Introduction

In the last decade, prompted by high-profile cases of adolescent abuse, UK safeguarding systems have broadened their understanding of, and response to, significant child harm in adolescence (Working Together, 2018). This has been a welcomed move; with the sector reflecting on language, thresholds and interventions that have excluded, and in some cases criminalised, adolescents who experience abuse outside their homes, such as peer on peer harm or criminal and sexual exploitation (see Shaw and Greenhow, 2021). Attempts to safeguard adolescents from these previously under-recognised 'extra-familial' harms (EFH) –have not simply required an expansion of child protection systems to a broader age group, new locations, or different types of harm. It has required an interrogation of the systems and beliefs that have allowed adolescents to be criminalised, blamed, and made responsible for their abuse.

Contextual safeguarding is one approach to formulating a child welfare response to adolescent EFH (Firmin, 2017). This approach asks children's social care and its partners to expand the remit of their child protection systems to include assessment and intervention with groups and locations (Firmin and Lloyd, 2022). Many have highlighted that child protection systems and multi-agency partners are challenged in their ability to respond to EFH in a way that promotes young people's rights. Some warn that notions of 'risk' associated with adolescent EFH expand punitive interventions into the lives of young people and their communities (Gadd and Broad, 2018), in gendered, classed and racialised ways (Vaughn, 2019). Some query the ability of child protection systems to address structural inequalities which provide an enabling context for a range of child harms (Featherstone et al, 2018), or the extent to which child protection systems are responsive to the intersecting inequalities faced by young people and their families (Davis and Marsh, 2020). These voices alert us to an additional range of harms that emanate from the systems in place to protect young people (authors own, 2022).

This paper considers how relationships of trust and care and relationships of surveillance and control feature in system responses to EFH. This question is explored through analysis of Contextual Safeguarding 'pilots' that formed part of the [Anon] study, representing the most systematic 'testing' of Contextual Safeguarding as a response to adolescent EFH in England and Wales. Data from pilots are analysed using the 'Watching Over Working With' framework developed by [Anon – author one] and the lead researcher [Anon] overseeing [Anon] study. The framework was proposed as tool to evaluate the extent to which innovation in response to EFH promotes relationships of trust and care, or relationships of surveillance and control. The analysis presented here signals important questions for future testing of Contextual Safeguarding and adolescent safeguarding more broadly.

Background

In 2020 the Contextual Safeguarding research programme published a values framework to underpin the four 'domains' of Contextual Safeguarding (1. targets social conditions, 2. using child welfare legislation, 3. with partners with reach into extra-familial spaces, and 4. measures contextual change, Firmin, 2017). The values are: *collaborating* with professionals, young people, families and communities to inform decisions about safety; *ecological*, considering the links between spaces where young people experience harm and inequalities; rooted in children's and human *rights; strengths-based,* building on the strengths of individuals and communities to achieve change; and *evidence-informed*, grounded in the reality of how life happens - proposing solutions informed by lived experience (authors own, 2020). The values were prompted by observations by the Contextual Safeguarding research programme of how the framework, or at

least the term 'contextual safeguarding', was being applied across England and Wales, noting that a range of methods that significantly extended the reach of statutory agencies into young people's lives were being adopted, with inconsistencies in the extent to which this was done in collaboration with young people, or through monitoring and surveillance of their friendships and neighbourhoods (authors own, 2019).

In 2020 (anon) published the 'Watching Over Working With' (WoWW) framework (authors own, 2020b; figure one) prompted by these observations. They reviewed literature concerning trust and surveillance in child protection work to create a framework against which to measure innovation in response to EFH.

<mark>FIGURE ONE HERE</mark>

They applied the framework to data from two projects using the Contextual Safeguarding framework to tackle EFH and concluded that there was variation in how they: collaborated with young people and communities in service design and implementation or engaged young people only in service delivery; stored and shared young people's data, with varying safeguards around how data was used; and sought to, or did, address contextual or structural factors impacting young people's experiences of harm and safety. Due to these inconsistencies, authors own (2020b) proposed that the WoWW framework may be helpful for evaluating future interventions into EFH, cautioning against:

> *Contextual Safeguarding becoming the next 'Trojan horse' of child protection, facilitating the expansion and intrusion of surveillance into the lives of children and families.*

> (Authors own, 2020b: 14)

The WoWW framework is organised around two *relational* principles: relationships characterised by trust and care, and those characterised by surveillance and control. In recent years the Contextual Safeguarding research team have developed work on the types of relationships that are required to formulate a child welfare response to EFH (Owen's et al, 2020; Firmin and Owen's, 2022). Exploring the interplay between Contextual Safeguarding and Relationship Based Practice, Owen's et al (2020) note that both approaches seek to safeguard young people by understanding and utilising relationships *in context,* in doing so: acknowledging the 'intervening power' of relationships; promoting collaborative approaches to building and sustaining safety; and responding to behaviour as a form of communication. Importantly, both approaches require practitioners to work in ways that promote relationships of trust and to work with, and from the perspective of, young people.

