



Transitional Safeguarding Strategy 2025 - 2027



“Children and adult services should be adapted so adolescents have an opportunity to learn how to take responsibility for their own care. An overlap period between services should be considered so the young person can receive support and advice on how to navigate adult services before having to take the responsibility on suddenly and independently”

Youth Forum & Barnardo's Report 2024-2025

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Executive Summary

Transitional Safeguarding is a national priority that recognises the need for a more coherent, developmentally informed approach to safeguarding children as they move between services, approach adulthood and experience transition as young adults. This strategy sets out our shared commitment across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to embed Transitional Safeguarding into core business, ensuring that safeguarding and support does not stop at 18 and that services are responsive to the realities of children and young adult's lives.

We are aligning with the national drive to strengthen relationships between children's and adult services, breaking down silos and building a more integrated safeguarding system. This strategy reflects our ambition to create a culture where children and young adults are not only supported through transition but are equal partners in shaping the services that affect them.

It outlines:

- A clear definition of Transitional Safeguarding and why it matters.
- Strategic objectives that reflect both national learning and local priorities.
- A focus on vulnerable groups and contextual risks, including those outside the home.
- Insights from safeguarding reviews and lived experiences of young people.
- A cross-sector pledge to collaboration, accountability, and early intervention.
- Governance structures and mechanisms to measure impact and drive improvement.

This is a strategic framework for change that places children and young adults at the centre, values their voice, and builds a safeguarding system that is inclusive, joined up, and fit for the future.



Introduction

In March 2024, Transitional Safeguarding was identified as a priority by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board following a staff self-assessment audit that revealed gaps in professional knowledge and practice. Concerns focused on young adults leaving children's services who, despite ongoing unmet needs, did not meet eligibility for support under the Care Act 2014. In response, a dedicated cross-sector workstream was launched to develop this strategy, aligning with the national drive to improve safeguarding and support during the transition into adulthood. By April 2025, this became a shared strategic priority across both the Safeguarding Adults and Children's Partnership Boards. For the purpose of this strategy, **children** are defined as those under 18, and **young adults** as those aged 18-25, in line with legislation.

Transitions based solely on age rather than developmental readiness can leave young adults more vulnerable and unsupported. These challenges are not of their choosing but are shaped by systems and thresholds that do not reflect the realities of their lives. Adultification bias, particularly affecting marginalised groups, can further obscure their need for protection. The impact of intersectionality, where overlapping identities shape each individual's experience of risk, exclusion, and access to support compounds these vulnerabilities. The Boards and partners recognise that age is not always an indicator of a person's ability to function and be safe and are committed to working together across services to support safe, successful transitions into adulthood.

In developing this strategy, the Boards and partners acknowledge the need to move away from traditional safeguarding approaches. Central to Transitional Safeguarding is the formation of strong, trusted relationships, recognising that consistent, relational practice is key to building safety, resilience, and continuity of support. Transitional Safeguarding offers a holistic developmental model that promotes integrated, person-centred practice for children and young adults up to age 25.

This strategy calls for a cultural and structural change within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, enabling services to respond proactively and flexibly to evolving individual needs rather than rigid legal boundaries that lead to fragmented care and increased risk of harm. Underpinned by legislation such as the Children Act (1989), the Care Act (2014) and guided by Working Together (2023), partners are committed to strengthening coordinated approaches and shared responsibility in safeguarding practice to ensure continuity of care and protection through childhood into early adulthood.

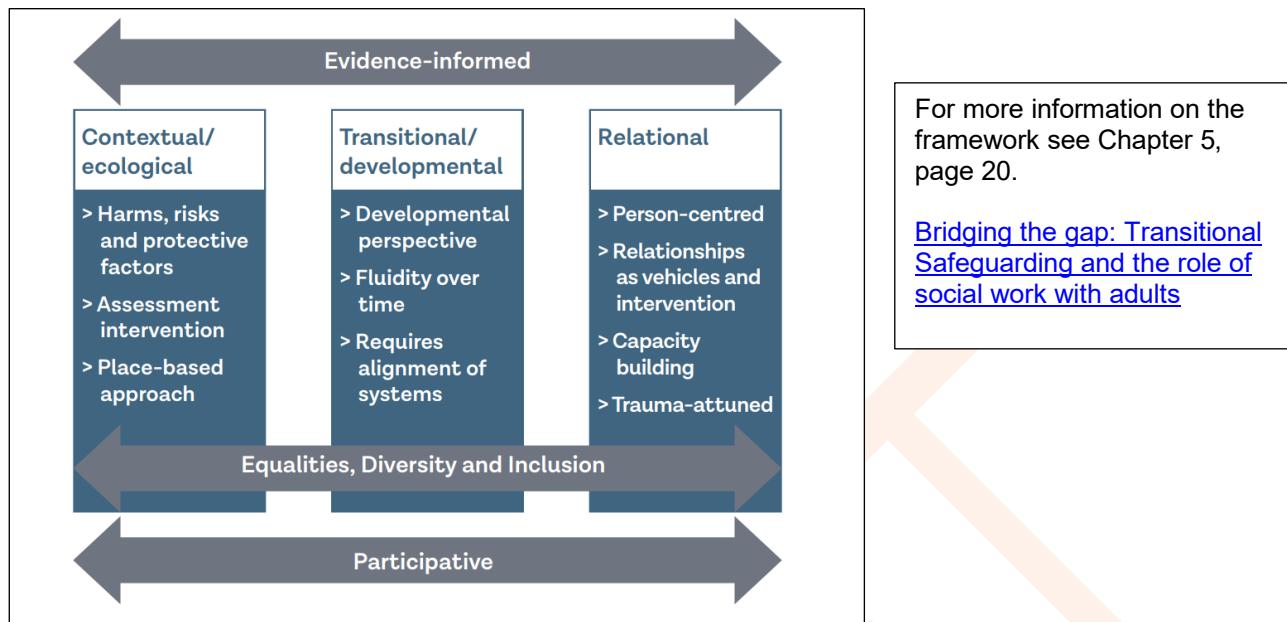
Definitions

Transitional Safeguarding

While there is no nationally agreed definition of Transitional Safeguarding, the widely cited quote by Holmes and Smale (2018) is commonly used to encapsulate it as an area of research and practice:

"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 and Smale (2018)

A Conceptual Framework for Transitional Safeguarding (adapted from Holmes, 2018)

Cooke and Foster (2021) emphasise the importance of making children and adult systems more connected and proactive in the early identification of need to reduce the risk of unmet needs reaching a crisis point and thus escalating into the social care or criminal space.

“People working with children should be looking ahead and forward planning, whilst simultaneously people working with adults should be looking behind to see who is coming up and planning for all, including those who may need an offer of support that sits outside the statutory framework. By building strategies & forming connections between children and adult services, we can adopt a strength based, flexible and early intervention approach across the life course.”

