

YOUR GUIDE TO



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

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WHAT IS CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING?

Contextual: The people or places around you are your contexts. You can't understand what has happened or why without understanding these context(s).

Safeguarding: Everybody's responsibility is to create safer spaces/places/people for young people.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach developed by Professor Carlene Firmin that aims to keep young people safe from harm outside home. The approach involves adults including youth workers, teachers and social workers to bus drivers, shopkeepers and park wardens working together with young people to create safer contexts for young people.

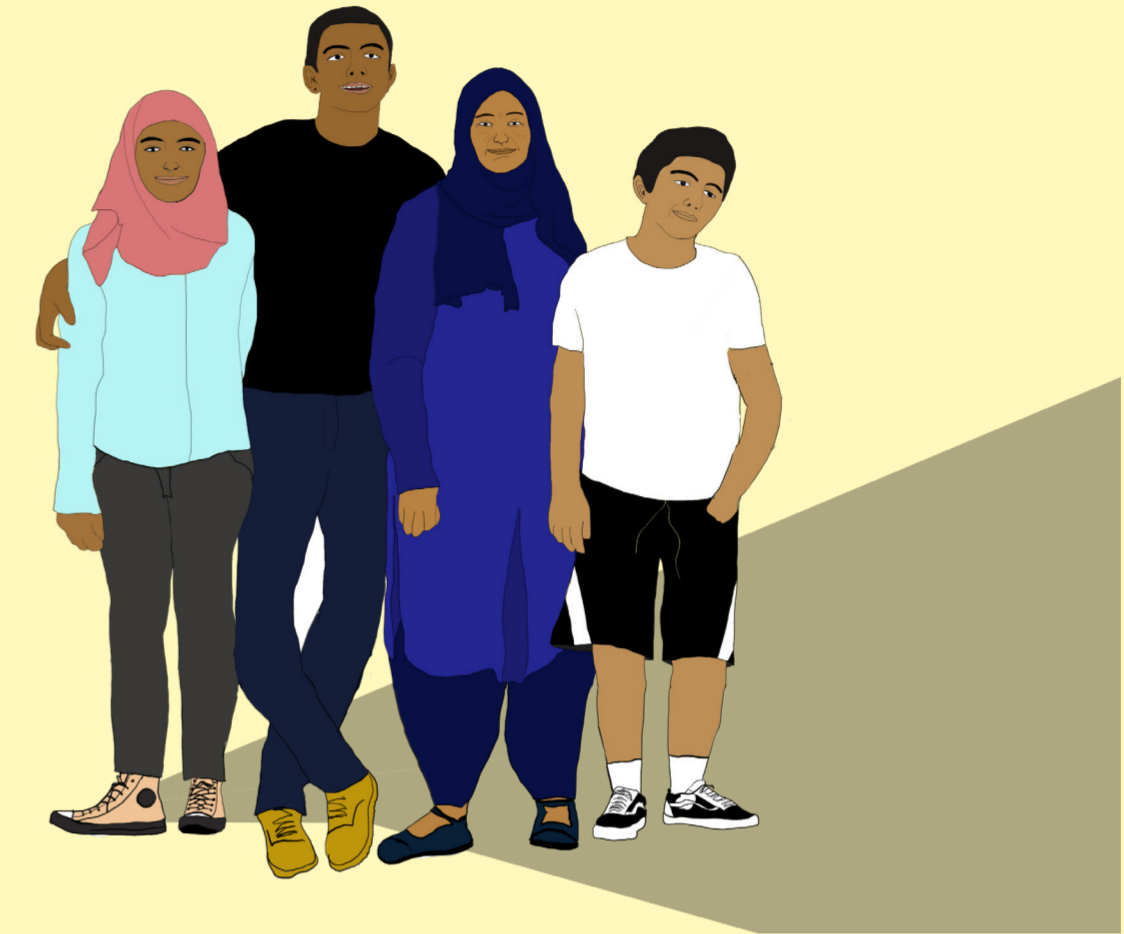
Contextual Safeguarding considers intervening in and increasing safety for young people in three contexts: at school, with friends and peers and in your neighbourhood.

This resource has been developed to support you to understand what Contextual Safeguarding is and for you to think about your safety in these different contexts.

