



Transitional Safeguarding in Brent

A Scrutiny Task Group Report

Chair, Councillor Ketan Sheth

**Brent Community and Wellbeing
Scrutiny Committee**

Members of the Task Group

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Councillor Anita Thakkar (Vice-Chair)

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The task group was set up by members of Brent Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 15 November 2021.

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Chair's Foreword



In recent years, safeguarding children and adults has become increasingly complex, with risks such as sexual exploitation, gang and group offending and violent crime challenging the children's and adults' safeguarding workforce to identify opportunities for innovation. The notion of transitional safeguarding is an emerging one, not currently widely applied in policy or practice. Its implementation requires changes in policy and practice and across systems involving all agencies. Many local authority areas are already innovating and creating opportunities for more flexible and bespoke support, providing valuable experiences for young people at a key point in their lives.

Supporting young people's safety and wellbeing during the transition to adulthood is not only morally and ethically important, but it is also important for the future health of society and future generations. Young people may experience a range of risks and harms which may require a distinct multi-agency safeguarding response, and safeguarding support should not end simply because a young person reaches the age of 18. Investing in support to address harm and its impacts at this life stage can help to reduce the need for specialist and statutory intervention and criminal justice involvement later on in life.

The Task Group has been encouraged by the progress Brent has made so far in developing transitional safeguarding. It has come away with optimism that this good work will continue, and hopes that its findings and recommendations help Brent Council to provide leadership in this area through expanded partnership working, meaningful engagement with communities and active knowledge and skills exchange. The Task Group looks forward to seeing how Brent's approach to transitional safeguarding evolves.

Everybody has a valuable contribution to make to the transitional safeguarding agenda. I would like to thank all stakeholders and expert witnesses who gave up their time to meet with the Task Group; I have been impressed with their knowledge, insight and commitment to Brent's young people. I would also like to say a special thank you to Dez Homes, Director at Research in Practice, who kindly gave up her time to share her detailed understanding of the practice of transitional safeguarding and its evolution nationally. Finally, I would like to say a thank you my fellow Task Group members – Councillor Anita Thakkar, Councillor Claudia Hector and Reverend Helen Askwith.

Councillor Ketan Sheth

Chair, Transitional Safeguarding Scrutiny Task Group

Recommendations

The Transitional Safeguarding Task Group makes the following recommendations to Brent Council's Cabinet:

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that Brent Council identifies transitional safeguarding as a whole council priority.

Increased pressure on local authorities and partners to respond to complex risks and harms point to the need to consider a new way of working to safeguard young people more effectively. The Task Group believes that providing more effective and fluid support for young people as they enter adulthood not only supports their safety and wellbeing, but may also reduce the need for specialist and statutory services and criminal justice involvement.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that the development of transitional safeguarding is considered an organisational priority.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended that Brent Council considers developing a council-wide approach to transitional safeguarding which is evidence-informed, participative and considers equality, culture, diversity and inclusivity.

It is clear that some young people may fall through the gap between children's and adults' services as thresholds for support are not aligned or they fall out of contact with services. The Task Group believes that opportunities for developing multi-agency and integrated models that can better enable a transitional approach to safeguarding should continue to be explored, recognising that the interconnectedness of harms and adversities requires a highly integrated and consistent system of support.

The council-wide approach to transitional safeguarding should be informed by recommendations 3-5. Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that work plans across Brent actively consider and address transitional safeguarding.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that Brent Council ensures that young people are active partners in the development of its transitional safeguarding approach.

The Task Group believes that transitional safeguarding should be a participative, user-led approach. This means adopting a collaborative approach; respecting young people's expertise and enabling them to coproduce solutions and support rather than

being treated as a passive recipient of support. Services should be responsive to the specific needs of the individual young person and as such should be flexible, integrated and multi-agency. This user involvement will support the development of effective safeguarding practice, informed by young people whose self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience can be developed through that involvement.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that young people are active partners in the development of transitional safeguarding.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that Brent Council considers how it can enhance its support to young people within the transitional safeguarding cohort with needs in education, training and employment (ETE), financial literacy and housing.

The risks young people face are often inter-connected, and a range of risk factors, such as financial difficulties, housing problems, and not being in education, training or employment can co-exist. Strict service criteria or thresholds can generate confusion for young people as the system is complex and it can be difficult for them to work out what support they are able to access. The Task Group believes that some young people therefore need multi-agency support at a more intensive level in order to navigate the complexities of housing, education, training and employment (ETE), finances and further agency support. Brent Council's SMART team offers an example of good practice within adult social care which can be learned from across services to support young people transitioning to adulthood.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that there are measures in place to demonstrate practice change.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that Brent Council promotes transitional safeguarding across safeguarding agencies and services working directly with young people by:

- a. Ensuring that Brent's strategic partnerships for children's and adults' safeguarding and Safer Brent Partnership offer multi-agency training for officers, local commissioners and service providers to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding.**
- b. Commissioning specialist training for elected and co-opted members to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding and empower them to identify gaps and areas for improvement in local safeguarding practice.**

The Task Group believes that the development of transitional safeguarding requires strong, collaborative leadership to enable creative and coherent practice and services for local residents. It is important that officers, local commissioners and service providers develop their knowledge and understanding of transitional safeguarding issues within the local area, share their expertise and support other professionals to develop their practice. The Task Group also sees elected and co-opted members as well placed to lead across boundaries with their experience of working across services, organisations and sectors, as well as their unique knowledge of the communities they represent.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that training is well attended and informs the development of transitional safeguarding across agencies.

