

Transitional Safeguarding



Dez Holmes

Director, Research in Practice

@dez_holmes

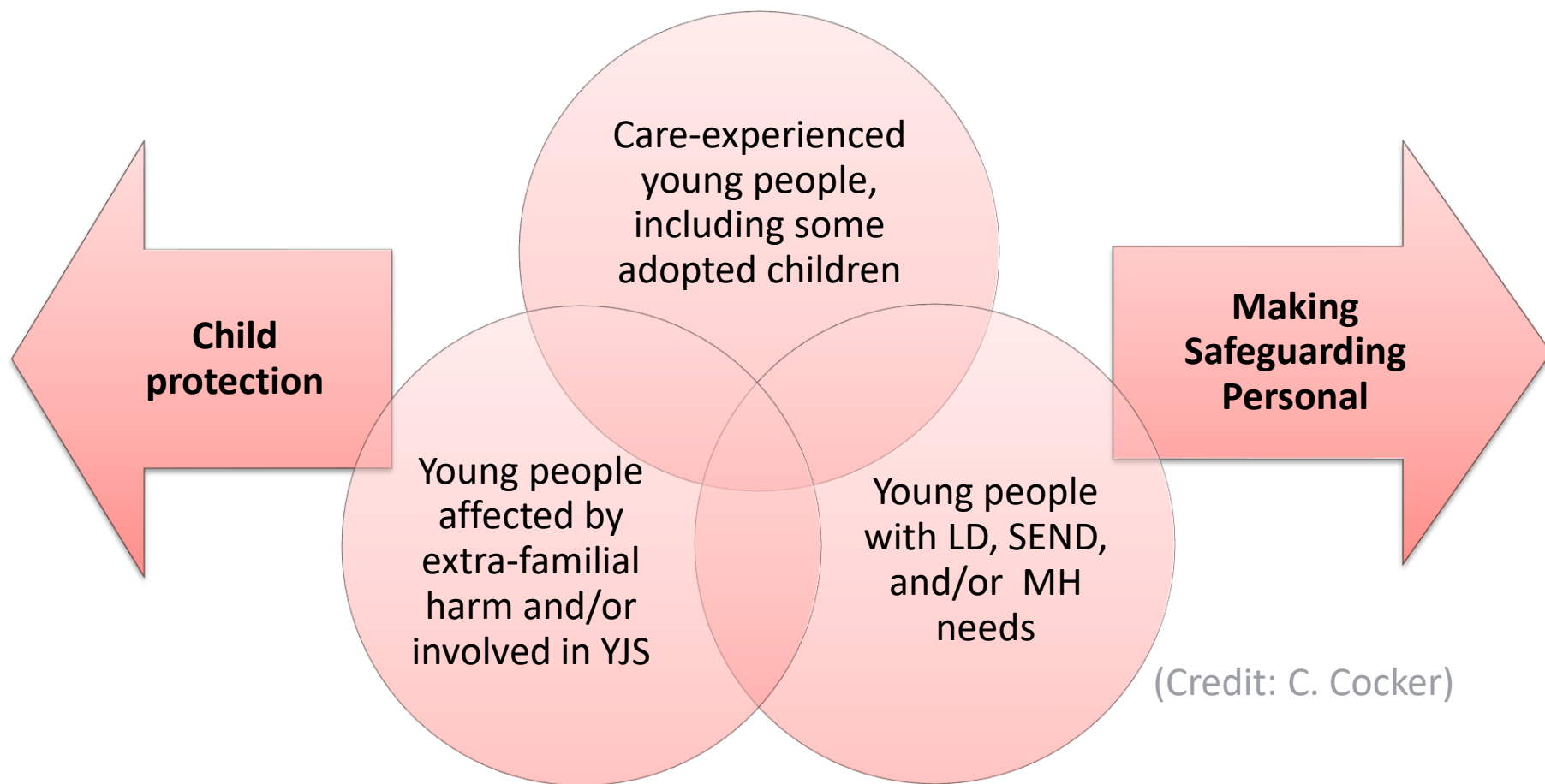
*With thanks to
'Hannah' and London
Safeguarding Voices*

The problem in a nutshell

The traditional binary approach to safeguarding has not served young people well. Safeguarding systems for those aged under 18 and over 18 operate to different thresholds, legislative frameworks and eligibility criteria.

