

7 Minute Briefing



Transitional Safeguarding



What is Transitional Safeguarding?

Transitional Safeguarding is a term that highlights that the needs of young people do not change or stop when they reach 18, despite safeguarding systems for those aged under 18 and over 18 operating to different thresholds, legislative frameworks and eligibility criteria.

Transitional safeguarding recognises that every young person experiences their transition into adulthood differently, and at different ages, according to their individual circumstances, life history, experiences and maturation.

“Those working with adults should be curious about the childhood of the adult they are supporting. And those working with children should be ambitious about the adult they are helping to create.”

Dez Holmes, Director of Research in Practice, 2021

Transitional Safeguarding is a concept for whole system change based on 6 safeguarding principles:

- Empowerment
- Prevention
- Proportionality
- Protection
- Partnership
- Accountability

Key Information



- The children's and adults' safeguarding systems have different ways of approaching things and different procedures. They are governed by different statutory frameworks, which can make the transition to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk. It can also mean it is more challenging for the professionals who are trying to navigate an effective approach to helping them.
- Evidence points to needing to consider a way of working where safeguarding systems and services for children and adults become more aligned, adaptable and responsive to the needs of adolescents and young adults.
- Transitional Safeguarding doesn't mean a section 47 safeguarding enquiry (Children Act 1989) or section 42 safeguarding enquiry (Care Act 2014), it is about safety in a broader sense, not just formal safeguarding enquiries.

- Transitional Safeguarding uses aspects from both adult and child approaches to provide personalised support as a young person moves into adulthood.
- Adolescents may experience a range of risk of harms, some of which are often distinct from those experienced by younger children, and so may require a distinctive safeguarding approach. The risks/harms they may face are also often inter-connected, and can include: sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, homelessness, poor mental health and self-harm, criminal exploitation including gang association, substance misuse.
- Adolescent behaviour and harmful experiences can be seen as 'lifestyle choices', underpinned by a notion that young people freely choose to engage in risky activity and harm, and treating adolescents as having the same capacity to act as adults. While there remains a risk of this happening at times, a lot of work has been undertaken across the system in Sunderland to improve professional understanding and to take a child-centred approach.
- The complexities of safeguarding both children and adults have increased, with issues like violent crime, criminal exploitation, gang culture, domestic abuse, modern slavery, trafficking, and grooming and sexual exploitation. These issues highlight the difficulties we face in safeguarding children transitioning to adulthood.
- Adversity in childhood can make some adolescents particularly vulnerable to harm, with effects that persist into adulthood. Consequently, some adolescents may need immediate support from Adults' Services or may require it later. Research indicates that unresolved trauma can increase risks in adulthood, leading to more challenging lives and potentially higher costs for support later.
- Adolescents approaching 18 can experience a marked difference in support, as there are differences between thresholds / eligibility criteria of children's and adults' safeguarding

Best Practice in Transitional Safeguarding



(Adapted from: [Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews about Transitional Safeguarding: Building an Evidence Base](#), Journal of Adult Protection, 2022)

Direct Work with the Individual: a needs-led, personalised, person-centred approach which is rights-based. All aspects of that individual's situation are acknowledged and taken into account in the safeguarding process. The individual is involved in all aspects of their care and support, and their wishes and preferred outcomes are recorded and considered. When support is declined, practitioners are curious and persistent in seeking ways to engage with the young person/young adult. Actions taken are clearly recorded along with reasons, including legal justification as to why the action was necessary in the circumstances, proportionate to the risk and with regard to the Human Rights Act 1998. Practice considers the history and current context of the young person and their environment, at all times. Practice takes a developmental perspective that is not constrained by age-determined boundaries. It acknowledges the emerging evidence about brain development and its effects on behaviour. Practice is clearly focused on preventing harm, protecting young people/young adults from harm, and enabling them to recover from harm and trauma where this has already occurred. Practice is trauma-informed, strengths-based and outcomes focused, aimed at promoting safety and wellbeing. Practice clearly recognises protected characteristics arising from gender, sexuality, race and disability. Practice recognises the impact on decision-making of coercion and exploitation. Practice is informed by a legally literate understanding of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Assessments are timely

and fulfil statutory requirements. There is evidence of early and proportionate planning. Placements and accommodation provision are suitable.

