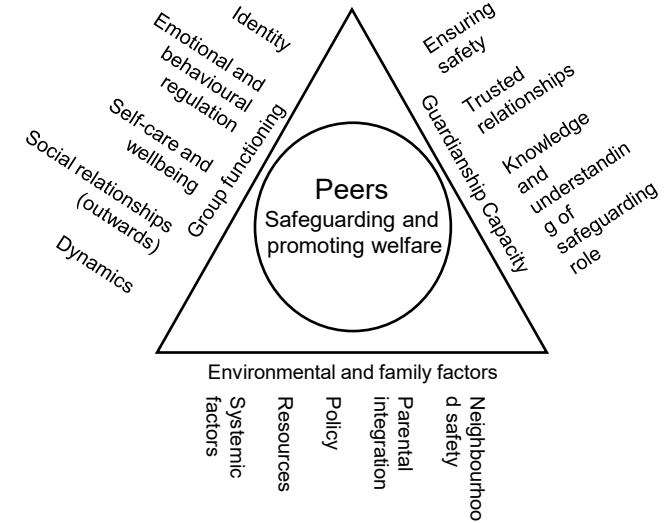


- Supporting a young person to 'map' where they feel safe or unsafe
- Finding out about peers during assessment and in responses
- Giving parents space to think the impact of extra-familial contexts
- Developing new meeting methods and pathways

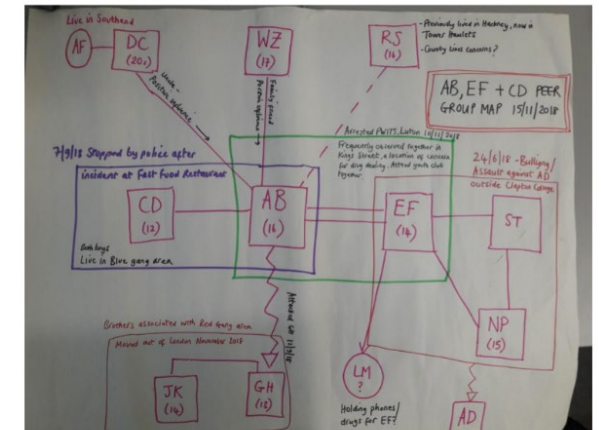


## 2. Assessing and responding to contexts

- Peer group work: working with young people to understand the connections and dynamics. Supporting peers to be safe in their existing networks.
- Community focussed: assessing neighbourhoods (parks, streets, shopping areas) to understand and respond to harm, responding with creative interventions with new partners.
- School focussed: supporting schools to understand how the policies, culture and practices in the school can better support safety.



We've got some resources to help



# The barber shop

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**Situation:** Early help worker worried about why 'Jamil' an unaccompanied young person was spending time in the barer shop

**Action:** Assessed the shop context through developing relationships with Jamil and the shop owner, not jumping to conclusions

**Response:** To work with the barber as if a family member, recognise his important role in Jamil's life

**Result:** Social worker worked with the barber to strengthened the support available to Jamil, developing strong relationships of trust and increasing safety





# The park

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**Situation:** Multi-agency EFH panel referral for young people being 'anti-social'

**Action:** Detached youth work team assessed the park. Realised that young people were at risk there, but the community were fearful of them and wanted them to be moved

**Response:** Advocate for the rights of the yp to socialise and be safe there. Increase potential adult residents as guardians

**Result:** Social workers engaged in community advocacy to achieve better co-existence, greater understanding of yp's needs and increased safety



# The school

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**Situation:** Group of young people, on roll at a school but on very minimal timetables – exposed to community exploitation

**Action:** Assessment lead to realisation of racism as a probable factor preventing school access

**Response:** To engage school in reflecting on their attitude towards these yp and their how their lack of access to education impacts their safety

**Result:** Professionals brought together in a reflective meeting, racist attitudes addressed, creative ways of engaging the young people expanded

