NSW Police Force

Community Safety Audit Guidelines for NSW Police

Crime Prevention Command

Summary
Community Safety Audit

A Community Safety Audit (CSA) is a focused analysis of an identified or perceived crime or safety issue in a certain area or location.

CSA are part of the process for change. They are a tool for collecting information about elements of an environment which are causing fear or crime. CSA identify safety issues and propose solutions to minimise opportunities for crime, anti-social behaviour and perceptions of crime with greater ownership among all stakeholders. Results from the CSA will be reflected in the Action Plan with changes that will benefit the area and community.

Document Control Sheet

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2	July 2020	Sen Constable Robert MacFarlane	D/2016/571724
3	April 2024	Senior Project & Policy Officer Kathryn Ashton	Review and revision of entire document. Formatting changes to align with an Australian Standard.

Table of Contents

Purpose

Community Safety Audits (CSA) recognise the work required to address issues of safety and security. They pro-actively implement crime prevention initiatives which are collaborative in nature and outcome focused.

Community Safety Audits are a way to engage community stakeholders and collectively document a range of findings using tools such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) as a way of capturing information and identifying problems. The result of the audit will influence the design of the environment to reduce crime and fear.

CSA should include the following:

- Observations of the built environment and surrounds.
- Existing and potential safety concerns.
- Identify specific location issues and needs.
- Any impacts of the physical surroundings on residents.
- Social impacts on the built environment.
- Discussion points and ideas for action.
- Areas to be addressed as a priority.

A CSA is NOT related to:
- A business or Residential Safety Audit
- A business inspection
- A development application
- An individual issue

A CSA can result from a request due to an issue identified by any of the following:
- Police
- Local members of Parliament (State and Federal)
- Community residents
- Local business and Clubs
- Government agencies
- Non-Government agencies (charities, not for profit organisations, etc)

Steering Committee

A concern or issue may be raised by any person through any agency. The reporting agency would be obliged to organise a meeting between relevant stakeholders to determine whether a CSA is required. A CSA Steering Committee is formed by stakeholders when an issue is identified that cannot be resolved by one organisation. It is important that the stakeholders involved commit to making changes to the environment to reduce or eliminate the issue.

A steering committee is an organised group of people that broadly represents the community affected by the crime issue. They decide on the priorities required to manage the general course of the CSA and consequent operations.

The responsibilities of Steering committee include:

- Decide on requirement for a CSA.
- Commit to being part of a collaborative group to remove or reduce the issue.
- Elect a Project Coordinator.
- Oversee the safety audit process.
- Generate interest from relevant local agencies and Police.
- Attend meetings.
- Select residents or local business representatives.
- Arrange information for all parties involved.
- Determine the size of the area to be audited.
- Determine numbers required teams.
- Receive the results from team reports.
- Ensure all people involved are safe during the CSA.
- Prepare an action plan with possible solution based on the results of the CSA.
- Ensure an ongoing process for the final action plan.
- Continued involvement with changes to the environment

Project Co-Ordinator Responsibilities

The Project Coordinator is the leader of CSA and is responsible for establishing a collaborative and effective CSA. The Project Coordinator can be a representative from an agency or group with a vested interest in reducing the identified or perceived crime or safety issue. The Steering Committee must elect the most suitable PC.

When a CSA is required, the Project Coordinator invites the relative stakeholders to form a steering committee. The Project Coordinator enlists assistance from stakeholders during the CSA and requires them to comment or submit their findings in a formal report. The reports are combined to form an executive summary with observations and recommendations which are used to produce a plan to combat the identified issue.

Police would only undertake the Project Coordinators role by request of the PAC/PD Commander. A Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) may assume the PC role on behalf of the PAC/PD. Other Police involvement from within the command may be utilised from the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU).

The Project Coordinators role includes:

- Arrange meetings with key stakeholders/steering committee.
- Identify issue and confirm the requirement of a CSA.
- Organise a steering committee and chair meetings.
- Create agendas, invites, mapping, presentations etc.
- Meet and invite residents from the affected area.
- Outline team members responsibilities.
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of all people involved.
- Create checklist with input from steering committee for CSA inspections.
- Conduct the CSA. This should be completed during both the daytime and nighttime to assess all aspects of the location.
- Obtain reports from the stakeholders.
- Collate the reports and create an executive summary.
- Present and distribute the findings to the stakeholders and agencies.
- Discuss the key issues through an action plan.

