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Transitional Safeguarding – an overview



National Safeguarding Week

Mid and West Wales Transitional Safeguarding event

9th November 2026

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Associate - Research in Practice

Brief intro…



- Research in Practice Associate; researcher, social worker & social pedagogue
- Research & facilitation on Transitional Safeguarding since 2019:
  - systems & service innovations to respond to extra-familial harm (Innovate Project , University of Sussex);
  - Youth justice and probation (Research in Practice / University of East Anglia);
  - Impact of Transitional Safeguarding (University of East Anglia / Research in Practice)
  - Transitional Safeguarding CPD module (University of East Anglia / Research in Practice)

Please introduce yourself in the chat

Remember self care

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Overview

- Introduction
- The issue: system and service gaps during transition to adulthood
- Transitional Safeguarding – what it is
- Transitional Safeguarding – what it isn’t
- Transitional Safeguarding as whole systems change
- Further resources

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When did you first realise you were an adult?

How familiar are you with the idea of Transitional Safeguarding?

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When did you first realise you were an adult?

I haven't realised yet, I'm still looking for the adult in the room

When I left University

Im not sure i am an adulting yet at 54

Making career decisions

When my parents divorced, i was 19

Buying a house

when I started to have to pay for big things

When I left school

never felt any different

18

When I started working

38

When I became a mum

20, when I moved out

When I moved out

At 18

When i realised my patents were people too

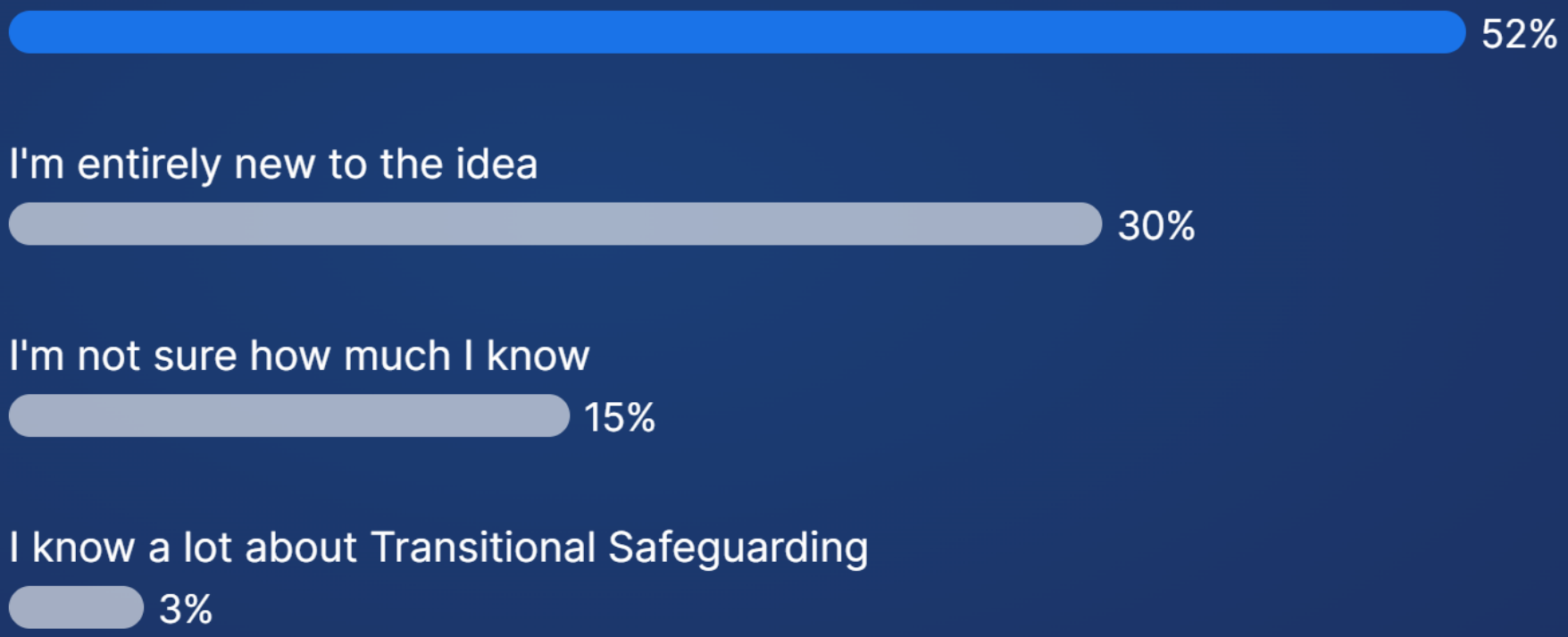
When I started paying bills

When I finished university and became independent

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How familiar are you with the idea of Transitional Safeguarding?