Similarly, in a collaborative piece of work with VCS organisation Safer London (Latimer et al, 2020) principles of trust and transparency were surfaced as important safeguards for young people's right to privacy and association in relation to 'peer mapping', a method proposed as part of Contextual Safeguarding 'peer assessment'. In this work, practitioners reflected on the importance of building trusted relationships with young people by giving them control over how their information was stored and shared:

> *The young person may choose not to allow the practitioner to keep a copy of the map. If the young person wants to keep hold of the map, the practitioner may suggest that they store it somewhere safe, due to its private nature. It may also be appropriate to ask the young person*

for consent to share the map with someone specific – e.g., a social worker or parent – and to plan this conversation with them.

(Latimer, Elias, Firmin, 2020: 11)

These considerations responded to practitioner concerns about young people's rights to privacy, and the legal basis for collecting and storing information about a young person and their peers when responding to EFH. These concerns were echoed in a Contextual Safeguarding Legal Briefing (Firmin and Knowles, 2020) that noted that peer and context assessment do not currently have a clear legal basis:

On [this] matter, present practice related to peer assessment varies hugely around the country in the absence of a clear legal threshold for initiating them. The grounds upon which peer assessment should be followed by plans – and the expected multi-agency contribution to such plans – is all unclear as is the associations of this practice to GDPR legislation and the UNCRC.

(Firmin and Knowles, 2020:15)

There remains ambiguity about how best to safeguard adolescents from EFH and what this means for the types of relationships that are formed with young people, their families, and communities as service responses to EFH are developed (Firmin and Owen's, 2022). Indeed, authors own (2023b) highlight the tension in initial pilots of Contextual Safeguarding between practices grounded in children's welfare (domain one) and those rooted in crime reduction. Lloyd and Owen's (2023) describe how responses to EFH are interchangeably guided by behaviourist and ecological (value two) conceptualisations of young people's experiences of harm. Initial findings from the ANON study indicate that changes to Working Together 2018 alone have not created the conditions for Contextual Safeguarding. Firmin and Lloyd (2022) note that initial pilots of the approach: continue to focus on individual rather than social change; struggle to engage parents are partners; grapple with the criminalisation of young people who are impacted by violence; and often feature a mismatch between how contexts are assessed and the interventions or resource that is available to change them.

The introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the various provisions relating to 'serious youth violence' therein (including Serious Violence Reduction Orders and a Serious Violence Duty that will mandate information sharing between agencies) will likely further muddy the water as responses to EFH continue to sit across Home Office and Department for Education remits and policing and protection priorities. Over sixty local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland are adopting Contextual Safeguarding as Working Together 2018 mandates a social care response to harm beyond the home, however this is taking place in a muddied policy context with outstanding legal questions about how approaches such as peer or location assessment align with GDPR and children's rights. It is therefore a critical time to evaluate how relationships of trust and surveillance feature in the first national testing of Contextual Safeguarding, this article aims to do this by doing secondary analysis of data collected as part of the [anon – original research project] using the Watching Over Working With framework, and to consider the implications for further refinement of the framework, the uptake of responses to EFH nationally, and future policy development.

Method

Data collection

This paper outlines findings from a six-month study by researchers at [anon] University. The WoWW framework (authors own, 2020b) was retrospectively applied to data from the ANON project, a three-year study carried by the Contextual Safeguarding research programme supporting and tracking the implementation of a Contextual Safeguarding approach across nine local authorities in England and Wales. As part of the original study, these children's social care teams conducted small-scale pilots to test a Contextual Safeguarding adaptation to their adolescent safeguarding service. Pilots were tracked by the research team using qualitative, embedded research methods. This included: meeting observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, case file reviews and reviews of policy and practice documents. For the original study, over 150 professionals were interviewed, including: Social Care, Police, Community Safety, Youth Offending, Education, VCS organisations, and Youth Work.

