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Mind the Gap: developing a Transitional Safeguarding approach for adolescents into adulthood

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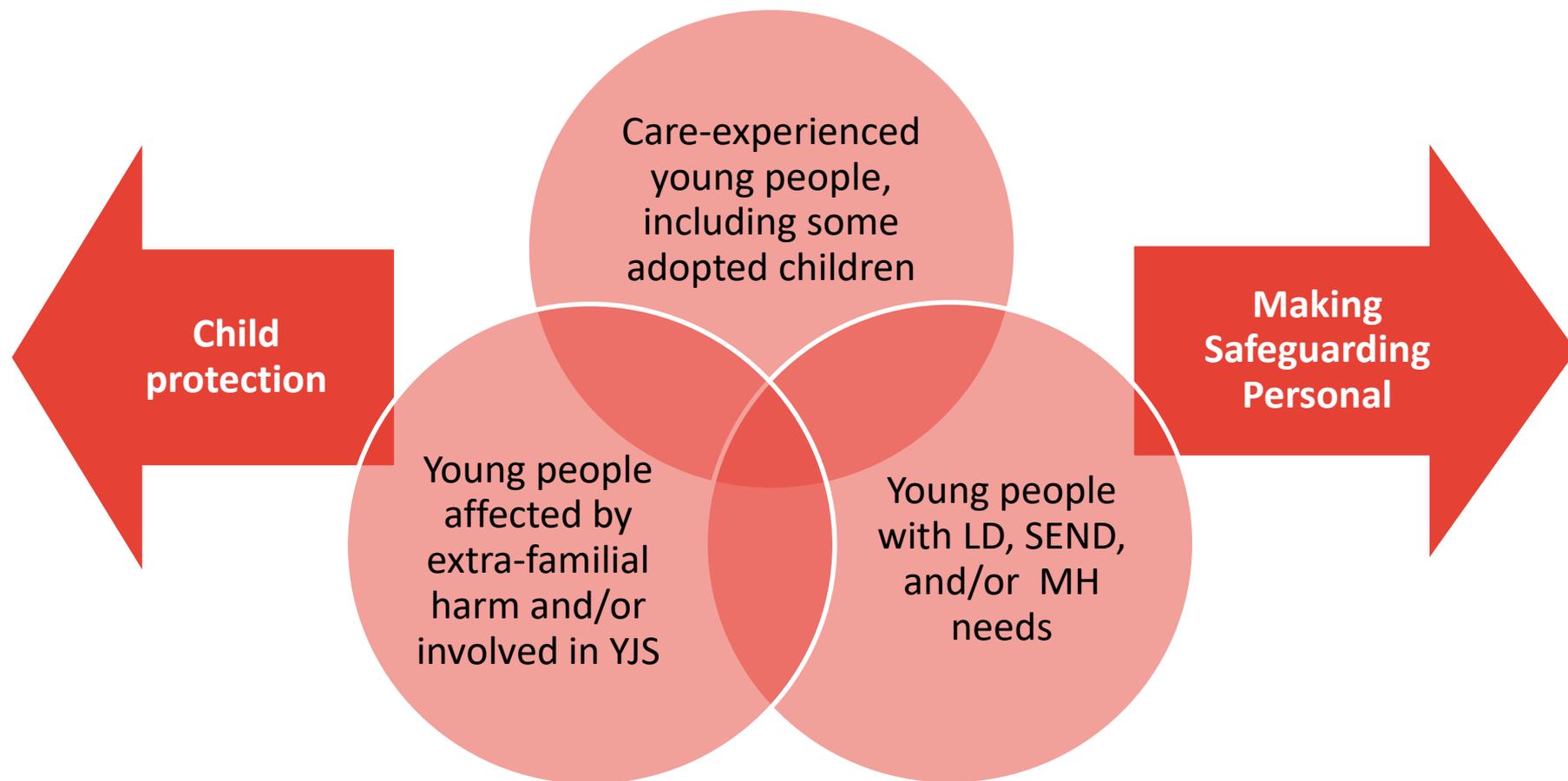