Cooke and Foster (2021)

Transfer, Transition & Transitional Safeguarding

	Transition	Transfer	Transitional Safeguarding
What it is	‘The process of moving from children’s to adults’ services. It refers to the full process including initial planning, the actual transfer between services, and support throughout.’ (NICE, 2016, p.35)	‘The actual point at which the responsibility for providing care and support to a person moves from a children’s to an adults’ provider.’ (NICE, 2016, p.35)	Safeguarding young people (mid-teens to mid-twenties) fluidly across developmental stages, providing an evidence-informed approach and involving the young person and those who care about them.
What it isn’t	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A simple transfer of care from one service to another > Transitional safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Planned transition > Transitional Safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Transition > Transfer of care

Winterbottom et al, 2023

Key Legislation and Statutory Guidance

Transitional Safeguarding spans child and adult safeguarding legislation, which were developed separately and often differ in thresholds, language, and legal duties. These differences can create gaps in support as children move into adulthood. A shared understanding of the legal context is essential for delivering a coordinated, person-centred approach that promotes safety and wellbeing throughout the life course. Strengthening legal literacy enables professionals to interpret and apply legislation confidently and consistently, supporting better decisions, protecting human rights and reducing inconsistencies in practice. It was identified as a key area for improvement in the [Teeswide Safeguarding Adult Board National & Regional SARs 2024](#). This strategy is informed by the legal and policy frameworks that underpin safeguarding responsibilities for children and adults.

Legislation & Guidance	Relevance to Transitional Safeguarding
Children Act 1989	Establishes the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; provides the legal basis for intervention before adulthood.
Children Act 2004	Emphasises inter-agency working and the role of Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships – essential for multi-agency transitional strategic planning and oversight.
Care Act 2014 factsheets Care Act 2014	Introduces safeguarding duties for adults and duties for transition assessments for young people likely to have adult care needs.
Children and Families Act 2014	Ensures continuity of support through Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans up to age 25, linking child and adult systems.
Mental Health Act 1983: reform - children and young people (2022)	Applies from age 16, importance in assessing children and young adult's ability to make decisions and safeguard themselves as they transition.
Mental Capacity Act 2005	Applies from age 16 with planning for Transition commencing at age 14. Provides a legal framework for assessing and supporting children's ability to make autonomous decisions as they grow into adulthood.
Equality Act 2010	Protects individuals from discrimination and promotes reasonable adjustments as they move between child and adult services, particularly those with protected characteristics.
Education and Skills Act 2008	Requires children to remain in education or training until age 19 providing a supportive and protective structure during transition.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023	Emphasises transitional safeguarding, transition planning and continuity of support as children move to adult services.
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023	Places responsibility on schools and colleges to safeguard children up to 18 and support transition into adult settings.
Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework 2023 (NHS)	Sets out NHS Safeguarding roles and supports an integrated, life course approach, encouraging partnerships to develop person-centred systems that respond to young people's needs in transition.
Recommendations Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management Guidance NICE 2013	Advocates for autistic children transition planning should start age 14, with an updated assessment of their needs be completed as they transition to adult services.
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Requires public bodies to refer young people at risk of homelessness to housing authorities. Encourages early intervention and multi-agency working which align with the transitional Safeguarding core principles.

Vision

We aspire to ensure that every child and young person in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is protected throughout their journey into adulthood, with the guidance and support needed to reach their full potential and lead safe, meaningful lives.

Goal

To create a consistent, collaborative and cross-sector approach to Transitional Safeguarding across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This approach will ensure children and young adults are protected, empowered and supported as they move into adulthood beyond their 18th birthday, through developmentally and trauma informed, co-produced and person-centred care, delivered by flexible services that respond to their evolving needs and lived experiences.

Strategic Objectives

This strategy sets out seven strategic objectives to advance Transitional Safeguarding across the partnership. Each objective outlines the shared direction of travel, underpinned by a commitment to equity, evidence informed practice, and the voice of lived experience.



1. A Shared Framework for Transitional Safeguarding

We will develop and embed a unified cross-sector framework for safeguarding children and young adults based on need up to 25. This will include:

- A single cross-agency protocol with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and thresholds across children and adult services.
- Integrated principles of trauma informed, developmentally attuned and person-centred safeguarding across all partner agencies.
- A common language and understanding of transition risk and need across the system.

2. Strengthen Governance and Accountability

We will build robust joint governance arrangements to drive strategic oversight and operational consistency, including:

- A multi-agency Transitional Safeguarding Working Delivery Group reporting into the statutory Safeguarding Partnership.
- Mandated shared audits, data reviews and performance monitoring to evidence impact.
- Clear escalation pathways for complex cases which fall between children and adult services.
- Create a dedicated space within existing Early Help teams to review young adults with unmet needs who do not meet Care Act eligibility, ensuring transitional risks are recognised and responded to with early support and interventions.

3. Embed Integrated Workforce Development and Practice

We will equip the workforce with the knowledge, skills and structures to deliver safe and consistent support to children and young adults journeying through transition:

- Provide mandatory training across sectors in Transitional Safeguarding and trauma informed approaches.
- Facilitate joint supervision, reflective practice and learning spaces across agencies.
- Transitional Safeguarding Leads or Champions embedded in key sectors to drive innovation and support practice.

4. Ensure Continuity of Support and Flexible Service Pathways

We will ensure that young adults receive support and protection beyond 18 based on individual need:

- Local service mapping to identify and address gaps to strengthen pathways between children and adult services.
- Shared care plans and safeguarding information to strengthen communication between agencies.
- Pilot cross-sector Transition focused meetings, joint planning, early intervention and shared decision making.

5. Centre Lived Experience in Strategy, Design and Delivery

We will empower children, young adults and their families to be active partners in shaping the systems that support them:

- Engage with Youth Advisory Panels and Groups to gain wider insights.
- Involve children, young adults and their families in shaping services, policies, and decisions that affect them.
- Provide accessible information and advocacy to support informed choices.
- Educate young people in the local safeguarding themes such as County Lines and Serious Violence and equip them with where to gain help and support
- Feedback mechanisms that allow children, young adults and their families to shape and evaluate their support regularly.

6. Tackle Inequality and Promote Inclusion

We will make reasonable adjustments and ensure our approach is equitable and culturally competent:

- Identify and respond to the needs of marginalised or at-risk groups (e.g. care leavers, disabled and or autistic children & young adults, individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, and those known to the justice system).
- Ensure culturally competent and equitable service delivery.
- Underpin practice with national research and legislation including the Human Rights Act (1998).

7. Monitor Impact and Drive Continuous Improvement

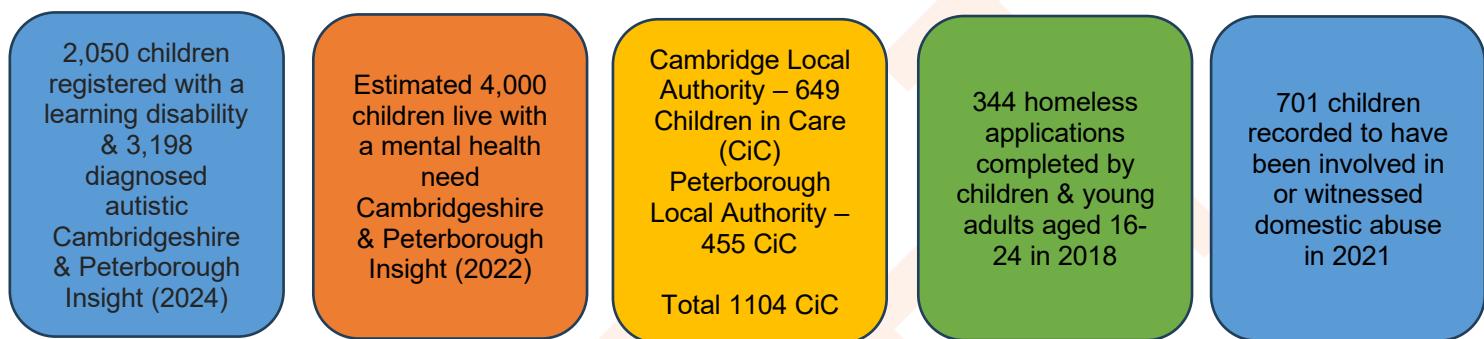
We will use data, evidence and insight to evaluate what works and adapt accordingly:

- Agreed indicators and outcome measures to track effectiveness across agencies.

- Routine collection of feedback from children, young adults, their families and professionals to inform improvement.
- Learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews and local intelligence to refine our strategy in real time.

Local Demographics and Context

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a combined population of 1,056,562 people and of this, around 208,935 (20%) are children (ICB, 2025). Within this group 41,170 young people are aged 16 to 19 years, making up 4.6% of the total population. The local demographics includes a number of vulnerable groups who may require targeted support and safeguarding. [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Welcome to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight](#)



These figures reflect the complexity and diversity of needs among children and young adults in the region. Many of these individuals may not meet statutory thresholds for adult services under the Care Act (2014) or Mental Capacity Act (2005) yet still face significant risks during transition into adulthood. This highlights why a developmentally informed, trauma aware, and person centred approach to safeguarding is so important, an approach which bridges the gaps between children and adult services.

Identifying Vulnerable Groups

Moving through stages of development and the transition from child to adult services can present challenges and increased vulnerabilities for all children and young people. However, research shows some groups face heightened risks due to their health and social circumstances, particularly those who have experienced adversity in childhood.



Source: Cocker et al, 2021

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the following groups have been identified as at greater risk of falling between services due to rigid application of eligibility under the Care Act (2014). These individuals may not meet the threshold for adult services, despite having ongoing needs.

- Care Experienced Children & Young Adults
- Unaccompanied Children in Care (UCiC)
- Individuals with Mental Health needs
- The LGBTQIA+ Community
- The Neurodivergent Community
- Individuals with Learning Disabilities
- Deaf, Blind & Deafblind Community
- Individuals with Complex Healthcare Needs
- Individuals who are or have experienced Homelessness
- Individuals who have been sexually or criminally exploited
- Individuals who are Missing
- Individuals known to Social Care
- Neglected Children & Young Adults



Children & Young Adults Lived Experience

One key principle of Transitional Safeguarding is that its development and implementation should be guided by evidence. This includes drawing on research, practice wisdom, and the insights of people with lived experience (Cocker et al, 2024). For children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, their lived reality may include hypervigilance, mistrust of adults and a sense of powerlessness, which can be a barrier to seeking support. It is crucial for professionals to adopt a trauma informed approach, which includes being attuned to non-verbal cues and behaviour indicators of distress, especially in children who have communication difficulties. Observing how a child or young person interacts with others, their emotional responses, and changes in behaviour can provide critical insights into their lived experience.

"Wanting to be free, wanting to stop that restriction & feeling of control might almost push young people towards adulthood sooner than might actually be, you know, right for them.

When you become too independent to the point where you're not able to accept help if it is available....it's like a fear of not being adult enough"

Care Leaver

"Felt terrified ahead of 18th Birthday and really scared of going to university....questions flashing through my mind like where would I live during the holidays?"

Ella aged 24

"It felt rushed, even though I knew that it was going to happen. But people didn't really speak about it before. I had been with CAMHS since I was 11 so I made good relationships with staff and people there and didn't want to lose that when I went to adults"

"If you're transitioning into adulthood and a safeguarding complaint is put in about you displaying risky behaviour, like you're using substances or you're hanging around with the wrong people...It can make your life more difficult as you're not seen as an adult, you're seen still as a child. So, you sometimes don't get the respect because you're seen as risky or vulnerable"

"Some of them young people that do this stuff [behave badly] could be asking for help that way. That's their way of communicating for help – some young people don't like to speak about how they feel. They just ask for help that way, and then they get into trouble, and they get labelled. He's just naughty. Nothing's wrong

"I was put on a DoLS order when I was 14, which benefitted me, but it also made me reluctant to tell, say if anything else had happened or I was put in another situation, it would make me a bit more reluctant to tell them. Because it [being the subject of safeguarding interventions] can be harsh. It can feel like you're being punished sometimes, and it does make you more reluctant to come back and to say anything or to ask anyone"

Learning from Safeguarding Reviews

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System promotes a learning environment, encouraging professionals to reflect, identify and shape change in practice from lessons learned from Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Learning from these Reviews that reference transition, and transitional safeguarding is essential to improving outcomes for children and young adults. These reviews consistently reveal transitioning from child to adulthood is a period of heightened vulnerability, often attributed to gaps between child and adult services. Transitional safeguarding recognises that risks and needs do not abruptly end at 18, and a more flexible, developmentally informed approach is required. Oliver's case [SAR in Rapid Time: Early Analysis Report template](#) emphasise the importance of continuity, partnership collaboration, and person-centred planning to

prevent young people 'falling through the cracks' during this critical period. Moreover, understanding the person's experiences are essential to prevent harm during this transition.

National Common Lessons Learned:

- Poor transitional planning leads to young adults losing support at 18, often with detrimental consequences.
- Lack of continuity between children and adult services creates a safeguarding gap.
- Inconsistent thresholds and eligibility criteria between services hinder access to support.
- Insufficient multi-agency collaboration results in fragmented care and missed opportunities for intervention.
- Failure to consider developmental maturity rather than chronological age can lead to inappropriate service responses.
- Inadequate information sharing between agencies delays or prevents timely support.
- Overemphasis on independence without recognising trauma and ongoing vulnerability can be harmful.
- Limited curiosity and understanding of peoples lived experiences reduces the effectiveness of safeguarding responses.

Sam 2022

Sam's story highlights serious safeguarding gaps. Despite a history of trauma, multiple placements, and mental health admissions, Sam was discharged from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) at 18 without a referral to adult mental health service as he didn't meet eligibility criteria. His autism diagnosis was removed at his request, and with care needs deemed moderate, he did not qualify for adult social care. Sam tragically died by medication overdose at age 22. **Sam's case reinforces the need for safeguarding that bridge children and adult systems to prevent people falling through the gaps.**

Jasmine 2020

Jasmine's story highlights the complexity of safeguarding people with long term health & mental health needs. Diagnosed with emotionally unstable personality disorder, an eating disorder and possible autism, she also had insulin dependent diabetes mellitus from age four, alongside other health conditions. She had repeated hospital admissions due to poor adherence to her insulin regime and was known to Children Services for concerns around her unmanaged diabetes and mental health. Despite seeking help at times, she struggled with relationships and often disengaged with treatment. At age 20 Jasmine was found deceased in supported accommodation due to diabetes related complications. **Jasmine's case shows the need for coordinated, consistent care and safeguarding during growing into adulthood**

[Sam - Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

[Jasmine SAR report - Final.pdf](#)

By applying these lessons and learning from its own child and adult reviews, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Boards can strengthen their cross-sector approach to transitional safeguarding. This will lead to more joined up, person centred services that respond to the real needs of children and young adults, improving safety, wellbeing and long-term outcomes.

[Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](#)

[Safeguarding Adults Reviews | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](#)

Contextual Safeguarding



Contextual Safeguarding is an approach that understands and responds to the significant harm children and young adults may experience beyond their families. It recognises that children and young adults may experience violence and abuse within relationships formed in their communities, schools, colleges, peer groups, and online. These contexts often overlap exposing them to multiple, interconnected risks. Parents and carers often have limited influence over these external environments, and the experiences of extra-familial harm can undermine parent-child relationships.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have successfully co-designed and implemented the Risks Outside the Home Pathways (ROTH), a contextual safeguarding approach. These pathways ensure children are safeguarded in all aspects of their lives through collaborative multi-agency working. They strengthen risk assessments and planning processes, with improves interventions for addressing harm occurring outside the home environment. The Transitional Safeguarding approach compliments this by ensuring ongoing protection for children as they grow into adulthood and face evolving vulnerabilities.



The ROTH pathways can be accessed via the below links.

[Cambridgeshire:](#)

[Peterborough:](#)

The contextual safeguarding risk screening tool (2023) is available at: [Contextual-Risk-Screening-Tool.docx](#)

If there are concerns about a young person aged 18-25 who may be a victim of exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, sexual abuse or domestic abuse this can be reported to Cambridgeshire Police by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency. There is also the online police reporting portal [Report | Cambridgeshire Constabulary](#)

The Transitional Safeguarding Pledge

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Boards have brought together local primary, secondary and third sector organisations in a shared commitment to this pledge. This unified approach strengthens cross-sector safeguarding, streamlines service provision, and sets clear expectations for children, young adults, their families and the professionals who care for them.

Together we commit to:

T	Transitional Safeguarding and Trauma Informed Practice: We commit to a trauma-informed workforce that understands Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and applies Transitional Safeguarding – bridging child and adult services to ensure safe transitions into adulthood.
R	Responsible Leadership: We each identify a lead/champion on Transitional Safeguarding.
A	Adopting a Collaborative Approach: We work in partnership across sectors and with children and young people themselves to co-create effective, joined up support.
N	Need for Earlier Conversations and Preventative Action: We prioritise timely, proactive engagement to identify needs early and reduce the risk of harm.
S	Systemwide Flexibility: We advocate for adaptable systems that respond to the unique, evolving needs of each individual, in a person-centred way.
I	Importance of Language, Intersectionality and Cultural Competency: We use inclusive, respectful language and recognise the diverse identities and experiences that shape each person's journey.
T	Targeting Empowerment: We aim to empower children and young people to realise their full potential, reinforcing that they are supported and not alone.
I	Inclusive Safeguarding Across Child and Adult Sectors: We commit to inclusive safeguarding processes that recognise and respond to diverse needs and circumstances, ensuring no child or young person is overlooked during transitions into adulthood.
O	Opportunity for Strength Based Planning: We create space to identify and review each child and young person's strengths, needs and desired outcomes, shaping support around them.
N	Navigating the Lived Experience: We seek to understand each child and young person's lived experience, using their insights to inform safeguarding decisions, planning, and support that reflects their reality. Their stories and perspectives also help shape and improve local services.
A	Active Listening and Effective Communication: We commit to listening with empathy, communicating clearly, documenting responsibly, and sharing information appropriately.
L	Learning for Continuous Improvement: We learn from Safeguarding Practice Reviews that highlight transition related issues, using these lessons to improve safeguarding practice and prevent the repetition of past mistakes. Our commitment to reflection drives meaningful changes in practice.

Multi-Agency Roles in Transitional Safeguarding

Keeping children and young people safe as they grow into adulthood requires coordinated action across all sectors. Each agency plays a critical role in recognising, responding to and reducing safeguarding risks that emerge at this life stage, particularly where support structures may change, end or be absent. This strategy builds on the principle of shared responsibility, early intervention and Think Family, recognising safeguarding cannot be the sole responsibility of any one agency.

Key Roles & Contributions

Health (including CAMHS, adult mental health, GPs and community care).

- Identify emerging and ongoing vulnerabilities (e.g. mental health, complex healthcare needs, substance misuse).
- Recognise and respond to signs of exploitation, coercive control, and abuse.
- Ensure coordinated transitions from child to adult services, with joint planning and co-working where possible.
- Maintain continuity of care, avoiding gaps in treatment or support.
- Early collaboration with the young person and partner agencies.
- Use universal and targeted services to support young people not eligible for specialist adult provision.

Police & Community Safety Partnerships

- Recognise and respond to ongoing local themes of exploitation, coercive control and harm that may continue beyond age 18.
- Prevent and disrupt abuse in all forms, including county lines and exploitation.
- Collaborate with partners to avoid criminalising young people experiencing safeguarding issues.
- Share intelligence to support risk management and contextual safeguarding approaches.
- Support innovative projects which reduce or prevent serious violence.

If there are concerns about a young person aged 18-25 who may be a victim of exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, sexual abuse or domestic abuse this can be reported to Cambridgeshire Police by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency. There is also the online police reporting portal [Report | Cambridgeshire Constabulary](#)

Children's and Adult's Social Care

- Coordinate transition planning with the young person at the centre.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are responded to across service boundaries.
- Be curious and flexible when needs do not meet traditional adult thresholds.
- Promote relationship based practice, including continuation of trusted adults where possible.

The publication of Working together to Safeguard Children (2023) emphasises enhanced collaborative working and will introduce new ways of working between Early Help, Social Care and Universal services.

Education & Post-16 Providers

- Identify students with vulnerabilities early and contribute to multi-agency planning.
- Support young people at risk of disengagement, exclusion, or poor outcomes.
- Promote safeguarding literacy and life skills for independence and wellbeing.
- Provide a safe, supportive environment that continues into adulthood.

Housing & Supportive Accommodation

- Offer stable, appropriate housing with wrap around support where needed.
- Contribute to safeguarding plans for young people at risk of homelessness or housing breakdown.
- Identify exploitation and other safeguarding indicators.
- Work jointly with other services to ensure housing is not a barrier to safety or recovery.

Youth Offending Teams & Probation Services

- Ensure transition plans are in place as young people move into adult justice systems.

- Support desistance and reintegration with trauma informed and safeguarding aware practice.
- Monitor risks holistically, including contextual risks and care histories.
- Advocate for young people to access community based support during and after statutory involvement.

Voluntary & Charity Organisations

- Provide trusted adults, continuity, and advocacy where statutory services are limited.
- Deliver early help, mentoring, specialist support and outreach for emerging adults facing multiple disadvantages.
- Act as connectors between young people and services, especially those who are disengaged or marginalised.
- Influence system changes through participation work and the voice of lived experience.

Training and Workforce Development

A skilled, confident, and well-supported workforce is at the heart of delivering effective transitional safeguarding. Our ambition is to equip cross-sector practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and reflective capacity to work relationally with young people, recognising the complexity of their lives and the interplay between past experiences, current vulnerabilities, and future aspirations.

We will ensure that workforce development is anchored in:

1. **ACEs Aware Practice** – Staff will be trained to recognise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). We will embed approaches that avoid fixed assumptions, focusing instead on building resilience, protective factors, and meaningful relationships that promote recovery and growth.
2. **Trauma Informed and Developmentally Informed Practice** – Practitioners will understand how trauma, particularly complex and chronic trauma, shapes brain development, emotional regulation, and behaviour well into adulthood. Training will move beyond procedural safeguarding to develop attuned, responsive practice that meets people where they are developmentally, not just chronologically. This means recognising that a 19-year-old with a history of neglect may require support more like that offered to a younger adolescent, while respecting their autonomy and legal adulthood.
3. **Intersectionality and Structural Awareness** – Our workforce will be equipped to identify and respond to how multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantage and discrimination (e.g. racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty) compound safeguarding risk and affect access to support. Practitioners will be supported to adopt an intersectional lens, recognising that harm is not experienced in isolation but shaped by structural inequities and social context.
4. **Cross-Sector Capability** – Transitional safeguarding is not the remit of one profession. We will build capacity across health, social care, education, housing, criminal justice, and the voluntary sector, ensuring a shared language, shared principles, and consistent relational approaches.
5. **Reflective and Restorative Supervision** – Supervision structures will prioritise reflective space to process the emotional and moral complexity of this work, drawing on restorative principles to support staff wellbeing, prevent burnout, and model the relational values we expect in practice.
6. **Co-Production and Young People's Voice** – We will work alongside young adults with lived experience to shape training content, ensuring that our workforce hears directly how practice feels and what makes a difference.