This can mean that many young people face a 'cliff edge' as they approach age 18 and risk being left without support during this critical life-stage. Many emergent adults face significant risks and harms without having formal care and support needs under the *Care Act 2014*.

(Winterbottom et al, 2023)



'young people' / 'youth' as 'persons between the ages of 15 and 24'
(United Nations, 2007)

Why Transitional Safeguarding?

- › The current binary approach bears significant **human and economic costs**
- › Harm, trauma and development **don't stop at 18**
- › **Beyond statutory duties** – holistic, flexible, person-centred
- › We need a system not a service... **whole place whole person**
- › Not all support *is* a formal service – social connection, community networks... *“the people I'm still in touch with now”*
- › Because **binaries reinforce binaries**: childhood Vs adulthood; victim Vs perpetrator; vulnerable Vs culpable
- › **Safeguarding is a verb, not a noun**

Transitional Safeguarding means...

‘safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children’s and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives’

(Holmes & Smale, 2018)

- › Transitional Safeguarding is a concept for **whole-system** change, underpinned by six key principles. (Holmes, 2018; 2022).
- › ‘early help for grown-ups’

What Transitional Safeguarding is not

- › Transitional Safeguarding is not a set of defined activities. It does not seek to dictate practice through the use of prescribed tools, definitions of harm or methods of working.
- › Transitional Safeguarding is not simply ‘transitions’ or ‘service transfer’
- › Transitional Safeguarding is not an intervention, nor a service.
- › Transitional Safeguarding is not a type of harm
- › *Transitional Safeguarding refers to activity that has often fallen outside of the traditional notions of both ‘transitions’ and ‘safeguarding’, where these have sometimes been interpreted through a lens of eligibility, rather than in the wider sense of human experiences and needs.*

(Department of Health and Social Care, 2021, p.10)

I was in care all my life and you did keep me really safe. You wrapped me up tight in bubble wrap... but I'm 19 now and I kind of feel like I can't move my arms.

(Max, care-experienced young adult)

Now I've left care I get really lonely. That's a big thing for my safety I think, but no one talks about it as safeguarding. Unless you're worried about my child, I won't hear from you [children's services] again.

(Aisha, care-experienced young adult)

NB – care status is not the only proxy for need

I couldn't wait to get to 18, I thought that once I was an adult everything would change. It hasn't worked out that way. I really wish I was a kid again so that you could lock me up.

