



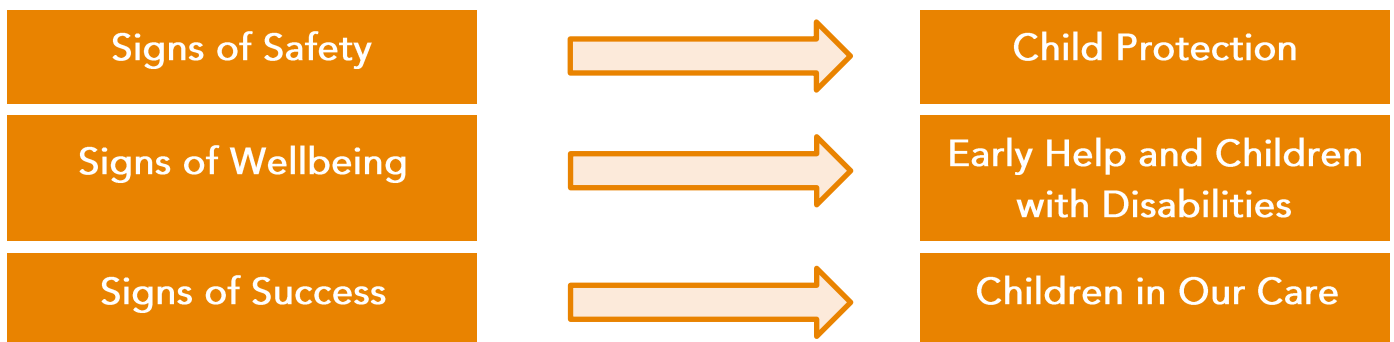
Signs of Safety Guide for Foster Carers



What is Signs of Safety?

Signs of Safety is an accredited model of social work practice, it has been in use internationally for over 25 years and is currently being implemented in Redcar & Cleveland.

Signs of Safety started as an approach to child protection cases but can also be applied to early help and children in our care, where this is the case the language changes. In Redcar & Cleveland we will use the following approaches for each area of practice.



Signs of Safety - If you are supporting a child or young person on a short term basis, and where child protection work is ongoing, their social worker will be using the 'Signs of Safety' approach. This will look at the dangers in the child's life and set out the safety goals that must be met in order for the child to return home.

Signs of Success - If you are supporting a child or young person who is in long term care, because they can't live with their birth family, their social worker will be using the 'Signs of Success' approach. This will look at any worries or risky behaviour in the child's life and what needs to happen to keep them safe, but it will also focus more strongly on their individual goals and aspirations and what needs to happen to help them to achieve their goals.

Your Supervising Social Worker will also use Signs of Success to work with you as a foster carer, aligning the supervision process to this way of working.

What are the Benefits?

The Signs of Safety and Success model is strengths based it will help us to understand what is already working well in a child's life (particularly in relation to any worries or danger) so that we can build on this to create an effective plan which will keep them safe, well and support them to achieve their goals. As a foster carer you will be a part of this plan.

It will make it easier for children and young to be involved in their assessments and plans.

The Signs of Safety/ Success approach includes the use of child engagement tools such as 'Three Houses' this will help children and young people to tell us about the worries and good things in their life and explain what they want to happen. Their views will be central to all the work we do.

Clear language that everyone understands. The Signs of Safety approach recognises that professional language, particularly broad terms such as 'aggression', 'neglect' and 'domestic abuse' can mean different things to different people. This is confusing and can lead to misunderstandings about a child's behaviour or the harm they have suffered. Through the Signs of Safety approach, we will be using clear everyday language in conversations, meetings and when we record information on a file. This means we will always explain the specific behaviours that have been seen or heard so that everybody involved has a clear understanding of what has happened. For example:

- ✘ There is evidence that Johnny is being neglected.

- ✔ The social worker is concerned that Johnny is not being looked after properly by Mum and Dad, that they are not giving him the food and drink that he needs, which is making him poorly.

Collaborative working with families and foster carers – Every child will have a support network made up of the people who are most important in their life.

- **In Signs of Safety**, this will be people who can support the family to keep the child safe or to make the necessary changes for them to return home.

- **In Signs of Success**, the network will involve the important people in the child's life, like their foster carers, who can help and support the child to address any worries, deal with past trauma and help them to achieve goals. The network will work collaboratively with the social worker to develop and deliver the child's plan.

It will also be important for you to think about your own support network, in order to help you in your foster carer role; your Supervising Social Worker will discuss this with you.

The Signs of Safety model provides a consistent way of working, enabling professionals from all disciplines to take a joined-up approach, so that everyone uses the same language, agrees on the worries and works towards shared goals.

The Signs of Safety and Signs of Success Approach

Signs of Safety uses solution focused questions to elicit information from those involved, in order to answer the following questions and evidence this in the assessment.

- **What's working well?** – What safety and strengths exist in the family, or the network around the child, that help keep them safe and well.
- **What are we worried about?** - who is worried and why, what has happened to make them worried and what is likely to happen in the future if things don't change.
- **What needs to happen?**-What the goals are for the family (Signs of Safety) or child (Signs of Success) and what needs to happen next.

There are a number of terms that are fundamental to the Signs of Safety Assessment and Planning Framework which social workers will use in their conversations with you, these terms are explained on below.