The case for change

(Holmes, 2021)

- › Adolescents may have **distinct** safeguarding needs - often 'contextual' / extra-familial and underpinned by complex social and biological drivers
- › **Harm and its effects** do not abruptly end at 18; **the brain** may continue developing until mid-20s...(Sawyer *et al*, 2018); Prior *et al*, 2011) but support may stop at 18
- › People don't fit into neat boxes! Different types of harm; vulnerability / resilience are situational and dynamic
- › **Transition** to adulthood is process not an event, we may need care and support without having Care & Support needs™.
- › Promoting **resilience** and dynamic **developmental** needs
- › There are **moral** and **economic** drivers for a reimagined safeguarding system which is contextual, transitional and relational
- › **Boundary-spanning**: practice, policy, mindset

Mind the gap...



- › ***‘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’*** (Holmes & Smale, 2018)
- › Not simply transition planning for people moving from CSC → ASC. It 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.
- › **Extends far beyond statutory duties** - highlights the holistic nature of effective safeguarding. This involves engaging commissioned services in a way that allows them to work creatively and flexibly.
- › Not a prescribed model. A **principles-led approach** to policy and practice, being developed in different ways according to local circumstances.

Systems leadership and boundary-spanning

- > Boundary-spanning - the practices of *'reaching across borders, margins, or sections to build relationships, interconnections and interdependencies in order to manage complex problems'* (Williams, 2002)
- > *systems leadership is characterised by two key attributes: it is a **collective** form of leadership, ... 'leadership as participation' rather than 'leadership as performance', and although it is individuals and not systems that produce change, systems leadership by definition is the concerted effort of many people working together at different places in the system and at different levels, rather than of single leaders acting unilaterally. Secondly, systems leadership **crosses boundaries**, both physical and virtual, existing simultaneously in multiple dimensions. It therefore extends individual leaders well beyond the usual limits of their formal responsibilities and authority.* (Ghate, Lewis & Welbourn, 2013)

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.

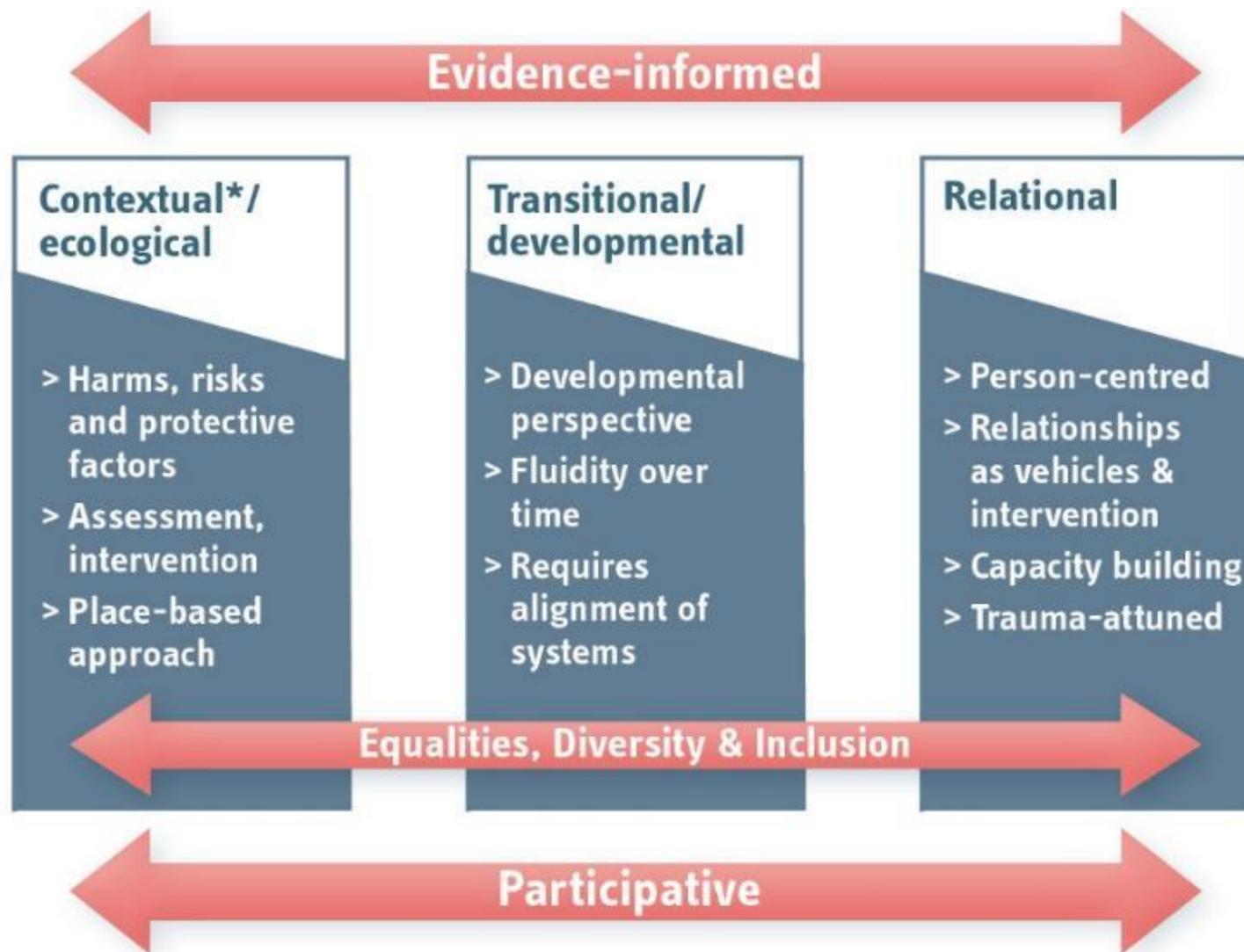
(Max, care-experienced young adult)

