



Signs of Safety Guide for Partners

The Signs of Safety Approach

Our overall ambition for children in Surrey is that each and every one of them is happy, healthy, safe and confident in their future.

Our absolute priority for all of those children who need our help, care and protection is that they are 'seen, safe and heard'.

The way we work with children and families is strengths based and child and family focused. Signs of Safety is our practice model for social work and therefore the primary approach used in Children's Services and areas of Surrey Family Services. There are also a range of other approaches being used effectively in our work with children and families in social care and right across the directorate - for example, restorative practice, social pedagogy, systemic and person-centred approaches.

Signs of Safety is a way of working that supports children, young people and their families who need help for a while to make changes that mean that they can keep their children safe or meet their needs for love and care in difficult circumstances.

What is Signs of Safety?

Signs of Safety is about children, families and friends support network, working together, along with professionals (health visitors, social workers, teachers, doctors, police etc.), to meet the needs of children in the best way possible. It puts children, young people, their parents and families at the heart of the work.

It is an assessment and planning framework supporting practitioners in determining:

- Whether there is sufficient safety for the child to remain within the family and what support is needed for the family for that to happen;
- Whether the situation is so dangerous that the child must be removed;
- If the child is looked after, whether there is enough safety for the child to return home.

Signs of Safety was developed from a spirit of appreciative inquiry, and the heart of the process revolves around a risk assessment and case planning format that is meaningful for all the professionals, and the parents and children.

Surrey's aim is to create a supportive working environment where staff are confident and committed to the professional judgements they make. The benefits of this are:

- Increased confidence and capability of staff.
- A supportive working environment for staff working through difficult and protracted cases.
- Professional judgements based on a balance of information and evidence.
- Improved engagement with families to meet the best needs, and outcomes, of the child.
- Improved partnership working with partner agencies to meet the best needs, and outcomes, of the child.
- Improved quality of assessment, analysis and intervention delivered to families.
- Improved risk management of vulnerable children as a result of rigorous assessment and safety planning.

Families play a key part in working alongside a social worker and other professionals to understand who is worried about a child or children and what could happen if this doesn't change. It is also important to recognise the things that are going well in the child's life and family life (strengths) that keep children safe and help meet their needs, and agree what needs to be done (goals) to build on these strengths and reduce the worries.

What difference will Signs of Safety make to the way professionals work with families?

The whole point of Signs of Safety is to make sure that the views of children and the views of families, as parents/carers, are fully heard. We want to understand the strengths of the family and build on these in the plans and actions needed to keep children safe and well. Professionals will be trying to make sure this happens by asking questions of families such as:

“What do you think is going well?” “What are you worried about?” “What needs to change?”

Signs of Safety is a way of making sure that everyone involved in a child's life has the same understanding of the strengths and the worries, and agrees the goals that need to be reached, to make sure that the child is safe and well at all times.

Professionals will be asking families how satisfied or worried they are about a child's safety, health, where they are living or anything else which is important to the child and the kind of support being offered.

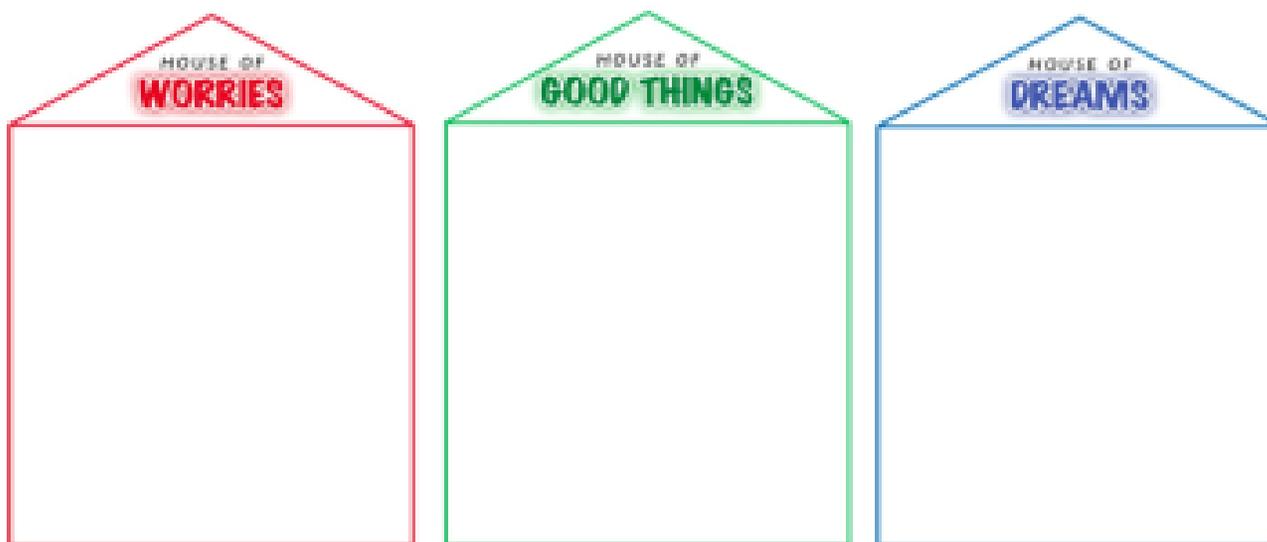
Signs of Safety helps everyone involved with a child or young person – including the child/ young person themselves – to think about ways to keep safe, healthy and settled wherever they are living.

