



Signs of Safety - What is it and how is it relevant to my preparation for a conference?

Please read this alongside the report for conference, and accompanying guidance.

What is 'Signs of Safety'?

Signs of safety makes sure the view of the child, their parents and their **safety network** (important people in the child's life), are part of the solution. The approach is about the child, their family, their network, and professionals working together to meet the needs of the child in the best possible way. Language used should be clear, so the child and family understand what it is we are worried about, and what things need to look like, in order for us to stop worrying. It follows a 12-step road map, taking the child and their family from danger to safety.

The Signs of Safety assessment process is called **mapping**, and it concentrates on three questions; what is working well, what we are worried about, what needs to happen, so that the child can be safe and happy in the future and considers how safe the child is on a **scale** of 0-10. If the assessment finds serious worries about the child, these are written down and called a **danger statement**, and then everyone agrees what behaviours need to be seen to know that the child is always safe and well; this is called a **safety goal**. The child, their network and professionals will work together to achieve this safety goal, by implementing a **safety plan** (all the things that will happen to show everyone how the child will always be safe, even if danger is present), and a **trajectory** (step by step how we will move from danger to safety).

The voice of the child is crucial in this approach, from undertaking direct work with them to understand their experiences, to providing them with a **words and pictures explanation** to help parents communicate with their child about what has happened and what will keep them safe.

What is working well?

When we ask you to tell us what is working well, we want you to separate this into existing strengths, and existing safety. **Existing strengths** are things that are positive for the child, but do not necessarily keep them safe, for example going to school every day; this provides the child with opportunities to learn and grow, and socialise with friends; however, if things go wrong at home, attending school every day does not keep them safe. **Existing safety**; however, are things that have happened, or happen in the family, which has kept/is keeping the child safe from harm, for example mum contacting grandma when dad has been drinking and is becoming aggressive, and grandma coming to take the child away from the situation before things get volatile.

What are you worried about?

When we ask you what you are worried about, we want to know about the past harm that the child has experienced, and the current danger they face. We want to know who is

worried (which we will establish at conference), why they are worried (the impact of the worrying behaviour upon the child) and what will happen if nothing changes. It might be that the child has previously seen fighting between mum and dad; that they saw mum covered in blood when dad hit her, and this made them sad, scared and withdrawn. This is **past harm**. They might now be facing a situation whereby dad is drinking again and being aggressive to mum. This is a **current danger**. You might be worried that if dad starts hurting mum again, the child will again feel sad, scared and withdrawn (this is the **why, or the impact**) and the child might be physically harmed if they got caught in the middle of a fight between mum and dad, or might grow up to think that violence in relationships is normal (this is the **what will happen if nothing changes**).

Complicating factors

Sometimes, there are things that **get in the way** of the family being able to make changes; for a child experiencing neglect for example, there might be damp in the family home, and problems with the electricity, so the family are unable to fully address the home conditions, until these things are sorted. These would be the **complicating factors**.

Network

When we refer to a network, we are talking about people in the wider family and the social circle, from grandparents, to neighbours, to old family friends. We need to know as much information as possible about the network, including whether or not they could help out, and step in to make sure the child is safe when things go wrong at home. These people would form the **safety network**; they come together, with parents/carers, to come up with a **safety plan**.

What needs to happen?

We want to know, in your opinion, what **help and support** you think the child and their family needs, in order to make sure they are able to keep the child safe, and what you think you could provide as part of the plan for that child and their family. We want you to think about what intervention a family has been afforded previously; whether this should be repeated or whether we need to think about doing things differently. We want you to think wider than your service area, and consider holistically, what needs to happen to help the child and their family reach the safety goal.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Bottom line	A minimum set of conditions set by the social worker and their manager about how the safety goal should be achieved.
Danger statement	A clear, jargon free statement setting out what we are worried about and what will be the likely impact on the child if nothing changes,

	where there are worries about the child's safety.
Family Network Meeting	A meeting attended by the family's naturally connected network whereby the social worker facilitates the family and their network to develop a safety plan for the child
Harm statement	A statement of specific incidents of past or current harm to a child
Internal case mapping	A process involving the case holding social worker, whereby information is considered and analysed across the 7 analysis domains (harm, danger, complicating factors, strengths, safety, safety goals and next steps)
Mapping with a family	The assessment process whereby the social worker engages the family by asking questions to gather information and consider and analyse this with the family, across the 7 analysis domains
Safety goal	A clear, specific, jargon free description of what we need to see to know the child is safe enough to close the case. What will the members of the family be doing that will tell us that the child is safe.
Safety planning	The process of engaging the family and their wider network through a series of questions to support them to develop a safety plan for the child. The safety plan must address each danger statement.
Safety plan	The plan that the family develops setting out what everyone in the family will do on a day-to-day basis to keep the child safe, even when things become difficult.
Scaling question	A question that asks someone to rate something on a scale of 0 to 10, where the 0 and 10 are clearly defined
Three houses work	A tool for working with children to help them identify their worries, the things they feel are going well and the things they would like to be different.
Trajectory	A clear, agreed timeline of what will happen between 'now' and case closure.
Words and pictures	A specific way piece of work that helps children understand what the adults involved are worried about and what everyone is doing to sort out those worries, in the form of a story board for the child. Words and pictures are developed with the parents and the parent shares this with the child.
Worry statement	A clear, jargon free statement setting what we are worried about and what will be the likely

	impact on the child if nothing changes, where there are worries about a child's wellbeing.
Wellbeing goal	A clear, specific, jargon free description of what we need to see to know the child is healthy and well so that the case can close. Includes what the members of the family be doing that will tell us that the child is healthy and well.