

**A Quick Guide to the Adolescent Safety Framework**

**What is the Adolescent Safety Framework?**

The Adolescent Safety Framework (ASF) is a pioneering, contextualised safeguarding approach to managing risk to children and young people across Plymouth.

**What is contextual safeguarding?**

Contextual safeguarding is a child welfare approach to understanding and responding to young people’s experiences of harm outside their families and within their communities. The approach recognises that children and young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of different social contexts (including neighbourhoods, schools and peer groups). Threats to child welfare include:

* Child Sexual exploitation
* Peer-on-Peer exploitation
* Child Criminal Exploitation
* Modern Slavery & Trafficking
* Missing young people
* Radicalisation
* Gang Activity
* Online exploitation

For more information on contextual safeguarding please go to <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

**What is the aim of the ASF?**

The ASF aims to provide a co-ordinated mechanism for professionals to effectively assess, plan and intervene through the lens of child welfare, in relation to contextual exploitation, by engaging a range of community partners to keep children safe within the spaces and places they live.

**How does the ASF aim to increase Safety for Children and Young People who experience harm outside the family?**

The ASF is a strength based multi-agency safeguarding approach to managing risk that is primarily found outside of the home, thereby supporting young people aged 11-18 years (up to 25 years for Care Leavers) and their families to increase safety. The approach is focused on our collective capacity as professionals and communities – not just the family – to keep young people safe from exploitation and harm.

The framework provides a single and holistic approach to referral and assessment via the safer me assessment of individual children, peer groups, neighbourhoods, locations or persons of concern.

* Assessment focuses on where the risk comes from and considers adolescent development, impact of trauma and collective responsibility to protect.
* Assessment analyses contextual risks outside of the family as well as identifying strengths to **maximise the participation of the young person, their families and social networks**.
* Practitioners complete relevant sections of the Safer Me Assessment appropriate to the pathway and/ or context they are concerned about and that they consider to have the widest impact on degree of safety.

**The Exploitation Hub** provides coordination through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which will ensure timely individual safeguarding, threshold stability, analysis and support. This also **enables different contexts** (people, situations and locations), as well as individual children, to be referred into Children’s Social Care with the same consideration to threshold.

The ASF uses existing safeguarding frameworks and thresholds within Early Help and Children’s Social Care to ensure safety planning via an**Individual Pathway**. It provides an alternative approach within Early Help, Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection meetings to focus on extra-familial harm. Safer Me meetings take place at an early help and child in need level with Safer Me Plus meetings taking place at a child protection level. The meetings adopt a collaborative and strengths-based relational approach.

Intervention is targeted at a wider level on the context where the abuse has occurred – creating and increasing safety in the places and spaces where young people spend their time through partnerships with the wider community and agencies. This is achieved through planning via the **Context Pathway** in Peer Group, Neighbourhood (Location) and School Context Conferences. Adult Persons of Concern will continue to be discussed via the MACE. These forums are not designed to focus on individual planning but intervening to increase the safety for young people by focusing on locations, environments, activity, groups and persons of concern

**What do I do if I have concerns about an individual child or young person where the risks are external to the home?**

Individual assessment, planning and intervention will still take place for children and young people, but alongside responding to the needs within the family, there will be increased focus on risks and influence for that young person outside of their family. [The Safer Me Assessment](https://devoncc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/PublicDocs/Education/EfmEtPBr9BFFghg8akWYI2EBH9JBZRIH9wI2qkTf3gGvpw?e=BcO5FI) will be a key document in terms of understanding the broader picture of contextual risk. A safer me approach to will be taken where the risks to the young person are predominantly external – that is, when the home and parents/carers are doing everything they can to protect their child.

* **Safer Me Early Help** reflects an Early Help approach to responding to need where the harm is identified as outside the family home.
* **Safer Me Child In Need** reflects a Child in Need Approach to responding to need where the harm is identified as outside the family home.
* **Safer Me Child in Care Meetings** are a response where the harm is identified as outside the placement home for a Child in the care of the Local Authority.
* **Safer Me Plus** reflects a Child Protection Conference approach to responding to significant harm where the harm is identified as outside the family home.

The processes and procedures that underpin these different levels of response will largely remain the same. The difference will be the focus of the discussion to shift to the issues external to the home. That is not to say difficulties within the family should not be considered as there will be an interplay between the two that needs to be understood.

**What do I do if I have concerns about a location/peer group & the risks are external to the home?**

If your concern is about a location or peer group, refer the relevant context into MASH using the relevant section of the Safer Me Assessment. This will then be sorted and allocated on the basis of need by the Exploitation Hub, and a decision will be made as to whether it needs to proceed to a context conference. The conferences are strategic and operational meetings to co-ordinate a response to enhance the safety of the school, neighbourhood or peer group from the exploitation issue.

In relation to **Persons of Concern** complete the persons of concern section of the Safer Me assessment and refer into MASH.