

Whole Systems Immersive Safety in Lewisham

Definition

A 'contextual safeguarding' approach recognises that children and young people can encounter harm or are at risk of harm in a *range* of settings and relationships beyond the family and home environment (Figure 1).

For example, peer relationships, as well as schools, neighbourhoods, parks are all interrelated relationships and physical settings where young people can feel vulnerable or be harmed.

Contextual Safeguarding approaches therefore expand the scope of where we look to protect children. It offers the opportunity to create places and relationships based on safety and protective factors, to reduce the risks posed to children.



Figure 1: Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability(Firmin 2013:47)

Example 1: Contextual safeguarding and knife crime:

When taking a contextual safeguarding approach when thinking about knife crime the behaviour is considered in its context. For example, a young person carrying a knife might be a response to being bullied at school, peer pressure, feeling scared in a particular space or being fearful of a group of people. These perceived threats can make a young person feel they need to carry a weapon.

Interventions are then developed or tailored to reduce these threats. This could be through working with an entire peer group, increasing the safety of a park or tunnel where

someone feels unsafe or reviewing a schools bullying policy. These interventions, when focused on the range of influences on a young person, have the potential to improve safety and reduce the young persons need to carrying a knife.

Example 2: Schools and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Schools are locations where young people can encounter sexual harm, such as name calling, sexual bullying and sexual assault. However, schools are also places that can protect young people. For example, they can promote healthy relationships and positive gender and relationship ideals, positive role models and trusting adults that young people can confide in.

Why we are working in this way

Violence is not normal, but it is being driven and proliferated by fear and trauma within our communities and within a range of settings beyond the family or home. Fear is being spread through negative messages, biases and **exaggerated** hypersensitive responses.

Our aim is therefore to reduce fear and improve wellbeing and safety through working collectively with organisations, groups and communities within Lewisham. We want to take a whole-systems immersive approach by

embedding evidence-based interventions in a geographical space to improve the contextual safety for our children and young people.

Our offer to support Contextual Safeguarding/Total immersive approaches

Lewisham Council Public Protection and Safety Team are looking to support schools and other institutions to develop contextual safeguarding approaches to make spaces as safe as possible for young people.

The steps outlined below will utilise established resources (surveys, assessment tools and safety maps) developed by the Contextual Safeguarding Network.

Steps:

- 1- Scoping of activity and interventions already undertaken by the school to support the safety of young people and collation of information/data that the school already holds on risks and crime
- 2- Safety mapping and safety survey with young people – The school will lead this exercise to understand pupil's experience of places and influences that make them feel safe or unsafe, both at school, online and in the surrounding area. This involves completing a safety mapping tool and student survey.
- 3- Parent/Carer Survey- The school will lead this exercise to understand what parents and carers find concerning. This can relate to the internet, social media, bullying, and the journey to school and surrounding area.
- 4- Staff engagement- The school will lead this exercise to understand the key issues that may be affecting the children they work with everyday
- 5- Dip dive into incidents/behaviour logs- to understand the relationship between the incident and the school context and identify any trends
- 6- School assessment- Through the above engagement, Lewisham officers, together with the school will summarise the key risk factors to young people.
- 7- School Intervention Plan- Lewisham officers will work with the school to develop and implement interventions to improve the identified risks. These could include;
 - Adapting the physical landscape
 - Support for parents
 - Workforce development with teachers and staff: Trauma-informed, restorative and unconscious bias training
 - Workshops for young people on specific issues
 - Bystander interventions and work with the wider community
- 8- Community Champions- The school will identify community leads (local business owners, parents, local faith leads etc.) to act as community champions for the school and wider community. These people will be able to share information with the school when they see risks or harm happening to young people. They will be trained to identify risk factors and what to do when they see harm occurring. Developing community champions is about recognising the collective responsibility and capacity for people across the community to play a role in keeping young people safe.

Developing an intervention plan

Lewisham Council will support the school/institution to embed evidence based approaches into the way they work. An inset session provided by Lewisham Council will be provided for all staff and individuals associated with the organisation on the following model:

1. Restorative approaches:

Restorative approaches are about offering both those who have been harmed or have perpetrated harm a safe place to have their say around what has happened. **Implementation** of restorative approaches will enable the workforce to stop problems and conflicts from escalating by repairing relationships and healing harm that has been caused through utilising positive and trauma-informed language.

2. Working in trauma-informed ways:

Working in trauma-informed ways will support the school in understanding how a young person's behaviour can be a response to fear and childhood adversity. Workshops on understanding trauma will enable the workforce to best understand how to communicate and work productively with young people who have been affected by trauma.

3. Unconscious bias:

This workshop will support staff to recognise innate biases and recognise how they might be affecting how we communicate and make decisions. Recognising and challenging our unconscious biases is essential to tackle discrimination.

Lewisham and the school will also build on their own networks and partners to bring interventions into the school from the wider voluntary community sector. Relevant interventions will be defined by the School Assessment and the various parent/carer, student and staff engagement, but these could include;

Support for Young People

- Mentoring- XLP
- Healthy relationships and gender workshop – Lewisham VAWG Team
- Emotional health and wellbeing- USSP
- Sexual health workshop- TBC
- Understanding youth crime workshop- Lewisham Crime Enforcement Team
- Understanding the risks posed by social media and the internet - Lewisham Crime Enforcement Team

Support for Parents and Carers

- Workshops on understanding violence and improving the safety of children and young people- Power the Fight

Support for the wider Community

- Support for local businesses to become Safe Havens- For Jimmy
- Support for local community leads to become Champions- Lewisham YOS & CRT

- Support to improve the physical safety of the school and surrounding area- Lewisham Crime Enforcement Team

Outcomes:

- ✓ School, and the surrounding community, feels like a nurturing and safe space for all children and young people
- ✓ The workforce reduce fear and are better able to support children by working in trauma informed ways, using restorative language and challenging their own unconscious biases
- ✓ Parents/Carers have greater confidence to identify and understand risks and threats to young people and know how to escalate their concerns
- ✓ Champions from across the community play a collective role in keeping young people safe and communicate when they see harm taking place
- ✓ A reduction in the risks posed by certain geographical spaces
- ✓ An overall increase in safety and reduction in crime and violence