

# South Gloucestershire

## Single Assessment Framework early help

A guide for professionals

### SAFeh PRACTICE GUIDANCE

#### The Common Business and Delivery Process (CBDP)

In South Gloucestershire we have an agreed Common Business and Delivery Process (CBDP) to use to assess the needs of children, young people and their families, and intervene early to improve outcomes. We want to ensure children, young people and their families are provided with integrated, accessible and equitable services which are designed to keep them safe, healthy and inspired to do the very best they can. There is free online training about the CBDP that can be accessed by all practitioners working with children and young people [South Gloucestershire CPD Online](#)

After agencies have used their own internal assessments and interventions, the next stage is to use the Single Assessment Framework early help (SAFeh) in order to involve partner organisations or support services in the wider assessment of need, and planned interventions in an integrated action plan and review.

Used in connection with the Safeguarding Threshold Tool [A Child's Journey of Need](#), the needs of a child, young person or family can be clearly identified and the process of providing or accessing support services can begin. This may mean organising a Team Around the Family / Child (TAF/C) meeting with the child, young person, their family and partners agencies to discuss the help they need.

There is an expectation that in most cases a SAFeh approach will be taken before any request for help is made to another agency, particularly a specialist or targeted agency such as children's social care, Family Young People Support (FYPS), or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Although, no child should be put at risk of further harm by delaying a request for help whilst undertaking SAFeh. Instead a SAFeh should be a normal part of every agency/ service offer at the appropriate point in supporting families, before a request for help is required. If family consent cannot be obtained for SAFeh, but they would welcome the support of other services for a particular difficulty, a request for help at the appropriate time can be considered by the Access and Response Team (ART).

## What is the Single Assessment Framework early help (SAFeh)?

The Single Assessment Framework early help is a process for practitioners to use to assist in the holistic identification of the needs of a child, young person and/or family, planning multi-agency interventions to meet them, and monitoring progress. It includes an assessment format and guidance for undertaking a full assessment of need, as well as an action plan and review format. It will look at three main areas;

- What is working well?
- What are we worried about?
- What needs to happen?

It can help to identify causes of behaviour, to support referral to specialist services, and to ensure that support and actions are being used effectively to change these behaviours and their causes. It can explicitly identify where support and resources are working and can avoid inputting services that either are not wanted by families, or are not effective in achieving change. An information leaflet for [professionals](#) and [parents and carers](#) can be found [here](#).

## Principles of the SAFeh

The Framework has been designed so that the child and the family are at the centre of the assessment with the following person-centred principles:

- Families understand and consent to ongoing information sharing and co-operation between agencies
- The Common Business and Delivery Process (CBDP) will be used for the early identification of unmet needs and will plan and co-ordinate early interventions.
- The Single Assessment Framework early help (SAFeh), as part of the CBDP, will enable families, children and young people to tell their story only once, allowing information, action plans and support to follow the child, young person and family through all changes.
- The strengths and needs of the child, young person and family will be assessed holistically and met in universal services wherever possible.
- Assessment, planning and delivery of support will be holistic and co-ordinated with a single point of contact (a named Lead Professional) for the child, young person and family.
- Delivering practical solutions to a child or young person's unmet needs
- Monitor and evaluate to ensure that actions improve outcomes for individual children and young people.
- We will involve children, young people and their families in the evaluation of the SAFeh process, to assess what difference it has made.

## When should I use SAFeh?

Universal services are routinely meeting the needs of most children on a daily basis. However any child or young person may exhibit additional needs to that of their peers at any stage in their development. By identifying these needs early on through the use of the CBDP and SAFeh process, causes of behaviour and possible interventions may be explored.

The SAFeh is a tool that will be able to assist practitioners to explicitly identify the needs of the young people and where support and resources are working, and can avoid inputting services that either are not wanted by families or are not effective in achieving change. It can therefore help us to direct time, energy and resources appropriately to meet needs. It should be used where more than one service or agency is involved with the family, or needs are unclear.

