

## Safety mapping guide

**This exercise helps practitioners work with young people to identify safe and unsafe areas in their local area and develop safety plans with young people, families and networks.**

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### When would you use this tool?

- To help practitioners assess risk in local areas, either broadly or with individual young people, to inform assessments
- To help professionals understand why young people choose certain routes (e.g. avoiding unsafe areas, even if it makes them late to school)
- To reflect with young people on where they feel safe/unsafe and how to respond to risks
- To support relational practice and trust-building with young people
- To inform decisions about placements, services, and support based on safe/unsafe locations
- When used with multiple young people, it gives a wider picture of community safety, how risks change over time, and can help identify community guardians

### How to use it

- Print a A3 map of the local area, bring red/amber/green stickers or pens
- Ask the young person to mark places on the map:
  - Red = *I don't feel safe in this area*
  - Amber = *I could be safe in this area*
  - Green = *I feel safe in this area*

- Encourage discussion about why they feel safe or unsafe in each location
- Record key locations and reasons on the safety planning sheet (below)
- Option: if appropriate, go on a walk with the young person/a group of young people so they can show you the area
- Work together to plan what the young person should do if they feel unsafe. For example, taking a location they have identified as ‘red’ you could ask them:
  - 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?
- Discuss realistic actions they can immediately take in risky situations
- If appropriate, practitioners can familiarise themselves beforehand with the local area and record their impressions

**Ensure young people can clearly identify where and how to access safety quickly if needed.**

“suddenly she stopped attending college and we couldn’t really understand why, because she was doing really well and there was nothing that we could pinpoint and she wasn’t able to verbalise why that was. And I just happened to do the mapping with her and her whole route from leaving her house to the college was pretty much red the whole way. And she said it’s because of people that had exploited her or were currently exploiting her lived. Along that route. So that was why she stopped, because she was too fearful of going and travelling that way.”

**Example from a practitioner**

## Key things to keep in mind

- The activity should be led by young people. The aim is to understand their experiences of safety, which might differ from what you or other professionals think is safe/unsafe and what needs to happen to increase safety. Create a trusted space to have these discussions with young people.
- The focus of the exercise should be on safety in environments and spaces – not on the young person’s behaviour. Young people should not be made to feel they are responsible for their safety or to blame for anything that has happened to them in these spaces.
- Safety plans should be regularly reviewed, updated and lead to intervention plans.
- Insights from multiple young people can be combined to identify wider trends,
- Consider safety factors beyond the map, such as trusted people or safe spaces in other areas.
- Plan for realistic access to safety, including travel time and what to do while waiting for help.
- Consider opportunities for connecting young people with community guardians and safe places, such as youth provisions

## Young people with additional needs

- Adapt the approach to suit different learning styles.
- Use visual tools (e.g. annotated maps with stickers) to support understanding.
- Ensure the final safety plan is clear, accessible, and usable for the young person.

## Safety planning sheet

	<b>Locations, people and further details</b>
I feel safe in this area	
I could be safe in this area	
I don't feel safe in this area	
<b>Safety plan</b>	

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This document is an updated version of the resource that was developed in collaboration with Simone Nyarko and Michela Notarianni with the Hackney Contextual Safeguarding Team, initially published in November 2018.

Find out more on [www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk)