

Signs of Safety

Your Questions Answered



When will you start using Signs of Safety in Redcar & Cleveland?

By the end of March 2019 all of our social workers, early help practitioners and Independent Reviewing Officers will have completed a two day Signs of Safety course and will start using the approach. This will be a gradual process as they adopt the different elements of the model and take on board further learning which will be disseminated to them by their practice leader.

Most local authorities take between 2 and 5 years to fully embed the Signs of Safety way of working, so at this stage we are very much at the beginning of our learning journey. We know that we will only learn by putting the model into practice, it will take a while to get this right, so please bear with us and we will all learn together.

I work with a number of professionals in Children's Services why isn't everyone using Signs of Safety?

Some of our practitioners completed their training as early as December and others as late as March, as a result people are at different stages in their development. We also have work to do to understand how best to apply the Signs of Safety model to certain areas of practice, such as our Family Hubs (Children's Centres), Special Educational Needs Team, Fostering Service, Children in Our Care Team and to support Children with Disabilities (to name a few). In these areas it will take us longer to fully implement Signs of Safety, but people will be giving it a go.

How will I know what to do at multi-agency meetings?

When you attend a multi-agency meeting such as a Strategy Meeting, Team Around the Family Meeting, Children Protection Conference or Core Group the format of these meetings will change. Don't worry if you don't know what to do, we appreciate that some people attending will be familiar with Signs of Safety and others won't, and that it will take time to get used to this. The person leading the meeting will explain what will happen and what you need to do. We will only learn by doing, so initially multi-agency meetings will be a learning experience and we would really appreciate your patience and support.

What changes can I expect to see?

During meetings and in your conversations with our practitioners you will notice the style of questioning change to unpick the specifics of what you have seen and heard to make you worry, in order to collect better quality evidence. They will also ask more questions about what you think is working well to understand the strengths of the family and any ways in which they have protected their children from harm, this will then be used to inform 'what needs to happen'.

We will also be discussing 'Danger Statements' and 'Safety Goals' in child protection meetings, this language will be adapted in other areas of practice to:

- 'Critical Worry Statements' and 'Wellbeing Goals' in early help and;
- 'Critical Worry Statements' and 'Success Goals' in respect of the children in our care

For an explanation of these terms please see our 'Guide for Partners.'(continued over page)...

At multi-agency meetings you will be asked at least one scaling question. The question will be specific to the family and will ask you to rate the situation on a scale of 0 to 10, then explain the reason for your score. It doesn't matter if everyone in the meeting gives a different answer, this isn't about everyone agreeing, it's a tool to help everyone understand each other's point of view and generate conversations about what each person needs to see in order to increase their score.

How will language change?

A key principle of Signs of Safety is to move away from professional terminology. This doesn't just mean acronyms, or the jargon which is specific to different professional environments such as social work, health or education, it's about avoiding broad terms such as 'neglect', 'domestic abuse' and 'emotional harm' which often mean different things to different people. Instead we want to describe the exact behaviours that are causing harm to the child, how frequently they have occurred and what was the worst incident, so the family and all the professionals involved are absolutely clear about what we are worried about.

We understand that putting this into practice will be challenging for all our staff and all the professionals we work with. You will notice our practitioners asking more questions to understand exactly what you mean if you use professional language. If at any point, we use language that you think is unclear, or you don't understand, please ask us to explain exactly we mean.

What do I need to do to complete the Safer Referral form in line with the Signs of Safety model?

As normal, the Safer Referral Form should be used to make any referrals to request support for a child who has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm. You will notice that the Referral Form is already aligned to the three Signs of Safety columns:

- What's working well?
- What are you worried about?
- What needs to happen?

The assessment template at the back of the 'Guide for Partners' provides some prompts about what to include when you make a referral, but don't worry, our First Contact Team, will be in touch to ask you for more information if they think anything is missing.

The Tees Multi-Agency Safer Referral Form can be downloaded by clicking on the green button at the top of the following webpage <http://www.teescpp.org.uk/>

Where can I go for more information about Signs of Safety?

We are in the process of developing our own Redcar & Cleveland web page to share Signs of Safety documentation with our partners. There is also lots of information on the official Signs of Safety Website (www.signsofsafety.net). You can also read the official [Comprehensive Briefing Paper](#) which provides an overview of the model and lots of examples.

For more information about how we are implementing Signs of Safety in Redcar & Cleveland please email Sarah Johnson, Service Improvement and Signs of Safety Project Officer (sarah.johnson@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk).