**What?** Transitional Safeguarding is an ‘approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children’s and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives. It focusses on safeguarding young people from adolescence into adulthood, recognising transition is a journey not an event, and every young person will experience this journey differently.’

It is NOT simply transition planning for moving people from children’s to adult services. (Bridging the Gap, 2021)

**Why?** Supporting young people’s safety and wellbeing during transition is vitally important.

Safety and wellbeing needs intersect the life course; the interconnected nature of harms requires an integrated system of support. Investing in support to address harm and its impacts at this life stage can help to reduce the need for more costly and intrusive intervention later on in life.

As such it is a multi-agency issue, dependent on collaboration and connection between services and with communities.

**Harm?** Whilst Transitional Safeguarding is about a wide range of issues that affect a young person’s safety and wellbeing, particular focus is on sexual and criminal exploitation.

Where young people are experiencing coercion and other forms of control and exploitation, these experiences rarely stop when a person turns 18.  Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Serious Case Reviews has highlighted how ineffective transitional planning can contribute to young adults ‘slipping through the net’ or facing a ‘cliff edge’, often with significant consequences on their wellbeing.

**How?** Transitional Safeguarding is dependent on collaboration and connection between services and with communities. Working this way includes seeking to prevent harm for these young people, protecting them where harm is occurring and also recognising and responding in ways that can help them recover from the impact of harm. The key to this is early communication and negotiation between Children’s and Adult Services to ensure young people receive a flexible and coordinated response to their needs and avoid experiencing a “cliff-edge”. Where a young person is at risk of, or is being exploited, transition planning should start as soon as possible

**Who?**

Everyone at all levels -  strategic, commissioning, practice – has a valuable contribution to make to Transitional Safeguarding.

It requires practitioners, leaders and partners in services for children and adults, to work together and think beyond child and adult silos.

Transitional Safeguarding requires changes in practice, across systems, and involving all agencies.

**Key Messages:**

* Early communication and negotiation between children’s and adult services
* Joint visits between Children’s services and Adult services should commence prior to the young person’s 18th birthday
* Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) should be central to the process – ensure the young adult is central to the safeguarding activity and decision making process
* The Care Act 2014 ‘prevention principle’ is key – we should always aim to prevent, reduce or delay care and support needs.
* A person cannot consent to abuse. Having capacity and ‘making unwise decisions’ is not consenting to be abused.

Advocate for and promote effective transitional services and models of support for young people moving into adulthood, drawing on the key principles within the knowledge briefing ‘*Bridging the Gap’*. (Link below

**Further information and resources:**

* Knowledge Briefing - ‘Bridging the Gap’ - [Bridging the gap: Transitional Safeguarding and the role of social work with adults (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/990426/dhsc_transitional_safeguarding_report_bridging_the_gap_web.pdf)
* Northumberland Safeguarding Transitions Protocol - [Northumberland County Council - Safeguarding adults](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/Support/Safeguarding.aspx)
* NICE Guidance ‘Transition from children’s to adults’ services for young people using health or social care services’ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng43/chapter/recommendations>
* Advice on Safeguarding Adults procedures can be sought from the Safeguarding Adults Team: Tel: 01670 622683 or e-mail: [safeguardingadults@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadults@northumberland.gov.uk)

**What is transitional safeguarding?**

‘Transitional safeguarding’ is about recognising that the needs of young people do not change or stop when they reach 18, although the laws and services supporting them often do. It is about making sure they have the help they need to keep themselves safe and as independent as possible. It is an approach to safeguarding that moves through developmental stages, rather than just focusing on chronological age, building on best practice and learning from both adult and children’s services. “Those working with adults should be curious about the childhood of the adult they are supporting. And those working with children should be ambitious about the adult they are helping to create” (Dez Holmes, 2021)

**Why is transitional safeguarding important?**

The wider child safeguarding system does not always work well for adolescents, often designed to meet the needs of younger children. Adolescents are thought to need distinct services and professional approaches in line with their developmental needs, recognising that harm and its effects do not stop at age 18. Many of the environmental and structural factors that increase a child’s vulnerability continue into adulthood, resulting in unmet needs and costly later interventions. The children’s and adults’ safeguarding systems have developed from different theories, come under different laws, and have different processes as a result. This can make the transition to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk and mean that young people entering adulthood experience a ‘cliff-edge’ in terms of support.

What might this mean for adolescents entering adulthood?

1. An adolescent engaged in ‘county lines’ or other gang-associated harm, may find they receive a criminal justice response rather than being recognised as a victim of criminal exploitation.
2. A young adult experiencing sexual exploitation may not be eligible for a safeguarding response unless they have a formal mental health diagnosis or diagnosed learning disability.
3. A young person who is subject to a child protection plan may find that support stops abruptly as they turn 18, despite their experiences of maltreatment leaving them just as vulnerable as a child leaving care who would be entitled to ongoing support.
4. A young adult experiencing domestic abuse and poor mental health may be offered little or no support for their own safety unless the circumstances become critical. Upon becoming a parent, they may find that children’s services consider their child to be at risk.