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Safeguarding and transition to adulthood







- Harm, trauma and development do not stop at 18 – but support often does
- Children's statutory safeguarding duties apply universally under 18
- After 18, adult statutory safeguarding duties have a more selective focus on people with 'care and support needs'
- Existing transitional systems (e.g. for young people leaving care) do not cover all young people who need support
- Why do our systems too often categorise young people as 'problems' requiring an 'intervention' – rather than as citizens with agency, rights and needs?

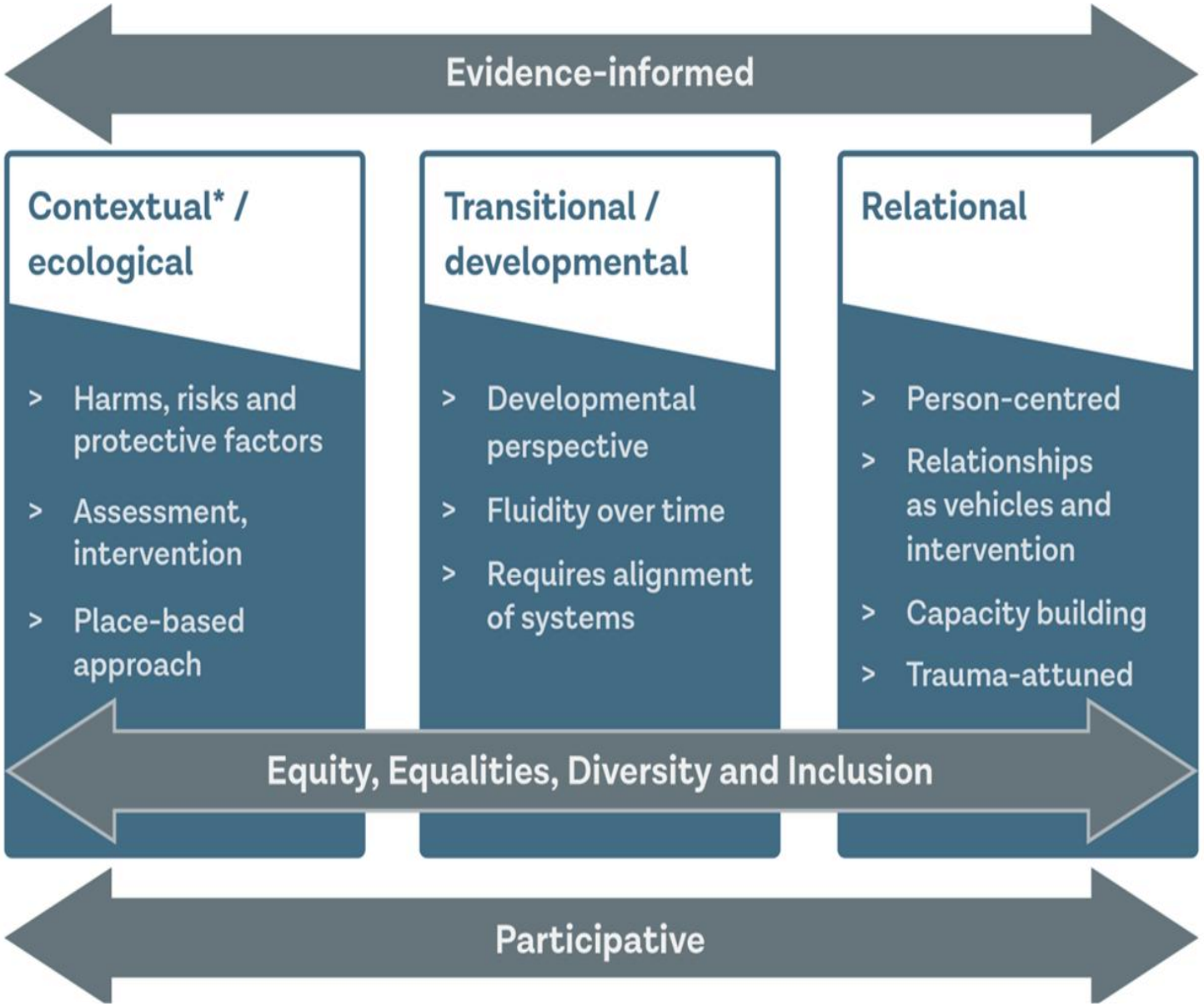
Transitional Safeguarding

"More developmentally-attuned and fluid approaches to safeguarding young people and young adults across transition to adulthood, taking account of diverse life experiences, building on best available evidence and learning from both children's and adult safeguarding practice" (Holmes and Smale, 2018)

- mid-teens to mid-twenties (UN definition of 'young people') - *& beyond*
- involves **challenging binary perspectives** (e.g. child vs adult, vulnerable vs responsible) and **spanning boundaries** between systems and services
- **whole systems change** – not just different practices or new services
- **co-production** with young people, communities, networks and a range of organisations – not just about social care responses; not just about professionals and services