Data from a sample of the pilots were selected for further analysis using the WoWW framework. Out of 18 pilots, three were selected for further analysis, ensuring: geographical range, targetting a range of harm types, a range of interventions. Pilots included: 'location assessments', assessment and support to locations where young people are at risk of/experiencing EFH; and 'peer assessment', where professionals assess and support groups of young people at risk of/experiencing EFH. Data analysed across the pilots consisted of:
- Observations (n=20)
- Interviews (n=3)
- Completed assessments (n=4)
- Supporting assessment documentation: (n=15)
- Focus Groups (n=8)

Data analysis
Stage one: data organisation
Data were inputted into NVivo and organised via the classification function. Data were coded using the node function against the following sections of the WoWW framework:

- Focus/rationale: Who or what is the focus of the interventions and what is the legal/moral justification?
- Method: How does the system of intervention pursue its aim and through which methods?
- Impact/outcomes: What is the impact on those subject to interventions?

Stage two: data analysis
Data were analysed against the corresponding sub-sections of the WoWW framework (figure one). For example, in the 'focus/rationale' section under 'relationships of trust' data were analysed against each sub-section of the framework (i.e., to what extent did the data indicate that the focus/rationale was 'rights based and operates within a moral framework'). Themes were recorded in a data collection template to establish where pilots featured relationships or trust and surveillance. Data were aggregated to protect the anonymity of participating local authorities.

Stage three: reflective discussions
Data were coded by both authors who met twice to sense-check the coding and analysis. The final dataset was presented to a focus group of 10 researchers who worked on the ANON study to sense check the analysis with researchers who had supported the original pilots (only author two was involved in the original study). The focus group took place using Microsoft Teams, lasted for one hour and was audio recorded. Reflections supported the interpretation and analysis of data.

Ethics

Researchers leading the [anon] study obtained ethical approval from [anon] research ethics committee; this included obtaining consent from participating local authorities that the data could be used for other research carried out by the [anon] programme. To protect the participants, all data is anonymised.

Limitations

The analytic framework was applied retrospectively to data collected for the original study that aimed to track the implementation of Contextual Safeguarding and did not ask questions specifically about relationships of trust or surveillance. However, issues relating to trust and surveillance were present in the original data set (authors own, 2023b) and subject to analysis here.

Findings

A summary of aggregated themes is in Table One; outlining how pilots featured relationships of trust and surveillance. All pilots featured relationships of trust and surveillance. Qualitative extracts are presented against each section of the framework, demonstrating the tensions that played out across the pilots.

1. **Focus/rationale**

Relationships of trust

Where practice aligned with relationships of trust it was led by social care teams focused on promoting the welfare and best interests of young people. The focus was increasing safety for groups of young people, or the locations in which they were being harmed, not managing behaviour, or reducing crime. In some instances, pilot activities aligned with or were initiated following police operations, here relationships of trust were foregrounded when professionals negotiated for social care to lead the responses to EFH:

> *There is a developing process around who should oversee these types of concerns. Clearly because of the police operation, and clearly because of the concerns about the vulnerability of these quite high-profile young people, it needed some sort of safeguarding lens really to take it forward, to have oversight of it. Because part of the decision making was going to be how are we going to support these young people that we're very worried about, and that needed somebody with the safeguarding responsibilities.*

> (Location Assessment, Interview with Children's Social Care Area Service Manager)

Pilot activities were weighted toward monitoring and disruption of perpetrators over the building of safety infrastructure around young people. However, some professionals used 'location assessment' to identify gaps in provision for young people, i.e., the absence of spaces and relationships in which safety could be built. Used in this way, neighbourhood assessment focused professionals on the resource required to increase safety for young people:

> *I am worried that children and young people, residents and businesses on the whole identified that there are no or limited youth groups, centres and clubs on or around [ANON] road. So far within the assessment, there have been no safe adults or spaces identified in the community where young people can be signposted to.*

(Location Assessment, Document Review)

Relationships of trust were supported when young people's views directed the focus of activities. Here, a professional discussed using peer assessment to support conversations with young people about relationships that are valuable to them:

> *So I like the relationship side because at the end of it all, what really matters for all of us, what is holding us together, who are the people that hold us up? Who are the people we call when we're having a hard day? It helps me to see the child's world not from what's around them that we perceive as professionals but from what they see around them, and they value in their lives.*

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Peer assessment has been used to map 'risky associates' (authors own, 2021), the use of peer assessment in the pilots that aligned with relationships of trust focussed on positive relationships and understanding wider structural issues impacting groups of young people:

> *the peer assessment is to get an insight into the child's world and that entails the groups they maybe into or they associate themselves with, that may talk about the person themselves, like self-care and wellbeing and on top of that, as my colleague said, wider issues, maybe structural issues, their neighbourhood that could also be impacted which is a part of the child's world.*

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Relationships of surveillance

Pilot activities that aligned with relationships of surveillance focused on police intelligence and/or police led the partnership work. Some pilots were aligned with police operations, influencing their focus, the relationships professionals could form with young people, and the language used to talk about them. These tensions played out in the following joint location and peer assessment, where policing priorities ran parallel with more 'positive' objectives:

> *Also going to look at survey monkey for some intel and if people are aware of CCE so they may provide different intelligence. If children are up to no good and that is sort of our side from crime and coms. Crossover with asking yp (young people) if they feel safe and what they want to change, will CCTV help, do we need to clean up and area and graffiti and remove some of the fear factors around locations and linking in with the youth centres. Thinking about more positive provision for young people.*

(Location and Peer Assessment, Document Review - Planning Meeting)

In these cases, a focus on crime reduction and harm-reduction were conflated and complicated the sorts of relationships that agencies could have with young people and their communities. In one instance, eresultingin arrests of young people that social care professionals wanted to safeguard. Confusion about what a location assessment, for example, might look like when carried out with Community Safety partners moved practitioners away from collaboration with communities:

So talking to communities, it feels a bit odd. How do you say; "hey, when would you like us to exercise these powers and where would you not like us to", because it's not like that. We just do or we don't. Do you see what I mean? I'm not sure I'm explaining myself very well.

(Location Assessment, Focus Group, Youth Justice Manager)

Pilot activities that aligned with relationships of surveillance focused on future/suspected risk. In lieu of relationships with young people who had met a threshold for support by children's social care, professionals discussed looser groupings of young people attached to locations of concern often without their knowledge or consent:

What outreach do we have with other agencies to go into the park to maybe gather that intel that we need.
(Location and Peer Assessment Meeting)

In such cases, assessment methods focused on 'net-widening' the pool of young people subject to monitoring by agencies:

For me, it's around exploring the child's peer group, friendships and that contextual safeguarding, so who that child associates with, whether that be face to face, virtually, text message, in any form and thinking wider as well about the environment and for contextual safeguarding, places that maybe at risk of harm or to be explored. From that, the child that we're working with may not be at direct risk of harm, but the child may share that information, unknowing that their friend maybe at risk of harm, so it's how we identify and keep all of our children within [anon area] safe.

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

In some cases, these net widening activities then led to young people from social workers to police intelligence systems:

Purpose of this is to be aware of these names, not share this info/integrate into plans all the time. Hope that SWs can start to make links, see details with these YP e.g., new trainers, new phone, they put into the "tell-all site" - Intelligence systems will fast track information with these YP's names.

(Location Assessment, Neighbourhood Associate Meeting Observation)

Unsurprisingly, where pilot focused on gathering 'intelligence', there was less direct engagement or leadership from young people, families, and communities:

Because we're not getting buy-in from the families we are having to hypothesise.

(Location Assessment, Meeting Observation)

Relationships of surveillance featured where structural inequalities, like deprivation, were recognised but were not a focus of safety building. In one instance, rather than acknowledging the potential impact on young people and communities of living in poverty, the focus remained on crime reduction and the 'drain' this has on the partnerships resource:

Alongside Crime and ASB overall, [anon area] contains some of the historical key streets for both crime and ASB, known key nominals as well as being an area of the highest deprivation not only in [anon area] but in the UK as a whole.

Layout – As the map of the area shows, [anon area] is an area that is conducive to crime and ASB. The road layout allows for a number of entry and exit points to the roads and is bordered by three main roads of [anon area]. As you can see from the photographs, this location has been a drain on partners resources for many years due to ASB, criminal damage, fires, violence, guns and gangs. Police, [anon service] and the Council have spent hundreds of thousands resolving the above issues.

(Location Assessment, Document Review)

2. Method

Relationships of trust

Pilot activities aligned with relationships of trust where existing relationships in the young person's network were acknowledged and built on. Professionals brought together parents for support, working with them to understand the extra-familial contexts in which young people were coming to harm. In other cases, practitioners continued relationships young people placed out of area due to risks in their community:

the young people were happy and thriving in their new placements. Their workers from [anon area] made sure to stay in contact with them and go and visit them.