The Threshold Guidance tool and matrix can be used by practitioners to help decide whether a child has additional needs, what level the needs they appear to be and what actions may be required. Generally a SAFeh may be indicated at tiers 2 to 3 in the thresholds matrix. However every case is unique, and attempting to place a young person's needs in tiers can be difficult. If help is required in supporting professional judgement of need either contact the Access and Repose team ([accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk) tel:01454 86600) for safeguarding queries OR for lower concerns contact the Early Help Partnership Workers ([safehsupport@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:safehsupport@southglos.gov.uk)).

## When not to use SAFeh?

- There should be only one major assessment and action plan in place for families, where possible.
- If higher level processes and services are involved there will be no need to duplicate assessment and planning through SAFeh.
- For example, statutory processes such as social care defining families as having a Child in Need or Child Protection concerns, will place needs at tier 4, beyond SAFeh, placing social care as the lead agency with a social worker as the Lead Professional.
- However SAFeh should continue, but not be started, through the response team undertaking a single assessment for social care, until a decision about next steps is completed.
- Where a need is at a lower level, and/or there is only one agency involved with no other agency being appropriate, a SAFeh will not be required.
- Where the parents and young people do not agree to it and refuse consent. Instead the agency should continue with their internal assessment and action plans, unless safeguarding thresholds are met.

## The SAFeh process

**Contact** the young person and family when you first become aware of any additional needs, to share your concerns, gain consent and agree next steps

**Assess** the needs fully by gathering information from the young person, parents and carers, as well as other involved professionals. Then evaluate;

- What is going well?
- What are we worried about?
- What needs to happen?

**Plan** how things can change, and what SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time limited) actions can be taken by all members of the Team around the child/family, that include the family themselves.

**Intervene** and carry out the actions by doing what has been planned

**Review** the actions in a timely way (between 6 and 12 weeks usually), to ensure that progress is being made, and plan the next series of agreed actions.

**Continue** ➡ **PLAN** ➡ **DO** ➡ **REVIEW** until needs met then,

**CLOSE SAFeh**

## Measuring progress in SAFeh

At present it is recommended that professionals use [Change Tracker](#) to consider and review what the current levels of concerns are around the identified needs that are being addressed in the action plan. They can be recorded on the early help action plan and review format.

Change Tracker has been developed as a tool for practitioners to use within their own settings and services in South Gloucestershire. It aims to support planning to improve outcomes for children and young people, and also to measure the progress that each plan achieves. It is hoped that children, young people and their families will be involved in using Change Tracker as a means of engaging them in being a part of every support plan, and also to support them in objectively defining their own needs and desired outcomes.

We have developed a set of descriptors of needs/behaviours which are called 'strands'. These cover a wide range of circumstances and are currently organised according to the five outcome areas above (Be Healthy etc). Each strand has five levels of need. The tool is deliberately focussed on measuring outcomes for the child rather than the successful completion of agreed actions. This could mean that actions supporting parents, for example, will be measured by the improved outcomes for the child. For example, a parenting course may be recommended to achieve more consistent boundaries at home, but the success of this course should be measured by whether consistent boundaries are actually experienced.

Please see the change tracker document for more information and also be aware that there is a website that can be used to explore this tool. [www.changetracker.org.uk](http://www.changetracker.org.uk)

## Expectations of professionals in SAFeh

It is expected that whichever professional or practitioner becomes aware of any additional needs of young people will consider and use the SAFeh process as appropriate. This can be any professional in South Gloucestershire working with young people and their families, where their home organisation designates them as having the appropriate skills required. See [SAFeh core competency skills](#) for further information.

**The SAFeh process** requires professionals to carry out a range of tasks:

See the [toolkit](#) for more explicit guidance for practitioners.

