

Signs of Something...

Cumbria County Council Children and young people services are embedding the Signs of Safety practice model; however, the title of the model can vary depending upon individual cases, threshold or service areas.

Munro, Turnell and Murphy (2006) *note that one of the most important developments in the Signs of Safety innovations project has been to expand the approach to fit across the whole service.*

Below you will find a guide to help you consider which assessment framework and terminology you will be using in your case work.

Signs of	Case status/threshold
Signs of Safety ○ Danger statements ○ Safety Goals ○ Safety Scale ○ Safety Journal ○ Safety plan ○ Safety plan rules	To be used where there are worries around harm/danger or safety. Signs of Safety is not just for child protection work, there may be times at other levels of intervention where harm may be present, and we need to assess the safety of a child/young person. Commonly used in: Child in Need Child Protection
Signs of Wellbeing ○ Worry Statement ○ Wellbeing Goal ○ Wellbeing Scale ○ Wellbeing Journal ○ Wellbeing plan ○ Wellbeing plan rules	To be used where there are worries about wellbeing, but there is no harm or safety worries evident. Commonly used in: Early Help Children with Disabilities
Signs of Success ○ Worry Statement ○ Success Goal ○ Success Scale ○ Success Journal ○ Success plan ○ Success plan rules	To be used when we are working towards a particular success goal, such as a young person working towards independence. We can also consider what we are hoping for our Looked After Children and whether they have a sense of belonging. Commonly used in: Children Looked After Early Help Leaving care Adoption Fostering If there are safety concerns for a looked after child, there will need to be Signs of Safety within the success care plan.

Table 1.

The table below explains the terminology used within the mapping tool for each Signs of Safety assessment framework.

Table 2.

Assessment Framework	What are we worried about?			What's working well?		What needs to happen?	
	Past Harm	Future Danger	Complicating Factors	Existing strengths	Existing Safety	Safety Goal	Next steps
Signs of Safety							
Signs of Wellbeing	Past Wellbeing Worries	Future Wellbeing Worries	Complicating Factors	Existing strengths	Existing Wellbeing	Wellbeing Goal	Next steps
Signs of Success	Past Success Worries	Future Success Worries	Complicating Factors	Existing strengths	Existing Success	Success Goal	Next steps

Glossary

One of the key principles of Signs of Safety practice is to use easy to understand language that everyone understands, therefore moving away from professional jargon and abbreviations. To help professionals understand some of the Signs of Safety language, we have included a glossary of commonly used phrases, to ensure that professionals are using a common language.

Appreciative Inquiry A solution-focused conversation on a piece of work or situation that someone feels they have done well. We then seek to understand why the piece has worked so well, more specifically, what the individual worker did to achieve the positive outcome. We then use the learning from this to help us grow in our future practice and as an organisation in the future.	Bottom line A set of minimum conditions that the agency puts in place to ensure that goal is achieved. If the bottom lines cannot be acted upon if broken, then they are not bottom lines.	Complicating factors What is making it more challenging to address the Safety, Success or Wellbeing worries, but doesn't equate to harm. Although complicating factors aren't necessarily linked to harm, they are potentially significant barriers for the network to overcome to achieve Safety, Wellbeing, or Success.
Danger statement Created where there is harm/danger present. The Danger Statement is written in child friendly language and explains who is worried, what actions or inaction they are worried about and what they are worried the impact will be on the child if the harmful behaviour was to continue.	Direct work Specific conversations and tools used with children and families which will be tailored to each individual family set of circumstances. The questions in direct work are planned and focused on the experience of the child as it relates to the specific behaviours detailed in the Danger or Worry Statement, and what they would like to happen in the future to achieve safety, wellbeing, or success.	Existing strengths The good things, people or plans that are around the family. Consider what is going to reduce our worries if we see this working. Strengths can become safety if measured and tested over time and mitigate the worries, so the existing strengths are a key focus of questioning and analysis in Signs of Safety.