(Locations Assessment, Focus Group notes)

Similarly, relationships of trust were extended to community members who were collaborated with and resourced to do safety building work, not just report to statutory agencies. This required professionals to work with a range of non-traditional partners and to take a reflective approach in doing so:

I think just in terms of the street sex workers side of things, that's been really refreshing and lovely to see us being up for using, not using, drawing upon the kind of knowledge and wisdom of people in society who usually we maybe wouldn't look to when it comes to safeguarding.

(Location Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Peer assessment aligned with relationships of trust where the strengths of peer relationships were central. In these instances, activities such as 'safety mapping' (when professionals and young person work together to identify where young people feel safe/unsafe in the community) were carried out in collaboration with young people, rather than just amongst professionals. Where conflict between young people was identified or shared, restorative approaches were carried out such as restorative group work:

It was just an incident between these four boys… the school and the contextual safeguarding team in the borough which the school was in have organised a whole restorative group work situation with the four boys… they're going to use this assessment to really unpick the dynamics between the students and what led to that incident.

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Transparency around information sharing has been reported by young people in various studies and consultations (Hill and Warrington, 2022) as critical to their feeling of safety. In some pilot sites professionals were sensitive to the ways in which information sharing could compromise relationships, and the importance of transparency:

> ...it can be a really good and trusting relationship where they do trust you, but at the end of the day they still know that you're a social worker and if the police ask you for this information, we have a duty to share it and they can trust you, they're still your go-to person but they won't go into details of their group dynamics because they know that information could get back to the police and that's always going to be a stumbling block. I guess it's how can we really make it clear to them how the information's shared

(Peer Assessment, Interview, Social Worker)

Pilot activities aligned with relationships of trust where the methods of assessment responded to structural inequalities related to child harm. In these cases, assessment tools were adapted to explore discrimination faced by young people, with young people:

> What is it like for you growing up in [anon area]? What is the group's experience of discrimination? i.e., impact of harmful gender norms or racism?

(Peer Assessment, Document Review)

Relationships of surveillance

Pilots featured relationships of surveillance when activities exceeded usual safeguarding parameters, were not communicated to young people, parents, or communities, and had undefined threshold, reach and purpose. This included data sharing across partnerships without clear legal or ethical justification; often led by police or being largely guided by police intelligence:

> Interviewer: Where has the information mostly come from then, to inform the assessment would you say?
>
> Respondent: I would say predominantly police systems, um, you know, stop checks, stop search, arrests, um, any associations that are on their systems as well as, you know, our knowledge of that area. Um, you know, there are other young people who kind of, I suppose, are not directly linked to this group, but have spoken about this group before and might say, you know, such and such knocks about with, with him.

(Location and Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Exploitation and Missing Team Social Worker)

This intelligence-led 'net -widening' featured in 'mapping' of peer groups where visual databases were created with personal information for the purpose of gathering intelligence in the absence of work with young people to understand their relationships and provide support. In such cases, complex relationships were reduced to descriptions of 'leaders' or 'followers', indicating

culpability, or describing peer groups as 'gangs', in ways that seemed to contradict the child welfare approach being piloted:

Can also have adults being exploited e.g., being runners, younger children as leaders etc. need to keep an open mind. We have some very 'clever children' who are able to lead where they need to.

(Peer Group Assessment, Meeting Observation)

Where pilot activities featured relationships of surveillance, young people's, families', and communities' views were gathered but not meaningfully incorporated into on-going safeguarding plans. Information about young people was brought to planning meetings and discussed without their involvement. Consequently, young people had minimal control over how their information was discussed, interpreted, and shared:

I think, you know, for us a lot of it is intelligence, isn't it? It's not necessarily substantiated, but I think being able to target our interventions to those particular young people, based on that information… because as I said before, the two young people didn't engage particularly well

(Peer and Location Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Relationships of surveillance were foregrounded when 'community guardianship' was reduced to 'informing' and reporting abuse. Here, gathering 'intelligence' from community members took precedent over relationship building with potential community guardians who could be safe adults that young people could to:

every question on the questionnaire was scrutinised for, "How is this going to get the best information we can get from people?"

(Location Assessment, Interview, Police)

Where pilot activities featured relationships of surveillance, they acknowledged the impact of structural inequalities, but these were not incorporated into plans for building safety in the local area and crime prevention took precedent:

Unfortunately, due to the global crash in 2008, this stopped all house building in an already socially deprived locale. This left the estate completely unmanaged with areas of demolition, poor roads and infrastructure and a feeling of abandonment.