Talking To Children & Young People

Talking to children and understanding what is like to live their life day to day is at the heart of Signs of Safety. It is important that children, as well as adults, have an opportunity to talk about what they are worried about, what makes them happy, and what they would like to see

happen in their family and community to keep them safe and well. The Signs of Safety approach uses a tool called The Three Houses to talk to children and ask them their views.

The Three Houses method uses the same three key assessment questions of the Signs of Safety framework: What are you worried about? What's going well? What needs to happen? Drawing this into the three houses makes them more easily understood by children.



Working with children and families

The Signs of Safety assessment will also include professionals working with a child, such as teachers, nurses, doctors and police. During an assessment key questions will be asked of the child, their family and wider family and anyone else who helps to care for the child:

- What are we worried about for your child?
- What is working well in your family that helps keep your child safe and needs met?
- What needs to happen to make sure your child is safe and well in the future?
- How safe or well is your child on a scale from 0 to 10? (0 meaning the child is in danger, 10 meaning the child is safe)

The following assessment and planning framework will be used to address the worries and improve outcomes for children.

What are we worried about	What's working well	What needs to happen
<p>Harm (Evidence/info about what has happened)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past harm • Impact on the child • Describe the Behaviour that poses a risk to the child. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequency ○ Severity ○ First worst and last plus frequency describing behaviours not jargon. • Triggers and Stressors <p>Complicating Factors (Evidence) Who or what is making this worry harder to deal with? E.g. Learning difficulties, mums depression, DA, substance misuse, poverty, family or neighbourhood relationships</p> <p>Danger Statements (Analysis of current and future risk) Who is worried? About what? What do we think will happen if nothing changes?</p>	<p>Existing Safety (Evidence/ info about what has happened) The danger has to have been present (the test) Something/ someone kept the child safe Q Tell me about a time when the danger was there and somebody/ you did something that kept child safe/ cared for (e.g. you felt angry but didn't shout/ hit, instead you calmed things down)</p> <p>Existing Strengths (Evidence/ info about what has happened) Things that happen that address the worries. These do not provide direct safety but can provide support, strengthen family relationships etc.</p> <p>This column is the one you use to develop the safety plan Safety plans are behavioural not services</p>	<p>Next Steps What are the next steps that need to be taken in order to move the case forward? Who will do what With timescales and measures</p> <p>Safety Goals – What will the day to day life of this child look like for us not to be worried. Should describe mostly behavioural changes What do we need to see to have confidence that the parents, family network are able to ensure the child is safe from harm can meet the child's needs now and in the future.</p>
<p>Scaling Question (provides analysis of level of risk- safety)</p> <p>On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means the child/ teen is safe enough and we are confident that the family network can consistently protect them and meet their needs and zero means that the child is not safe and the family network are unable to consistently protect the child from harm and meet their needs where would you score things at this time?</p> <p>Let each person in the support network score including what does the child say? 0----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10</p>		

As Signs of Safety becomes embedded, you will find meetings, supervision, panels and assessments will be framed using this approach, and a routine use of the Signs of Safety communication tools for capturing children's views. This model will also be seen within practice related to Early Help, children who are Looked After and other services across the partnership

Related Links

Signs of Safety <http://www.signsofsafety.net/uk-implementation-of-the-signs-of-safety/>

Sign up for the Signs of safety newsletter: <https://www.signsofsafety.net/>

NSPCC Review of Signs of Safety: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/signs-safety-england.pdf>

SSCB Support Team
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