

Conducting a Neighbourhood Assessment

A case study



The Contextual Safeguarding team in Hackney developed and piloted a neighbourhood assessment in a specific neighbourhood location where adolescents were identified as being at risk of significant harm.

What was the concern?

The neighbourhood area had concerning data of crime statistics involving young people including substance misuse and drug dealing, incidents of youth violence and reports of Anti-Social Behaviour. Concerns were raised about the pervasive culture of drug dealing in the local area, coupled with a wider tendency of non-reporting crime due to residents' fear of repercussions, which was putting young people at risk of exploitation. Local tube stations were flagged as locations in which young people congregate and as possible hotspots of crime.

How was the assessment conducted?

Contextual Safeguarding practitioners conducted a contextual assessment in the neighbourhood by engaging young people, residents and local businesses, in addition to core stakeholders present in traditional children and family assessments. A youth advisory panel was also set up to inform the neighbourhood assessment and was instrumental to identifying safeguarding concerns and suggesting solutions.

What is a 'Context Safeguarding Conference'?

Following the assessment, a 'Context Safeguarding Conference' was held to discuss findings and inform an intervention plan. Context Safeguarding Conferences differ from meetings to discuss individual young people that may be affected by issues related to their families or home environment (such as Child Protection Conferences or Child In Need Reviews). Instead, they consider broader factors within specific contexts that may impact young people's safety. The Context Safeguarding Conference was attended by key partners including community organisations, local businesses, one local secondary school, the area Regeneration and Housing Teams, the local youth provision (Young Hackney), Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Hackney Learning Trust.

See more information on Context Safeguarding Conferences on:

<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/en/toolkit/planning/context-conferences>

What was the outcome of the assessment?

An action plan was developed at the Context Safeguarding Conference. Actions were varied and addressed both broader approaches and specific targeted work to try to reduce harm, such as providing detached youth provision at specific times and locations. Substance misuse was addressed through expanding interventions for young people in local schools and medical practices.

In addition to focusing on interventions with young people, measures were taken to increase engagement of residents and adult supervision. This included encouraging third party reporting of safeguarding concerns through the use of existing meetings and newsletters and the provision of bystander training to support the development of a network of community guardians.

Furthermore, as part of the plan, Housing partners were tasked with reviewing any features on the estate that were believed to increase risk to young people's safety. One estate block was flagged by residents as an area where young people from outside the estate met and spent time, raising concerns over drug use and anti-social behaviour in this location. Access to the roof that had been utilised by adults and young people, involved in gang related violence, was made more secure by strengthening the locks and improving the lighting. Concerns about speeding cars around the estate were also addressed through the provision of speed humps.