



Youth Now Community Guardianship Intervention

Using observational information with a visual record

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Paula Skidmore with the Youth Now team



Preface & acknowledgements

The Youth Now project is a two-year pilot project using the principles of Contextual Safeguarding to develop better responses to increasing levels of youth violence in the Oldham area of Greater Manchester. The project is based within the Youth Justice team of the voluntary sector organisation 'Positive Steps' and the key partners in the pilot are Greater Manchester Police and Oldham Council. More information about the project is available [here](#).

Paula Skidmore, Senior Research Fellow, worked as an embedded researcher with Youth Now, to support the pilot to establish and sustain local Contextual Safeguarding approaches to extra-familial harm around serious youth violence. This case study was produced as part of the embedded research project.

We are always interested to hear how these documents have been used and adapted by other practitioners. Please contact us at contextual.safeguarding@beds.ac.uk.



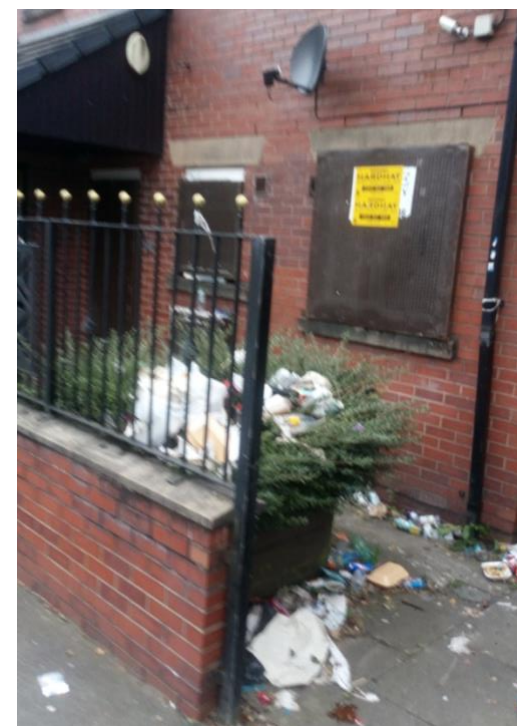
How were photographs used in observational assessments?

As part of the pilot project in Contextual Safeguarding, members of the Youth Now team have completed observational assessments in numerous locations within Oldham where there are safeguarding concerns. These specific locations may have been flagged by multi-agency partner professionals, members of the community or young people themselves.

In addition to providing written information about the location and identifying potential safety/harm concerns and follow up actions, the team have taken photographs at the locations. This can help support follow up actions and also enable individual staff to fully report back at weekly team meetings on the locations that have been assessed. Using visual photographic representation in this way enables other staff members to then fully engage with the process of assessing potential harms and discuss ways to build better safety in the location, even when they haven't attended the place of concern. Photographic representation can be an important way of keeping connections between staff team members, who are working in multiple ways to build Contextual Safeguarding in different locations and in diverse ways within the team.

Using observational data on specific locations, linked to a visual record can therefore be a useful way of enhancing community guardianship of 'spaces and places' where young people may come to harm.

Examples of photographs taken



Example of an observational record

Observational Record of Location Z - [Gives Date of Observation] time 6.pm till 8.pm

Outreach work at -[Names Street Location Z in Oldham]

Detached team [*Names Worker*]

Youth service [*Names Worker*]

Youth Now [*Names Worker*]

Observational Notes from location, by Youth Now worker :

It was clear to see from the observation on the flats at [Names Street, Location Z] that there has been lots of negative behaviours going on. There were several windows smashed and boarded up and lots of different types of criminal damage. All electrical boxes that are on the outside of the properties have been forced open and wires laid bare. The CCTV has been damaged and is facing inwards, so it probably does not record anymore. The amount of rubbish strewn about the place is a real eye sore and must be attracting rats due to the large amount. There is a courtyard that has a gate on it but is not locked this can easily be used by young people as it is easily accessible. The lighting is very poor around these properties which makes it a very intimidating for residents who look after their properties. Just around the corner from these flats is the local shop that young people use and whilst we were there, older males were watching what we were doing. I didn't manage to complete any surveys on this occasion as it felt very risky due to the amount of people who were staring at us wondering what we were doing. However, I feel we should go back out in the daytime to speak to the local shopkeeper and residents to carry out survey, to get their views. I have made some recommendations below.

Potential actions to follow up after Observation:

- Carry out surveys with shopkeeper and resident in the daytime
- Speak to [*Names Council Service*] to find out who is responsible for these properties
- More lighting required
- All electrical boxes to be fixed and made safer
- Windows to be replaced and rubbish tidy up to make it more presentable
- CCTV to be repaired and pointed in the right direction
- Speak to [*Names Local Police Sgt*] to see if there have been further incidents