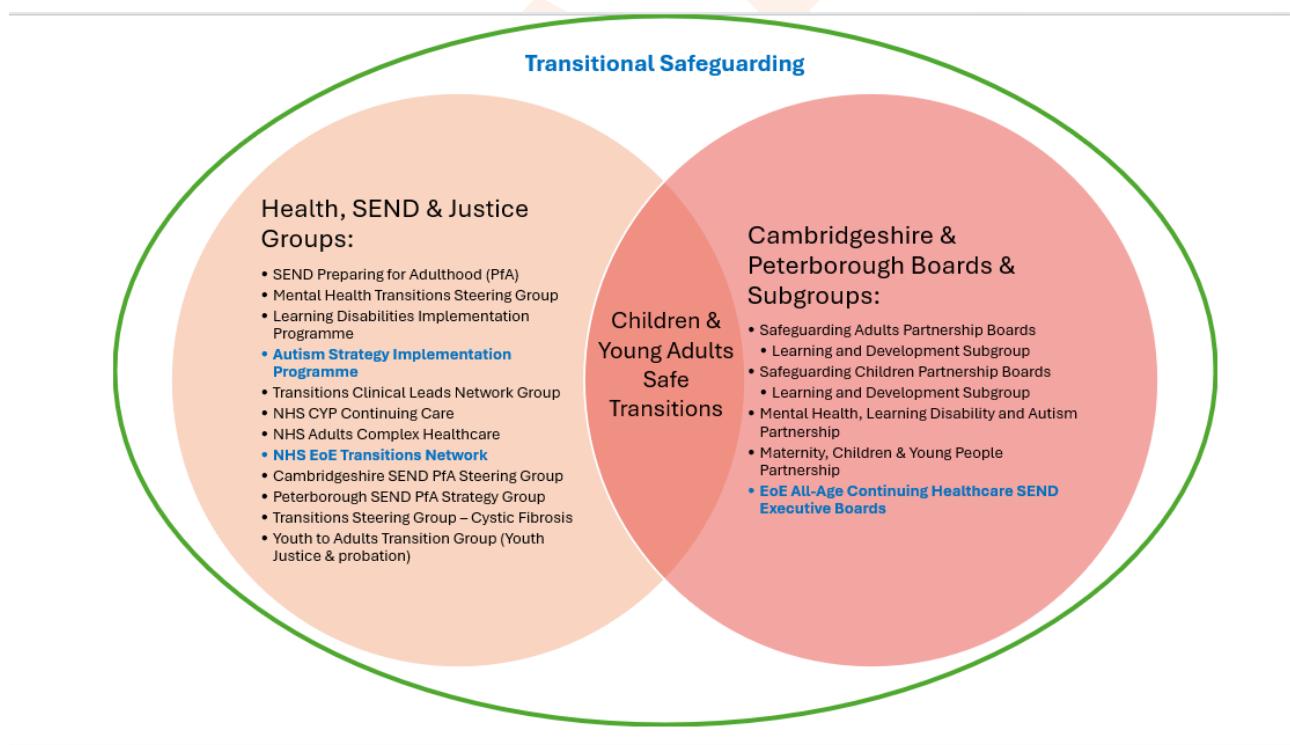
We commit to a workforce development programme that is evidence-informed, where feedback loops between practitioners, leaders, and young adults continuously strengthen our safeguarding culture.

Governance and Accountability

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Boards provide overall governance for the cross sector Transitional Safeguarding strategy. Oversight of progress towards the strategic goal and objectives, along with the monitoring of performance indicators is carried out by the Boards' Quality and Performance Subgroups. All members of the Partnership Boards and Transition Leads share the responsibility for implementing this strategy, and driving forwards sustainable, evidence informed approaches within their respective organisations. The Boards will hold its members accountable to ensure that the strategy is effectively embedded and that agencies work collaboratively to close gaps in support and protection for children and young people, thus improving safety, outcomes and experiences, ensuring no one is left behind.

Stakeholder Overlap in Transitional Safeguarding

There is multiple preparing for adulthood groups and work commencing within the Transitional Safeguarding space within Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. The below Venn Diagram shows the interlinkage of each group and how Transitional Safeguarding should interweave as a core principle. The national groups and programmes have been highlighted in blue.



Responsibility to Share Information

Effective information sharing is vital to safeguarding, particularly during the transition to adulthood when responsibility changes from children to adult services. Coordinated communication across statutory agencies and robust recording measures ensures professionals have a shared understanding of the individual's needs, risks and protective factors. This supports decision making, consistent person-centred planning, early intervention and reduces gaps in care.

Legal frameworks like the Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) allow personal information to be shared without consent where necessary for

safeguarding, provided it is lawful, proportionate, and well documented. However, where possible young people should be involved in decisions about their information. This builds trust, supports autonomy and aligns with the principle of safeguarding with and not to them.

Statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2023) and the *Department of Education's Information Sharing Advice* (2024) reinforces that while consent is not always required, it should be sought unless doing so increases risk. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Information Sharing Framework supports this approach and is widely adopted by local partners: [cambs-information-sharing-framework | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](https://cambs-information-sharing-framework.cambs.safeguardingpartnership.org.uk/)

Measuring Impact & Effectiveness

To ensure the successful implementation and continuous improvement of this strategy a robust monitoring and accountability framework will be established. This will be underpinned by multi-agency collaboration, data analysis, and the lived experiences of young adults and their families.

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of young people supported through transitional safeguarding approaches
- Outcomes from audits.
- Service users feedback and engagement outcomes.
- Equity indicators to monitor for disproportionality, including adultification bias.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

- Learning from local and national Practice Reviews – embedded into training and reflective learning sessions.
- Rapidly disseminate key findings i.e. 7-minute briefings and adapt practice accordingly.

Feedback Loops

- Feedback from practitioners, young people and their families will inform service development.
- Existing forums will be used to ensure accountability and support to those with lived experience.

Annual Review & Reporting

- An annual report will be produced outlining progress, challenges and strategic priorities for the following year.
- Reports will be shared with all partner organisations, safeguarding boards and published for transparency.

