



Title: Guidance on Local Safety Audits: a Compendium of International Practice

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SCS topic headings: Monitoring and Evaluation; Personal Safety, Safety in Public Spaces, Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Environment Safety, Home Safety, Partnership Working

This document is an international REVIEW of community safety focused auditing approaches, processes, and skills.

Summary of the intervention's aim

This is a very thorough and broad ranging guidance document advising approaches to and implementation of local safety audits at the city/local level. It compiles experience and best practice from international examples to present step-by-step guidance concerning awareness for undertaking audits across a range of community safety fields.

Outcomes

The guidance topics address three themed stages of a safety audit process. Part A is directed primarily at those responsible for policy and legislation at national level, as well as civic leaders with a mandate for crime prevention at city level. Parts B and C are especially relevant to groups overseeing the audit process.

Part A highlights connections between safety audits and wider social, economic and environmental issues, such as sustainable development, social inclusion and good urban governance.

It illustrates the importance of the safety audit to advancing well-planned and well-executed action to reduce crime and its associated risk factors.

The guidance identifies who needs to be involved, the skills needed to complete the work, the scope of audit activity, the principles of good practice and the four main Stages of audit implementation. Topics include:

- The benefits of auditing, alongside principles underpinning good practice
- What information needs to be collected, and what knowledge and skills are required
- Attention is paid to engaging communities in an audit– what groups should be involved, securing participation, engaging hard-to-reach groups
- Specific community safety topics and issues for auditors are addressed, including:
 - Children and youth
 - Interpersonal violence
 - Offenders and reintegration
 - Human trafficking
 - Alcohol, illicit drugs and substance abuse.

Part B focuses on specific and important issues that pose major challenges because they are difficult to investigate. Amongst those examined here are specific populations e.g. ‘at risk’ children and youth; women’s safety; human trafficking; illicit drugs; and crimes involving business. The sources, techniques and tools required to undertake effective audits are presented in detail.

Part C is designed to support practitioners undertaking audit work. It covers a range of technical subjects, including:

- Strategic considerations
- Using secondary data sources (from police data, Criminal Justice Agencies, Victim Assistance Services; Housing and Environmental Services; Education Services; Social Care Services; Health Services; Fire Services; Private Security and Insurance Companies, and other surveys and research).
- Collecting and using survey data
- Gathering qualitative information
- Businesses and crime
- High crime neighbourhoods.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The use of audits has become commonplace as the potential benefits are increasingly recognised. A safety audit needs to examine crime and victimisation alongside linkages with socio-economic factors and existing services, as well as the wider political and institutional context in which problems occur.

Safety audits also play an important part in educating partners, creating a shared understanding of the city's problems and current responses, and strengthening their resolve to work towards a common goal. Strategies can be developed underpinned by audit findings to determine visions with clear objectives and an indication of how priorities can be addressed.

When embarking on a safety audit, the process should be underpinned by agreed principles. Throughout the process, review and evaluation should ensure that future action is informed by past experience. The process needs to be inclusive and participative, not only to ensure that relevant interests are properly considered, but to enable the city to benefit from the active involvement of stakeholders and communities (see section 5). It needs to be recognised that this is an ongoing process. The audit and strategy need periodically to be updated and even repeated, as issues and priorities change in local communities

Auditing members need to be carefully selected, taking into account local circumstances, especially the socio-demographic structure (e.g. age and gender). The importance of the private sector as a social agent in the development and enhancement of communities should also not be overlooked. A stakeholder analysis can help identify who needs to be involved and how this is best accomplished. A small Audit Steering Group should be formed to oversee the audit process and be accountable for its satisfactory completion.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The guidance has been drawn from published and practised international examples of auditing processes across different community safety topics, involving a diverse range of organisations, to address a broad range of auditing priorities.

A full bibliography is presented alongside an appendix of useful links to additional auditing information and guidance are suggested in a list about organisations, websites and online resources.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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