Introduction

The Transitional Safeguarding Task Group was set up to review the development of transitional safeguarding in Brent. The evolution of practice nationally and the development of transitional safeguarding arrangements in Brent made the creation of the scrutiny task group timely, and has enabled members to review these arrangements at an early stage.

In recent years, safeguarding children and adults has become increasingly complex. Sexual exploitation, gang and group offending and violent crime - including domestic violence and abuse, modern slavery and trafficking - are challenging those involved in safeguarding children and adults to reflect on established models of safeguarding. Safeguarding is a field where binary notions of childhood and adulthood have prevailed and, as such, the notion of transitional safeguarding is an emerging one. Emerging evidence indicates that more effectively meeting the needs of young people as they transition to adulthood may help to avoid later interventions.

Task Group Membership

The Task Group was comprised of the following elected and co-opted members:

- Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair)
- Councillor Anita Thakkar (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Claudia Hector
- Reverend Helen Askwith

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference were agreed for the Task Group:

- i) Understand the practice of transitional safeguarding, its evolution nationally and the applicability of its implementation in Brent
- ii) Consider how Brent is developing transitional safeguarding practice as part of an improvement to children and young people's services, and what the current offer is
- iii) Understand Brent's particular social demographics and the scale of the risks for adolescents in Brent
- iv) Explore the next steps and potential further development of transitional safeguarding by the local authority and its partners

Methodology

The Task Group gathered qualitative and quantitative evidence to complete its report and develop its recommendations. In particular, the Task Group carried out a number of evidence sessions with Brent Council officers, Brent Council Cabinet Members, local health commissioners, the police, voluntary and community service sector providers and academics. A full list of those who took part is detailed in Appendix A.

Members of the Task Group took part in three evidence sessions between December 2021 and January 2022. The first evidence session focused on the practice of transitional safeguarding, its evolution nationally and how it is being implemented in Brent. The second evidence session focused on the transitional safeguarding development work being undertaken in Brent and the experiences of transitional safeguarding for frontline staff, young people and families. The third evidence session focused on the next steps for developing transitional safeguarding in Brent, and the lessons that have been learned from other local areas, other services and wider parts of the system.

Recommendations were developed with reference to existing legislation for local authority scrutiny. The Task Group notes that an external body or local authority executive is not compelled to act on a recommendation; however, a local authority executive must respond within two months, and NHS organisations are expected to give a meaningful response within 28 days of recommendations being agreed by a scrutiny committee.¹

Background

Definitions

Definitions of adolescence and young adulthood are a source of some debate. For the purposes of this report, 'adolescence' is used to mean 10-18 years and 'late

¹ Department of Health (2014), Local Authority Health Scrutiny

adolescence' is from 16 years to the early twenties. 'Early adulthood' is understood as overlapping with late adolescence and 'young adults' refers to 18 years to mid-late twenties.² The term 'young people' is used in the report to bring these definitions together and refers to people aged 16-25 years.

The report uses the terms 'risk' and 'harm' to refer to abuse, neglect and the experience of adversity that would trigger a safeguarding response from services, for example a child 'is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' or 'an adult is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect'. It also uses the term 'risk' to denote the likelihood of experiencing harm or significant adversity.

'Extra-familial' harm refers to harm that occurs to young people outside of their family system, often during the adolescent years because at this age their social networks widen. The term 'contextual' when used in a safeguarding context refers to environment in which young people grow and develop and the different relationships that they form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online.

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".³ It focuses on safeguarding young people, from adolescence to adulthood, recognising this period of transition will be experienced differently by young people at different times.

Transitional safeguarding is not simply transition planning for people who are moving from children's social care to adult social care services. It refers to activity that has often fallen outside of the traditional notions of both 'transitions' and 'safeguarding', recognising that support to young people experiencing transition to adulthood can be fragmented, with differing age thresholds for service access and service eligibility and with differing services available for young adults.

Underpinning frameworks and legislation

The Task Group has heard that children's and adults' safeguarding services share a common aim of protecting people from harm, but that these two systems have evolved differently over time and are governed by distinct practice, policy and statutory frameworks. Practice, policy and statutory frameworks underpin multi-agency roles and define safeguarding responsibilities.

² Holmes, D. and Smale, E. (2018) 'Mind the Gap: Transitional Safeguarding – Adolescence to Adulthood.'