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)

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)



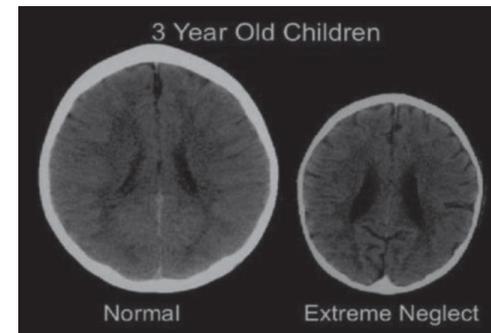
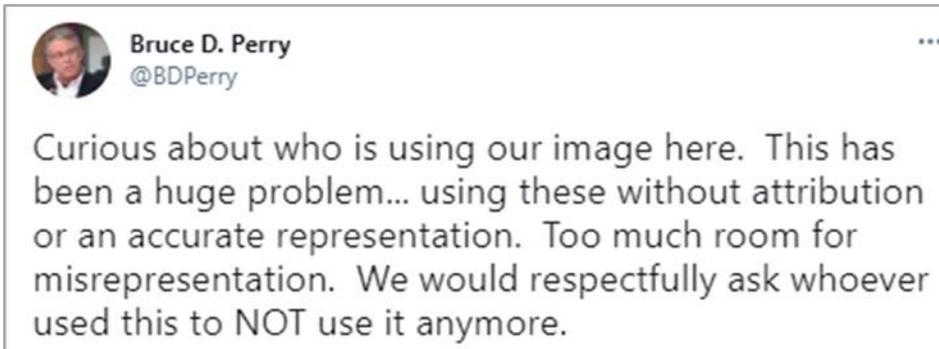
See Firmin's work:

www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

Thinking critically about ACEs

- > Does not attend to wider social / structural factors eg poverty, homelessness, racism or hunger.
- > Other factors overlooked eg bereavement; people's individual experiences of trauma are significant. (Edwards *et al*, 2017)
- > 'a view of people as bodies and brains to be managed and treated rather than citizens who should be represented and engaged' (Edwards *et al*, 2018).
- > **The evidence base is not as clear as popularity suggests.** (EIF, 2020)
- > "Working with" important in engaging families rather than "doing to".
- > Risk of young person/parent becoming fatalistic rather than empowered.
- > 'Serious concerns about the ethics of some ACE screening practices (inc routine enquiry)' (EIF, 2020)
- > *Moral issues?*
- > *Inconsistency?*
- > ***Whole org lens needed***

