



Contextual Safeguarding: School Assessment Framework

May 2018

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Contextual Safeguarding School Assessment Framework

Background

Contextual Safeguarding (CS) is an approach to safeguarding that supports practitioners to recognise and respond to the harm young people experience outside of the home.¹ This Contextual Assessment guidance toolkit has been developed by The University of Bedfordshire with Hackney Children and Families Services to support practitioners to consider how to assess and develop responses to risk in schools. The toolkit is designed to support practitioners to carry out a contextual assessment within a school context. This document forms part of a school assessment toolkit which includes a suite of different methods for assessing harm, which are required for completing this assessment framework.

Schools have been identified as sites in which young people can experience and/or be safeguarded from abuse and violence. From experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence through to physical assaults, relationship-based abuse, bullying and grooming into exploitative networks, young people have told practitioners, researchers and journalists about risks they have faced in educational settings. Furthermore, studies have found that there are a number of ways that schools can guard against, or effectively respond to, these issues and become sites of safety and protection for young people – from ‘designing-out’ opportunities for abuse to occur and creating opportunities for bystander interventions through to offering high quality and embedded relationships and sex education and providing trusted and sustained relationships between adults and young people.

As such it is critical that when young people experience abuse and violence and this is in some way associated to their school environment or school relationships – that the school itself features within the process of assessment and intervention. If we want to address the factors that cause abuse, or provide an opportunity for abuse to occur, then these factors need to be identified explored and addressed – and school assessments is one way to achieve this.

The toolkit includes:

- Guidance for carrying out a Contextual Safeguarding School Assessment
- Appendix A: Summary page: Contextual Assessment Framework Template
- Appendix B: Example template
- Appendix C: Detailed assessment information

School Assessment

This guidance outlines the process of carrying out a school assessment and how to use the school assessment framework. The school assessment toolkit consists of two parts – the school assessment framework and the assessment tools. The assessment framework can be used to collate information relating to the school. The assessment methods are tools to gather that information, examples of which can be found as part of the school assessment toolkit on the Contextual Safeguarding Network. These methods include:

¹ Visit www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk for more information.

- Student survey
- Parent survey
- Young people engagement sessions
- Staff engagement sessions
- Behaviour log reviews

In addition to these methods, other partners may hold quantitative information that can supplement your assessment. The methods in the assessment toolkit are guides only, they should be amended and supplemented with other assessment methods as required

School assessment process

The school assessment process has been developed between the University of Bedfordshire and Hackney Children and Families Service. As such, the process outlined here relates to the approach developed by them and should be adapted for individual local authorities.

Figure 1 is a simplified version of the assessment process.

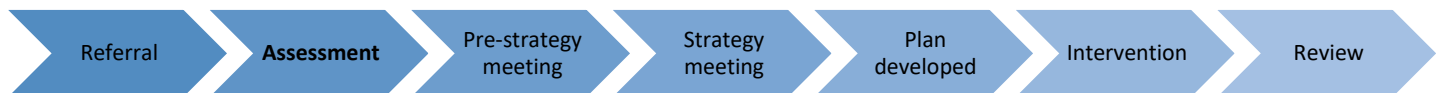


Figure 1: School assessment process

School assessment framework

Before starting the school assessment it is important to consider who the key stakeholders are within and around the school to develop a plan for how to use each assessment method. The assessment guidance in this toolkit may help you consider this. Once you have started to use the assessment tool, use the assessment framework to collate the information from the assessment. The guidance is broken into three parts:

- Appendix A: is a summary page, this should be completed at the end of the assessment.
- Appendix B: is an example template.
- Appendix C: is a blank template for detailed assessment notes.

Throughout the assessment use Appendix C to gather detailed notes. Notes should be separated depending on the context – individual, home, peers, schools, neighbourhood. The first column should include information on risks/ vulnerabilities/ strengths. Appendix B provides examples of some of the types of issues that relate to different contexts. Additional rows can be added when required. It is likely that the ‘schools’ row may include the bulk of information and some information may be repeated across different contexts. For example, if there are particular concerns about sexual image sharing within the school but also a particular peer group this information may be entered in the ‘peers’ and ‘school’ row.