³ Ibid

The current duty to promote the welfare of children has been established in law since the Children Act 1989 and 2004. This framework places a general duty on a range of agencies, including local authorities, the police and health services, to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need in their area by providing a range of services appropriate to those children's needs.⁴ The statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with the relevant legislation.⁵ The Task Group has heard that, as of December 2021, there were 2878 children open to statutory services in Brent. Of these children, 353 were on a Child Protection Plan and 352 were Looked After Children.⁶

The current duties and responsibilities regarding care and support for adults has been established in law since the Care Act 2014. It places a general duty on local authorities and health services to provide a system of support to maintain and promote the independence and wellbeing of adults, and a statutory framework to protect adults from neglect and abuse. Making Safeguarding Personal, as set out in the Care Act 2014, aims to identify what action needs to be taken to stop or prevent abuse and neglect in the context of an individual's wellbeing.⁷ The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides the framework by which an adult's capacity to make specific decisions at a particular point in time is assessed.⁸ The Task Group has heard that, as of September 2021, there were 4015 people in receipt of funded adult social care services in Brent. These are adults who have needs that arise from a physical or mental impairment or illness. There were almost 2,000 reports of abuse or neglect involving adults at risk in 2020/21, and Brent Council's statutory duty to intervene was met in 35% of these cases.⁹

Brent's young people

There are estimated to be around 42,500 young people aged 16-25 in Brent – this group makes up around 13% of the Brent population.¹⁰ It is estimated that 63% of Brent young people aged 16-25 are from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse groups including 35% from Asian groups and 19% from Black ethnic groups.¹¹ Over two thirds of Brent's pupils (68%) have a first language other than English and, in total, Brent pupils use around 150 different languages.¹²

⁴ Children Act (1989) & Children Act (2004)

⁵ Department for Education (2020), 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children'

⁶ Brent Council, Evidence received at Evidence Session 1

⁷ Care Act (2014)

⁸ Mental Capacity Act (2005)

⁹ Brent Council, Evidence received at Evidence Session 1

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics, (2020), '2019 based mid-year population projections'

¹¹ Office for National Statistics, (2017), '2016 based ethnic group projections'

¹² Brent Council (2021), 'Brent Youth Strategy 2021-2023'

The poverty rate in the borough is significantly higher compared to the overall poverty rate in London. One in three households in Brent live in poverty – compared to one in five in the country as a whole. This is the sixth highest rate in London and the highest in outer London. Poverty rates are particularly high for children and young people in Brent – around 22% of children live in poverty, and this rises to 43% where housing costs are considered.¹³

Despite this relative deprivation, Brent's adolescent children perform well at secondary school. The proportion of 16/17 year olds not in education, employment or training is 1.4%. For London the proportion is 1.8% and nationally it is 2.6%.¹⁴ The number of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is relatively high and continuing to rise, with 3.9% of children who attend school having an education, health and care plan (EHC), compared to 3.7% nationally.¹⁵

As of March 2021 Brent had 288 looked after children and young people. This represents 37 out of every 10,000 children and young people in Brent, compared to a rate of 62 out of 10,000 for England. 38.4% of the care population in Brent were aged between 16-18 years old and, as of March 2021, Brent Council was responsible for 415 care leavers (307 of which were aged 18-21 and 108 aged 22-25).¹⁶

A small minority of young people are vulnerable to extra-familial harm such as criminal and sexual exploitation. County lines is one area where criminal exploitation of young people can occur – as of April 2021, 133 individuals in Brent were identified who evidence a link to county lines activity and, of those individuals, the highest proportion were aged 17 to 19 years (35%) and 58% were aged 18 to 25. Moreover, 21.5% of knife crime victims (excluding domestic abuse) are aged 18-25, and 29.5% of knife crime suspects (excluding domestic abuse) are aged 18-25.¹⁷

The case for change

It is important to note upfront both the financial realities facing providers of safeguarding services and the financial case for innovation. The financial constraints placed upon local areas like Brent make it difficult to undertake any work considered non-statutory, and embedding transitional safeguarding would indeed require local services to provide support to young people that are currently not receiving a statutory safeguarding response. However, investing in preventative and recovery-

¹³ Brent Council (2020), 'A Fairer Future: Ending Poverty in Brent'

¹⁴ Brent Council (2021), 'Brent Youth Strategy 2021-2023'

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics (2021), 'Special educational needs in England: January 2021'

¹⁶ Report to the Corporate Parenting Committee (July 2021), 'Annual Corporate Parenting Report April 2020 - March 2021'

¹⁷ Brent Council, Evidence received at Evidence Session 1

oriented work to promote people's safety and wellbeing can play an important role in avoiding the need for specialist and statutory services and criminal justice involvement.

It is noted that extensive research has been undertaken by academics to illustrate why a more fluid and transitional safeguarding approach is needed for young people entering adulthood. The most widely accepted reasons are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Complex safeguarding needs of adolescents

Adolescents may have distinct safeguarding needs, harms and routes to protection. These are often 'contextual', extra-familial and are underpinned by complex social and biological drivers. The Task Group has heard that the risks adolescents face in Brent are often interconnected, and can include sexual abuse, physical and/or emotional abuse, neglect, homelessness, criminal exploitation and substance misuse. A range of risk factors, such as emotional and mental health difficulties, accommodation problems, and not being in education, training or employment can co-exist, and exposure to adversities such as bereavement and strained family relationships can make some more vulnerable to abuse. It is recognised that adolescents who have experienced harm may often require ongoing support beyond the age of 18, either because the harm continues into adulthood or because they need help to recover from the impact of harm.