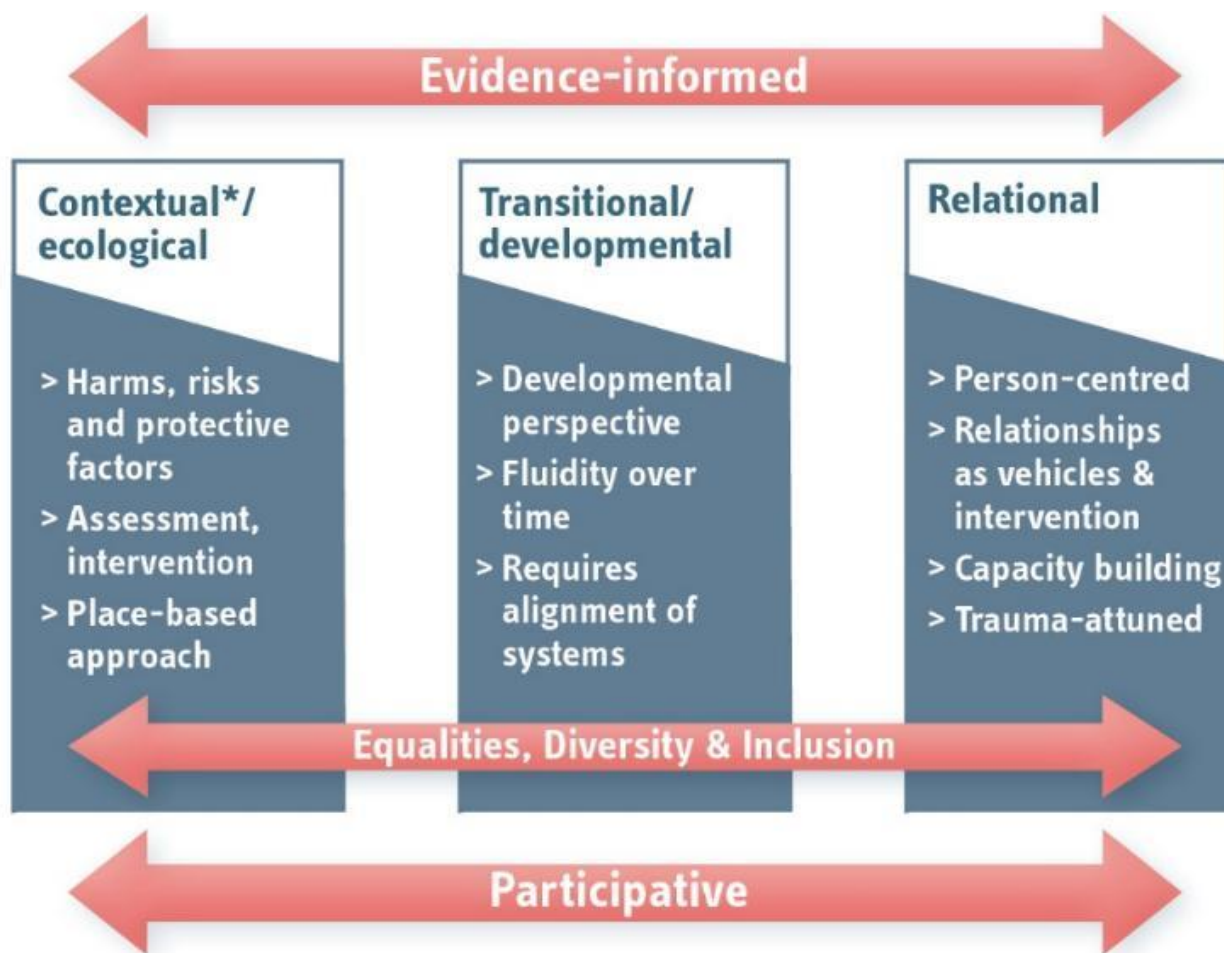
(Kelly, young adult)

*Did anything change overnight when I turned 18?
No, I was in as much danger and in as much risk
'that night' as any other.*

*Did anything change overnight when I left home at
18, 1 month and a week? No, I was at risk and in
danger in other ways - from other sources. I just
swapped a known risk for multiple unknown risks
and dangers.*

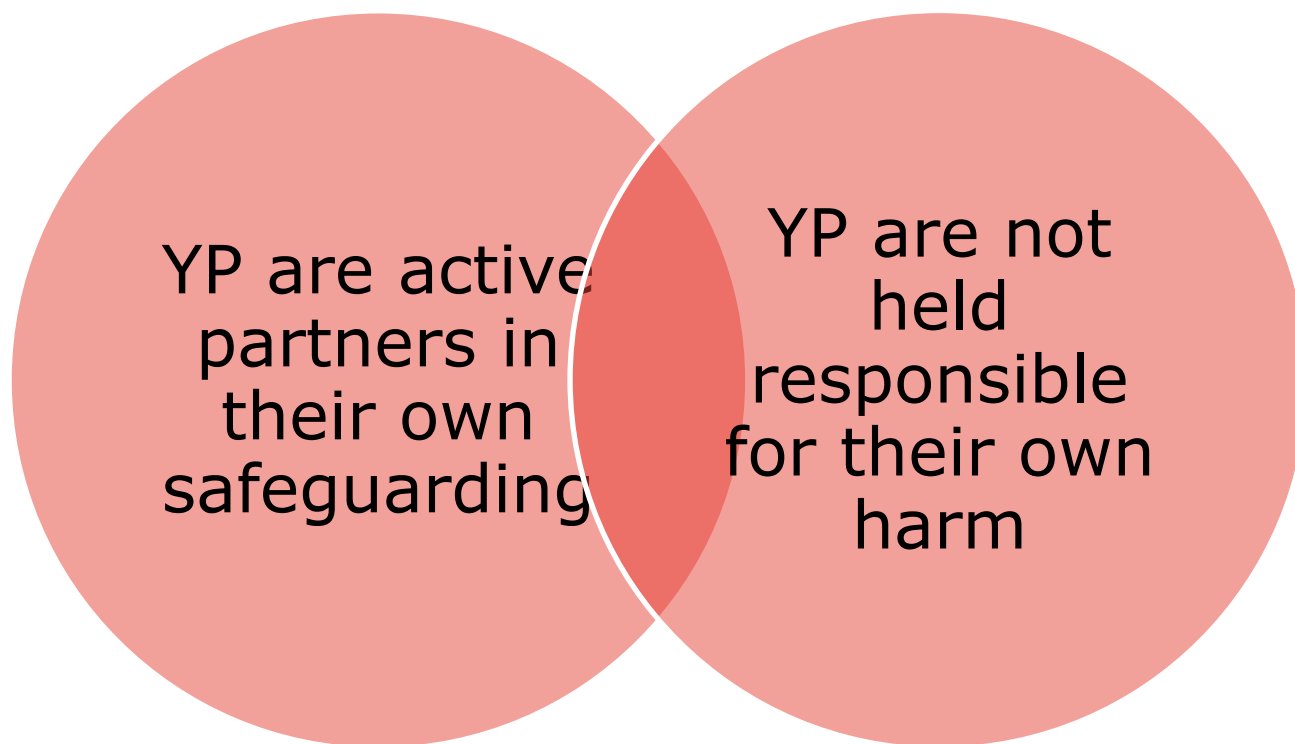
'Hannah'