C O N T E X T S



FRIENDS AND PEERS



FAMILY

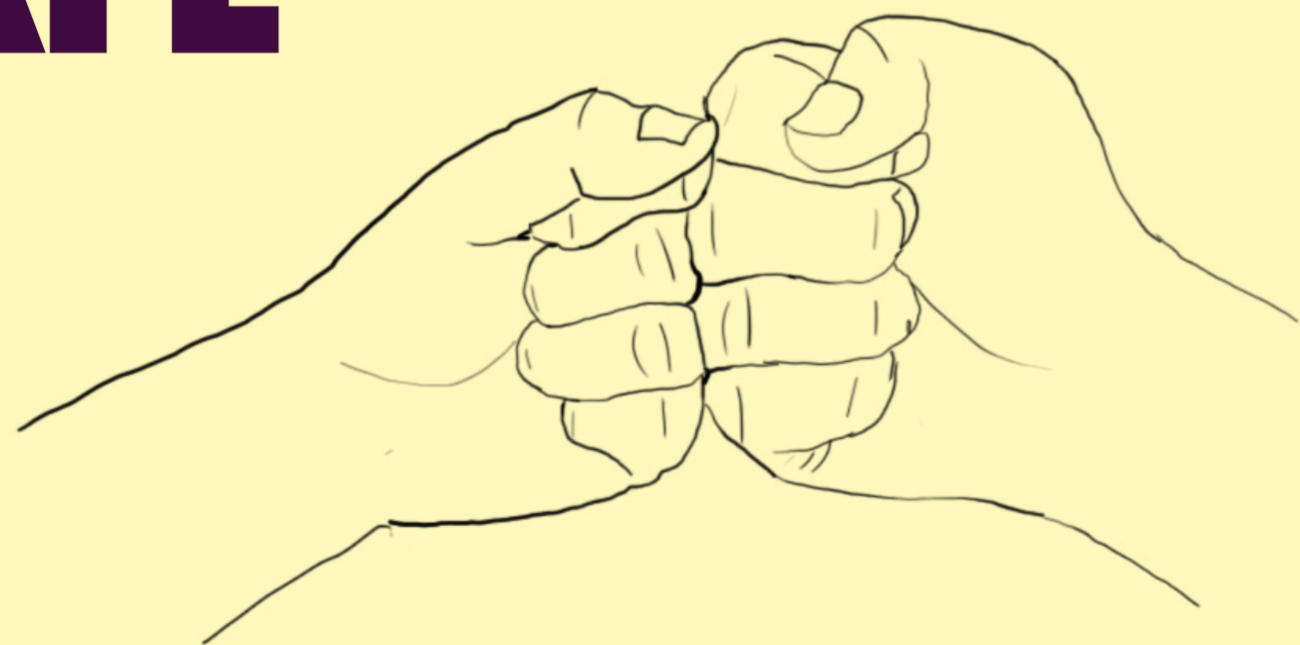


SCHOOL



NEIGHBOURHOOD

THINKING ABOUT STAYING SAFE



As a young person, do you know how to keep yourself safe?

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Who do you think is responsible for keeping you safe?

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Do you think you get a say in decisions about your safety, and what you think is best?

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How do you think you can have a better say in staying safe in your area?

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How do you think adults in your community could keep you safer?

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Do you have an adult you trust and can talk to if you experience harm outside of home?

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CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING SCHOOL

Jade is 14 years old and being targeted by a group of girls in her year. They bully her about her clothes and her appearance, and she dreads going to school every day. She tries to avoid them by arriving late and truanting. Teachers also notice how quiet she is, that she is losing weight and not engaging during lessons.

Instead of punishing Jade for skipping classes, the school takes a Contextual Safeguarding approach. A teacher that Jade has a good relationship with arranges to speak with Jade discreetly so none of her classmates notice she has been singled out.

Jade finds it difficult to share all the details about what has been going on but explains that she is being bullied, doesn't know what to do and is worried that something worse might happen if she reports the group of girls to staff. The teacher does some **safety mapping** with Jade to understand more about what she is experiencing. Jade marks on the map areas that she feels safe at different times of the day. The trusted teacher explains that they will need to share the information with the head of year and head teacher, and they will discuss ways to address bullying and create ways for Jade to feel safer and happier at school.