The Task Group has heard that research on wider social determinants, such as poverty, show a link between deprivation – where families live and their resources – and safety and wellbeing needs. Childhood poverty is argued by some as the biggest factor increasing risk of homelessness, and poverty has been shown to have a strong effect on both physical and mental health. Poverty is also linked to sexual exploitation of adults, and some research suggests a connection between modern slavery (including forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking) and homelessness. Multiple studies find that poverty and associated structural factors are consistently linked to multiple crime-related outcomes, and poverty and inequality is also highlighted as a key factor in understanding gang-related crime and disorder. Some groups might face structural disadvantage, as a result of systemic racism, ableism, classism or sexism, and these persist into adulthood and may mean a person is targeted by those seeking to exploit them.¹⁸

Adolescence is also a time of considerable change with physical development and the effects of puberty having emotional and behavioural impacts. The Task Group has heard that some studies into brain development and its effects on behaviour show that

¹⁸ Holmes, D. and Smale, E. (2018) 'Mind the Gap: Transitional Safeguarding – Adolescence to Adulthood.'

some elements of brain growth – such as the development to emotional regulation, social relationships and executive functioning - continue into the 20s. It is argued that the transitional nature of maturation after 18 may therefore require a more nuanced approach to ‘maturity’ and account for young adults’ individual experiences and circumstances in understanding their capacity to take particular decisions.¹⁹

The Task Group is of the view that the interconnectedness of these harms and adversities means that enabling young adults in Brent to be safe may require an integrated system of support that pays attention to childhood and adolescent experiences. It is recognised that there are a variety of ways in which a young person might need help to be safe, including housing support, therapeutic support, financial advice, employment support, legal support, and practical support.

Divergence between children’s and adults’ safeguarding systems and ‘silo working’

Safeguarding systems have developed in accordance with different legislative and policy frameworks and arguably divergent conceptual frameworks. The Task Group has heard that neither system is specifically designed with adolescents’ developmental needs or behaviours in mind, nor do existing approaches to safeguarding take into account evidence that the transition period for adopting adult social roles and responsibilities extends into the twenties. This can lead to what is termed as ‘silo working’ – where services work in close vicinity but independently from each other.

In relation to children, safeguarding duties aim to promote children’s upbringing and their welfare (rather than wellbeing). The Task Group recognises that the role of parents and the familial context arguably frames children’s safeguarding practice, because children are broadly viewed as lacking the full capacity to make decisions for themselves. A primary driver in children’s safeguarding is considered to be protection from harm and removing or mitigating risk - children fall within the scope of safeguarding duties if the local authority has ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’.²⁰

In relation to safeguarding adults, the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda aims to identify what action needs to be taken to stop or prevent abuse and neglect in the context of an individual’s wellbeing. The Task Group has heard that this approach is based on an understanding of ‘maturity’, associated with adult roles and responsibilities and capacity to make decisions. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides the framework by which an adult’s capacity to make specific decisions at a particular point in time is assessed. In terms of eligibility, the safeguarding duties apply to an adult who ‘has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Children Act (1989) & Children Act (2004)

meeting any of those needs) and; is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect'.²¹

The Task Group recognises that this divergence presents some challenges in terms of providing a fluid transitional response to safeguarding as young people enter adulthood in Brent, as the criteria by which someone is deemed to require a safeguarding response can change significantly upon reaching their 18th birthday. Consent provides another area of complexity; a child's consent is not required to initiate a safeguarding intervention, whereas consent is broadly considered essential before making a safeguarding referral should an adult be deemed to have capacity.

Differing legal and statutory thresholds

The Task Group has heard that young people in Brent transitioning from childhood to adulthood can find it difficult to access services. Older adolescents and young adults can fall through the gaps between children's and adults' services, often because they do not meet eligibility criteria for care and support from adult services (nor therefore for adult safeguarding), or they fall out of contact with services. This may exacerbate harm in adulthood, potentially leading to poorer outcomes across their lifespan and increasing the likelihood of specialist and statutory interventions in later life.

Whilst children in care in Brent are now entitled to support until the age of 25, those adolescents who have experienced high levels of trauma and harm but are not in care do not automatically have the same entitlements. Young people entering adulthood can fall out of contact with services or disengage with them for a range of reasons – often because services are not as flexible or responsive to adolescents' needs as they could be.

Importantly, the Task Group recognises that young people in Brent can experience a 'cliff-edge' due to different thresholds for access to services. For example, adolescents entering adulthood often do not meet adult mental health criteria, and young people with moderate special educational needs who received support while at school do not necessarily meet eligibility criteria for care and support from adults' services. The criteria by which a person is eligible for safeguarding support can therefore be very different for older adolescents and young adults.

²¹ Care Act (2014)

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Increased pressure on local authorities and partners to respond to complex risks and harms point to the need to consider a new way of working to safeguard young people more effectively. The Task Group believes that providing more effective and fluid support for young people as they enter adulthood not only supports their safety and wellbeing, but may also reduce the need for specialist and statutory services and criminal justice involvement.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that the development of transitional safeguarding is considered an organisational priority.