Having a Team around the Person: Agencies work together across service and geographical boundaries rather than in silos, in order to offer an integrated system of planning and support, recognising the inter-connected nature of harms and risks. Practice is characterised by collaboration, information-sharing and co-location. There is a clearly agreed lead agency and key worker to facilitate and coordinate planning and decision-making. There is early and proportionate sharing of information about risk and regarding the range and level of support required. Practice is legally literate. Child and adult safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately, and considered by relevant child and adult services in partnership, where this will better meet the needs of the child or young adult. Practice is characterised by the use of multi-agency, multi-disciplinary meetings to share information, identify needs and risks, and agree a coordinated plan.

Having organisational support for team members: Practitioners are offered reflective, trauma-informed supervision, to enable them to manage the emotional impact of the work and explore any unconscious bias. Practitioners and managers are offered training to develop their knowledge of and skills for Transitional Safeguarding. Professional and personal relationships and organisational cultures that support joint working are evident at all levels within and between organisations. Practitioners and managers across services have access to specialist advice and guidance. Young people/young adults are involved in the co-design/co-production of services for safeguarding young people. Commissioners, providers and young people/young adults regularly conduct needs analyses and review available services to identify any gaps in provision, ensuring that planning is responsive and evidence-informed. Senior managers demonstrate leadership that spans boundaries, with a life-course approach. There are agreed multi-agency procedures and practice guidance to support Transitional Safeguarding. Caseloads allow for the development of relationship-based practice

Governance: Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) routinely exercises its statutory mandate by seeking assurance regarding how Transitional Safeguarding is being developed and embedded in policy and practice locally. The SSAB works closely with the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and the Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) (Sunderland's Community Safety Partnership) to ensure system-wide, coordinated oversight of Transitional Safeguarding locally. Regular case audits of transitional arrangements are conducted. Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews are used to develop and continually improve arrangements for care leavers and for young people experiencing health issues, vulnerabilities or complexities.

Reflection for Practitioners



Reflecting on Transitional Safeguarding, think about your practice and identify at least one demonstrable strength in relation to:

- taking a [contextual approach](#) to safeguarding and risk for young people
- enabling a more developmental approach, supporting a smoother transition into adulthood
- offering a trauma-informed response to young people experiencing harm
- actively responding to issues of structural inequality, disproportionality and injustice
- treating young people as experts, engaging them in meaningful coproduction.

(Taken from [Bridging the gap: Transitional Safeguarding and the role of social work with adults](#) (Department of Health & Social Care, 2021)).

Further Resources

- [What is Transitional Safeguarding and why does it matter?](#) Research in Practice animation

- [Safeguarding During Adolescence - the Relationship Between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding](#) (Research In Practice briefing, 2019)
- [LGA Transitional Safeguarding Resources](#) (Local Government Association/Partners in Care & Health 'one-stop shop' of relevant resources: audio-visuals, briefings, Safeguarding Adults Boards' resources, webinar presentations and publications)
- [Transitional Safeguarding Blog Recording](#) (Dez Holmes 2023)
- [Transitional Safeguarding Padlet](#) (Research in Practice)
- [Special issue of 'Practice' journal, focussing on Transitional Safeguarding](#) (2021/22)
- [Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews about Transitional Safeguarding: Building an evidence base](#) (Journal of Adult Protection, 2022)
- [Transitional Safeguarding: A Knowledge Briefing for Health Professionals](#) (Research In Practice briefing, 2023)
- [Bridging the gap: Transitional Safeguarding and the role of social work with adults](#) (Department of Health & Social Care, 2021)
- [Transitional Safeguarding - Adolescence to Adulthood: Strategic Briefing](#) (Research in Practice, 2018)
- [Transitional Safeguarding and Youth/Criminal Justice](#) (Holmes & Smith, 2022)
- [Making Safeguarding Personal: 7-Minute Briefing](#) (Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board)
- [Complex Adult Risk Management \(CARM\) Fact Sheet](#) and [CARM Referral Documentation](#) (Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board). CARM is a multi-agency approach to manage risks that may arise for adults who can make decisions for themselves, but who are at risk of serious harm or death from: Self-Neglect; risk taking behaviour, chaotic lifestyles or refusal of services.
- [Partnership Reduction, Exploitation and Missing \(PREM\) Briefing](#) PREM is an all age, police led, multiagency, outcome focussed forum. The purpose of PREM is to reduce the risk of exploitation and vulnerabilities associated with missing episodes through a collaborative partnership approach.
- [Transition from Children's to Adult's Services Quality Standard](#) (NICE 2016)
- [Transition from Children's to Adult's Services for Young People using Health or Social Care Services Guidance](#) (NICE 2016)