The teachers decide to do a whole **school survey to get young people's, teachers and parents' views** on bullying. They find out that a lot of students have experienced bullying but students, teachers and parents are unsure of what to do about it. The teachers then receive training from safeguarding professionals, and they set up accessible safe spaces in various areas around the school, for use during breaks and lunchtime. Students also get bystander training and older students can become mentors for those in younger year groups. They try to create a compassionate environment where students can support each other. Jade finds that she can now meet other students easily and develop an understanding and protective friend group



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING FRIENDSHIPS AND PEERS

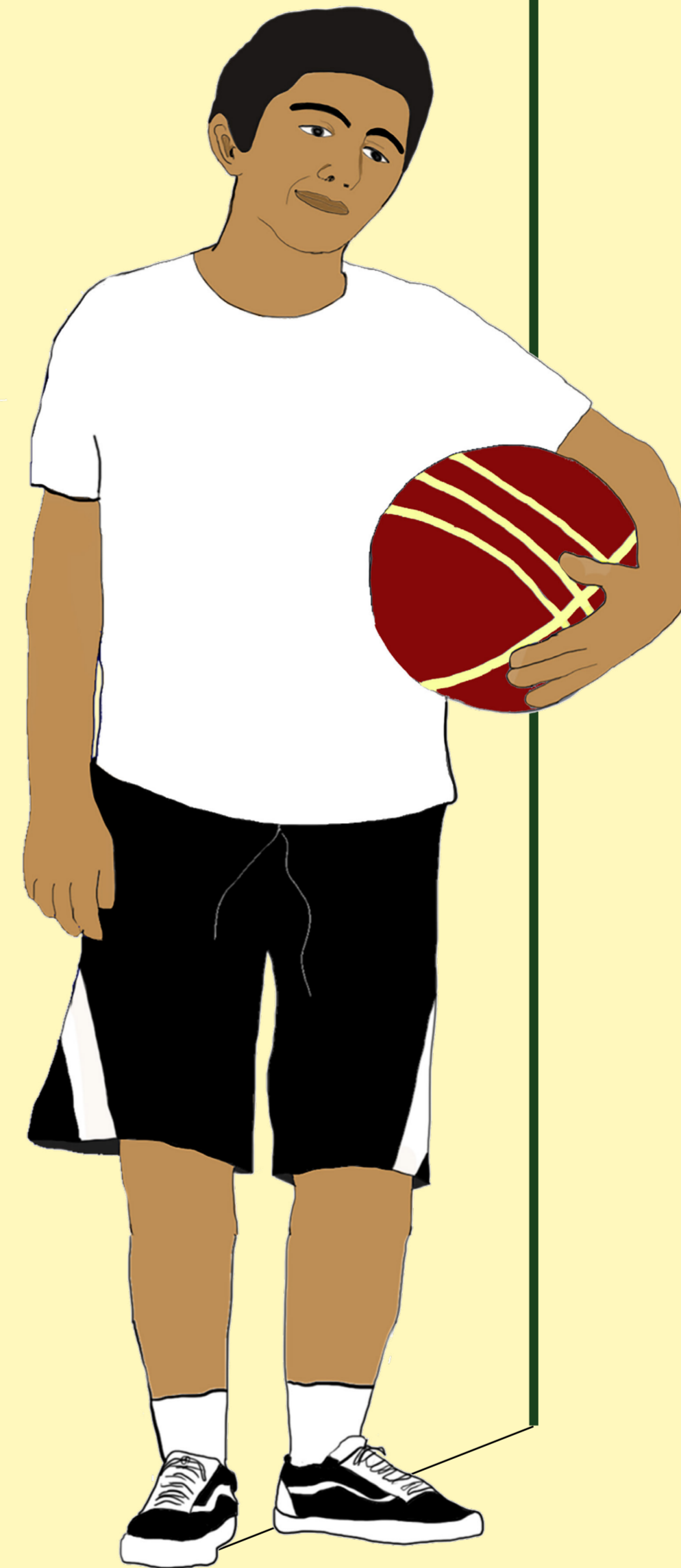
Jordan is 13 has grown up on an estate where there are tensions with another local area, which led to recent a stabbing of a 15-year-old. A few months later, Jordan gets excluded from school for carrying a knife and he is sent to an alternative provision. He feels a lot of pressure and blame from parents and professionals and doesn't like his new school.

There are some 15-year-old boys at his new school who give him opportunities to skip class with them to go ride mopeds. He starts to stay out late with them, and they show him how he could make some money selling drugs. Jordan wanted some new trainers, and this looked like such a quick way to make the cash he needs.

There is a youth centre on Jordan's estate and there is a youth worker who has known Jordan for a few years. He notices Jordan is spending less time there and when he is, he is speaking about new friends and how they are helping him get a job. The youth worker is worried about Jordan and doesn't want him to get into trouble.