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The council-wide approach to transitional safeguarding should be informed by recommendations 3-5. Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that work plans across Brent actively consider and address transitional safeguarding.

Good practice

The Task Group believes that the evidence therefore points to a need to consider a new way of working in Brent in which existing safeguarding systems and services for children and adults become more aligned, more fluid and more responsive to the needs of young people. Working this way includes seeking to prevent harm for this cohort of young people, protecting them where harm is occurring and also recognising and responding in ways that can help them recover from the impact of harm. As such,

it is a multi-agency issue dependent on collaboration and connection between agencies, services and with communities.

Transitional safeguarding is not a prescribed model. It is a joined-up approach to policy and practice that is being developed and applied in different ways according to local circumstances. There are a number of areas that localities, including Brent, are exploring when considering how to strengthen their local safeguarding response to adolescents and young adults, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

Good practice within adults' safeguarding

The Task Group believes that there are many positive elements to safeguarding adults that might be usefully drawn into adolescent safeguarding practice. It is felt that doing so may not only create smoother transition to adulthood for young people in Brent who will continue to require support to be safe once they are adults, but might also ensure that young people's emerging independence and autonomy is more effectively promoted.

For example, the Care Act 2014 sets out the following six key principles that underpin all adult safeguarding work. The Task Group feels that these principles are arguably equally applicable to the safeguarding of adolescents, particularly older adolescents:

- Empowerment: People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention: It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- Proportionality: The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Protection: Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Partnership: Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- Accountability: Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Making Safeguarding Personal is a person-centred and rights-based approach to adult safeguarding, which became part of the formal guidance under the Care Act 2014. It is an approach to safeguarding that aims to ensure that adults at risk are fully engaged and consulted throughout an intervention and that their wishes and views are central to the final outcomes.²² The Task Group feels that understanding participative approaches within adults' safeguarding and applying this understanding to transitional safeguarding practice could go some way to improving young people's experience of services in Brent.

²² Ibid

Good practice within children's safeguarding

The Task Group feels that, in turn, there are elements of children and adolescent safeguarding that might prove useful to those seeking to ensure young adults in Brent facing risk are supported most effectively. For example, the Contextual Safeguarding framework and learning from those local areas, like Brent, which have embedded it into policy and practice offers key messages and practical tools for safeguarding young people more effectively beyond the age of 18 years.

Contextual safeguarding may provide a framework for Brent to develop a transitional safeguarding approach that engages with extra-familial risks in adolescence. It may be useful as it recognises that many young people's needs cannot necessarily be addressed by traditional social work interventions, and focusing on the need to assess and intervene with extra-familial contexts and relationships in order to safeguard young people during adolescence. It also encourages an expansive understanding of who constitutes a safeguarding partner – with local businesses, stewards of public spaces and communities playing a key role alongside statutory and voluntary sector agencies.²³

Examples of innovation

The Task Group recognises that transitional safeguarding is being developed and applied in different ways according to local circumstances, and elements of a transitional safeguarding approach can be seen across agencies and services working with young people. For example, in some local areas the focus is on extending the support available to young people experiencing harm in their communities, for others there is a drive to develop services for young adults to prevent them developing longer-term care and support needs.

Newcastle - Sexual Exploitation Hub

This is a multi-agency service that supports both child and adult victims of sexual exploitation and modern day slavery. The service was initially commissioned by the police in partnership with the local authority, in recognition of the way perpetrators were targeting individuals regardless of age. The service works with people where there are identified risks and ongoing concerns around grooming, coercion and control.

Key features of the service include:

²³ Firmin C, Horan J, Holmes D & Hopper G (2019), 'Safeguarding during adolescence – the relationship between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding'

- Enables young adults to make sound choices and negotiate risks safely, with the team routinely using the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to assess adolescents' capacity to make safe decisions
- Outcomes-focused and with no upper age limit for the young people being supported
- Work is not time limited and practitioners are able to develop an in-depth understanding of the nature of the risks and needs experienced by adolescents
- Referrals into the service are made via a transition protocol across different services²⁴

Metropolitan Police – DIVERT programme

DIVERT was created to address a gap in statutory provision for young adults who go into police custody. It is a Metropolitan Police Service diversion programme designed to use police custody as a teachable moment to prevent young people aged 18-25 from reoffending, and leading them away from crime into employment, education or training.

Key features of the service include:

- Coaches tailor their approach to the individual's needs, assisting them in a variety of ways; from facilitating access to training, education or employment opportunities to assisting with housing issues or arranging support for mental health or addiction problems
- Coaches continue to work with the young person outside of custody, drawing on a network of partners and agencies for support
- Process continues completely independent of the criminal justice process, and coaches often maintain contact with young people who have received custodial sentences and continue working with them on release²⁵

Brent Council – Supportive Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART)

Brent Council's SMART service supports adults who experience multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities but who do not meet statutory criteria for social care interventions. The SMART service works with people within Brent who often have a cycle of homelessness, mental health admissions, drug and alcohol dependencies and contact with criminal justice and probation services. It is multi-disciplinary, involving social workers with mental health and social care backgrounds, an occupational

²⁴ Department of Health and Social Care (2021), 'Bridging the Gap: transitional safeguarding and the role of social work with adults'

²⁵ Ibid

therapist, drug and alcohol misuse professionals, a housing officer and supportive outreach officers.