Critical Worry Statements summarise the social worker's analysis, based on the information they have collected from the child, the foster carers, family members and all the involved agencies, to explain who is worried, what they are worried about and the impact this could have on the child. Critical Worry statements are developed based on the information that has been collected regarding 'past harm', 'future danger' and 'complicating factors' and are written in clear, everyday language. Where circumstances are complex, a child can have up to three critical worry statements.

For child protection cases, where there is potential for the child or young person to return home, we will call this a 'danger statement.'

Claire, a social worker in the Children in our Care Team, is worried about Daniel because he is going out in the evenings, five nights a week, and is drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. He has also been hiding cider in his bedroom.

Claire, and Daniel's foster carers Jim and Mary, are worried that when Daniel is drunk, he is vulnerable to assault and might get involved with antisocial behaviour, like the time he was brought home by the police and he was so drunk that he couldn't walk. Daniel's drinking is having a negative effect on his school attendance and if this continues, he will not do well in his exams, it will also have a long term impact on his health.

Success Goals - There is a success goal for every critical worry statement. This explains to the child or young person, their support network and all the professionals involved what we are all working towards to help the child or young person be safe, happy and achieve their goals. It explains what the social workers need to see happening to know that the worries have been addressed.

For Child Protection cases where there is potential for the child to return home this is called a 'Safety Goal.'

In order for Claire not to be worried anymore she needs to be reassured that Daniel will be safe when he is out in the evenings and that this doesn't negatively impact on his school attendance. Claire also needs to know that Jim and Mary are supporting Daniel to understand the effects of drinking and how this can lead to risky behaviour and poor choices.

Claire needs to see that there is a plan in place so that Jim and Mary know where Daniel is on an evening and that he will come home at an agreed time. Daniel will need to show, Claire, Jim and Mary that he can stay safe when he is out of the house and that he can stick to the plan over a period of three months.

Success Scale Questions – Are used to capture how people feel at any one time and create further conversation about what needs to happen for things to get better for everyone involved, scaling questions are on a scale from 0 – 10 for example:

On a scale of 0 – 10 with 10 being that Daniel is entirely safe in the evenings when he is outside of his foster home and 0 being that Daniel is not able to remain safe in the evenings outside his foster home – where would you rate this situation at the moment?

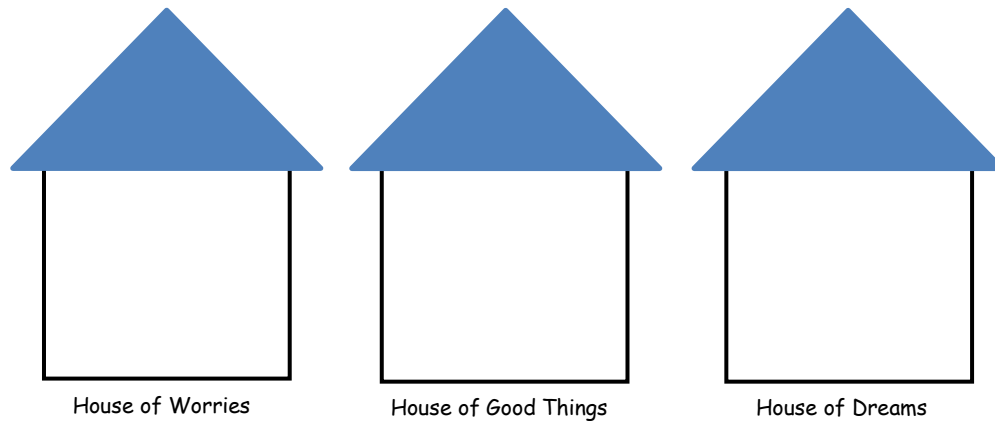
At meetings everyone attending, such as the foster carer, the social worker and any other professionals, will be asked to rate the situation on the Success Scale. They don't need to agree on a score, but everyone will need to give a reason for their score and explain what needs to happen for their score to increase. The child or young person and any attending family members will also be asked the Success Scale Question. **In Child Protection cases this is called the Safety Scale.**

Each child or young person might have up to three 'Critical Worry Statements' on their plan.

Each 'Critical Worry Statement' will have a 'Success Goal' and a 'Success Scale Question.'

Child Engagement Tools

Signs of Safety advocates the use of engagement tools to capture the voice of the child so that this becomes integral to the assessment process. Social workers will use a range of tools to help children and young people explain 'what they are worried about', 'what's working well' and 'what they want to happen'. The 'Three Houses' activity is one example of this, it encourages children to draw and write in each house to explain worries, good things and dreams.



Social workers might also use another tool called 'The Safety House' to help children and young people explain how they feel about going back home and what they need to see happening in order to feel safe.

Where appropriate, as a foster carer, you may be asked to use these tools with a child in your care.

How will Signs of Success work infostering?

Every child in our care, will have a Signs of Success Plan which will set out any worries, what's working well and what needs to happen to achieve their success goals.

Over time, the structure of meetings such as the Child in Our Care Review, placement stability meetings and strategy meetings will change. The worry statement and success goals for the child will become the focus of these meetings.

Scaling questions will also be used so that everyone at the meeting, including the child if they are present, foster carers, family members and professionals, have an opportunity to share their judgement about how well things are going and explain what they think needs to happen for things to improve.

The way in which we carry out your supervision has now changed and our recruitment processes for new foster carers will be aligned to the Signs of Safety.