(Location Assessment, Document Review)

3. Impact

Relationships of trust

Here, a peer assessment was used to understand safe relationships, resulting in a young person being returned to their home community from secure care:

I think if I go back to the young person in secure, I'm not sure that we would have perhaps been as optimistic about the likelihood of successfully bringing her back in to the borough if we hadn't had that understanding of really the context of the issues that led her to come in to secure in the first place. I'm not sure our planning would have been as focused around positive, building positive friendships and stuff like that, it would probably have been more focused on we bring her back in to borough, we put lots of services in to try to wrap around her, which is not a bad thing whereas actually we're able to more I think focus our thinking around what is going to be really important for her..."

(Peer Assessment, Professional Interview, Service Manager for Exploitation and Missing Children).

Where pilot activities featured relationships of trust they were focused on these sorts of positive outcomes for young people:

don't just use the tool and say "I've got that information", you're using it for information gathering but you want to evidence how you have used it to the benefit of that tool and then the outcome which is intervention and most importantly, minimising risk for the child so those are the things I want to see in that assessment.

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker).

In particular, the use of Contextual Safeguarding tools to increase resource for young people aligned with relationships of trust. In one area, professionals shared how they:

"use the [location] assessment to argue for more youth provision because there is an evidence base here now – well, there's always been an evidence base – but we have now have this in a nice tidy piece of work" and *"to acknowledge that we have a gap and what are we going to do about it"*

(Location Assessment, Meeting Observation)

Using Contextual Safeguarding assessment tools to challenge assumptions about young people, particularly young people profiled as 'criminal' aligned their use with relationships of trust. In the following example, a peer assessment was used to debunk assumptions about gang affiliation (in contrast to how their use elsewhere, authors own, 2021):

he was involved in an incident that involved a stabbing incident and the assumption, because when it comes to our team like [anon] said it's "oh they're gang affiliated, he was present when this happened so he must be associated to someone", but when completing the peer assessment, I was able to say, "He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, he was associated with people who are affiliated", well not affiliated but like [anon] mentioned, grown up in the same area, went to the same primary school and that happens sometimes so even though I wouldn't say it was unsuccessful because it was successful because it worked through a process of elimination rather than "we think he is an associate because of the incident he was linked to".

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker)

Location assessment could be used to help professionals earn trust through trustworthy behaviour - like being consistent, and offering practical support and care for young people:

> *I think it will be very much a lasting effect for those young people that they allow adults to help them, they can see it being done. That's probably going to be the biggest thing that will remain with them. So hopefully when something else does happen in their life, they can be, okay, I can start to build trust and speak to another adult to help.*

(Location Assessment, Focus Group, Education and Inclusion Manager)

Another feature of trusted relationships was accountability to young people, their families, and communities. This was reflected were practitioners actively fed back outcomes of activities, specifically where they considered how information would be fed back so that it was not re-traumatising for young people:

> *so there's still some work ongoing around how we feed back to the communities what we learned and what that means and what will happen now. We haven't just done a survey and said, "Thank you very much, we're not going to do anything with it". It's really important to think about yeah, what we can do long term. And, we're doing something similar with the young people as well, aren't we? So, we're trying to work out in a way that's not going to re-traumatise them, how we update the young people to say, "Look, this is what we did".*

(Location assessment, Focus group, Police)

Relationships of surveillance

One feature of reducing interventions to 'watching over' is that there are few tangible benefits for young people's safety. For some pilot activities, it was hard to establish whether young people were safer or not due to a lack of engagement with young people, and difficulties in translating assessment and monitoring into intervention and outcomes. In other pilots, interventions had harmful outcomes, coinciding with increased policing of young people:

> *Got some good stop checks (named young people who have been discussed in associates' assessment)*

(Location and Peer assessment, Document Review)

Where outcomes for children were achieved and recorded, these were measured in a variety of ways and in some cases, this included 'relocation' of young people away from areas in which they were being harmed. This 'relocation' of young people also took place locally, with young people being dispersed via use of injunctions, increasing the likelihood that they would face criminal repercussions for not following orders. Entering young people into a loop whereby failure to abide by professional intervention intended to keep them safe, results in them being surveilled and criminalised:

> *If you exclude from that place they'll only go and find another place to go into.*

> *Yeah. But also I spoke to one of the young people and he was just like I'm not going to follow the injunction. What then? Are they going to be taken back to court for not following it? Then I don't know what the repercussions are, and hopefully they're not serious, but then*

that just reinforces they didn't follow it, got taken back to court, nothing changed, so I'm just going to carry on behaving the way I behave.