Action Plan

Objective	Action	Lead	Proposed Impact / Outcome	Date for Completion
1. Co-design a Cross- Sector Transitional Safeguarding Framework for children and young adults up to age 25 within 8 months	<p>Establish a multi-agency Transitional Safeguarding Operational Delivery Group (TSODG)</p> <p>Develop and implement a Protocol that defines roles, responsibilities, and thresholds for transitional safeguarding and early interventions</p> <p>Use existing communication teams and training leads to disseminate the protocol.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board</p> <p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Delivery Group</p> <p>Multi-agency Training Leads and Communication Teams</p>	<p>A dedicated group to drive forwards sustainable improvements for work around Transition</p> <p>Clear guidance for professionals & enhanced collaboration with consistent, safe practice for children and young adults.</p> <p>Cross-sector professionals will have a shared understanding of the new protocol and what it means in clinical practice.</p>	April 2026
2. Strengthen Governance Structures & Accountability across the ICS within 12 months	<p>Establish the TSODG terms of reference and reporting lines to the statutory Adult & Children's Safeguarding Partnership Boards.</p> <p>Develop and implement a shared audit and data review schedule across children's and adult services.</p> <p>Design and disseminate escalation protocols for complex cases that fall between service thresholds.</p> <p>Create a dedicated review space within Early Help teams to identify and support young adults with unmet needs who do not meet Care Act eligibility.</p> <p>Align governance tools (e.g., dashboards, reporting templates) across agencies to support consistent practice.</p>	Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board	<p>To ensure strategic oversight and accountability.</p> <p>To evidence impact and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>To support professional disagreement resolution and timely and appropriate responses to transitional safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>To provide early intervention and reduce risks of harm or criminality for young adults.</p> <p>To embed shared accountability and improve cross-sector coordination.</p>	August 2026

<p>3. Integrate workforce Development & Practice within 12 months</p>	<p>Design and deliver mandatory cross-sector training on Transitional Safeguarding and trauma informed approaches.</p> <p>Establish joint supervision and reflective practice spaces across agencies.</p> <p>Identify and embed Transitional Safeguarding Leads or Champions in key sectors.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Partnership Training Subgroups & Training Leads.</p> <p>Safeguarding Supervision Supervisors</p> <p>Safeguarding Partnership Boards, Sector Leads (e.g. Police, Health, Education)</p>	<p>To ensure all practitioners have a shared understanding and are equipped to respond to transitional safeguarding needs.</p> <p>To support consistent, high quality safeguarding practice and promote multi-agency learning.</p> <p>To drive innovation, support practitioners, and ensure sustained focus on transitional safeguarding across services.</p>	<p>July 2026</p> <p>July 2026</p> <p>February 2026</p>
<p>4. Within 18 months ensure continuity of support and flexible service pathways</p>	<p>Conduct a comprehensive mapping of local services to identify gaps in transitional safeguarding pathways.</p> <p>Develop and implement shared care plans and safeguarding information exchange protocols between children's and adult services.</p> <p>Pilot cross-sector transition focused meetings and joint decision making processes for young adults.</p>	<p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Delivery Group</p> <p>Sector Designated/Named Safeguarding Leads, Information Governance Teams.</p> <p>Early Help Leads</p>	<p>To understand where support breaks down and inform improvements.</p> <p>To ensure continuity of support and reduce duplication or missed risks.</p> <p>To promote early intervention, shared accountability, and coordinated support.</p>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>August 2026</p> <p>12/18 months</p>
<p>5. Within 12 months Centre lived experience in strategy, design and delivery</p>	<p>Engage with established Youth Advisory Panels and lived experience groups to inform strategy and service design (follow consent processes).</p> <p>Facilitate workshops with children, young adults, and families to co-produce policies and service improvements (adhere to ethical processes).</p> <p>Continue delivering safeguarding education on key local issues (e.g.</p>	<p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Delivery Group</p> <p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Group & Sector Transition Leads/Champions Education Leads</p>	<p>To ensure services reflect the real needs and perspectives of children and young adults.</p> <p>To embed lived experience into decision making and service delivery.</p> <p>To empower young people with knowledge and tools to protect themselves.</p>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

	<p>County Lines, exploitation) to schools and youth settings.</p> <p>Develop and implement feedback systems to capture and respond to views of children, young adults, and families.</p> <p>Ensure all partners provide accessible safeguarding information, material and advocacy support.</p>	<p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Group & Sector Transition Leads/Champions</p> <p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Group & Sector Transition Leads/Champions</p>	<p>To evaluate impact and continuously improve services based on lived experience.</p> <p>To promote informed choices and equitable access to support.</p>	<p>August 2026</p> <p>August 2026</p>
6. Tackle inequality and promote inclusion within 18 months	<p>Conduct targeted analysis to identify the needs of marginalised and at-risk groups (e.g. care leavers, disabled/autistic children & young adults, those involved in the justice system).</p> <p>Carry out multi-agency audits to assess cultural competence and equity in service delivery.</p> <p>Deliver training on culturally competent and inclusive safeguarding practice.</p> <p>Ensure safeguarding practice aligns with national legislation, including the Human Rights Act (1998).</p> <p>Establish indicators and feedback mechanisms to monitor progress and impact on inclusion.</p>		<p>To ensure services are tailored to those most at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>To identify gaps and improve inclusive practice across agencies.</p> <p>To build workforce capacity to respond to diverse needs effectively.</p> <p>To ensure legal compliance and uphold rights-based approaches.</p> <p>To measure effectiveness and inform continuous improvement.</p>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>12 months</p> <p>12 months</p> <p>12 months</p> <p>18 months</p>

<p>7. Monitor impact and drive continuous improvement within 18 months</p>	<p>Define success metrics Develop monitoring framework Collect and analyse data Conduct stakeholder feedback sessions Identify improvement opportunities Implement targeted improvements Evaluate impact of improvements</p>	<p>Transitional Safeguarding Operational Group & Sector Transition Leads/Champions</p>	<p>Establish KPIs to measure initiative impact and align with goals. Create a structured approach for tracking progress and collecting data. Understand performance trends and gather insights for improvement. Capture qualitative input to complement data and identify improvement areas. Prioritise areas for change based on impact and feasibility. Apply changes to enhance efficiency and outcomes. Assess effectiveness of changes and document lessons learned.</p>	<p>12-18 months</p>
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Resources & Guidance

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/partners-care-and-health/safeguarding-resources/transitional-safeguarding-resources>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-serious-case-reviews-2014-to-2017>

<https://www.coram.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Disability-full-report.pdf>

https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/5420/67346_dhsc_trans-safe-report_bridging-the-gap_web.pdf

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/03/Academic-Insights-Holmes-and-Smith-RM.pdf>

https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2768_TCE_Child_exploitation_and_youth_participation_13pp_v3.pdf

<https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FINAL-Multi-agency-Practice-Principles-for-responding-to-child-exploitation-and-extraterritorial-harm-Designed-.pdf>

<https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FINAL-Multi-agency-Practice-Principles-for-responding-to-child-exploitation-and-extraterritorial-harm-Designed-.pdf>

https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/i5ja2n34/transitional-safeguarding_health_knowledge_briefing_final.pdf

<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article/52/3/1287/6102523?guestAccessKey=78b38361-28be-48b8-b591-9f2edff7fff4>

<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article/52/3/1287/6102523?guestAccessKey=78b38361-28be-48b8-b591-9f2edff7fff4>

[NHS YF TRANSITION REPORT](#)

Video's & Webinars

[Introduction to Transitional Safeguarding](#)

[Transitional Safeguarding Blog Recording - Dez Holmes.mp4 on Vimeo](#)

[Risks, Resilience & Relationships: Safeguarding adolescents | Research in Practice](#)

[A Framework For Best Practice - Michael Preston-Shoot](#)

[Transitional Safeguarding & Understanding the Impact for Young People - R Cooke & C. Pengelley-Scott](#)

[What is Transitional Safeguarding and why does it matter? on Vimeo](#)



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Appendix 1: Vulnerable Groups Summaries & One Page Briefings

Neurodivergent Community

The neurodivergent community refers to individuals whose cognitive functioning differs from neurotypical norms. Neurodivergence encompasses a range of conditions, including but not limited to autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Tourette syndrome. These neurological differences can present both strengths and challenges. Diagnosis is often delayed or entirely missed, this particularly effects women and individuals from minority groups, contributing to unmet needs and marginalisation (NHS England, 2023).