A **Contextual Safeguarding approach wants to work with the group** and not stop Jordan from seeing his new friends. The youth worker checks with social services and finds out that some of the older boys are known to services. The professionals connect with each other and decide to do a '**peer assessment**' of the group, as they are worried about their safety. The workers speak to the group about their friends, where they spend their time and what they need to stay safe.

Professionals with trusted relationships encourage the group to attend the youth centre, and offer them free studio time and access to a gym. The boys build trust with the youth workers who offer support with issues including advocating for getting back into mainstream education and part-time work. Jordan and the older boys are safer at the youth centre, where they won't come to harm outside due to the tensions in the area. Jordan still needs money but understands that the risk is not worth it, and that he can start to get paid for taking up roles in the youth centre.



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Ivy, Andre and lots of their friends often go to a local takeaway after school. Sometimes there are up to 20 boys and girls aged 13-16 hanging around the square, near the shop. They play music, eat and smoke and the shop owners think they are bad for business. There is suspected drug dealing taking place and older people have been seen stopping by in their cars. The shopkeepers are worried that this situation might lead to exploitation and violence.

Instead of calling the police to disperse the group or ban them from the area, **the shopkeepers contact the safeguarding team at the council.** They record that this is an area that might be unsafe for young people and decide to send detached youth workers and community leaders to speak to the young people in the square.

The young people tell the workers that they are bored and have nowhere to go, especially when they don't have a lot of money. The detached youth workers find out their interests, safe areas, professionals they know and use this information in a **neighborhood assessment.**

At the end of the assessment, they decide to create a young person's space in the community centre where they can get support, food and do activities. Members of the community, like the shopkeepers, are also trained to support keeping young people safe and how they can work with people like social workers, youth workers and community safety to make their areas safer.



DISCLAIMER

This is how Contextual Safeguarding would like systems to work to increase safety for young people. We recognise that systems in your area are probably not working like in these examples, and you may not have been supported in this way, if you have experienced harm outside of home.

The Contextual Safeguarding Programme is supporting local authorities across the UK to work with young people to change how services respond to those affected by harm outside of home.

A CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING APPROACH SHOULD:

- Not blame you for the harm you experience
- Take a genuine interest in and listen to young people's lived experiences, views, wishes and feelings
- Consider young people as partners
- Take a collaborative and participatory approach
- Inform you of and uphold your rights
- Keep you (not just parents/carers) informed of information sharing
- Intervene in contexts to manage risk of harm
- Understand that a young person is an expert in their lives
- Include young people in decision-making
- Support a young person's trusted relationships



YOUR SAFETY AT SCHOOL

Do you feel that you can learn in your school/college environment?

What makes you feel this way?

Where do you feel safe?

Where do you feel unsafe?

I think adults could keep me safer if....

I would feel safer if....

YOUR SAFETY WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND PEERS

Do you think that you feel safe with your friends?

What makes you feel this way?

I would feel safer with my friends and peers if....

YOUR SAFETY IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Do you feel safe being out in your neighbourhood?

What makes you feel this way?

Where do feel safe?







Where do you feel unsafe?

I think adults could keep me safer if...

I would feel safer if...

**THIS IS YOUR FREE PAGE TO FILL
WITH WHATEVER YOU WANT**

IF YOU, OR A FRIEND, IS AT RISK OF HARM OUTSIDE OF HOME, THIS IS OUR ADVICE:

-  Remind yourself that whatever has happened to you, or your friend(s) is not your fault
-  It is not your responsibility to try and resolve a situation that affects you and/or your friends
-  Do not forget to look after and value yourself
-  Support your friends, even it is by listening
-  Speak to an adult that your trust and that feel safe with
-  Offer to support a friend to speak to their trusted adult

It is important to have someone that you trust and feel comfortable with to let them know if you or someone you know is at risk of, or has experienced harm. We understand that it can be difficult to open up and we hope friends will be able to support you, if you don't have a trusted adult. Helplines such as ChildLine and YoungMinds are also available to you, as well as charities and organisations in your local area that can offer support to young people who are at risk, or have experienced specific types of harm.

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk> - 0800 1111

Young Minds: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk> - Text YM to 85258

National Rape Crisis: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/> - 0808 802 9999

This booklet has been developed and written by YRAP members; Olivia Bonnick, Dominic C, Meg Elizabeth, Keeley Howard, Evie Poingdestre, and Raahim.

The YRAP is a group of young researcher advisors within the Safer Young Lives Research Centre [SYLRC] that focuses on ending exploitation and improving services, support and access for young people.

Book design and artwork by Meera Shakti Osborne.

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