



Signs of Safety

Information for families

About this booklet

The information in this booklet is to let you know how Achieving for Children (AfC) will work with children and families. We know your child's wellbeing is important to you, so we want to work with you to keep your child safe.

Whilst working with AfC, you may hear about Signs of Safety. The aim of this information is to give you a better understanding of what Signs of Safety means for you and your child or children.

What is Signs of Safety?

Signs of Safety is a consistent way of working with our children and families. We want to keep children at the centre of our work and to look at the strengths in your family to help find solutions to any concerns.

The approach is about your family and professionals (health nurses, social workers, teachers, doctors, police and AfC) as well as your wider network of friends and family, working to have the best understanding of how to support you and your family and make sure that children are safe and happy.

We will invite you, your network and the professionals involved to think about worries and concerns that are identified for your child (who is worried and why), identifying the things that are going well in the child's life (strengths), and agreeing what needs to be done (goals), to build on the strengths and reduce the worries.

The social worker will ask questions such as:

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

It helps everyone involved, including your child, to think of and agree to ways to keep them safe, healthy and settled at all times.

This will mean asking you a lot of questions so that we can understand how satisfied or worried you are about your child's safety, health and wellbeing.

Talking to children

Talking to children is at the heart of our practice within AfC and is a strength of the Signs of Safety approach. It is important that whilst we work with your family we understand the wishes and views of the children that we are working with.

It is important that children, as well as adults, have an opportunity to talk about the things 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.

We want to spend time getting to know the children that we are working with and to do this we use different tools to build relationships and trust. An example of a tool that we may use is the Three Houses.



The assessment process

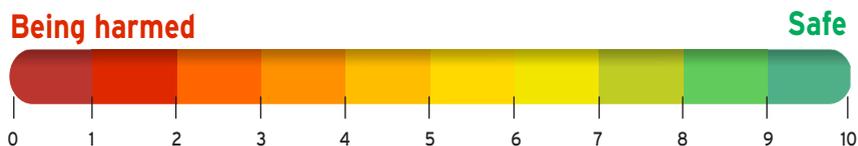
The Signs of Safety assessment process is called 'mapping'.

During an assessment, we will work together with you to create a safety plan. This includes looking at what the worries are, what is working well and what needs to happen next.

What are we worried about?	What's working well?	What needs to happen?
What has happened to make us worried and what is the impact on the child, including things that may be happening in the family's life that make the problem(s) harder to deal with.	Things that are already happening to keep the child safe and protected from harm and how well the family meets their needs. Working with the family to identify strengths which can be built on.	What the family and professionals need to see to be satisfied the child is safe and well. These are turned into goals and a family plan.

How safe is your child on a scale from 0 to 10?

We will also work with you to scale a worry from 0 to 10. This scale helps us to know if everyone feels the same way about a worry and also see if the score on the scale changes as we work together.



The outcome of the mapping

Whilst exploring what we are worried about, we will work with you to develop a 'danger statement'. This is a clear statement using simple language setting out what we are worried about and what will be the likely impact on the child if nothing changes.

The steps taken to deal with the worries are written down and called 'safety goals'. These are the goals that need to be reached to make sure that your child is safe and well at all times.

All safety goals need to identify a safety network. This safety network of family and friends work with you to provide ongoing support after the case is closed.

Words and pictures are used to communicate with your child in a way to help them to understand why AfC is involved and what has happened and what will keep them safe.

We want to encourage friends, family and people within your network to help support you and your family. As part of our work we would like to bring your network together to look at how they could provide practical or emotional help for you and your family.

All of this information will go into a safety plan which includes all the things that will happen every day and will show everyone (professionals, your safety network and your child) how to be safe in the future even if the worries are present.

The safety plan is written together with you, your social worker and your safety network. The plan will have what is called a 'trajectory'. A trajectory includes the danger statement, the safety goal and a number of steps with a timeline.

The safety plan will include the danger statement (what the worries are), the safety goal (goals being worked towards by the family) and a timeframe so that you and your family know the steps to take towards achieving the safety goals.

You will be given a copy of your child's plan.

Everyone will meet regularly to see how the plan is going and work together to increase the wellbeing and safety for your child, until everyone is happy the safety goals have been reached and the case can be closed.

Your rights

As a parent you have the right to:

- be heard
- be kept informed and involved
- participate in the thinking and planning to address the concerns
- seek legal advice
- ask for and be given explanations
- be supported
- access your child's records
- have access to an interpreter if you require one

If you have further questions about Signs of Safety that this information doesn't answer, then please discuss these with your child's social worker.



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