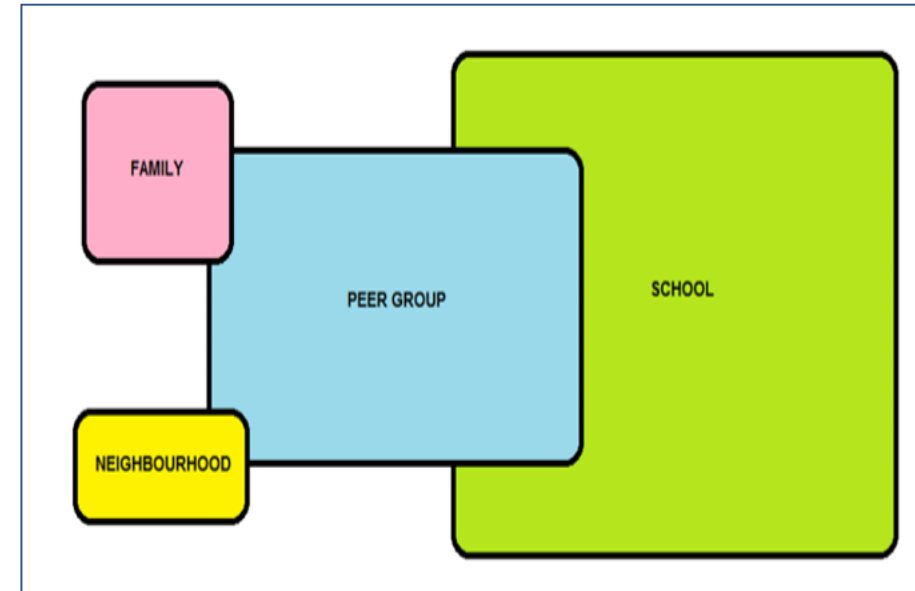
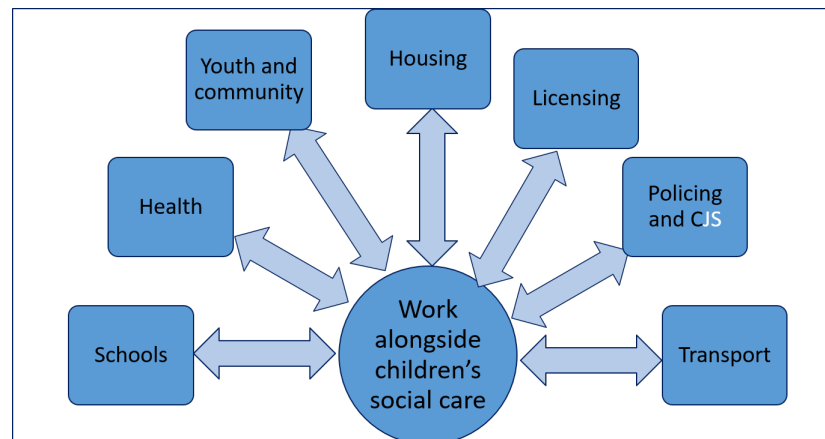
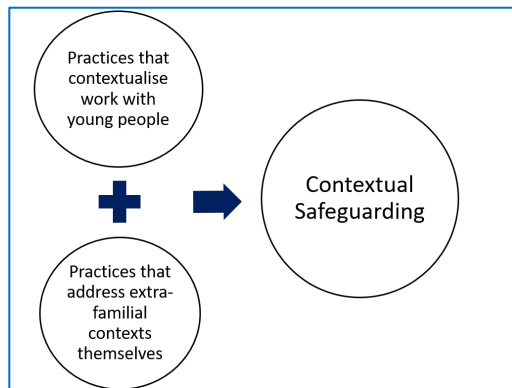


# Consistent features of practice

Bringing contexts into work with individual young people and assessing and working with contexts themselves

Moving from everybody making referrals to everybody building safety around young people

Discussing the weight of influence of different contexts so they can be targeted accordingly





# Working “from the inside out”

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*“You’re focusing on the wider angle, you’re looking at what the issues are as a community and ....you’re breaking in from the inside out rather than the outside in, because usually we work with individual families on the outside and try and break our way into the circle.*

*Whereas actually what we’re doing is plonking ourselves right in the middle of the circle, because these are the issues, right in this middle, and we’re working outwards..*

*Because the ripple effect will work out. So if we deal with that issue as a community, with services, bang smack in the middle, the positive ripples will go all the way to the edge to where all of the young people and elderly members of the family and all the individual hub families [are] on the outside.... So that’s why I think it could be so powerful.”*

Community conference facilitator





# Questions, contact, feedback

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For more information about the research programme resources visit: <https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

To access resources and practice tools visit:

[www.csnetwork.org.uk](http://www.csnetwork.org.uk)