CASE STUDY: CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

Dean is groomed by a street gang in his neighbourhood to traffic drugs across the country. He is approached by them when hanging-out with his friends at a local take-away food shop. The influence of those who have groomed him means that Dean doesn't come home when his parents ask him too and stops answering their calls while running drugs. Slowly Dean's parents lose control of him and when they try to lock him in the house he physically attacks his mother to get out. Dean is one of six peers who have all been approached at the take-away shop for the purposes of drug trafficking. Within a Contextual Safeguarding model the risk in Dean's neighbourhood, and the group who have groomed him, appear to be more influential than his parents. In the current system it would be Dean and his family who would be referred, assessed and receive intervention to address his behaviour, often with little impact.

In a Contextual Safeguarding system extra-familial settings and relationships could be subject to this process; so the take-away shop, street gang and/or Dean's peer group may be referred into a safeguarding system, assessed, discussed by a partnership and then to subject to an intervention as a means of keeping Dean safe. Strategically and operationally the safeguarding partnership is made aware of the trend associated to the take-away shop, a street gang, six young men and the issue of drugs trafficking and work together to design a plan for disrupting risk in that context (and thereby safeguard all six young men affected by it).

Addressing this issue may in turn address the challenges that Dean is facing at home – whereas intervening with Dean's family is unlikely to impact the risks he is facing in the community.

At this stage Contextual Safeguarding offers a framework to shape the development of policy and practice models for safeguarding young people affected by extra-familial risks. The framework needed to be applied in order to identify the resources, structures and partnerships required to bring the model to life and test its usability.