

Signs of Safety

Briefing note 1 for partner organisations and practitioners

March 2016

Welcome

Welcome to the first Signs of Safety briefing note from the Signs of Safety Communications and Partners sub group. It is designed to update all practitioners working with children and their families on what's happened so far to implement the Signs of Safety approach in South Gloucestershire and the next steps. It also includes feedback from practitioners who are now beginning to use it in their day to day work or have seen it in action.

What is Signs of Safety?

The Signs of Safety approach focuses on 'How can the (social) worker build partnerships with parents and children in situations of suspected or substantiated child abuse and still deal rigorously with the child protection/safeguarding issues?'

Practitioners supporting families work together to look at the strengths (what's going well in the child's life), the worries and concerns identified (who is worried and why) and focus on what needs to be done (outcomes) to build on the strengths, reduce the concerns and keep the child safe. This is known as a strengths and safety based approach.

Signs of Safety expands on the investigation of risk to encompass strengths and signs of safety that can be built upon to stabilise and strengthen a child's and family's situation.

The approach is designed to help practitioners and families throughout the child protection process, whatever the setting (statutory, hospital, residential or treatment).

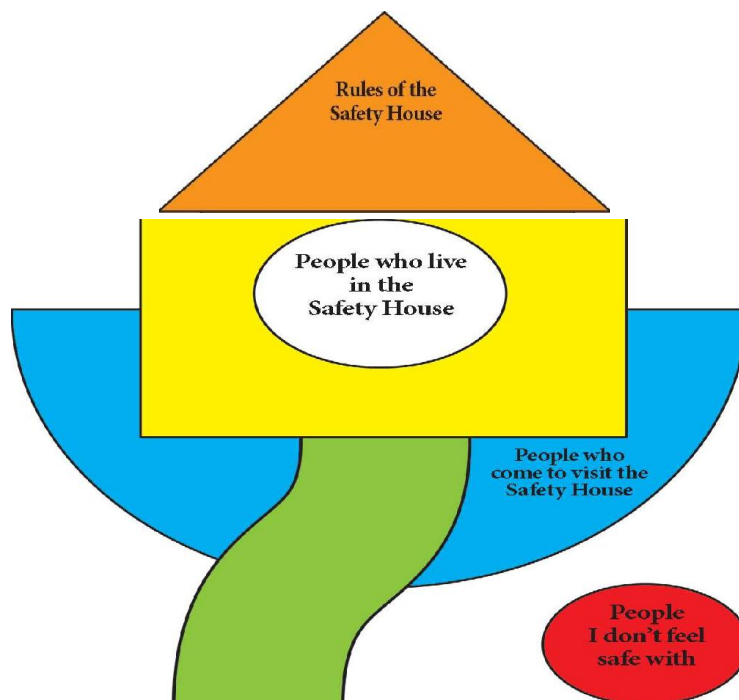
There are helpful tools that can be used such as the Three Houses, the Wizard and Fairy and the Scaling Question.

Why are we using the Signs of Safety approach in South Gloucestershire?

The Signs of Safety approach is being adopted in South Gloucestershire to:

- embed a unified approach to risk management across all of our children's services, providing a common language and practice framework
- contribute towards ensuring an integrated culture within children's services.
- reclaim professional practice and support workers in developing evidence based professional skills

The implementation of Signs of Safety is fully supported by the South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board. In December 2015 members of the board attended a development morning where they received a briefing about the Signs of Safety model. They then undertook an exercise where they identified what their organisations and practitioners will need to assist children's social care in implementing Signs of Safety, in order to work in a joined up and multi-agency way.



What has happened so far in South Gloucestershire?

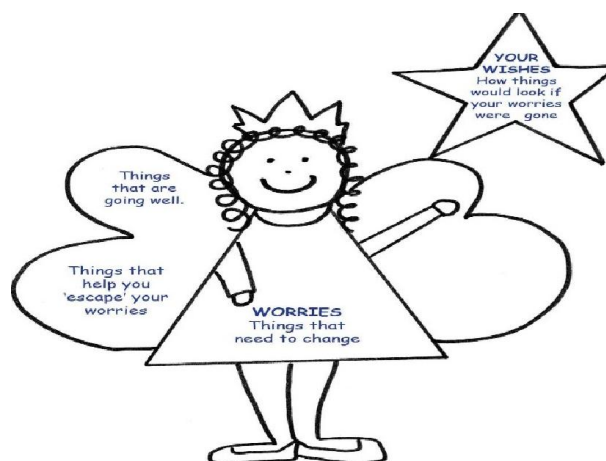
The Signs of Safety (SofS) strategic implementation group has been formed to coordinate the implementation and embedding of the SofS approach. There is a sub group specifically responsible for communications and partner engagement which is chaired by Catherine Boyce, Head of Safeguarding within the council.

There is no launch date for the implementation of SofS. All practitioners, once they have received the appropriate level of training are encouraged to use the model.

A large proportion of children's social care have now received training in the SofS model. You may well have attended a Child in Need meeting or a Child Protection Conference where the SofS approach is being used. Below is some feedback from practitioners who have seen it in practice.

We are currently working on a training matrix for practitioners which will help to inform you and your organisation what type of training is required and by whom.

We are also working on the forms that you regularly complete to ensure that they reflect the SofS approach. To start with we are looking at reports to Child Protection Conference, the conference minutes and plan. We are also devising leaflets for parents/carers, children and young people and practitioners explaining SofS and how it will be used in the Child Protection Conference. We hope to have a specific section of the Safeguarding Board website, which can also be accessed via South West Child Protection Procedures, where briefings, forms, leaflets etc will be stored.



Feedback

Practitioners are being encouraged to engage in conversations, feedback their thoughts and uncertainties in the Signs of Safety approach so that we can build positively on experiences.

Contact

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach please contact your organisations Safeguarding Children Board representative for more information. Alternatively you can contact Catherine Boyce

Catherine.boyce@southglos.gov.uk