- Gain written and informed consent from parents/carers and young people to initiate a SAFeh. More details can be found on the [Information sharing](#) page.
- Undertake a holistic assessment of needs with the family. See [Guidance on SAFeh questions](#) for more information.
- Meet with each parent carer and young person to obtain their views and assessment information.
- Contact other relevant professionals for further information

- Where you are contacted by another professional who is initiating a SAFeh always share information appropriately and prioritise your involvement in the family SAFeh and TAC/F meetings.
- Identify and agree a [Lead Professional](#) based on family preference (link to the role of LP).
- Write up assessment in SAFeh form. See [SAFeh completion guidance](#) for more information.
- Consider need for Team Around the child/Family meeting and convene as required. See [TAC/F approach](#) and [TAC/F guidance](#) for more information.
- Professional chair the TAC/F meeting. See [Chairing TAC/F guidance](#) and [Sample Agenda for TAC/F meetings](#) for more information.
- Develop early help action plan. See [guidance for completing action plan and review](#) for more information.
- Submit all SAFeh forms to ART securely when completed, and share with all TAC/F members, including parents and young people, and where possible always the G.P where families consent. An example letter can be found on the [SAFeh webpage](#) under model letters.
- All family members and professionals involved undertake actions
- Convene TAC/F meeting to review actions, agree the next action plan and record.
- Continue Plan, Do, Review cycle until needs are met and SAFeh can be closed. See [Closing a SAFeh guidance](#) for more information.
- Submit final review to ART to close SAFeh.
- Where needs escalate despite interventions consider safeguarding procedures and the need to step up SAFeh to social care. The [thresholds document](#) should assist in making these decisions and ART can be consulted at any stage to give support and guidance, tel:01454 866000

# What do we mean by holistic assessment?

SAFeh draws on two approaches to the assessment of need which is reflected both in the format of the SAFeh assessment form, and the guidance to completing it;

## 1. The Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families



## 2. Signs of Safety

Practitioners support families by working 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. More information can be found on the [Signs of Safety](#) page on the Safeguarding website.

For more information on completing the assessment refer to the [SAFeh completion guidance](#), and [Guidance on SAFeh questions](#).

## Closing a SAFeh

The SAFeh is intended to be a time-limited intervention to assess, identify needs and intervene at an early stage. It is a mechanism where families can tell their story once, give consent for it to be shared with relevant parties in the future, and be used to effectively support transition.

When needs have been met or reduced, or numbers of services and interventions reduced, the SAFeh should be closed. See [Closing a SAFeh guidance](#) for details on how to do this. However, if needs are not met and increase it is possible that the SAFeh may need to be stepped up to a statutory intervention level.

Where a SAFeh has been closed, but a transition across services takes place it is important to ask the young person and their family if they wish the SAFeh to be transferred to the new service (e.g. new school, health service). If consent can be gained the SAFeh information and paperwork may be shared. This will enable any new service to be aware of past actions and not have to re-assess known past needs or information in the future. Supporting the family to share information without having to duplicate it.

## Management of SAFeh

### Practitioners

Practitioners are responsible for identifying additional needs, assessing them holistically to the best of their ability and working towards resolving them. If more support is required the circumstance should be brought to the attention of the line manager and SAFeh considered. Please see [SAFeh core competency skills](#) for details of skills required to be a SAFeh initiator, lead professional or TAC/F chair.

### Responsibilities of practitioners;

- Identify needs early of young people they work with that are likely to affect successful outcomes towards normal development.
- Attempt early intervention in line with home agency expectations. (See expectations of professionals as above)
- Request either SAFeh training or the name of someone SAFeh trained within the organisation, to initiate SAFeh when required for young people and their families.
- Request help, support and supervision from line manager to plan meet needs, and be aware of roles of ART (01454 866000) or SAFeh support from Early Help Partnership Workers ([SAFehsupport@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:SAFehsupport@southglos.gov.uk) )
- Be prepared to take on Lead Professional responsibilities for families where families request your help.



- Convene and ensure TAC/F meetings are recorded to develop action plans and review them. To include considering SAFeh closure at each meeting.
- Be aware of the [Resolution of Professional differences policy](#) and how to use it.
- Submit SAFeh paperwork regularly and securely to [accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk)
- To be aware of thresholds documents and guidance, and ensure that your own safeguarding training is kept up to date.

