



Signs of Safety leaflet for professionals

What is Signs of Safety?



Signs of Safety is a way of working with Children, Young People and Families. It is a practice model which was developed in Australia in the 1990s and has since been used in 13 different countries around the world. It is used by about a third of local Councils in England due to this being such an inclusive model which puts the family in the driving seat and sees the family as experts of their life.

Our implementation of Signs of Safety

As part of Hull's improvement journey, we have committed to implementing the model across the partnership, including the whole of Children's Social Care, Early Help, Education, Health and the Police in order to work transparently together with external partners, from a common understanding and shared vision for children.

It is expected that the model will be fully embedded within the partnership within two to five years. Our journey began in June 2021 and since then a large proportion of those within the partnership have received basic training with 101 practice leaders completing six days of specialist training.

We are committed to training our own internal trainers to deliver the two-day signs of safety programme and ensuring that our partners are also provided with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the approach to assist us in achieving the best outcomes for children, young people and their families.

This implementation will be a learning experience for everyone included within the partnership. It is a big change with lots to learn and it will take time to get to a place where everyone understands the model and is confidently able to put their new knowledge into practice.

The changes you will see

Practitioners will have grown in confidence when working with children, young people, families and their networks and take pride in their work.

The children, young people and families that we work with feel empowered and have the confidence to share their voices and support each other to ensure that children and young people are safe and well cared for, especially in the most difficult times.

We will have systems in place where we can train our staff to the level where they are confident using the model and passing their skills on to others. Alongside this there will be a commitment to peer supervision and appreciative inquiry to ensure that staff continue to develop their skills in this approach.

Our wider leadership will be confident in using the approach and will be able to engage with practitioners on all levels to ensure that the signs of safety model is being used in the best way throughout children, young people and families' services

There will be a commitment across the partnership to use the model throughout the policy and procedures that affect children, young people and families so everyone is on the "same page" when it comes to making sure children and young people are safe through good practice and multi-agency working.

Practitioners at all levels across the partnership will be familiarised with using signs of safety language in their practice and feel confident in understanding the key terms and processes in meetings and when completing referrals, such as danger statements, safety goals and scaling. There will be a commitment to ongoing support for professionals to understand the model and to help them embed it in their practice.

Practitioners will be confident in using and completing the paperwork that has been adapted to the Signs of Safety framework. This includes social care and early help assessments, plans, conference reports and review reports.

Early Help will adopt the Signs of Safety model for their assessments and will continue to use Outcome Stars with partners because they remain a valuable tool to inform the Signs of Safety assessment.

Safety, Success and Wellbeing

Signs of Safety was originally developed for Child Protection where children were in danger of being harmed, but this does not apply to all the children and young people we work with. We will change our language according to the needs of the person but the basics of the approach remain the same.

For Child Protection, we use **Signs of Safety**. We will talk about dangers and safety goals
For Early Help and some children in need. **Signs of Wellbeing** is the language you will hear when we do not have concerns about their safety but need to work to ensure their wellbeing.
We will talk about worries and wellbeing goals.

For children and young people who are looked after long-term and young people who have left care, we use **Signs of Success**. We will often have no concerns about their safety but need to support to make sure they can thrive and be successful as they approach independence. We will talk about worries and success

Key Terms

During meetings you will see professionals gathering information under the following headings.

What are we worried about?

Harm: Past hurt, injury or abuse to the child or young person (likely) caused by adults. Also includes risk-taking behaviour by the child or young person that indicates harm and/or is harmful to them.

Complicating Factors: Actions and behaviours in and around the family, the child or young person and by professionals that make the situation more difficult to deal with.

Danger Statement: The harm or hurt that is believed likely to happen to the child or young person if nothing in the family's situation changes.

What's working well?

Existing Strengths: People, plans and actions that contribute to a child or young person's wellbeing.

Existing Safety: Actions taken by parents, caring adults and children to make sure the child or young person is safe when danger is present.

What needs to happen?

Safety Goals: The behaviours and actions that Hull City Council needs to see to be satisfied the child or young person will be safe enough to close the case.

Next Steps: The immediate next actions that will be taken to build future safety and keep the child or young person safe as possible.

Safety Scales

At the end of a meeting you will often be asked to scale on a scale of 0 to 10 to measure the extent of the worries and concerns for the safety of the child or young person at a point in time. Specific scaling questions will be developed for each child, young person or family in order to make them relevant, meaningful and measurable. We will scale regularly with children, young people, families and professionals in order to review how near or far we are from our goals. This is an important tool to find out how worried each partner is about the situation.

