Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people.

Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, and don’t always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home.

As children move from early childhood and into adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. The nature of young people’s relationships, that they form in these settings, inform the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse.

Research tells us that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence. If a young person forms friendships in contexts characterised by violence and/or harmful attitudes these relationships will be anti-social and unsafe.

There are a wide range of potential risks where the prime cause of harm is outside of the family. This list isn’t exhaustive but includes: peer on peer abuse; exploitation and online abuse; missing episodes; gang involvement; radicalisation; trafficking and modern slavery.

Identify the ways in which young people can change the social conditions where abuse has occurred, and encourage self-responsibility for making these changes. Engage with individuals and sectors who have a bearing on social contexts, ie shopkeepers, local policing, community leaders, to make environments safer.