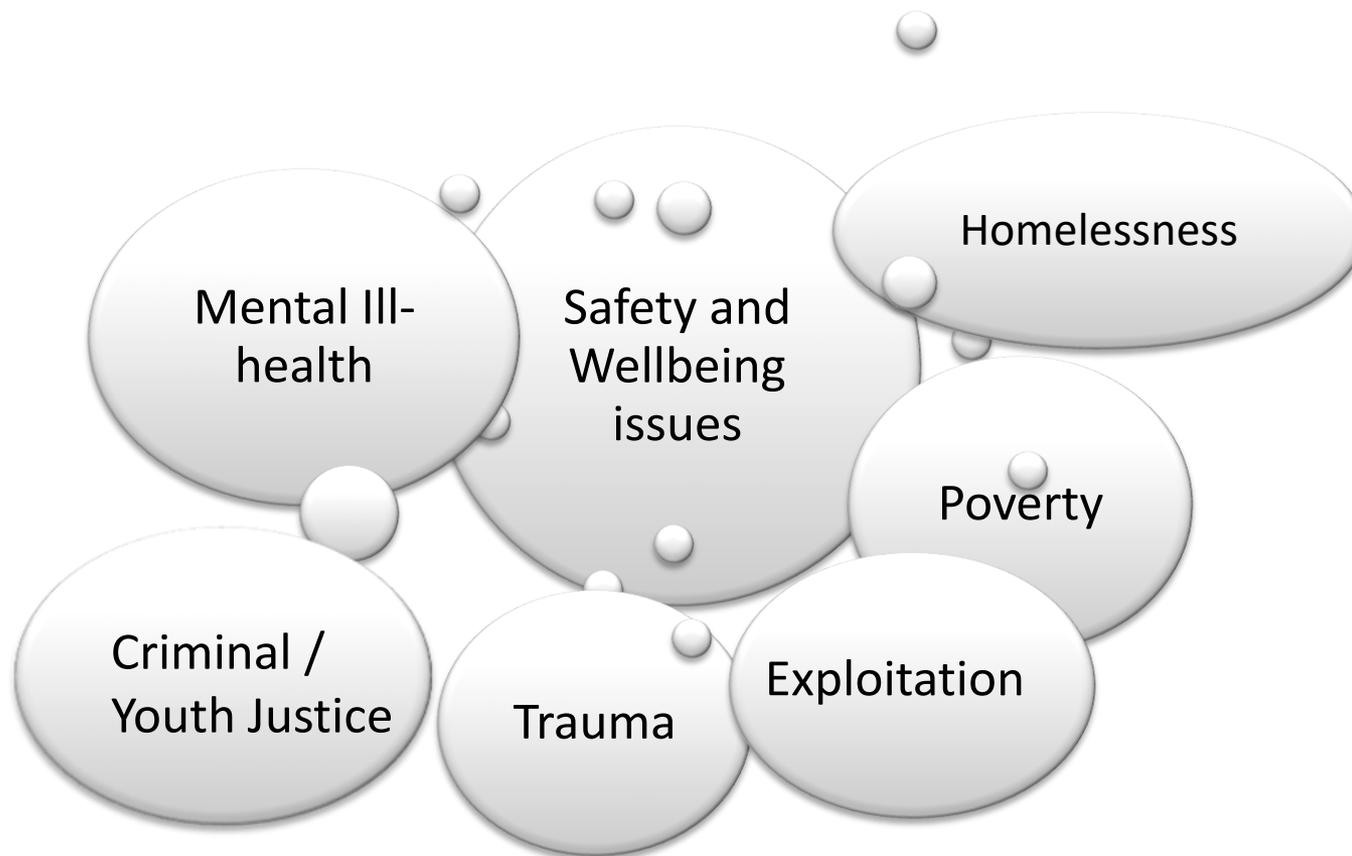
- > *neuroscientific claims ... appear to be operating as powerful 'trump cards' in what is actually very contentious terrain, suppressing vital moral debate regarding the shape of state intervention.*
- > *the 'evangelism' behind claims that 'early years determine brain development...the claims are misleading and fallacious ... the assumption that later experiences necessarily have only minor effects is clearly wrong' (Rutter, 2002: 13)*
- > *Focusing on parental culpability without meaningful help: less practical aid, more parenting programmes (Furedi, 2001)*