On a scale of 0-10, where 10 means the child or young person is safe enough and zero means things are really bad for the child or young person and they must be removed from the situation immediately, where do you rate this situation today?



Building a Trajectory

A trajectory is a document that sets out how the case will progress until eventually a decision is made to either close the case or meet the child or young person's safety needs outside the family home.

The document gives families a clear timeline for what needs to happen to show Hull City Council the child or young person is safe. It sets out step-by-step how the professionals and the family will work together and on what tasks to develop the safety plan.

This timeline includes:

- **Involving the child or young person**
- **Developing a safety network**
- **Keeping the network informed**
- **Holding regular safety planning and safety monitoring meetings.**

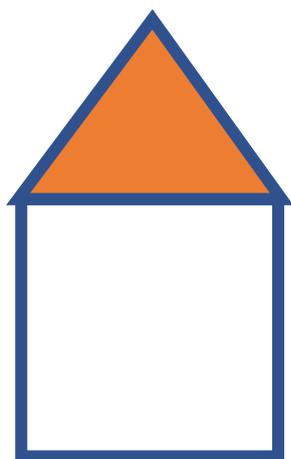
Having the timeline makes it possible to assess the family's ability to provide safety for the children or young people. It also includes a specific case closure date which provides clear goals, motivating the family to reach them.

Direct work and the child or young person's voice

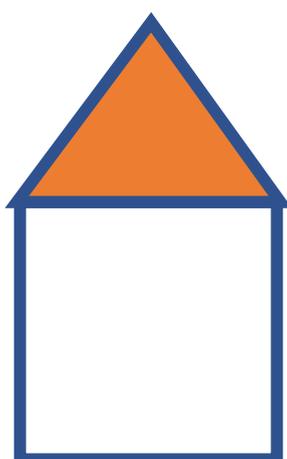
Gaining the views of children and young people is at the heart of Signs of Safety. We use specific tools to engage with children and young people and to ensure that their voices are heard. Their voice will help to inform assessments and plans. Even from a very young age, children have a voice. How a baby reacts to certain situations or people will tell a person a lot about how they feel even before they can speak.

The Three Houses

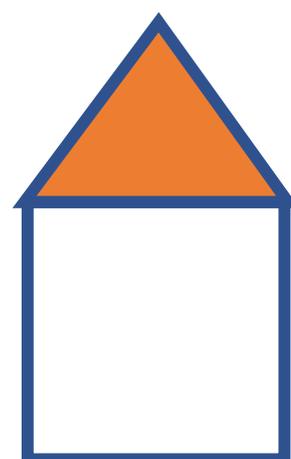
The worker and child will draw the house of worries, the house of good things and the house of dreams. The child will then use words or drawings to fill the houses with things from their life. From this we will find out in the child's own words what they are worried about, what's working well and what needs to happen. For families, hearing their child say in their own words what they're scared of or how they'd like things to be is a very powerful experience.



House of
WORRIES



House of
GOOD THINGS



House of
DREAMS

Words and Pictures

Words and Pictures is an agreed story, prepared in partnership with the family to enable the parents to explain to their child why they are working with Hull Children's Services, what happened and what will change in the future. It is also a way of explaining the situation to other professionals and the adults in the wider safety network.

Developing a Safety Network

A safety network is a group people, who are connected to the child or young person and the family. It consists of family and community members who commit to working with Hull Children's Services and the family to create a plan that shows everyone how the worries about the child or young person will be managed.

The network is a critical element of the safety planning process in Signs of Safety. Every safety goal developed with a family must identifying a safety network.

Developing and Monitoring a Safety Plan

A safety plan is a specific set of rules and arrangements that describes the family's everyday life and shows everyone - the professionals, the family's own supporting safety network and the child or young person - how the child or young person will be kept safe in the future, even if the danger is present. The safety plan is created with the family and the safety network. It is monitored, reflected on by everyone involved and refined over time.

To learn more about the model and how it will affect you:

Sign up to one of our free online partner briefing sessions

✉ SignsOfSafety@hullcc.gov.uk

Access the Signs of Safety knowledge bank

<https://knowledgebank.signsofsafety.net/>

Please note only limited resources are available free of charge to the public or to organisations without a subscription. If you are a Hull City Council employee please mail SignsOfSafety@hullcc.gov.uk to enquire about a subscription.

Speak to the social care service professionals you are working with.

There are signs of safety champions and practice leads who have undertaken further training and support who will be able to give you guidance and support. For example, if you are attending a Child Protection Conference you can contact the conference chair.

Should you have any further queries about Signs of Safety

please contact us at SignsOfSafety@hullcc.gov.uk