



## Contextual Safeguarding: Safety Mapping Exercise

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# Safety Mapping Exercise

## 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.<sup>1</sup> This safety mapping exercise has been developed by Hackney Children and Families Services to help practitioners to identify areas of risk and safety and can be used for safety planning with children, families and networks. Safety mapping can be used by practitioners as part of a broader assessment of risk within local neighbourhoods or on its own with individual young people. Further details about carrying out a contextual assessment can be found on the Contextual Safeguarding Network.

Young people encounter risk and safety in locations outside of the home. These experiences are crucial in shaping how young people move through their local neighbourhood and how they keep themselves safe. By carrying out safety mapping with young people, practitioners can learn and understand about where young people feel safe or at risk. This has a number of benefits:

- Offering professionals a way to understand how and why young people might choose certain routes around their local area and how this impacts them. For example, a young person might be late for appointments or school because they take longer routes to avoid risk.
- Providing a reflective space for young people to consider locations where they are safe and what to do if they encounter risk.
- Supporting professionals to consider locations of risk/safety when making decisions about young people. For example, where to place young people or what service locations may be best for them.
- If multiple safety maps are completed with several young people, they can provide an overview of risk and safety in local areas in order to support wider interventions into the local environment. If carried out over time they can support practitioners to understand the changing nature of risk in a local area.

This guidance includes an example safety mapping exercise that was developed in Hackney, therefore this would need adapting, with relevant maps for each local area.

The document includes:

- Guidance for carrying out the safety mapping exercise
- Appendix A: Exercise 1 for practitioners: Learning about the local area
- Appendix B: Exercise 2: Safety mapping with young people
- Appendix C: Safety mapping planning sheet

## Safety Mapping Exercise 1

The safety mapping exercise has been designed for use by social workers but is suitable for any practitioners working with children and families. The overall aim is to gather information and understand where young people feel safe/at risk and to develop safety plans from this.

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<sup>1</sup> Visit [www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk) for more information.

Exercise 1 is an activity that can be used by practitioners on their own to help them get to know the local environment. It is important that practitioners have a good understanding of the local environment before they complete the safety mapping exercise with young people.

When adapting this exercise for your own area you will first need to access maps. These can be accessed through your local authority or online, for example at [www.ordancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordancesurvey.co.uk).

To ensure the maps are clear make sure to print each map in A3 size.

## Safety Mapping Exercise 2

The safety mapping exercise 2 forms the bulk of this activity to be carried out with young people. The aim is to work with young people to identify areas of safety and risk and to use this information to form the basis of a safety plan.

1. To begin, print a large map of the local area on A3.
2. Bring some stickers – green, orange and red that can be used to mark the map or some coloured pens.
3. Print Appendix C: the safety planning sheet.

Working with your young person, go through the map and ask them about where they feel safe, could be safe and feel unsafe. For each area get them to put a coloured sticker on the map.

### RED



I do not feel safe in this area.

### AMBER



I could be safe in this area.

### GREEN



I feel safe in this area.

This could include whole areas or be as specific as certain streets, parks or shops. Using this exercise try and start a conversation with the young person about why they feel safe or unsafe there. This might include information about people or types of harm there.

Using Appendix 3: start writing down the locations where the young person feels safe or unsafe and the reasons for this. Once you have completed the assessment of risk, working with the young person, start to develop a safety plan for them. This means helping them to consider who or what to do if they feel unsafe. For example, taking a location they have identified as 'red' you could ask them the following questions:

- What would they do if they feel unsafe?
- Is there anyone they know there who they could go to for help?
- What would they expect that person to do to help keep them safe?
- Do they have contact details accessible?

Once you have completed exercise 2, you should have developed a safety plan with the young person and helped them to think through areas of safety and risk. However it is important that this does not end at this point. It is crucial that, in the case where young people do identify unsafe places, you work with other practitioners and services to consider ways to make them safer. This might include working with local park wardens, youth workers, licensing, police or the voluntary sector.