‘Structures and systems’ can be used to document any challenges within the safeguarding system itself that do not directly relate to a specific context. For example, cross-border working or delays in referral process may be best noted in the ‘structures and systems’ field.

‘Data source’ is for noting where the information came from. This might be ‘student survey; or the name of a specific teacher/ staff member. If multiple practitioners are completing the

framework it may be helpful to include initials alongside the information as it is entered in case there are queries. 'Capacity to safeguard' and 'Gaps in knowledge' should be completed throughout the process of the assessment. Once you have identified 'gaps in knowledge' this should be used to inform subsequent assessment methods or people to contact.

Once the initial assessment is completed, the summary page (Appendix A) should be filled-in with information taken from the more detailed assessment (Appendix C). 'Identified interplay between these above factors' are any factors that may be barriers or exasperate factors in different contexts. For example, domestic violence in the home may be a factor that impacts young people within the school or gang-related violence outside the school may escalate issues relating to the school context. The 'Context weighting decision' are any notes relating to the contexts or factors that most require an intervention.

Using the assessment

Once you have completed the assessment framework it is important to speak with the school and discuss your findings and gather their thoughts on the assessment. The assessment should then be used to develop an intervention plan that considers and focuses upon specific concerns relating to the different issues raised. This is likely to require working with different agencies relating to the locations where concerns were raised. For example, if issues about safety in a particular area outside the school are raised, this may require working with local police or neighbourhood tasking. If the concern relates to issues in the school, external agencies or the school themselves may be responsible for the intervention.

As Figure 1 outlines, the assessment process involves several stages. This guidance relates to the assessment specifically. In Hackney, once the assessment was completed a pre-strategy meeting was held between the assessing social worker and the school. This provided an opportunity to outline the key findings from the assessment, to consider the weighting to different contexts and suggestions for interventions. Following this meeting a multi-agency meeting, chaired by an Independent Chair was held to develop the intervention plan. Advice on carrying out a school context strategy meeting will be available on the Contextual Safeguarding Network in Summer 2018.

We hope you find this guidance useful, if you have used the school assessment toolkit please do get in touch.

Appendix A: Summary page: Contextual Assessment Framework Template

Assessment Number:		Summary of initial concerns that triggered referral:			
		<i>Vulnerability factors (pre-existing factors)</i>	<i>Risk factors (factors directly related to the issue/s in question)</i>	<i>Resilience factors / Strengths</i>	<i>Capacity to safeguard (capacity to safeguard is being undermined in this context and by whom/what)</i>
Individual and contextual factors to consider	Individual young person's characteristics				
	Family / Home(s) characteristics				
	Peer group(s)				
	School				
	Neighbourhood spaces (specify)				
	System challenges				
Identified interplay between these above factors					
Context-weighting decision					
Summary of contextual concerns that will be addressed through intervention and desired outcomes					

Appendix B: Example template

Examples of factors to consider during the assessment process by context/individual (this is not exhaustive and serve as an example)

