



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Safeguarding adolescents

Hi, my name is Beverley and I work in the corporate parenting team with young people who are looked after. From my work with young people I have seen first-hand the complexity of adolescents safeguarding. And as a practitioner this can sometimes feel overwhelming.

It has really helped me to always see the young person as a child first and have an understanding that their behaviour often comes from the result of some form of trauma.

For example, I have been working with a young woman aged 17 years old who is in a semi-independent placement, who I will call Cassy. Cassy is in care because her parents were unable to meet her emotional needs. Cassy goes missing 3 times a week. Sometimes up to 48 hours and on other occasions she misses curfew and returns to her placement in the morning or late afternoon. We have created a multi-agency partnership around Cassy which includes her keyworker from the placement, an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate because of the violence she has experienced from her boyfriend, a Youth Offending officer, the CSE police officer and Child Adolescent Mental Health worker. In professional meetings, we use reflective practice to check out our attitudes, values and beliefs to ensure these do not impact on our professional relationships with each other or our relationship with Cassy.

We work with Cassy around balancing her right to her own decision making and her need to develop her own self identify. While at the same time recognising, she is still a child and that the trauma she has experienced has affected her brain development and her emotional wellbeing, which may mean she makes constrained choices.

Cassy attends the strategy meetings called as a result of her going missing and together the practitioners and Cassy explore and debate the different views about the increased vulnerability to her being abused and exploited. Through this process Cassy is able to recognise the concern of practitioners and together we agree a plan to reduce the reasons Cassy goes missing. The plan is directly informed by what Cassy will find the most helpful and meaningful.

Hello, my name is Helen and I am a safeguarding lead at a school in Waltham Forest. Safeguarding adolescents is complex and can include young people who do harm to others. We recently supported a boy who came to our school as a result of him harming another child at his previous school. Troy (not his really name) was also subject to a child protection plan because of the incident.

Before Troy was integrated in to our school we had a professionals meeting which included myself and his new class teacher, the harmful sexual behaviour lead from the local authority, his allocated social worker, and in consultation with his mother.

Together as partnership, we recognised both the harm that Troy had done but that he was a child himself. Initially there was some concern about how we could support Troy but as a partnership we worked together reflecting on our own thoughts and feelings about this in safe environment. We were then able to come to an agreed approach to our safety planning and ensure we used positive language and avoided creating stigma for Troy.

The safety plan took a Think Family approach, recognising Troy in the context of his family and took account of how trauma that Troy has previously experienced affected his development.

Troy responded well to the support we all provided and in partnership with his family the risk for Troy has been significant reduced resulting in Troy being stepped down from a child protection plan to a child in need plan. Troy is really enjoying his new school and is developing new friends and growing in confidence

Hello, my name is Francis and I am the head of youth justice for the local authority and my role is all about safeguarding adolescents. The practice guidance is about the everyday practice of my service and the risks and challenges that young people and their families face.

In the guide we include the seven principles to improve our response to adolescent risk which are applicable to all practitioners and promote a child focused, trauma informed approach which recognises that children can face risks both from within their homes from family members and externally in their school, friendships groups, neighbourhoods etc.

In my service we need to balance our approach between safeguarding and enforcement and good example of this is our work with Tina.

Tina is 16 years old and has mild learning disabilities which means she can struggle to understand the consequences of her actions. Tina lives with her mum. Tina does not have any contact with her father. Tina's mother experienced domestic abuse from a former partner when Tina was young which has impacted on both mum and Tina's emotional wellbeing.

Tina and her mum describe their relationship as close; however there are concerns from professionals about some aspect of mum's parenting particularly in terms of providing boundaries and guidance on relationships and friendships.

Tina is on a referral order for assault, following a fight with another girl. Recently Tina was found in a house in a city outside of London with adult males and a lot of drugs. Tina was initially arrested and taken into police custody. Her mum had not reported her missing. Tina's view was that she was in a relationship with the men who were exploiting her

Tina was placed on a child protection plan in relation to the concerns about her mum's parenting abilities and the exploitation that Tina was experiencing.

The multi-agency network working with Tina and her mum took a Think Family approach and undertook an assessment using a contextualised safeguarding approach. Tina and her mum were actively engaged in the child protection conference alongside the Youth Offending Service, her social worker, police from the CSE team, her school and any other professionals. At the conference agencies were able to explore with Tina and her mum their concerns for Tina. This included mum's parenting which included work around risk, relationships and friendships with Tina. Mum and Tina have been referred for Functional Family Therapy to explore how mum and Tina could communicate more effectively together and create different boundaries and expectations in their relationship.

The Youth Offending Officer and social worker have worked individually and together using motivational interviewing in a learning style and different tools and techniques that suited Tina's needs to help her explore her reasons for her committing the assault and going missing from school and home. Tina was supported in understanding the exploitation she had experienced, and this led to her making a decision to end her friendships with some of her friends who were continuing to have contact with the same men that had exploited her.

Tina made a request to change schools as she felt she was being targeted by a group of girl pupils. The school agreed to her transfer to alternative provision based on Tina's wishes.

Tina and her mum continue to build on their relationship and Tina has not been involved with gangs or any criminal activities and her referral order will soon come to an end.

Hello, my name is Hannah and I am a police officer working in Waltham Forest and Newham

In my work it is essential that I take a safeguarding lens to our work with young people involved in crime and recognise that young people are often being exploited and are a victim in situations where they may first be viewed only as a perpetrator of crime

David's case highlights the complexity of these situations where someone can be a victim and perpetrator at the same time and the importance of recognising that boys are exploited too.

David lives with his parents and when he was younger, his mum experienced domestic abuse from his dad. As a result, David was made subject to a child protection plan for neglect.

When David was 14 years old, he was groomed by a gang and started going missing from home. He was then forced to sexually assault a young girl in front of a group of other young boys and men.

The girl told her parents and David was arrested. Initially the police treated David as a perpetrator. When the girl and David were separately interviewed, they both described David being forced to assault her by the gang members present.

A Think Family approach was taken and all the agencies supporting David individually and alongside his parents worked positively together using a trauma informed and contextualised safeguarding approach. This included children social care, the CSE police team, school, functional family therapy and the CSE support service. The CSE support service took the lead on advocating for David to be treated as victim and this led to those who forced David to assault the girl being charged. David was able to explore how he had been groomed by the gang, his gang involvement and how he felt about the assault. With support David was able to make positive choices about not wanting to be gang involved. David had always had good school attendance and none of the gang members attended his school, so this was a positive place of safety for David. The girl that David had assaulted did not attend the same school.

Through functional family therapy David and his parents developed their relationship and addressed issues of communication, boundary setting and respectful behaviours.

The assault had taken place in a local park and the multi-agency partnership always worked with the management of the park and local neighbourhood policing teams to look at ways of making the park safer.

The gang targeted the girl for reporting them to the police and her and her family made the decision to move out of the area and were supported by agencies to do this.