On the occasions where the relocation of a young person is being considered, as part of this exercise and as a component of your wider assessment of risk, you will also need to think about safe spaces, networks and adults that do not appear on the map - these may be with family or friends that live in the borough that the child is moving to. In this instance, safety **must not** be considered achieved if no further work is undertaken both with the context the child is moving from (i.e. continue to address the risks with the space) **and** there is no work undertaken with the context the child is moving to (with particular attention paid to safety plans for the child to move between the two contexts for example the transport routes etc.). In this situation, in order to properly assess risk you should **also** complete a safety map of the location the child is moving to (exercise 2).

*NB: In order to make this a successful exercise both you and the young person must be able to clearly identify where they can achieve safety at the earliest opportunity should they find themselves in a risky situation.*

### **Safety planning after assessment**

Once you have completed the safety plan(s) it is important that it does not become a static document. This will mean updating and re-assessing the safety map with your young person regularly. It is also important that where young people identify risk, that this is followed up and an intervention plan is developed into those areas. Finally, where appropriate, plans may be brought together from multiple young people to support the analysis of trends and risks in different areas.

It is also important to pay attention and note safety features that may not appear on either map. These could be safe people or spaces in another borough. In this case, you will need to think about how long it might take them to get to safety or how long it may take for their safe person to get to them and what they will do to be as safe as possible within that time.

### **Safety planning with Children with additional needs**

Considerations should be given to learning styles of children involved with this activity. Practitioners are advised to use the physical map as a visual tool for children who have difficulty reading. This does not mean that the written safety plan cannot form part of the assessment but it is important that the children are left with a plan that they can understand or refer to. For example, a map which they have annotated for themselves with coloured stickers.

## Appendix A: Exercise 1 for Practitioners: Learning about the local area

The map below shows the Hackney Wards (with demarked boundaries in blue).

Often young people we work with can identify areas of risk and safety using these Wards and refer to them by name. This map can be used for safety planning with children, families and networks.



Can you identify the following Wards in the London Borough of Hackney? Mark each Ward with the corresponding number (Hackney Central is already labelled as a navigation reference point):

1. Brownswood	2. Cazenove	3. Clissold	4. Dalston	5. De Beauvoir	6. <b>Hackney Central</b>	7. Hackney Wick
8. Hackney Downs	9. Haggerston	10. Homerton	11. Hoxton East/ Shoreditch	12. Hoxton	13. Kings Park	14. Leabridge
15. London Fields	16. Shacklewell	17. Springfield	18. Stamford Hill	19. Stoke Newington	20. Woodberry Down	21. Victoria

(1 Point for each correctly identified area) Total: \_\_\_/21

❖ **5 Bonus Points:** Can you locate Murray Grove? This is not a Ward on the map but is a known area identified by young people in the borough. **Mark this location with an X**

**Exercise 1 for Practitioners: Learning about the local area:**

**(Quick reference MARK SHEET)**



**Appendix B: Contextual Safeguarding Risk and Safety Mapping:  
Safety Planning with young people, their families and networks.**



The map above shows the Hackney Wards (with demarked boundaries in blue).

In the event that you require a more detailed map of a specific Hackney Ward or area (including individual streets), this can be found at: <http://www.map.hackney.gov.uk/gismappallery> and then clicking on the LBH WARDS tab.

Often young people we work with can identify areas of risk and safety using these Wards and refer to them by name.

The map is simple to use as a safety planning tool and can help both you and the young person figure out safe spaces for them in the borough using a traffic light coding system.

**RED**



I do not feel safe in this area.

**AMBER**






I could be safe in this area.

**GREEN**



I feel safe in this area.

### Appendix C: Safety mapping planning sheet

<b>Locations, people and further details</b>	
 I feel safe in this area.	
 I could be safe in this area	
 I do not feel safe in this area	
<b>Safety Plan</b>	