Crucially, it is important to recognise that neurodivergent individuals are not inherently vulnerable; rather, vulnerability arises from systemic factors such as social exclusion, stigma, bullying, and lack of appropriate support. Consequently, the community is at higher risk of developing poor mental health, becoming involved in or victims of criminal and sexual exploitation (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2024). Additionally, miscommunication or a lack of professional understanding can lead to misdiagnosis or improper treatment (Casey, et al., 2024).

During the transition to adulthood, these risks are often exacerbated. The move from child to adult services frequently results in the loss of SEND support and continuity of care; this is commonly due to fragmented service provision and extended waiting times. This can contribute to increased anxiety and emotional instability (Tang, 2024). During this developmental stage, without effective transitional safeguarding, neurodivergent young people are at heightened risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) or entering the criminal justice system (Anns, et al., 2023; Crompton, 2023).

Learning Disabilities

Children and young people with a learning disability often face increased risks during periods of transition, particularly if they do not meet the eligibility criteria under the Care Act (2014). This can lead to gaps in support, especially when decisions made during adolescence may not align with their best interest due to cognitive or social vulnerabilities. All staff are required to complete the mandatory Oliver McGowan learning disability and autism training in line with the code of practice to improve safe, person-centred care.

[Explanatory memorandum to the Oliver McGowan draft code of practice on statutory learning disability and autism training - GOV.UK](#)

[Cambridgeshire Online | SEND Information Hub \(Local Offer\)](#)

[Peterborough Information Network | Peterborough SEND Information Hub \(Local Offer\)](#)

[Peterborough Information Network | Preparing for Adulthood - Good Health \(Local Offer\)](#)

Deaf, Blind & Deafblind Community

Young people who are deaf, blind, or deafblind face heightened risks during transitional safeguarding due to the complex barriers they encounter in communication, independence, and access to services. As they move from child to adult care systems, they may experience disruptions in support, especially if professionals lack awareness or training in sensory impairments. These individuals may struggle to express concerns, understand safeguarding information, or advocate for themselves, increasing their vulnerability to neglect, exploitation, or social isolation. Tailored, consistent, and accessible support is essential to ensure their safety and well-being during this critical life stage.

The Cambridgeshire Deaf Association (CDA) plays a vital role by offering independent qualified advocates in British Sign Language, training for professionals, and accessible community services that empower individuals and help bridge gaps in understanding the safeguarding processes and support available. Cambridgeshire Police also have an app which gives them instant access to an online advocate service for individuals who are deaf, blind, or deafblind.

To book an independent interpreter please complete the online form via the below link or e-mail the CDA office directly or telephone during working hours, 9-5 Monday to Friday.

Advocacy and Casework – CDA

E-mail: office@camsdeaf.org

Contact Number: 01223 246237

Exploitation & Missing

Criminal exploitation includes activities such as county lines, where gangs and organised crime networks transport illegal drugs from one area to another, often crossing police and local authority boundaries. These criminals use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence), and weapons to exploit children and young adults into transporting and storing drugs and money. The UK Government (2021) defines County Lines as: "Gangs and organized criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of 'deal line'. They exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money, often using coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence), and weapons."

Cuckooing involves taking over a property for criminal activities such as drug dealing, sexual exploitation, or storing firearms. This property typically belongs to a vulnerable person. The National Crime Agency (2018) defines cuckooing as: "Drug dealers who take over a local property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it to operate their criminal activity from."

Transitional Safeguarding is crucial for young people moving from adolescence into adulthood, as this group are vulnerable and easy targets for criminal gangs and exploiters, due to their unmet needs which do not meet the threshold for intervention and support. Young people often do not see themselves as victims or realise they have been groomed. This includes those who are cuckooed and may not understand that their property has been taken over for criminal purposes, believing the exploiters are friends staying with them.

People who have gone missing are placed in a highly vulnerable and dangerous position. Often without shelter and basic necessities, they can become targets for those seeking to exploit them in return for providing these needs. When a child or young person in care goes missing, they face numerous risks, including being vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and criminal activity.

Parent Incarcerated

Children with a parent in prison face numerous challenges that can make them more vulnerable, including emotional and psychological distress, financial hardship, stigma, and potential disruptions to their education and well-being. Witnessing a parent's arrest or being separated from them can be deeply traumatic. The stigma associated with parental imprisonment can lead to social isolation and bullying. Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges (Cummings & Shelton, 2024). These children are at higher risk of Transitional Safeguarding because the compounded effects of their vulnerabilities can persist.

into adulthood, making it harder for them to access consistent support and protection during critical developmental transitions.

Known to Social Care

Children and young people who have previously been known or are currently known to children's social care are often more vulnerable due to their histories of adversity, trauma, or unmet needs. As they move into adulthood, the structured support they received as children may reduce or end, leaving gaps in care and oversight. These young people may struggle with trust, stability, or accessing services independently, making them more susceptible to exploitation, neglect, or mental health challenges. Adultification bias where professionals perceive these young people as more mature or resilient than they are, can lead to their needs being underestimated or overlooked, reducing the likelihood of appropriate safeguarding responses. Without a coordinated and trauma informed transition plan, they risk falling through the gaps of adult services.

Transitional Safeguarding & Individuals with Complex Healthcare Needs

7 Minute Briefing: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough | August 2025 | R Cooke

Why Risk is Higher

- **Fragmented care systems:** Children's and adult services operate under different legislation and thresholds, often leading to gaps in support during transition
- **Inconsistent eligibility criteria:** Young people may no longer qualify for services they previously received, despite ongoing needs
- **Developmental vulnerability:** The human brain continues maturing until around age 25, meaning young people may lack the emotional and cognitive capacity to navigate complex systems alone
- **Multiple service reliance:** These young people often depend on health, social care, education, and advocacy services. Poor coordination increases the risk of unmet needs
- **Mental Capacity challenges:** Under the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**, young people aged 16+ are presumed to have capacity unless proven otherwise. However, assessing and supporting decision-making can be complex, especially for those with learning disabilities or neurodivergence
- **Risk of disengagement:** Without person-centred planning, young people may withdraw from services, increasing exposure to harm, neglect, or exploitation
- **Safeguarding thresholds shift:** Adult safeguarding requires consent and evidence of care needs, which may exclude vulnerable young people who don't meet strict criteria
- **Higher exposure to harm:** Young people with complex needs are more likely to experience neglect, emotional abuse, and poor mental health during transition
- **Legal complexity:** Navigating rights under the **Children Act 1989**, **Care Act 2014**, and **Mental Capacity Act 2005** requires professional support to ensure safeguarding is upheld

Safeguarding Adult Review - Adult O (Kirklees, 2022)

Adult O was aged 21 when she died from sepsis and bronchopneumonia. She had complex health needs from birth, including cerebral palsy, scoliosis, blindness, epilepsy, quadriplegia, and profound learning disabilities. Her primary caregiver was her mother, and she lived at home. Adult O attended a special education school until age 19. After leaving, her engagement declined with health and social care, and she **did not undergo a formal transition to adult services**, contrary to NICE NG43 guidelines <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng43> & [Overview | Transition from children's to adults' services | Quality standards | NICE](#). Admitted to hospital with sepsis, staff raised a safeguarding concern due to having a grade 4 necrotic pressure sore on her heel, along with additional sores on her sacrum, hip, and genital area. Her mother stated she was the sole caregiver and **did not require external support**.