- The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) supports a **life-course approach** & focus on **wellbeing** and **prevention**
- '*Early help for young adults*'
- ***'Safeguarding as a verb'*** **- not a threshold** (Holmes, 2022)

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Transitional Safeguarding: Key (non-negotiable) principles



Holmes, 2022
Cocker et al., 2024
See also links to
Contextual Safeguarding

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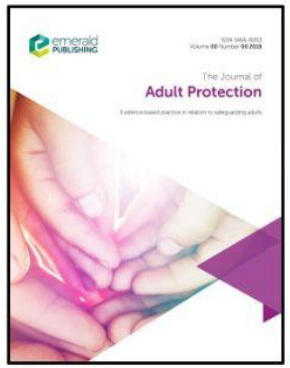
What Transitional Safeguarding is *not*:

- ≠ Not the same as service transitions or transfers (though safeguarding young people during service changes is key)
- ≠ Not an intervention, service, model or prescribed set of activities that can be rolled out or implemented top-down
- ≠ Not a type of harm
- ≠ Not about just extending age 'cut-off' points upwards
- ≠ Not the sole job of statutory safeguarding partners, nor a call for all young people to have statutory 'interventions'

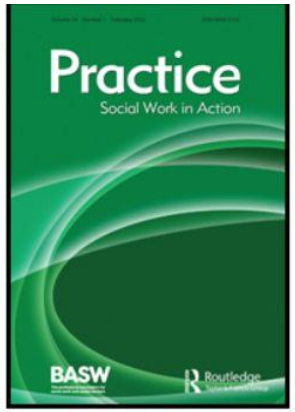
Instead:

- ✓ Collaborative **whole systems change** that looks differently in different areas
- ✓ A focus on **human experiences & needs** rather than 'eligibility' thresholds (*Bridging the Gap*, 2021)

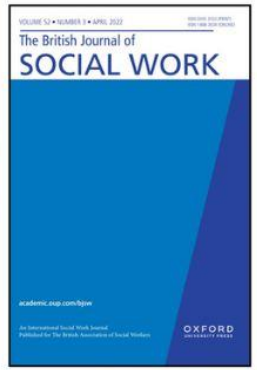
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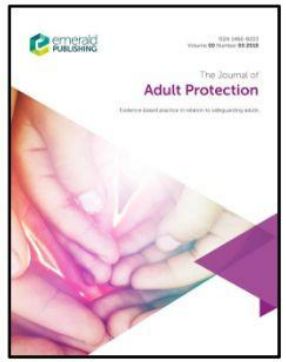
The legal framework, 2021