Key features of the service include:

- Engages with service users who are difficult to reach and do not meet eligibility for social care interventions
- Enables a collaborative approach in which the person being supported and those providing support work together to determine an outcome that draws on the adult's strengths and goals
- Attention is given to developing and strengthening the person's support network
- Partnership working with a range of agencies and services working with vulnerable adults to ensure integrated and tailored support

The Task Group is of the view that lessons and learning can be taken from local areas that are adopting a more fluid transitional safeguarding approach and from other services and parts of the wider system where transitional approaches are more embedded. The progress of these local areas and other services and parts of the wider system can be drawn upon when considering how to strengthen Brent's transitional safeguarding approach.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that Brent Council ensures that young people are active partners in the development of its transitional safeguarding approach.

The Task Group believes that transitional safeguarding should be a participative, user-led approach. This means adopting a collaborative approach; respecting young people's expertise and enabling them to coproduce solutions and support rather than being treated as a passive recipient of support. Services should be responsive to the specific needs of the individual young person and as such should to be flexible, integrated and multi-agency. This user involvement will support the development of effective safeguarding practice, informed by young people whose self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience can be developed through that involvement.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that young people are active partners in the development of transitional safeguarding.

Development of transitional safeguarding in Brent

The Task Group notes that change must be considered within the context of each local authority's setting. For some local authorities, there may be a number of blocks and barriers to developing transitional safeguarding. For example, the financial constraints facing local areas like Brent make it difficult to undertake any work considered non-statutory. It is also recognised that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic may have slowed progress in this area as emergency and recovery responses were rightly prioritised. The development of Brent's approach to transitional safeguarding should therefore be explored in this context. Whilst its development is at an early stage, there are a number of key forums where transitional safeguarding work is being undertaken.

Brent's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) is a structure where professionals from agencies share information on cases of vulnerable and high-risk individuals whose personal safety is a concern. The meeting creates a risk management plan to offer immediate support. The aim of the process is to address the safety and protection of an individual and to review and coordinate the case and case management plan. Examples of vulnerable individuals that can be referred to the panel are those who are victims of domestic abuse, victims of hate crimes, at risk of fire related incidents, at risk of financial abuse/fraud and at risk of homelessness/or have difficulties maintaining their property. The MARAC evidences information sharing between a range of agencies and includes representatives from the local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, domestic violence advisors and other specialists. Young people are considered who are under the age of 18, as well young adults aged 18 and over.

The Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP) is another forum in which transitional safeguarding is being developed. Alongside overseeing interventions for children, young people and adults at risk of exploitation, the panel provides a coordinated, visible and accountable partnership response for managing those in the Violence and Vulnerability Programme cohort. The Violence and Vulnerability Programme focuses on supporting vulnerable young people and reducing reoffending and serious youth violence through a coordinated, multi-agency and intelligence led approach. As of May 2021, the programme was supporting 130 clients aged between 17-25. This includes gang members, persistent offenders, habitual weapons (knife/gun) carriers, domestic abuse perpetrators and those at the cusp of offending behaviour.²⁶

The Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group progresses the contextual safeguarding agenda in Brent. It works to ensure that policy and practice responds more effectively to harms faced by children and young people outside the family of home. The main extra-familial risks to children and young people in Brent are recognised to include

²⁶ Brent Council, Evidence received at Evidence Session 1

youth violence, gang involvement, and child exploitation, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation such as county lines. The Task Group is encouraged to learn that the Transitional Safeguarding sub-group of the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group brings together representatives from Brent Council's Children and Young People, Community Wellbeing and Regeneration and Environment services to look at the ways in which the local authority can develop its transitional safeguarding approach.

The Transitional Safeguarding sub-group's current work is focused on transitions for children leaving care. As a result of joint-working, a more collaborative approach was recently piloted between the Leaving Care and Adult Safeguarding teams which sought to explore the ways that vulnerable young people who are leaving care are supported where non-statutory interventions are needed. The majority of the cases identified did not meet eligibility criteria for an adult safeguarding intervention, where there is no statutory duty to support these young people. The Task Group is encouraged by the support received across services for the pilot and the expectation that those involved learn from one another and work together to consider what transitional safeguarding may look like in Brent. A learning event took place in February 2021 to discuss the challenges and opportunities emerging from the pilot, as well as the opportunities to reimagine systems to support for this cohort.

Case Study: Piloting transitional safeguarding approaches for young people at risk of sexual exploitation in Brent

Freya is an 18 year old care leaver who is at high risk of sexual exploitation and is very vulnerable with a history of abuse and neglect in her life. Freya has a history of going missing and it has been reported that she both sends and receives messages from men she has met online, meets with them and is offered drugs and alcohol. Freya is frequently reported missing together with other young people known to CYP.

Concerns escalated around Freya's eighteenth birthday and these were reported through the Integrated Risk Management Meeting, leading to a complex strategy meeting to ensure that all the professionals involved, including the Adult Safeguarding Team and Police representatives, share information and intelligence from partner police services in the various locations Freya is known to have visited.