(Location Assessment Interview, Area Service Manager)

This 'watching over' was extended to whole communities in some pilot activities. This included use of vehicle surveillance and visible policing using riot vehicles and on-street patrols. Whilst these may have been intended to target people who were deemed to be potentially harmful to children, they impacted the community as a whole and was particularly troubling where interventions targeted working-class inner-city areas with majority migrant and ethnic minority residents already subject to higher levels of policing:

Probably our best piece of work were joint high visibility patrols that we did in [anon area], so quite early on we got together with the neighbourhood team because obviously they were really keen to help and they brought it to us anyway and we put bids in for our operational support group, so the officers in the big riot vans that go around. So, we put together joint patrol teams and we all briefed together, so I put some of the [anon police operation] Team in with some of the local beat team and then with the support group, so we had a real mix of skills. So, we had the local officers that know all the faces, know the location really well, know where to go, who to look for. [anon team] with the child exploitation expertise and child protection expertise and then the support group who are used to kicking doors in, arresting people, searching, doing searches and stuff. So, it actually worked really well and as a team, I made it very clear that we were going to be really noisy about why we were, why their small section of [anon area] was getting a real, getting some really, a real heavy presence from the police.

(Location Assessment, Focus group, Police).

One way in which child protection interventions typically default to 'relationships of surveillance' is through an imbalance of assessment and monitoring versus useful and supportive outcomes for young people, families and communities. This was a feature of pilot activities and tended to be a symptom of assessments where having 'eyes' on young people was considered an effective outcome of professional intervention:

It was slightly worrying that a number of officers knew our students' names and our students knew them, but it was also, for me, there are eyes on our young people, and that was, there were various eyes on our young people. When they left us at the end of the day there were eyes on them, and they were known and needed that support.

(Location Assessment, Focus Group, Education and Inclusion Manager)

Professionals were often live to how their working relationships with other partners compromised their relationships with young people, and a lack of safeguards around how some of the Contextual Safeguarding tools, i.e., 'peer assessment' might be interpreted by police in a way that criminalises young people:

Because the worst thing that can happen, I'm just thinking a young person says he's friends with … that could be interpreted by the police "so these four friends are also now going to be on the gangs matrix" and there's no evidence except this kid has opened up a bit and that's then being interpreted in a certain way by the police, so I guess it's just how

can we ensure that doesn't happen? That it just further criminalises young people without any real evidence apart from this tool. I'm thinking maybe the young people, there would be concerns about us getting that information and having it on our system. If we have clear procedures around how it is shared then that's, what forum would this be shared? Because I can just see us being pulled into a multi-agency risk national panel where the police are there, "[anon name], how was that peer assessment tool you did?" and then you have to give feedback on it but that could then provide information that's then being interpreted in a certain way, so I think it's just something to think about.

(Peer Assessment, Focus Group, Social Worker).

Finally, where 'watching over' was prioritised, young people were not informed of the impact of interventions or information was fed back in a way that did not consider the impact on young people:

One YP [sic] have said to police they feel they don't know what is going on. Police note they haven't fed back to the young people at all what they have been doing. Sending letter to young people updating them on what work has been done. Note from CSE SW that they need to ensure young person is supported when they receive the letter.

(Location Assessment, Document Review)

TABLE ONE HERE

Discussion

This paper asks: when social care teams and their partners design safeguarding interventions into EFH following the Contextual Safeguarding framework, to what extent are they are rooted in relationships or trust or surveillance? Table one gives a comprehensive outline of how Contextual Safeguarding pilots carried out under [anon study] featured relationships of trust and surveillance when measured against the Watching Over Working With framework (authors own, 2020b). The qualitative data demonstrates the activities that took place and the relationships that were foregrounded and achieved. This data suggests that there is an over-reliance on relationships of surveillance in the interpretation of Contextual Safeguarding in practice, and that further work is needed to support the design and delivery of Contextual Safeguarding to centre trusted relationships and collaboration with young people in line with the values. Diagram two summarises the major challenges and opportunities for practitioners designing and delivering Contextual Safeguarding responses to EFH in this respect.