Busting myths and misconceptions

- › *If an adult says they don't want safeguarding support, we can't act...* This doesn't mean we 'walk away' (Cooper, 2019). Making Safeguarding Personal and Transitional Safeguarding both emphasise curious, tenacious, relationship-based practice.
- › *The CA2014 stops us from working with a person unless they have Care & Support needs...* The prevention and wellbeing principles are key here (DHSC, 2020). Not all support to be safe = statutory Safeguarding.
- › *But in the eyes of the law...* The law reflects common understandings at a given point in time. See CSE / marital rape.
- › *We can't afford to do different...* We can't afford not to...

Interconnected issues require an integrated response



Interconnectedness of harms and adversities requires a highly integrated system of support, whereby attention is paid to childhood/adolescent experiences. Commissioning may be a key lever for change

Spot the difference...

- > *The Mental Capacity Act 2005... confirms that it should be assumed that an adult (**aged 16 or over**) has full legal capacity to make decisions for themselves (the right to autonomy) unless it can be shown that they lack capacity to make a decision for themselves. (MCA Code of Practice, 2007)*
- > *CCE: Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person **under the age of 18** into any sexual/criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited **even if the activity appears consensual**. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.’ (Home Office, 2018)*

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- Males under 17
- Females under 17
- Males 18 to 24
- Females 18 to 24
- Males 25 to 34
- Females 25 to 34
- Males 35 to 44
- Females 35 to 44
- Males 45 to 54
- Females 45 to 54
- Males 55 to 64
- Females 55 to 64
- Males 65+
- Females 65+