Special Issue 'Practice', 2022



Case for Transformation, 2022



Building an evidence base, 2022



Transitional Safeguarding Book, 2024

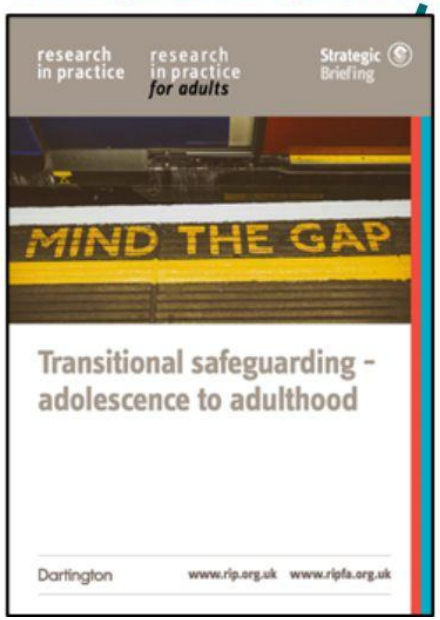


Briefing for sector leaders, 2025



Impact research & Community of Practice, 2026 -

Transitional Safeguarding Strategic Briefing, 2018





Bridging the Gap: Social work with Adults, 2021

HMIP Insights Paper, 2022



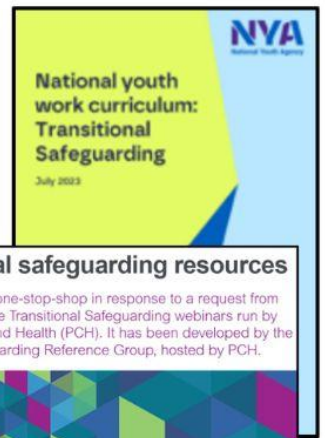
The Innovate Project
Researching youth, risk and complexity

Transitional Safeguarding as innovation to address extra-familial harm, 2019-2023