## Line managers

As the CBDP and SAFeh are approved and agreed by the South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (SGSCB – the local LSCB) managers should seek to ensure that staff within their service and under their supervision are skilled and involved in regularly carrying out the CBDP and SAFeh to their appropriate skill level.

### Responsibilities of managers;

- Ensure staff group are aware of and using CBDP, SAFeh and safeguarding thresholds documents as appropriate. There is a free e-learning module available on the South Gloucestershire [Learning and Development website](#).
- Encourage staff to work together with other professionals in the family SAFeh process.
- Be aware of the [SAFeh core competency skills](#) for details of skills required to be a SAFeh initiator, lead professional or TAC/F chair.
- Be aware of SAFeh local standards and SAFeh checklist and QA document.
- Ensure that all staff within your service are skilled, trained and aware of their individual responsibilities to carry out CBDP, SAFeh and safeguarding, and that some staff are competent to initiate, chair and be Lead Professionals.
- Ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training as required within your own organisation, as well as ensuring your own training is up to date.
- It is RECOMMENDED that the CBDP and SAFeh should be part of every services internal business process in order to avoid duplication of work, effort and paperwork. Contact Early Help Partnership Workers ([safehsupport@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:safehsupport@southglos.gov.uk)) for more information.
- Provide support or supervision to practitioners in order that they are able to plan and intervene early to meet the needs of young people.
- Check and audit work carried out regularly, including SAFeh, to ensure that plans and interventions are successful at meeting the needs of young people, and do not require closure or stepping up to a higher tier of service.
- Be aware of [the Resolution of professional differences policy](#) and how to use it.

## Senior managers

With ultimate responsibility for the safety and well-being of the young people being supported by your service, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are well informed about the CDBP and SAFeh, and have made it clear to all of your employees how this fits into normal everyday business within your service.

### Responsibilities of senior managers;

- ALL ABOVE AS LINE MANAGER
- Consider and develop integration of the CDBP and SAFeh approach within your day to day business approaches, to include robust policies, procedures and checks to ensure that staff are carrying out early interventions under CDBP and SAFeh appropriately.

## Threshold tool

All practitioners, whichever organisation they work for, must be able to understand the threshold for each level of need and recognise the development and changes in a child, young person or family's needs.

The South Gloucestershire Threshold Tool [A Child's Journey of Need](#) adopts the continuum of need model. It provides a multi-agency, whole system approach to assessment, prevention and interventions for children, young people and their families and directly supports the implementation of the Single Assessment Framework early help which all practitioners can initiate. The adoption of this model provides consistency for professionals working across different services and geographical areas.

## Step up/step down to and from Social Care

The transition from SAFeh to a higher level statutory service such as social care, and vice versa, should be seamless. The family should only need to tell their story once so that professionals can share this information appropriately.

It is NOT appropriate to have allocated workers (social care) AND Lead Professionals (SAFeh) leading on separate plans for the same child or young person. Where a SAFeh is stepped up to a Single Assessment for social care, the social worker and the Lead Professional should work together until a decision is made about whether the family remain within the social care service and SAFeh is to be closed or is stepped back to SAFeh.

Where a Single Assessment social care, Child in Need or child protection concern is reduced the case may be stepped back down to SAFeh for universal practitioners involved in the family to continue.

## Supporting documents

- [Early help cross border protocol](#) (under review)
- [Resolution of professional differences policy \(Escalation Policy\)](#)
- A Child's Journey of Need - [Threshold guidance and matrix](#)
- [Early Help Vision and Strategy](#)

## Useful links

All documents and links detailed in this guidance can be found on the Single Assessment Framework for Early Help website page:

<http://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/single-assessment-framework-for-early-help/>

### **SAFeh toolkit**

<http://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/single-assessment-framework-for-early-help/>

Including:

- Guidelines
- Forms with supporting guidance
- Model letters
- Resources

### **South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board**

<http://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/>

- [Information for professionals](#)