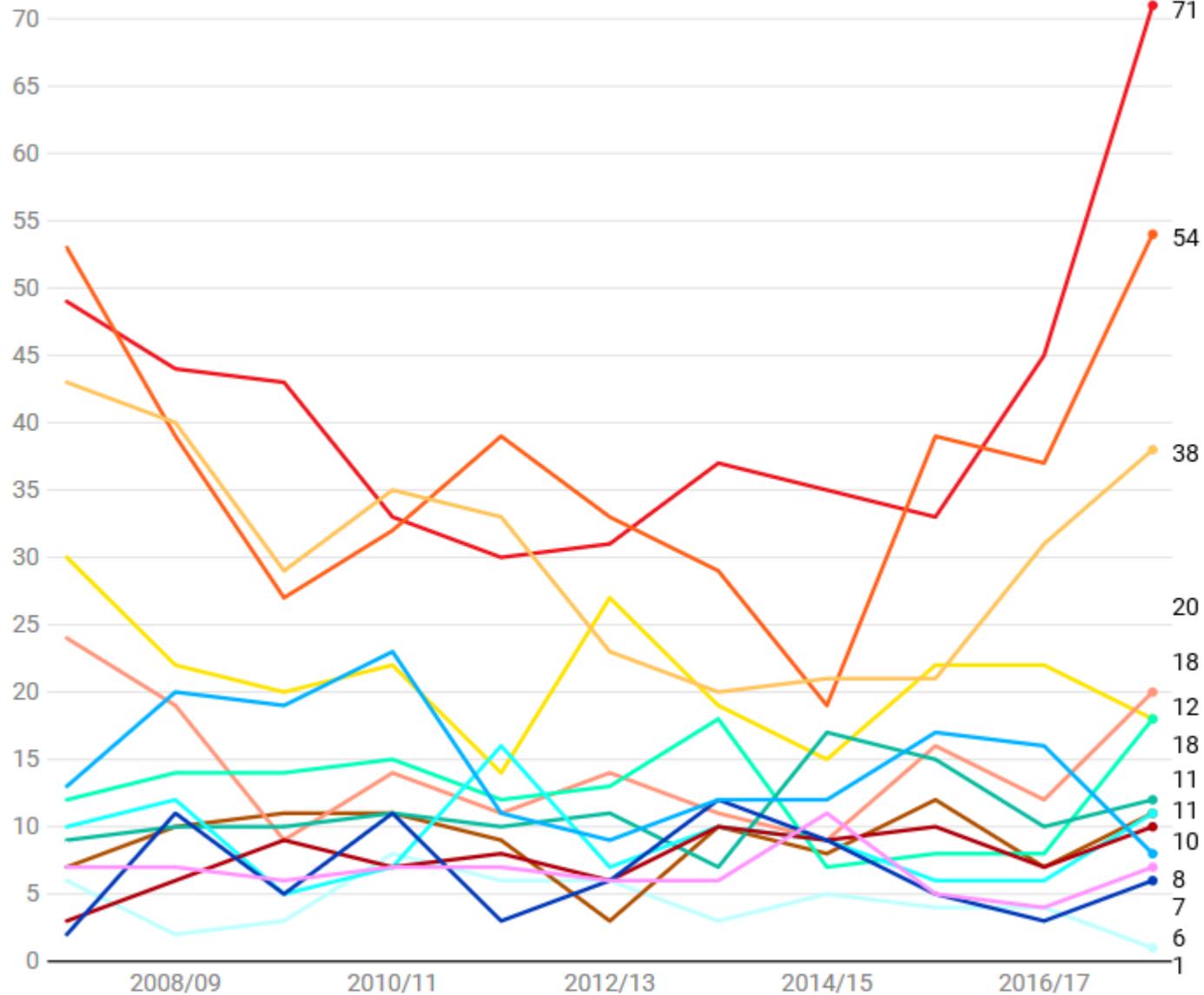


Chart: The Conversation UK • Source: Office for National Statistics • [Get the data](#)

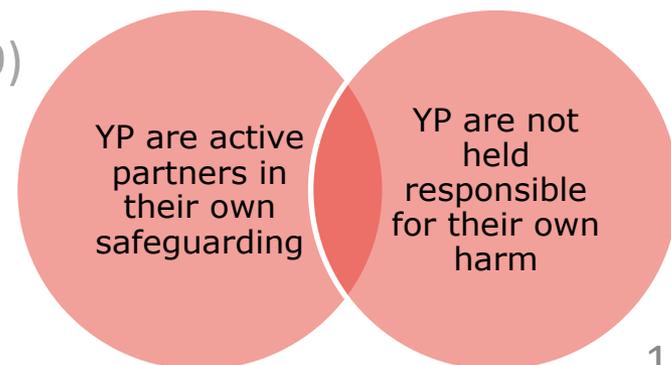
Vulnerability and justice

	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%

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.

With not to: Resilience and participation

- > **Relationships** are paramount to promoting resilience. (Coleman, 2014)
- > **Self-efficacy** - commonly associated with resilience, is an area that professionals can exercise some influence (positively or negatively!)
- > Children's **rights to protection and participation are mutually dependent and indivisible.** (UNCRC)
- > “[User] Involvement supports development of effective safeguarding practice, informed by people whose self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience can be developed through that involvement.” (Droy and Lawson, 2017)
- > ‘Both/and not either/or’ (Lefevre *et al*, 2019)
- > Harm reduction principles?
(Hickle and Hallett, 2016)



- › Deliberative learning from other services and parts of the wider system where transitional approaches are more embedded (SEND?)
- › ‘Drawing down’ best practice from safeguarding adults into safeguarding adolescents: rights-based approaches, MSP, wellbeing focus...**Making Safeguarding Personal for young people?** (Cocker et al, 2021)
- › Considering how Contextual Safeguarding and other innovations in children’s safeguarding might inform safeguarding of young adults: place-based, partnership approach
- › Reflect on how safeguarding responses can overlook – even exacerbate – vulnerability...iatrogenic interventions?
- › Commissioning for complexity – Human Learning Systems
- › Build local capacity for system redesign, analysis, cost-benefit