Key (non-negotiable) principles



See Firmin's work:
www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

It is not about infantilising young adults



Vulnerability and justice

	YP in general population	YP in custody
Learning disability	2–4%	23–32%
Comms impairment	5–7%	60–90%
ADHD	1.7–9%	12%
Autism	0.6–1.2%	15%
Any head injury	24–42%	49–72%
Head injury (LoC)	5–24%	32–50%

(House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016)

Young adults involved in the CJS have often themselves been victims of crime. Many have a history of being exposed to violence, including in the home, abuse, neglect, bereavement relating to the deaths of parents, siblings and other close relatives, and criminal behaviour by parents and siblings. These traumatic events have frequently occurred from a very young age and, the traumatic effects may be raw.

“J is a young person ensnared in an exploitative relationship and engaged in criminal activity as part of this. Upon turning 18, overnight, they will cease to be defined as a victim of child abuse and may instead be viewed as an adult with capacity to make such choices. Their circumstances and vulnerability are entirely unchanged by their birthday, but they are suddenly, no longer ‘everybody’s business’.

The potential impacts of exploitation and trauma – such as mental ill-health and substance misuse – might escalate far enough to constitute ‘care and support needs’ which in turn may mean J is deemed eligible for safeguarding support as an adult. But they will likely experience much more harm and pain first, and may receive a criminal justice response before their safeguarding needs are recognised.

Should J become a parent, it is very possible that children’s safeguarding services might intervene, but this will likely be centred on the safeguarding risks facing their child.”

(Holmes & Smith, 2022)

Care Act 2014 and Transitional Safeguarding

(DHSC, 2021)

- Prevention principle emphasises importance of preventing or delaying or reducing the need for care and support.
- The wellbeing principle applies equally to those who do not have eligible care and support needs but come into contact with the system in some other way.
- Requires that decisions take account of the individual's circumstances, rather than a person's age, appearance, condition or behaviour. Important in ensuring proportionate and least intrusive responses, AND in ensuring that needs and vulnerabilities are recognised.
- *Para 6.100* - The national eligibility criteria set a minimum threshold for adult care and support needs and carer support needs which local authorities must meet. All local authorities must comply with this national threshold. Authorities can also decide to meet needs that are not deemed to be eligible if they chose to do so.
- *Para 14.5* - Where someone is 18 or over but is still receiving children's services and a safeguarding issue is raised, the matter should be dealt with through adult safeguarding arrangements

Transitional Safeguarding and health

(Winterbottom et al, 2023)

- > Transitional Safeguarding aligns with NHS Long Term Plan (NHS E/I, 2019) and its focus on older teens and young adults - eg 'young adult mental health services' for 18–25 year olds.
- > As a universal life-course service, health services are where problems arising from exposure to risk and harm often first appear. Health colleagues have a vital role to play in securing engagement of at-risk young adults who might otherwise be lost to services at a time of complex and accelerating need. *“It has got to be trauma-informed though”*
- > Transitional Safeguarding supports participation and embodies the person-centred, strengths-based approach that young people say they want from health services.
- > Intercollegiate documents (safeguarding adults) now reference Transitional Safeguarding (!!)
- > As a preventative approach, Transitional Safeguarding has the potential to avoid and/or reduce later costs to the health system.