	Vulnerability (pre-existing factors)	Risk (factors directly related to the issue/s in question)	Resilience / Strength
Individual characteristics or behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning disabilities • Recent bereavement or loss • Low self-esteem or self-confidence • Experience of being bullied themselves and/ or coercion into bullying others • Alcohol and/ or substance misuse • Has been bullied • Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families or peers • Missing from home or from school • Absent or exclusion from education or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of aggressive behavior • History of cruelty to animals • Socially and emotionally isolated • Recruiting others into exploitative situations • Concerns raised regarding sexualised or sexually harmful behaviour during childhood • Cold, callous attitude towards offending & appears to lack of empathy • Harmful/Oppressive attitudes towards young women, relationships and consent • Obsession/ pre-occupation with pornography • Evidence of bullying behaviours • Evidence of distributing sexually inappropriate images • Allegations have been made against them in respect of abusive behaviours, including when 'no further actioned' • Recent or rapid disengagement from education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic behaviour appears to be peer influenced rather than led by young person • Problematic behaviour ceased when victim demonstrated non-compliance or distress • Accepts responsibility for problematic behaviours • Engages in positive talents and or leisure interests • Good negotiation/ problem solving skills • Developmentally appropriate level of sexual knowledge • Makes positive use of support network • Demonstrates leadership qualities
Familial / Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaotic or dysfunctional household • Historic experiences of abuse or neglect • Historic domestic abuse • Recent bereavement or loss within the family • Alcohol and/ or substance misuse • Parental mental health or learning needs • Non-engagement associated to cultural dynamics (i.e. class, gendered norms etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current domestic abuse • Current experiencing of abuse and neglect • Family members, such as siblings, have recruited others into exploitative situations • Concerns raised regarding sexualised or sexually harmful behaviour within family • Harmful/Oppressive attitudes towards young women, sexuality, relationships and consent within the family • Family members gang-associated or involved in criminal behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationship with at least one adult • Previous secure attachments • Active engagement with and positive response to services • Demonstrative protective attitudes and behaviours • Family members make positive use of a wider support network
Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of abuse or neglect within the peer network • Members of peer network have been victimized in the community – including by gangs – or bullied within school • Members of the peer network have been missing from home or care • Members of the peer network have a shared recent bereavement – for example of a peer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of aggressive or offending behaviour within the peer network • Disclosures made by others about the peer network have been withdrawn • Peer group has recruited others into exploitative situations • Concerns raised regarding sexualised or sexually harmful behaviour within the peer group • Harmful/Oppressive attitudes towards young women, relationships and consent shared within the peer group • Obsession/ pre-occupation with pornography within the peer group • Evidence of sexual bullying and/or distributing sexually inappropriate images within the peer group • Peer group have been involved in anti-social or offending behaviours • Members of the peer group have been missing together • Members of the peer group have witnessed abusive behaviours and not challenged them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive behaviour has been challenged by some peers • Developmentally appropriate level of sexual knowledge within the peer network • Members of the peer network make positive use of wider support services
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited PSHE or SRE provision – drop-down days or selected year groups only for example • Response to safeguarding issues embedded within mainly with behaviour policies and procedures • Awareness of trends and concerns are not formally recorded or monitored • Referral pathway within and external to school is concerned with individuals but cannot extend to patterns, networks or locations • Limited partnership working with the partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of exclusions/managed moves for young people who have been victimized within school • HSB and problematic behaviours (including bullying) which have been unaddressed • Systemic triggers for behaviour trends have been unaddressed • Victim-blaming language or stereotyping language in behaviour records • Evidence that students have been recruited into exploitative situations via school associations • Harmful/Oppressive attitudes towards young women, relationships and consent expressed by students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for extra-curricular and or leisure interests • Clear messaging about consent, relationships gender within the school curriculum and wider ethos • Clearly applied bullying policies and procedures • Clear, and used, referral mechanism to raise concerns • Response to corridor cultures are consistent • Access to a positive relationship with at least one adult within the school community • Positive relationships with professionals

	Vulnerability (<i>pre-existing factors</i>)	Risk (<i>factors directly related to the issue/s in question</i>)	Resilience / Strength
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent bereavement of a student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normalised attitudes to harmful behaviours such as self-harm, drugs and alcohol misuse, eating disorders etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school makes positive use of support network – engaged in multi-agency partnerships
Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy of abuse/violence is identified in the locality Poor lighting or visibility Fractured relationships between the wider community and young people Adults using drugs or alcohol in the local area Converging schools/students in the afternoon in the locality Large numbers of people in the space enabling anonymity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active risk of robbery or street-based crime in the locality Young people subject to attacks in location in retaliation to disclosure Young people recruited into exploitative situations within the locality Locality associated with sexual exploitation or a hotspot for other forms of sexual violence Locality has appeared in abusive online content – such as ‘bait out’ videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available extra-curricular and or leisure interests Access to a consistent and positive relationship with at least one adult in a community setting Places for safe socialisation are available Clear response to identified trends in crime and anti-social behaviour Relevant neighbourhood partners engaged in response to emerging trends

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Family / Home(s) characteristics				

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Peer Group/s				

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
School/s				

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source and practitioner present	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Neighbourhood				

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source and practitioner present	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
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