

One Minute Guide

September 2017

Signs of Safety

Cheshire East will be adopting Signs of Safety as our way of working with families from November 2017 in Children's Social Care and in Early Help and Prevention at CAF.

Many of you will already be familiar with using Signs of Safety, as our successful Making Children Safer model used in Child Protection Conferences is based on the approach.

What is it?

Signs of Safety is now widely recognised internationally as the leading approach to child protection casework. It is an innovative, solution-focused, strengths-based approach to working with children, young people and families.

It provides a clear framework for **how** to work with families; how to build relationships and work effectively with them to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

It includes:

- **principles for practice** which underpin the work
- **ways of working** – what to do, how and when
- **a range of tools** to support engagement with families, strong assessments and plans, and for capturing the voice of the child or young person
- **ways to support learning, reflection and development**, such as supervision and audit of practice that is aligned with the approach

Research has shown that the best outcomes for children and young people are achieved when there are **constructive working relationships** between professionals and family members, and between professionals themselves. This has been shown to be the case, both nationally and internationally, at all levels of need and intervention.

In order to build effective relationships and work inclusively and respectfully with families, Signs of Safety focuses on **both** the family's strengths **and** the safety of the child or young person. This recognises that, despite the concerns and difficulties, all families have strengths, and by building on these strengths we can increase safety and wellbeing for children and young people.



One Minute Guide

Why are we adopting it?

We are adopting Signs of Safety because we believe this will support us to deliver the very best outcomes for our children, young people and families. Best practice is child-focused, solution-orientated, and respectful and inclusive of families, and this is what we want to achieve through adopting Signs of Safety.

Where Signs of Safety has been adopted by other local authorities it has been welcomed by families. Families have reported that (often for the first time) they are clear about what services expect from them. Families particularly like that their views and strengths are acknowledged as well as their weaknesses understood.

What will it mean for my practice?

Using Signs of Safety will mean that:

- You will be asked about the **impact** on the child or young person
- You will be asked to talk or write about families' **strengths** as well as the concerns – from contact at the front door onwards
- **Planning and meetings will work differently** (e.g. CAF and Core Groups) – these will have a similar format to Child Protection Conferences and will focus on the three columns – concerns, strengths and next steps.
- You will be asked to **scale** how worried you are about the impact of the current situation on the child/ young person on a scale of 0-10. This will happen at the front door and in meetings and is used to help everyone understand and discuss their level of concern and assessment of risk.
- You will be part of developing **danger/ worry statements** and **safety/ wellbeing goals** – which set out very clearly for the family what the concerns are and what we want to achieve
- You will see a **change in language** away from professional language to clear and simple language which is easier for families to understand
- Professionals will have a more **coaching and questioning role** – supporting families to develop their own solutions
- You will have access to tools and ways of working that make it easier to **involve** children and young people and their families.

Want to know more?

For more information on why we are adopting Signs of Safety, what we want to achieve, and our plan for how we will do this please see our [Signs of Safety Strategy](#) on the Signs of Safety page on the [LSCB Website](#).

Also see the official Signs of Safety website for the latest developments on the approach and resources at www.SignsofSafety.net

Contact us at:

SignsOfSafety@cheshireeast.gov.uk