



Safer Seven

On: Transitional Safeguarding



1. What is “Transitional Safeguarding”?

Transitional Safeguarding describes the need for, “an approach to 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”.

It focuses on safeguarding young people, from adolescence into adulthood, recognising this period of transition will be experienced differently by young people at different times.

3. Why is different to safeguarding children?

Transitional safeguarding uses aspects from both adult and child approaches in organisations, to offer more tailored support as a young person moves into adulthood.

It does not expect that all young adults experiencing risk will have this removed or lessened by formal services in the same way that safeguarding children focuses on explicit protection from harm.

5. So why is this important?

- The safeguarding system does not always work well for adolescents, often designed to meet the needs of younger children.
- Adolescents are thought to need distinct services and approaches in line with their developmental needs, recognising that harm and its effects don’t stop at 18.
- Many of the environmental and structural factors that increase a child’s vulnerability continue into adulthood, resulting in unmet needs and costly later interventions.
- The children’s and adults’ safeguarding systems have developed from different theories, come under different laws, and have different processes as a result.
- This makes transitions to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk and mean that young people entering adulthood may experience a ‘cliff-edge’ in terms of support.

2. Why does it matter?

- Transitional safeguarding is about safety in the more general sense, not just formal safeguarding investigations.
- The Care Act 2014 definition for safeguarding adults can apply to young people of age 18 and above, just as the children’s legislation can apply to those under 18.
- If a young adult (18 or over) meets the Care Act definition, formal safeguarding duties will apply. If they are still receiving children’s services, they are considered to have needs for care and support, even if these are not eligible needs under the Care Act – safeguarding adult duties apply.

4. Linking to Adult safeguarding

- The Making Safeguarding Personal approach, set out in the Care Act, means recognising an adult’s rights to make decisions that may seem unwise where mental capacity is not in question.
- It is about understanding that adulthood gives degrees of personal responsibility, and respecting people’s preferred outcomes.
- It is about risk enablement taking account of an individual’s preferences, history, and circumstances to achieve a proportionate tolerance of accepted risk.
- Many young people who received a service through children’s services will not meet the criteria for Adult Social Services intervention.

6. What could this mean for young people becoming adults

- An adolescent engaged in ‘county lines’ or other gang-associated harm, may find they receive a criminal justice response rather than being recognised as a victim of criminal exploitation.
- A young adult experiencing sexual exploitation may not get a safeguarding response unless they have a mental health diagnosis or diagnosed learning disability.
- A young person who is subject to a child protection plan may find that support stops abruptly as they turn 18, despite their experiences of maltreatment leaving them just as vulnerable as a child leaving care who would be entitled to ongoing support.
- A young adult experiencing domestic abuse and poor mental health may be offered little or no support for their own safety unless the circumstances become critical.

7. Further information: Research in Practice have published two documents:

- [Transitional safeguarding & the role of adult social work](#) & [Transitional safeguarding & adolescence to adulthood](#)
- The Department of Health and Social Care have published a document transitional safeguarding:
- [Bridging the Gap: Transitional Safeguarding](#)