

Communication – Context - Curiosity

Assessments have historically focused on the family and home, or focus on specific issues or concerns (educational issues, mental health, substance use... This means that certain voices or specific types of information have been prioritised. Assessments do not always focus on Risks Outside The Home and therefore do not always provide for a holistic view of a child's life. Possible indicators of contextual gaps in assessments include not being able to answer these questions:

- ☐ What do we know about their peer group?
- ☐ What do we know about their time in the community?
- ☐ What do we know about their community?
- ☐ What do we know about their online life?
- ☐ What do we know about their vulnerabilities outside the home?

Some young people may be more vulnerable to Risks Outside The Home, and understanding how these vulnerabilities interact with Risk Indicators we observe. Below are examples of possible Vulnerabilities and Risk Indicators (this is not exhaustive):

Vulnerabilities:

1. Learning/educational needs, neurodevelopmental differences and processing delays.
2. Socially isolated
3. Adverse Childhood experiences
4. Mental health and substance use (also a risk indicator)

Risk Indicators:

1. Victim or perpetrator of assaults
2. Low school attendance
3. Mental health and substance use (also a vulnerability)
4. Anti-social behaviour

Where we have evidence of risk and/or vulnerabilities we should seek to share information with partners to build a shared understanding of risk. Risk outside the home requires shared understanding of risk - this only happens with communication

Prepare for the Assessment:

Professionals can Complete their own map of the area. Can you identify What strengths does the community have and what risks exist in the community. If you don't have a good understanding of the community, Who can you speak with to understand the area better and What other data can I access.. How might local context impact the specific vulnerabilities of the young person you are supporting?

Assessment Tools

The Contextual Safeguarding Network has developed a wide range of tools to support practitioners engage with contextual factors when carrying out assessments. These are all available directly from the Contextual Safeguarding Networks website:

- ☐ School/neighbourhood/peer Assessment Triangle
- ☐ Peer mapping exercise
- ☐ Community Safety Map
- ☐ Contextualise Assessments
- ☐ Explore different sources

Other Sources of Information can support assessments to be more contextually informed. Consider how we can engage with partners such as Local Businesses, Other council departments, Youth Services – especially detached youth work, Community Police Officers and PCSO's, Community Safety Teams, Local Resident Groups and Schools (for their community knowledge)

Contextualised Assessments can lead on to information being analysed, understood and interpreted in ways which support services understanding the Risks Outside The Home. This in turn can lead to the development of contextually informed plans and interventions.