

Transitional Safeguarding in Health

What is Transitional Safeguarding?

Transitional Safeguarding describes the need for a seamless journey from adolescents into young adulthood through the collaboration of partners, having an emphasis on the resilience of developmental needs rather than solely focusing on physical care and support needs. This requires a holistic safeguarding approach, which should be person-led and outcome focused ensuring young people have control of what their future looks like.

Transitional safeguarding is not a model or a framework. It is a systems and provider level change of culture in how we safeguard our young people more fluidly and effectively, understanding the individual's safeguarding vulnerabilities and needs as our young people journey into adulthood. In health we need to consider vulnerability and the lived experience of our patients and how Transitional Safeguarding can be used effectively.

Within the integrated care system model there is an opportunity for effective healthcare commissioning to move traditional boundaries to focus on the goal of sustainability and promotion of good health and wellbeing.

Why do I need to know about Transitional Safeguarding?

The journey into adulthood occurs over developmental stages where young people have their own unique needs and vulnerabilities. For an adolescent it is a time of 'storm and stress' whereby their bodies are rapidly changing, and their brain's grey matter is growing, with neural pathways forming and strengthening. Research from MRI imagery has shown that the prefrontal cortex develops during adolescence. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for a person's impulse control, rational decision making, emotional development and memory. This area of the brain does not fully mature until an individual's early 20's.

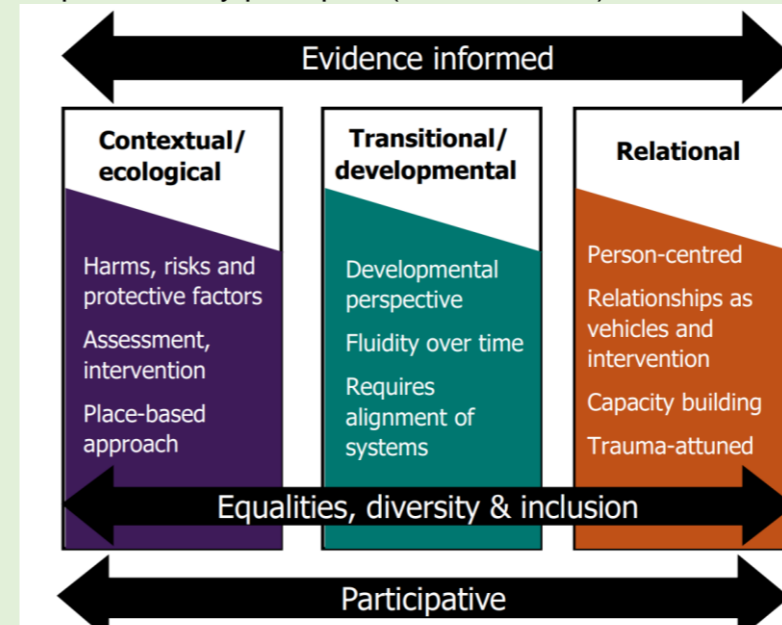
Thus, it is understandable why adolescents do not always act in the way adults expect and their decision making is not always in their own best interest. Time is needed to mature, learn life skills, and understand one's own health needs and make rational decisions that can impact upon their own well-being and future aspirations. This is the crucial time whereby young people are more vulnerable to extra familial harm.

Transitional Safeguarding is important in healthcare because as health professionals we need to consider how we can safeguard young people more effectively and improve the experience of accessing our services. How can we achieve this? Understanding the Transitional safeguarding principles can enable us to think differently about the safeguarding support our young people need as they journey into adulthood and beyond. Understanding the risks and needs of this age group is important and can influence and impact many factors such as engagement and the impact of trauma.

Considering vulnerability rather than eligibility, building relationships and understanding that harm continues past the age of 18 is key.

Transitional Safeguarding Principles

Transitional Safeguarding is underpinned by a holistic framework informed by six interconnected and interdependent key principles (Holmes, 2021).



What can we do?

- Recognise harm does not stop at age 18
- Be [trauma informed](#) – value lived experience
- Understand specific risks of young people
- Make every contact count
- Consider/ assess mental capacity
- Better plan for effective transition
- Explore your professional curiosity

Definitions

It is important to identify the differences in terminology in Transitional Safeguarding, Transition and Transfer of care are different and clearly linked.

Transitional Safeguarding: The term Transitional Safeguarding describes the need for, “an approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children’s and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives”. (Holmes & Smale, 2018. [Transitional safeguarding | adolescence to adulthood | Research in Practice](#)).

Transition: is defined as a purposeful and planned process of supporting young people to move from children’s to adults’ services. ([Transition from children’s to adults’ services for young people using health or social care services \(nice.org.uk\)](#)).

Transfer of Care is the transfer of care from one service to another.

For more info, see:

- [Transitional safeguarding | adolescence to adulthood | Research in Practice](#)
- [Transition from children’s to adults’ services for young people using health or social care services \(nice.org.uk\)](#)

More information and learning from reviews can be found via link below and resources can also be uploaded:

[TRANSITIONAL SAFEGUARDING IN HEALTH PADLET](#)

This resource was developed in collaboration with professionals from the NNDHP and The Looked After Children’s Network.



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