Following this, Adult Safeguarding and the Leaving Care Personal Advisor carried out a joint Mental Capacity Act assessment. As this assessment concluded that she does have capacity, professional focus is currently on developing an adult safeguarding risk management plan, drawing on Adult Safeguarding expertise in this area.

Four sessions of multi-agency training on transitional safeguarding were conducted in 2021 in partnership with Research in Practice. The objectives of the training were to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding, communicate messages from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and to understand the tensions, blocks and barriers to developing a transitional safeguarding approach. The Task Group is pleased that attendees included practitioners from the Council's Community Wellbeing and Children and Young People services alongside health partners, commissioned services, schools and local charities. In addition, Research in Practice were invited to speak to the Council's Adult Social Care team about its research and encourage attendees to share their expertise and explore the ways in which they could develop their safeguarding practice.

The Task Group is encouraged to hear that Brent Council commissions a range of interventions available to children and young people in Brent to the age of 25. St Giles Trust have been commissioned to provide a Gangs Intervention Programme (which falls under the EVVP) to challenge and work with those involved with or on the periphery of gangs to change their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions. There is a dedicated Gangs Mentor based within Brent Council's Youth Offending Service Team to provide support and interventions for young people working with the Youth Offending Service, Early Help, and Social Care teams. AIR Network have been commissioned to deliver a mentoring, sports, and wellbeing programme and have provided support to offenders on the Violence and Vulnerability Programme. AIR Network engages with offenders prior and during release from prison and provides support in areas such as housing, education, training, employment, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse.

Another example of a commissioned intervention available to children and young people in Brent to the age of 25 is the Embedded Youth Violence Hospital Project delivered by St Giles Trust. This project aims to improve the identification and engagement of young people who present at Northwick Park Hospital as a victim of serious youth violence. They also deliver training and professional development programmes to professionals who have contact with young people. Westminster Drug Project (WDP) is commissioned through Brent Council's Public Health service to provide support services to young people and adults in Brent. For example, the Mental Health Outreach Project provides support for those with either diagnosed and non-diagnosed mental health conditions to reduce re-offending rates. It also works to focus on cohorts not yet known to statutory services, increasing earlier intervention and identification.

Global Thinking's Young Women's Diversionary Project delivers a bespoke service for young women affected by gangs, criminal exploitation and county lines. It aims to ensure that young women are able to access help and are free from harm, abuse and exploitation. The project also delivers training days for professionals to help increase

the awareness of how young women can be affected by threats and to help professionals better identify risk indicators for early intervention. Brent Council also commissions Advance Minerva Wrap Around which provides specialist support to women and girls over 15, with complex multiple needs who have committed crime and are at risk of re-offending. The service is designed to be a multi-agency response to women in contact with the criminal justice system and is offered in women only hubs and two regional women's centres.

Brent's Probation Services is involved in the transition of young people from the Youth Offending Service to Probation Services and is a member of key safeguarding forums such as EVVP and Brent MARAC. Young people are usually transferred from the Youth Offending Service to Probation Services at the age of 18. The Task Group heard that the Transitions to Adulthood programme provides a community-based holistic service for 17 year olds transitioning from the Youth Offending Service to adult probation, informed by an understanding of maturity rather than age in order to reduce reoffending, improve mental health and support young adults to make positive life choices. Pilots are also underway in Brent to provide trauma-informed training for staff to assess a young person's capacity to make informed decisions and to identify care leavers and care experienced offenders to ensure risk assessments and sentence plans take this experience into account.

Case Study: Transitional support from the Youth Offending Service in Brent

A Crown Court provided positive feedback about interventions for two young people age 19. Their Youth Offending Service worker continued to work with them post-18, funded by Brent Council Covid-19 pressures funding. due to the progress made, on returning to Court to seek a variation the Judge decided to revoke both orders. The young people were asked what made the biggest difference. They responded:

"Receiving support in applying for courses, preventing me from re-offending and doing stupid stuff."

"Engaging in sessions addressing my offence and the impact it had on victims."

"Discussions that made me think hard about my actions and the consequences."

Brent's schools also undertake considerable work to support young people moving into adulthood. In particular, schools play an important role in identifying young people that may experience risks and harm. The Task Group heard that many schools have close working relationships with a range of agencies and services that work with young people, such as the local police, mental health services, statutory children's and adults'

safeguarding services and commissioned services, and work alongside these organisations to ensure safeguarding support is in place. This provides a platform by which young people transitioning into adulthood can be supported regardless of whether they fit into adult safeguarding statutory criteria.

Local health commissioners such as North West London Clinical Commissioning Group and Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust play an important role in supporting young people as they transition into adulthood, and provide another area in which transitional safeguarding practice is being developed. Local health commissioners are seeking to ensure that commissioned services are afforded flexibility in order to support people across this stage of development, and to incorporate co-productive principles within local commissioning approaches to ensure those young people that receive care are involved in the planning, development and delivery of the care they receive. They are also uniquely placed to ensure robust local needs analysis, so that young people's needs are understood and incorporated into service planning and reflected in the market.