Existing Safety What the family and network of people around the child are doing to keep them safe when the worrying behaviour is present. These are strengths which have been tested over time, to demonstrate they provide safety. Existing safety does not always completely remove risk, however, shows what safe behaviours are present that will ensure the worrying behaviours do not impact on the child.	Genogram Symbols which are used to show the people who are in the family, including separations and losses. Along with people who have been identified in the network. In Cumbria our genograms show the family relationships, as well as detailing the naturally connected network.	Group Supervision Group Supervision sessions focus on one specific Signs of Safety tool. A worker will bring a case and be clear what they wish to gain from the session. Everyone then thinks of their best questions/ideas to support the worker to think their way through the practice and the worker then can take this away to use with the family. The focus of group supervision is not case management, or solving the case for the worker, but is a way to support the worker to understand the best approach to their own practice rooted in carefully crafted solution focused questions.
Harm Specific behaviours that are evidenced as having an impact upon a child and equate to harm. Harm cannot be assumed so we carefully craft questions to ask the child, family, network and professionals to analyse the impact on the child	Mapping Practitioners ask questions to help get detailed and explicit information which they record and analyse using the 3 columns and the 7 analysis categories which are detailed within table 2.	Miracle Question A type of solution-focused question which is asked to help the child or adult we are working with to think about what their ideal future would look like.
Network The individuals who are naturally connected to the family, who are willing and able to support the children and family to create and follow a plan of safety/wellbeing or success for the child. The group of people may be referred to as a safety or support network.	Network meeting A meeting with the network initially facilitated by a practitioner. The purpose is for the family and network to develop their own plan to address the key critical issues of the case.	Plan rules The rules that the family and network have come up with to address the key critical issues of the case and show professionals that the children will be safe and cared for even at the difficult times.

Relationship questions A solution-focused way to ask questions to get the person to see things from another person's perspective. Relationships are a key question in Signs of Safety and are used to build and maintain effective safety/wellbeing networks around children and their families.	Safety object The object a child chooses which if placed somewhere and helps them to raise the alarm that something is worrying them, or they are in danger. Each person in the network will know what the safety object is, where the child will place the object when everything is okay, where they will place it if they are worried or need to talk, and how the network will respond at these times.	Safety Goal A goal created in child friendly language which will detail the behaviours and actions that professionals need to see to be confident that the child is safe, and Children Services can close or move the case on. The safety goal is not a list of services that a family must comply with but is a description of what it will look like and what will be happening which shows the professional network that the worrying behaviour is being managed in a good and safe way.
Safety planning The worker will use questions to help the family and their network come up with a safety plan that addresses the key critical issues of the case. Safety planning is a collaborative process where we work alongside children and families and measure and test their rules overtime in order to produce a final safety plan.	Safety plan The rules that the family and network have come up with which describe what they will do to keep the child safe.	Scaling Question A Scaling Question is created to match the statement and goal. For each statement and goal, there is a matching scaling question so they form a trio. The scale from 0- 10 will detail what 0 and what 10 would look like. Everyone will be asked what they scale and why they chose this number, the scaling question is used to measure and review progress towards the goal. A generic Scaling Question can also be used during conversations with families, a scaling question is a solution-focused method of questioning, it helps people to share their own judgement on their specific circumstances.
Success goal A goal created in child friendly language which will detail what success will look like for the child or young person. The goal will	Success plan The rules that the family and their network have come up with to help achieve success for a child/young person.	Safety, Wellbeing or Success Journal The journal is used by the family, network, and professionals to write in when the plan rules have been working. The entries include what they have

detail the specific behaviours we will see when we know the goal is achieved.		observed. This helps to measure the effectiveness of the plan and whether the rules are effective in achieving safety wellbeing or success or whether they need to be reviewed and updated with the family and network.
Three houses The three houses tool is used with the child and reflects the mapping tool used with parents. The practitioners ask the child questions to help them to identify what they are worried about, what is working well and what they want to happen next. This will form part of the assessment and contribute to the creation of the statements and goals. This work is presented to the family and network so they can develop rules that respond to the child's wishes feelings and what they want to happen in the future to help them to feel safe.	Timeline A step-by-step timeline that details specific tasks that need to take place as we work towards our Safety, Wellbeing or Success Goal. The tasks have clear timescales, and we measure these to assess progress.	Words and Pictures The words and pictures story aims to answer a child's questions about their life. It covers the good times, but also what has happened for people to be worried and why a Social Worker is involved. The network should have a copy of the words and pictures, so they are aware of the worries and who is doing what now to keep the children safe and well. The words and pictures are created by the worker in draft form, presented to the parents, then working alongside them to complete a final version. Words and pictures are 50% of safety planning as it clearly articulates the worries in child friendly language so the child can understand what is happening in their lives, and what will happen in the future.
Worry statement A statement created in child friendly language that details the worries about a child's wellbeing/success. The statement will detail who is worried, what they are worried about and what they are worried will happen to the child if the wellbeing/success worries were to continue.	Wellbeing goal A statement created in child friendly language that describes the behaviours and actions that professionals need to see to be confident that the wellbeing worries are being managed by the family and network in a good way.	Wellbeing plan The rules that the family and their network have come up with that will show what they will do to achieve wellbeing for a child/young person