FIGURE TWO HERE

A confusing policy and practice landscape

These findings have implications for the future use of the Contextual Safeguarding framework, and for the policy and practice environments in which practitioners are being asked to implement it. As evidenced in the qualitative data, practitioners are alive to these tensions and want to work in a way that promotes trust and safety. So why are we struggling to make it happen? When discussing these tensions with practitioners engaged in the implementation of Contextual Safeguarding, they have shared that practice cultures can be risk-averse, and that strengths-based strategies and tools for supporting adolescents are needed that challenge stereotypes about young people and include them as decision makers. They have shared that competing priorities across multi-agency partners make safeguarding adolescents complicated and that greater clarity, more resource and more time is needed to do the work properly. Regarding relationships, practitioners have shared that there is insufficient funding for community-based and community-led responses to youth safety, and that this is where trusted relationships are formed and thrive. And finally, that there is a need for clearer strategies for adolescent safeguarding to support balancing adolescents' developmental stage and right to privacy and association, with their right to protection and support from statutory agencies. Concerningly, practitioners have shared that the national policy context is confusing, and that greater clarity is needed about who should be the lead agency in this work and how and when information should be shared. Practitioners felt that the current policy context promotes relationships of surveillance, continues to frame young people as criminals, and that this is disproportionately felt by working class and Black and racially minoritised young people (Contextual Safeguarding Network, no date).

The introduction of mandatory reporting under the Serious Violence Duty and the removal of consent as a foundation of information sharing (see Department for Education 2023) complicate alignment with Contextual Safeguarding, do not meet the reported needs, and compromise the rights, of young people.

Young people's rights and 'affirming' relationships and infrastructure.

Why is it important that social workers and their partners are accountable to the quality of relationships they form with young people, families, and communities? Research involving young people's research panels has found that for young people with EFH service involvement,

security of personal information is one of the highest cited concerns, and that these fears are well founded as there is regular poor practice in relation to information sharing; leading young people to disengage and subsequently impacting professional's ability to keep young people them safe (Hill and Warrington, 2023). Pilots that relied on police intelligence, on mapping young people and their associates without speaking to them, and on procedural or professional led objectives around crime reduction or dispersal of 'problem' people or issues, were unable to form trusted relationships with young people. This is significant not only for how professional services engage young people at risk of EFH, but for the types of relationships and spaces that are being modelled by those mandated to care for them and keep them safe.

At best, EFH safeguarding intervention that is weighted toward relationships of surveillance discourages young people from engaging with safeguarding processes, at worse it adds to risks in the young person's environment (such as criminalisation, marginalisation and breakdown of relationships) and reproduces relationship norms based on coercion, threat, restraint, dispersal and stigma (an issue documented early on in the child sexual exploitation literature, see Hallet, 2015). As Owen's et al (2020) noted, relationships have 'intervening power', they matter and are important in and of themselves as they are essential to feelings of safety and security, this is a benchmark of child development and social care education.

Hingley-Jones and Ruch (2016) propose that depleted and constrained economic and policy contexts impact the quality of relationships professionals can form with young people ('relational austerity', Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016). Young people in the UK are living in environments blighted by austerity, poverty, immigration and welfare reform and an erosion of civil liberties (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2022), these environments are not conducive to their rights to protection, expression, association, privacy, education, social security, or adequate standards of living and health. Whilst stability and love are mentioned in the Government's vision for children's social care (Department for Education, 2023), these will remain implausible 'visions' unless the material conditions for young people in this country are significantly improved. It is perhaps overly optimistic to borrow from the language of healing-centred community organisers doing the work to re-imagine what safety building work looks like; but they prompt us to ask: to what extent are we building 'affirming' relationships and infrastructures that are conducive to safety and healing (Kaba and Ritchie, 2022)? In a recent study exploring Contextual Safeguarding in the VCS sector (Walker, 2023), the question was asked how do we build trusted relationships with young people when doing Contextual Safeguarding work? Indicators from this research appear to be three-fold.

First, a ore rigorous application of the Contextual Safeguarding 'values' (Anon, 2019) when applying the framework is required. These values are intended to reflect not just the what of Contextual Safeguarding but the how and why. The approach is rooted in child welfare and is about building safety for young people in the spaces where they are harmed. Practices that are rooted in policing or are punitive or detached from young people's views do not align with the framework. Second, the sector requires
national policy and practice frameworks that are clear and coherent in their intention for a welfare response to EFH. The introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, the lack of an over-arching national strategy for adolescent safeguarding and the prominence of youth justice responses to harm outside the home make for a confusing and often contradictory landscape for young people, their families and practitioners. Finally,
resource is required, locally and nationally, to build safety through life affirming infrastructure (like public health and community housing and educational and youth

spaces) that uphold young people's rights and provide the foundation for relationships that are rooted in trust, care, and love. This is equally so for service re-design and innovation, social care and its key child *welfare* partners in the education and VCS sectors are chronically under-funded, if we are asking professionals to re-imagine the future of adolescent safeguarding, we need to provide them with the resource to think and act differently.

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