The Task Group is encouraged to learn that the need to improve transitions from Children and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health (AMHs) services was recognised in the NHS Long Term Plan. In response, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a new model of mental healthcare designed for young adults aged 16-25 years. Specific features of the model include dedicated support for young adults moving from CAMHS to AMHs, continued support for young adults who have experienced adversities such as youth violence and in-reach services where young people are based, for example universities, colleges or local hubs for those not in employment or higher education. It also includes Multi-agency Young Adult Triage and Partnership meetings with clinical assistance for referrers to develop management plans and young adult focused therapies and service adaptations.²⁷

Whilst recognising that the development of transitional safeguarding in Brent is at an early stage, the Task Group is encouraged by the progress made so far. The Task Group feels that the transitional safeguarding agenda must continue to be progressed with clear, credible and explicitly owned local leadership, an expanded definition of partnership working, meaningful engagement with communities and active knowledge and skills exchange.

²⁷ Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (2021), 'Improving Young Adult Mental Health in North West London – A new model of care is ready for local implementation'

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that Brent Council considers how it can enhance its support to young people within the transitional safeguarding cohort with needs in education, training and employment (ETE), financial literacy and housing.

The risks young people face are often inter-connected, and a range of risk factors, such as financial difficulties, housing problems, and not being in education, training or employment can co-exist. Strict service criteria or thresholds can generate confusion for young people as the system is complex and it can be difficult for them to work out what support they are able to access. The Task Group believes that some young people therefore need multi-agency support at a more intensive level in order to navigate the complexities of housing, education, training and employment (ETE), finances and further agency support. Brent Council's SMART team offers an example of good practice within adult social care which can be learned from across services to support young people transitioning to adulthood.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that there are measures in place to demonstrate practice change.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that Brent Council promotes transitional safeguarding across safeguarding agencies and services working directly with young people by:

- a. Ensuring that Brent’s strategic partnerships for children’s and adults’ safeguarding and Safer Brent Partnership offer multi-agency training for officers, local commissioners and service providers to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding.**
- b. Commissioning specialist training for elected and co-opted members to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding and empower them to identify gaps and areas for improvement in local safeguarding practice.**

The Task Group believes that the development of transitional safeguarding requires strong, collaborative leadership to enable creative and coherent practice and services for local residents. It is important that officers, local commissioners and service providers develop their knowledge and understanding of transitional safeguarding issues within the local area, share their expertise and support other professionals to develop their practice. The Task Group also sees elected members as well placed to lead across boundaries with their experience of working across services, organisations and sectors, as well as their unique knowledge of the communities they represent.

Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee should be updated on the progress of this recommendation and seek assurance that training is well attended and informs the development of transitional safeguarding across agencies.

Appendices

Appendix A Participants

The Task Group would like to thank the following participants who contributed to the report and/or took part in evidence sessions held between December 2021 and January 2022:

- Dez Holmes – Director, Research in Practice
- Georgina Diba - Head of Adult Safeguarding , Brent Council

- Sonya Kalyniak - Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Children and Young People, Brent Council
- Natasha Langleben - Team Manager (LAC and Permanency), Children and Young People, Brent Council
- Jyoti Morar - Deputy Team Manager (Integration and Improved Outcomes), Children and Young People, Brent Council
- Rebecca Byrne - Head of Learning Disability and Mental Health, Brent Council
- Colin Wilderspin – Head of Community Protection, Brent Council
- Andy Brown – Head of Substance Misuse, Brent Council
- Marcus Hanvey - Acting Inspector, Gangs and Project Horizon, North West London Basic Command Unit
- Kathryn Hunt - Head of Service, Brent Prison and Probation Service
- Hermann Farrington - Headteacher, The Village School
- Trish Davies - CAHMS Manager, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
- Claudia Brown – Operational Director Adult Social Care, Brent Council
- Nadeem Janjua - Hospital Embedded Team Manager, St Giles Trust
- Lance Findlater - St Giles SOS Project Caseworker, St Giles Trust
- Sam Amiryan - Coordinator, Air Network
- Dr Arlene Boroda - Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children, Child Death and Children Looked After, North West London Clinical Commissioning Group
- Gail Tolley – Strategic Director Children and Young People, Brent Council
- Phil Porter – Strategic Director Community and Wellbeing, Brent Council
- Philippa Galligan – Borough Director, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
- Tiffany Adonis-French – Head of Adult Services (Complex Care), Brent Council
- Councillor Harbi Farah - Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Brent Council
- Councillor Margaret McLennan – Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care

The Task Group has been impressed by the knowledge and insight of all stakeholders and expert witnesses involved, and thanks them for their contribution.

Appendix B

Evidence Sessions

	Themes and Areas for Discussion
Evidence Session 1 9 December 2021	Understanding transitional safeguarding Practice of transitional safeguarding Evolution of transitional safeguarding practice nationally Examples of good practice and learning from other boroughs and/or nationally
Evidence Session 2 14 December 2021	Transitional safeguarding development work undertaken in Brent Role of multi-agency working in developing transitional safeguarding practice Experience of young people and families who may require transitional support
Evidence Session 3 11 January 2022	Development of transitional safeguarding practice going forward Lessons learned from both good practice and where things could be improved and from other services/wider parts of the system

Appendix C

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