Mental health, councils and costs

- “mental illnesses have their peak onset at age 15 years, and early intervention is crucial... 63–75% of mental illnesses first appear **before the age of 25**...”(Lancet Psychiatry Commission, 2024).
- Mental ill-health costs England at least **£105bn** (Centre for Mental Health, 2010) and yet ICBs spent **1%** of their total budget on CYP mental health in 22/23 (Children’s Commissioner, 2024).
- A mental health liaison via A&E costs £330 each time, and secure mental health care costs about £740 per bed per day... (PSSRU, 2023) but may fall to the NHS. So the debate about ‘funding shortfalls’ can exclude councils... and yet...
- The costs of crisis (that person’s child needing support, or even being taken into care, or with them becoming homeless if they lose their tenancy, etc) can fall to the council.
- As importantly, the very things that can help a person mitigate or even avoid some forms of poor mental health (good housing, community connection, educational opportunities) are the areas that local government plays a key role in! It’s very hard to win an ‘invest-to-save’ argument when the savings (or rather cost-avoidance) will fall to a different part of the system.

- › The economic context makes innovation as difficult as it is essential.
- › The current approach isn't great value... *"I had 15 houses in 15 years... what I needed was a home"*
- › Investing in preventative and recovery-oriented work to promote people's safety and wellbeing can play an important role in avoiding the costs of later intervention.
- › Evidence from the UK and international contexts suggests that failing to help young people recover from harm and trauma can mean that problems persist and/or worsen in adulthood, creating higher costs for the public purse.
(Chowdry and Fitzsimons, 2016; Kezelman *et al*, 2015)
- › The system (and the spend) is connected... Maternal wellbeing (SM, MH) and CP/care; care and criminal justice; mental health needs, costs Vs funding; family relationships and homelessness; domestic abuse and community violence etc.

What could we do?

- > Learn from parts of the wider system where transitional approaches are more embedded – *practice panels, problem-solving surgeries, joint commissioning, shared CPD, all-age MS / exploitation approaches*
- > ‘Draw down’ approaches from safeguarding adults: rights-based, person-centred, wellbeing focus...**Making Safeguarding Personal for young people?** (Cocker et al, 2021)
- > Considering how Contextual Safeguarding and other approaches with <18s might inform safeguarding of adults
- > Notice and demonstrate the poor value of current binary approach; support colleagues who are far from practice to see strategic benefit
- > Use your clout – London has power (political and purchasing)

What's helping local areas make the change

- > Clear, credible, explicitly owned local leadership of the agenda
- > Expansive definition of 'partnership' – inc communities
- > 'A system not a service' - A salad not a soup
- > Active knowledge and skills exchange (Cocker et al, 2021)
- > Culture of innovation ('the soft stuff is the hard stuff')
- > Practice informed strategy
- > Collective, place-based problem solving (rather than problem displacement)
- > Building the local case – data, inc people's lived experience

- > **It's about unlearning** not just learning
- > **It's a relational act:** Networks, CoPs, peer support, morale maintenance
- > **Innovation is not linear:** *'the majority of [innovation frameworks] were presented rather like a formula or manual, providing a comforting, but rather misleading, illusion of a pipeline whereby ideas, resources and the full range of prescribed activities could be fed in at one end so that aspired outcomes would flow out at the other'* (Lefevre et al, 2022:10)



Thank you



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- › Transitional Safeguarding (2018) original briefing: <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2018/august/transitional-safeguarding-adolescence-to-adulthood-strategic-briefing-2018/>
- › The role of adult social work & adult safeguarding to the Transitional Safeguarding agenda (2021): https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/5420/67346_dhsc_trans-safe-report_bridging-the-gap_web.pdf
- › Transitional Safeguarding and justice: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/03/Academic-Insights-Holmes-and-Smith-RM.pdf>
- › The relationship between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding (2019): <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/publications/2019/january/safeguarding-during-adolescence-the-relationship-between-contextual-safeguarding-complex-safeguarding-and-transitional-safeguarding-2019/>
- › Systems leadership: <https://thestaffcollege.uk/staff-college-research/systems-leadership-research/>