

Briefing note to update partner agencies on the implementation of Signs of Safety model of practice to Child Protection Conferences

This briefing is designed to update practitioners working with children and their families on what’s happened so far with regards to the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach in Surrey and the next steps for Child Protection Conferences.

What is Signs of Safety?

The Signs of Safety approach is a way of working which aims for families to have the best opportunity to create safety and wellbeing for their children with community and professional support; be rigorous in assessing risk and planning for safety of children; and to be transparent in practice.

Practitioners supporting families work together to look at the strengths (what’s going well in the child’s life), the worries and concerns identified (who is worried and why) and focus on what needs to be done (outcomes) to build on the strengths, reduce the concerns and keep the child safe. This is known as a strengths and safety based approach.

Signs of Safety expands on the investigation of risk to encompass strengths and signs of safety that can be built upon to stabilise and strengthen a child’s and family’s situation.

The Signs of Safety approach seeks to create a more constructive culture around child protection organisation and practice. Central to this is the use of specific practice tools and processes where professionals and families can engage with each other in partnership to address situations where children have suffered, or are at risk of harm.

Why are we using the Signs of Safety approach in Surrey?

The implementation of Signs of Safety is fully supported by the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board.

Through adopting Signs of Safety, we aim to achieve:

* A consistent strength based way of working in which children are safe, seen and heard
* The very best outcomes for children, young people and families
* Child-focused services that put the needs of children and young people first
* Inclusive practice – families are supported to develop their own solutions in partnership with professionals leading to empowered families and safe, sustainable outcomes for children
* Empowered professionals – professionals across the partnership feel confident in having difficult conversations with families, are supported in their decision making, and see the impact of their work on families, leading to robust partnership working**.**

What has happened so far in Surrey?

Over 800 staff in Children, Schools and Families directorate have now received training in the Signs of Safety model this includes staff from Social Care, Early Help, Schools and Learning. Designated leads from Police and Health have also attended training to support joint working for our most vulnerable children.

Ensuring that partners are also briefed on the Signs of Safety framework and implications for practice is a high priority. Multi-agency Signs of Safety training is therefore being offered to all partner agencies via the SSCB website. [www.surreyscb.org.uk](http://www.surreyscb.org.uk)

Work is ongoing to align processes, procedures and our documents with the Signs of Safety practice framework so that the system supports the changes in our day to day practice.

We are currently looking at reports to Child Protection Conference, the Conference Minutes and Safety Plan. We will produce new leaflets for parents/carers, children, young people and practitioners explaining Signs of Safety and how it will be used in the Child Protection Conference. These will be available along with guidance on the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board website.

Signs of Safety approach including details of the Assessment and Planning Framework

For more details please go to [www.surreyscb.org.uk/documents/2018/02/signs-of-safety-approach.pdf/](http://www.surreyscb.org.uk/documents/2018/02/signs-of-safety-approach.pdf/)

Child Protection Conferences

We are moving towards a conference model that is much more inclusive of children and families and we have implemented a number of changes to support this.

We recognise that family networks are the greatest asset to creating safety and change within families and this approach supports and enables the network to identify and create safety for children

Our vision in Surrey is to facilitate meetings that have the full participation of children, families and practitioners in order that the network around the child is able to identify and implement successful safety plans for children.

**What changes can you expect?**

* A less formal environment with improved communication that promotes open discussions within the network leading to more child focused safety planning.
* Changes to the room layout. (For example; no tables to remove physical barriers)
* The rooms are now more ‘child friendly’ with increased focus on including the children in the process appropriately
* Recording of key points will be visible on flip chart paper around the room ensuring that what is written is transparent for the family members.
* A revised report to conference and safety plans will be used.
* Reports to conference should be shared with the network before initial conference to avoid the necessity to spend the first part reading reports. For review conferences they will be shared at the Core Group meeting 2 weeks before the review.
* Danger Statements and Safety Goals will be used in the conference with a focus of working together to agree what safety for the child will look like.
* Social workers will have met with the family before the conference to share the Danger Statement and Safety Goals as part of their report.
* Child Protection Chairs will meet with the child/ren/family for discussions prior to the meeting in the conference room. Practitioners will then be invited to join the meeting.
* There will no longer be a confidential section at the beginning of the meeting. Practitioners are now asked to share any confidential or sensitive information (information that might put any member of the meeting at risk) in advance of the meeting with the Chair.

You may have noticed some of these changes already as we work to develop our practice and implement the new way of working during 2018. Your feedback on your experience of how Signs of Safety is used in Conferences is welcomed to help inform practice development. You will be alerted to the new report and any other matters by the Child Protection Duty Administrator at point of invitation to Conference.

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