Health briefing, 2023

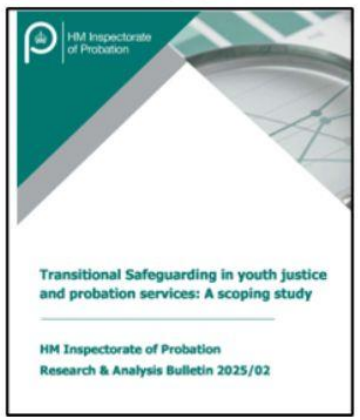


Youth Work Curriculum, 2023



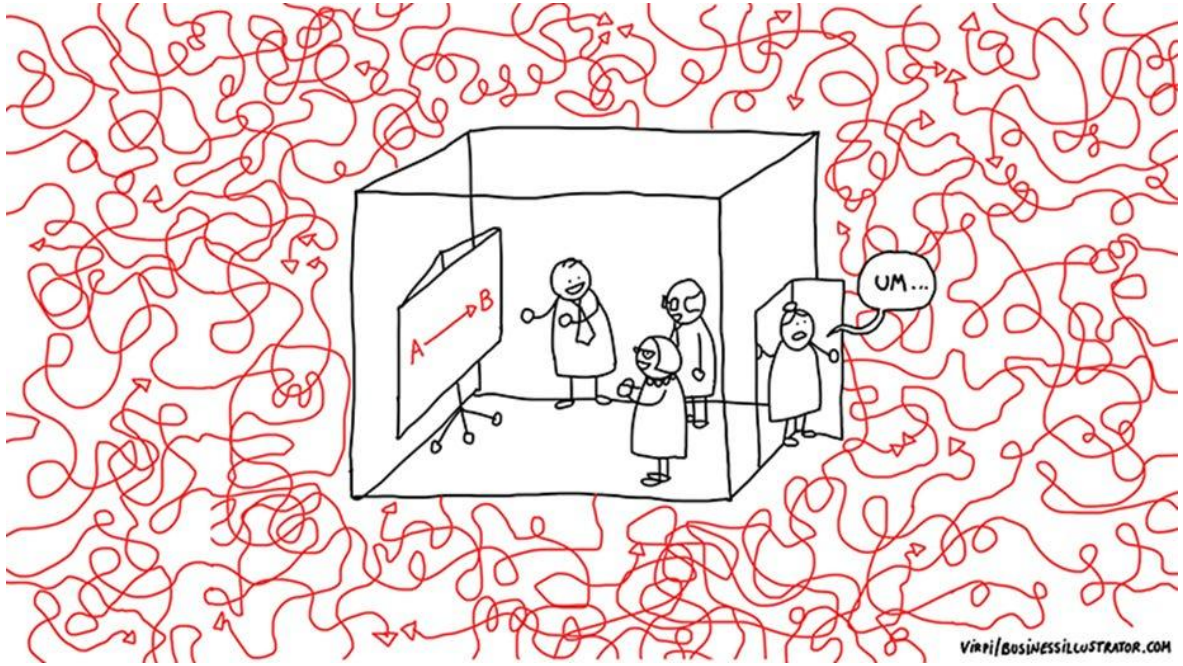
Partners in Care and Health resources

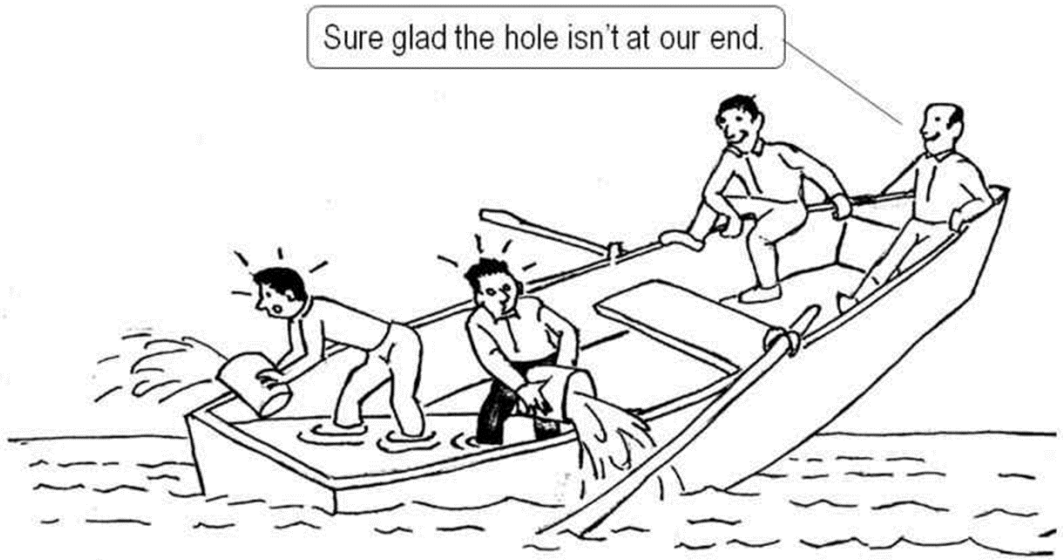
Youth Justice & Probation, 2025



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Transitional Safeguarding as whole systems change





Links to further resources

- **The initial provocation:** Mind the Gap (Holmes & Smale 2018 – Research in Practice))
- **Bridging the Gap:** Adult social care (2021)
- accessible talk about Transitional Safeguarding: YP talk (Research in Practice)
- short animation explaining what Transitional Safeguarding is and why we need it (Research in Practice)
- The latest Research in Practice briefing for sector leaders (2025)
- Youth and criminal justice briefing (Holmes & Smith 2022) and scoping study (Cocker et al / HMIP (2025); Health (Winterbottom et al 2023), National Youth Work Curriculum (NYA, 2023)
- Transitional Safeguarding book (Cocker, Holmes and Cooper 2024), legal framework (Cocker et al, 2021), case for transformation (Cocker et al, 2022) and building an evidence base (Preston-Shoot et al, 2021)
- Transitional Safeguarding 'one stop shop' of resources (Partners in Care and Health 2024)
- Transitional Safeguarding Padlet examples and resources
- Multi-agency reviews
- The Innovate Project – 2 open-access papers (Huegler and Ruch, 2022; Huegler et al., 2024), illustrated resource on systems change dynamics focused on Transitional Safeguarding, Open-access books: Safeguarding young people beyond the family home, Innovation in social care, Beyond Risk in Adolescent Safeguarding
- Practice journal special issue (2021/2022) including 'The case for change' (Holmes, 2022)
- The relationship between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding (2019)

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Breakout groups:

What could Transitional Safeguarding look like in Mid and West Wales?

Imagine you collectively time-travel to a future where all young people and young adults in your local area are safe, supported and flourishing.

- What's the change that young people would immediately notice?
- What would help us get there?
- What barriers would we have to overcome?
- How would we know we are getting there?



Please nominate one person from your breakout group to submit a summary post on behalf of the group.