- Implement action items which are assigned to stakeholders for timely completion.

Stakeholders

The stakeholder role is performed by the body of the group involved in assisting with the CSA. Stakeholders are part of the steering committee and attend the CSA to document and report their findings. A group of stakeholders may be formed comprising of representatives associated with the particular issue in the area or community. Ensure stakeholders can have an influence in the investigation and make recommendations toward the analysis outcome. Key stakeholders may include:

- Police
- Local Councils
- Housing groups (DCJ, local refuge, etc)
- NSW Business Chamber (Chamber of Commerce)
- Public transport (Trains & buses)
- Community members
- Community leaders

About 70% of public space is owned by councils. Whether or not the CSA is initiated by them, it is vital for the relevant local council to be involved.

Local community members are very important in the process. Residents and business owners supply local knowledge and add quality information from a unique perspective. They can take responsibility for their neighbourhood during the action plan process.

Crime Prevention Officer (CPO)

A CPO would usually undertake the stakeholder role.

The CPO on behalf of the PAC/PD will provide:
- Crime Statistics (BOCSAR)
- Intelligence Analysis.
- Local knowledge.
- Advice from Police perspective.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Risk Assessment of CSA Inspection with consideration to ALERT Concept of Operations.
- Participate in CSA inspections.
- CSA final report on behalf of the PAC/PD. This report must be submitted through chain of command for authorisation and lodged on RMS before presenting report to Project Coordinator.
- If viable, commit to assisting in the action plan.

The CPO will:
- Document attendance in all meetings in Engage and CPU 'End of Month' reports.
- Utilise PAC/PD Prevention, Disruption Response (PDR) meeting to request and implement initiatives to compliment CSA action plan.
- Record CSA as 'Occurrence Only' COPS event referencing relevant locations and property names.

Conducting a CSA Inspections

Participation

- The CSA team should have between 4 to 7 people.
- They should be a mixture of representatives from community and stakeholders.
- Limit Police personnel to no more than two officers when location is not associated with violent crime.
- Avoid using any Police vehicles as transport during the CSA.
- Include special needs or vulnerable groups if required.
- Keep the team together, discourage independent inspections and consider personal safety (reflective vests, torches may be required).

Timing

Select the day most suitable to observe the location. The assigned team should conduct the CSA in two phases. A daytime phase would observe the environment traffic between dawn and dusk considering local business and patronage of the area, for example proximity to schools. A nighttime phase would have additional factors to consider such as poor lighting, visibility, proximity to licensed premises.

Location

- The audited location should not be too large.
- A definable boundary must be set to ensure the CSA is manageable.
- Location can be divided into smaller zones. Zoning enables the team to focus on areas of concern. For example: transport, walkways and parks.
- Specific locations within the CSA boundary may require separate audits. A train station, shopping centre, parkland or car park may have an impact on the crime issue. Separate safety audits will need to be completed and incorporated into the CSA report.
- Locations that require separate Safety Audits should be completed in order of priority with relevance to the CSA and crime issue.
- Anti-social behaviour is commonly hidden from plain sight. Important factors to consider when reducing such behaviour are places of isolation. This is an area that can conceal a person from natural surveillance. Examples of isolated areas include public toilets, community parking, stairways and tunnels.

Checklist

An audit checklist will identify areas of concern identified by the steering committee and may include:
- Lighting
- Visibility
- Signage
- Maintenance
- CCTV
- Traffic
- Public attendance and demographic

CSA Documentation

Upon completion of inspections team members should discuss their observations to ensure all viewpoints are considered and documented. Team members including Police may be assigned to submit a report on behalf of their stakeholders' perspective. Reports should include images of the CSA area. An agreed timeframe should be set for completion of reports to the Project Coordinator.

Project Co-Ordinator will collate reports into a draft document for discussion at Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will discuss proposals from stakeholders and form an action plan. The Project Coordinator creates the final executive summary and distributes to all key stakeholders.

The stakeholder groups must act on their commitment to the action plan over an agreed amount of time. This can be measurable by weeks, months and forecast into years. The Steering Committee and stakeholders regroup and review their participation and plan outcomes.

Some of the issues identified may require infrastructure, policy or legislative changes. The information collected by the CSA and the solutions they generate will be important in determining any changes in public policy and the future of the specific area.