What You Can Do

- Ensure continuity of care across child and adult services
- Implement early person-centred transition planning
- Provide advocacy and support for healthcare systems
- Train professionals in trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate care
- Coordinate safeguarding efforts across health, social care, and other sectors
- Promote inclusive access to education, employment, and community engagement
- Monitor & evaluate transition outcomes to inform service improvements

Consent to Treatment and Legal Rights of Children and Young Adults

- ❖ Children under 16 can consent to treatment if assessed as 'Gillick competent'—able to understand the implications of their decisions.
- ❖ Young people aged 16–17 are presumed to have capacity to consent under the Family Law Reform Act 1969, Section 8.
- ❖ The Mental Capacity Act 2005 applies from age 16, supporting decision-making and best interest assessments if capacity is lacking.
- ❖ Parental consent may still be valid for those under 18 but cannot override a competent young person's refusal in some cases.
- ❖ Disagreements between young people and parents/carers can create ethical and legal challenges for professionals.
- ❖ Capacity may fluctuate due to mental health, learning disability, or neurodivergence, requiring ongoing assessment.
- ❖ Young adults up to age 25 may still be developing emotional & cognitive maturity, which can affect their ability to make complex decisions.
- ❖ Professionals must balance safeguarding duties with respecting autonomy and legal rights.
- ❖ Professionals should consider developmental stage not just chronological age when assessing decision making capacity and providing support.

Transitional Safeguarding Risks for Care Experienced & Unaccompanied Children in Care

7 Minute Briefing: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough | August 2025 | R Cooke

Why Risk is Higher

- Disrupted Relationships & Lack of Stable Support Networks

Frequent moves between placements lead to unstable relationships with caregivers, professionals, and peers. Lack of consistent adult support makes transitions (e.g. to independent living) harder.

Increased Exposure to Exploitation and Abuse

Greater risk of criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and trafficking—especially during transitions. Unaccompanied children may be targeted due to language barriers, lack of local knowledge, or immigration status.

Criminalisation & Bias

Up to 6x more likely to be criminalised (Laming, 2016). Adulfitation bias: Black and minoritised children often under protected.

Mental Health & Trauma

Higher rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD (Cumming & Shelton, 2024). Trauma impacts ability to cope with change.

Housing & Employment Instability

Unstable placements and poor access to jobs. Risk of homelessness after leaving care.

Poor Transition Planning

Inadequate support for moving to adulthood. Gaps in housing, education, and mental health services.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

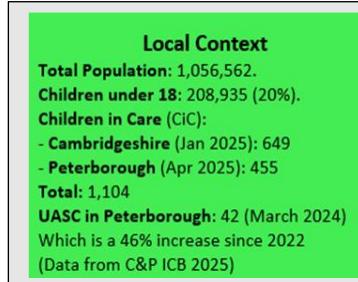
Face cultural displacement, trauma, and immigration uncertainty. Legal limbo and language barriers increase vulnerability.

Lack of Advocacy & Voice

Often feel unheard in decisions. Struggle to access help or challenge unfair treatment.

Digital Dangers

Online grooming, radicalisation, and cyberbullying. Limited guidance on safe digital use.



Innovation: What's Being Done

- **Care Leavers Health Passports:** Provided at age 17 during the final health assessment.
- **East of England UASC Safeguarding Protocol:** A regional guide for multi-agency support of unaccompanied minors, promoting culturally sensitive & trauma informed practice.
- **Think Family & Think Transition:** Approaches that reduce gaps between children's and adult services, encouraging early help, continued relationships, & coordinated support.
- **Peterborough House Project:** Supports care leavers aged 16–17 through a psychologically informed framework to transition into independent living. Young people co-design their homes, build life skills and receive weekly 1:1 and group support.
- **Cambridgeshire Corporate Parenting Strategy (2025–2030):** Sets out commitments to care experienced children and care leavers, shaped by young people's voices.
- **Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategy:** A joint initiative across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to improve access to mental health services for care experienced children and young people
- **Risk Outside the Home Pathways:** A contextual approach to safeguarding children to risks outside of the home environment
- **Transitional Safeguarding Strategy:** A joint initiative across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to improve safeguarding children and young adults through their developmental stages of life.



Local Safeguarding Child & Adult Referral Links

Always inform your organisations Safeguarding Team
[Making a Referral | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](#)

Further Resources

[East of England Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children \(UASC\) Safeguarding Protocol | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](#)

[Section 20 Children Act 1989](#)

What Can You Do

- Be alert to: service loss at 18, hidden harm, exploitation, isolation
- Build & maintain trusted relationships beyond transition
- Apply trauma-informed & intersectional practice
- Escalate early & ensure smooth handovers between services
- Promote inclusion & strengths-based support
- Protect and support by following safeguarding processes
- Advocate for young people's voices in planning and decision-making
- Support navigation of adult systems (e.g., housing, health, legal)
- Collaborate across agencies to reduce gaps and duplication

Transitional Safeguarding and Homelessness

7 Minute Briefing: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough | August 2025 | P Wicksted & R Cooke

Understanding Homelessness

Under the **Housing Act (1996)**, homelessness is defined as lacking access to secure housing, living in unsuitable accommodation, or residing in temporary housing. Despite common misconceptions, homelessness is **not limited to rough sleeping**, and it includes hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing or living in unsafe environments (Greaves et al., 2024).

Key Drivers & Vulnerabilities

Homelessness can arise from a variety of **structural** (e.g., poverty, housing shortages) and **individual** factors (e.g., mental health, discrimination, disability). Common Drivers include:

- Mental health difficulties
- Discrimination based on identity (e.g. race, gender, sexuality)
- Disability
- Lack of affordable housing
- Family breakdown or abuse

These factors often intersect, compounding vulnerability. Homeless individuals frequently face:

- Deteriorating physical and mental health
- Loss of safety, privacy, and support networks
- Increased exposure to crime and exploitation

The **2024 UK Government report** on rough sleeping highlights a **20% increase** from 2023, though actual figures may be higher due to **hidden homelessness** (Greaves et al., 2025).

Why Risks are Higher

Children and Young Adults experiencing homelessness face **heightened safeguarding risks** during and beyond their transition from children to adult services due to:

- Abrupt loss of support and long referral delays
- Confusion understanding housing and care systems
- Fragmented services and inconsistent safeguarding thresholds
- Lack of trauma informed care and advocacy
- Financial instability with limited access to benefits & financial skills
- Disconnection from Education, Employment or Training
- Heightened risk of exploitation (particularly criminal & sexual) & long term exclusion
- Stigma and mistrust of authority figures & services
- Barriers to re-engagement (e.g. lack of transport, digital access, documentation) & emotional barriers (e.g. low confidence, trauma).

Due to these factors, homelessness increases the threat of being a victim or perpetrator of crime, including violence, illegal substance possession and distribution, criminal exploitation, and sexual exploitation (Nilsson, et al, 2020). Involvement in crime is acknowledged as a common process in the survival and coping with the impacts of homelessness. Crucially, for young people, homelessness can have strong long-term negative impacts during vital stages of development (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2016).

What You Can Do

- Ensure continuity of care between children's and adult services
- Provide trauma-informed support tailored to children & young adults experiences
- Improve coordination across services (housing, health, education, social care)
- Offer clear guidance and advocacy to help them understand housing and support systems
- Create flexible referral pathways to avoid delays and service gaps
- Support access to education, employment, and training
- Provide financial advice and access to benefits
- Develop trust-based relationships with professionals and mentors
- Use inclusive safeguarding thresholds that reflect developmental needs
- Make safeguarding personal, gain wishes and feelings
- Identify and respond to exploitation risks early
- Youth-specific housing options with wraparound support