

## What is Transitional Safeguarding?

**Transitional safeguarding** is a progressive approach in UK health and social care that focuses on protecting young people as they move from adolescence into adulthood—typically from their mid-teens to mid-20s. It acknowledges that the risks, vulnerabilities, and support needs of young people do not abruptly end when they turn 18, even though statutory safeguarding systems often do.

### Key Features of Transitional Safeguarding:

- **Person-centred and needs-led:** It moves away from rigid age-based thresholds and instead considers the individual's maturity, experiences, and circumstances.
- **Joined-up services:** It promotes collaboration between children's and adult services to avoid gaps in support, often referred to as the "cliff edge" where support drops off at 18.
- **Developmentally informed:** Recognizes that the human brain continues to mature until around age 25, and that young people may still face significant risks such as exploitation, mental health issues, or substance misuse.
- **Multi-agency collaboration:** Encourages cooperation across health, education, justice, and social care sectors to ensure continuity of care.

**Not a standalone service:** It's a whole-system approach rather than a specific intervention or program. It requires strategic leadership and cultural change across safeguarding systems.

### Why Is Transitional Safeguarding Important:

Without transitional safeguarding, young people can "fall through the cracks" between child and adult services, leading to unmet needs and potentially harmful outcomes. This approach aims to ensure that safeguarding is responsive, fluid, and tailored to the realities of young people's lives.

### Core Principles of High Quality Transitional Safeguarding

#### 1. Person-Centred and Developmentally Informed

- Focus on the **individual's journey**, not just their age.
- Recognise that brain development continues into the mid-20s.

Tailor support to maturity, lived experience, and needs rather than rigid age thresholds.

## Joined-Up Multi-Agency Working

- Ensure **collaboration between children's and adult services**, health, education, justice, and voluntary sectors.

Promote **shared responsibility** across agencies to avoid gaps in support.

### ○ Trauma-Informed and Contextual Safeguarding

- Understand the impact of trauma and adversity.

Consider **contextual risks** such as peer abuse, exploitation, and coercive relationships.

### ○ Flexible and Adaptive Systems

- Avoid rigid eligibility criteria that exclude vulnerable young adults.

Use **blended frameworks** that adapt existing statutory duties to meet transitional needs.

### ○ Participative and Rights-Based Practice

- Involve young people in decisions about their care and safeguarding.

Promote **co-design** of services and policies with young people.

### ○ Early Intervention and Prevention

- Identify risks early and act before crisis points.

Support continuity of care to prevent drop-offs in service provision at age 18.

## Best Practice Actions

- **Create shared protocols** between children's and adult services.
- **Train professionals** across sectors in transitional safeguarding principles.
- **Use data and evidence** to inform local needs and service design.
- **Embed safeguarding in Further Education settings**, recognising their role in supporting 16–25-year-olds.
- **Ensure timely and proportionate information sharing** with the young person's involvement