Money matters

- › The economic context makes innovation as difficult as it is essential
- › The current approach isn't great value...
- › 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

Others seeking to innovate in this space

- › Hants & Portsmouth MARM framework
- › Birmingham Preparing for Adulthood
- › Southend Transitional Exploitation model
- › Hackney – SAB, CSP & CSP owned
- › Newcastle Sexual exploitation hub (in ASC)
- › North East regional protocols
- › Sheffield, Suffolk, Camden, Warwickshire, Brent....

What existing opps can we leverage? ICS developments, changes to probation, CSC Review...

What's helping local areas make the change

- > Clear, credible, explicitly owned local leadership of the agenda
- > Expansive definition of 'partnership'
- > 'A system not a service'
- > Meaningful engagement with communities
- > 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

Safeguarding – a verb not a noun

- › Binary notions of child/adulthood, victims/perpetrators, vulnerability / capacity can mean some people can ‘slip through the net’ or face a ‘cliff-edge’.
- › Many environmental / structural factors persist into adulthood, resulting in unmet need.
- › Investing in preventative work to promote safety and wellbeing can help in avoiding costs (financial and human) of later intervention.
- › Resilience, self-efficacy, social connectedness requires relational practice (and concordant policy).
- › Does *not* propose all young adults facing risk should be protected via statutory means, nor does it propose a paternalistic approach to safeguarding young adults.
- › **This is a systems leadership issue – Complexity, Coherence & Courage**
- › **If not now, then when? If not you, then who?**

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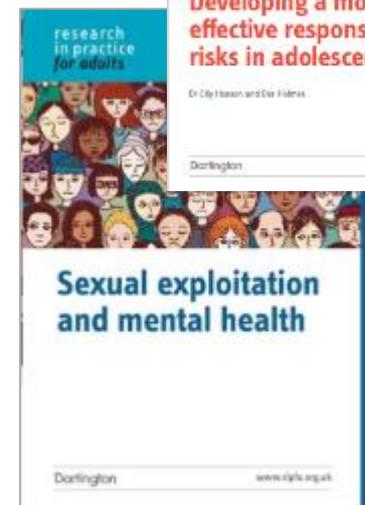
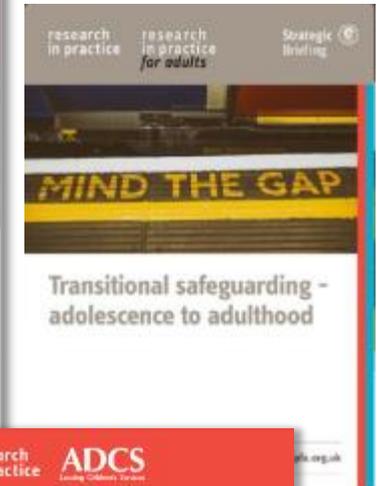
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Thank you

- › 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
- › 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/>

Questions for reflection - leaders

- › What do we *really* know about our adolescents, and their lives as they become young adults? How are we planning for their needs?
- › What do / would young people and practitioners say about the needs we are not currently meeting? Who gets turned away?
- › What learning is there (from CSPRs/SCRs, SARs, DHRs, wider data, people's lived experience) around how our approach to safeguarding across transitions could be improved?
- › What opportunities / levers / existing work can support this agenda?
- › What leadership behaviours do we as leaders demonstrate to enable courageous, creative and coherent practice and services for these people?

- > How can we move from an individualised approach to safeguarding to one that promotes safe spaces and contexts for young people?
- > How are practitioners supported (inc role-modelling) to use evidence in their work? What would help?
- > How can practitioners ensure practice is participative – as much voice and choice as possible – in the context of safeguarding?
- > How can we avoid presuming ‘choice’ – and inadvertently victim-blaming - whilst still honouring young people’s agency?
- > What support do practitioners need – and from who – to practice in this nuanced and ethical way?
- > How do all of the above apply in the current context?