



Signs of Safety Implementation

Child Protection Conferences - Professionals' briefing

From 27 July 2015, Norfolk County Council will be implementing a new approach to Child Protection Conferences, using the Signs of Safety approach. The Signs of Safety approach is designed to increase family involvement and understanding of the concerns and risks that professionals have for their children.

More information on this can be found at www.signsofsafety.net

What do I need to do before the conference?

As currently, when you are invited to a Child Protection Conference, please provide a report to the local authority two working days before an initial conference and five working days before a review conference. It is very important that all information is presented in everyday language that avoids professional jargon. Please ensure you share your report with the family prior to the conference taking place.

The multi-agency report template is available to download from the NSCP website.

The conference

Prior to conference agency representatives will assemble together in a room to read all the available reports. Please do not talk about the family with other workers during this reading time, as it is important that the family is present during any discussion.

The Chairperson will meet with the family members in the conference room to talk about the meeting and how they will be asked to participate. You and other professionals will then join the family in the room. The conference will start with an introduction and the Chairperson will ask professionals to summarise the information that they hold about the family.

What is different about this style of child protection conferences?

The room will be set out in a horseshoe shape, facing a white board at the front. The Chair will move around the room and the family will be given the choice of where they sit.

The Chairperson will support the development of an open discussion between all participants, focusing on active inclusion of parent/carers, children and other family members. Family members will be given the opportunity to ask questions about the information shared.

Professionals will no longer solely read information from their prepared reports; instead, each will be asked to succinctly provide key information on each child focused on:

- what they are worried about (dangers/risks – both current and past – for the child)
- complicating factors (including grey areas)
- family strengths
- safety factors

The Chair will also ask family members additional relevant questions or seek clarity on certain issues. The most pertinent points discussed will be written on the white board by the Chair and minutes will be taken for distribution after the conference.

How the white board will be presented

What are we worried about?

The Chairperson will explore the following areas with family and workers -

- What are the past and current dangers and risks for the child?
- What behaviours/events/actions are placing the child at risk of immediate and significant harm?
- What is, or has been, the impact on the child?
- What evidence is there that means the child is being ill-treated or their health and development is being impaired?

Complicating factors (including grey areas)

- Factors that contribute to, or cause difficulty to a child. This could be a parent's mental health being exacerbated by alcohol, or information that requires additional information to reliably assess risk.

Strengths

- Positive attributes and resources within the family that, over time, could be built on to provide a safer environment, e.g. a family member looking after children or a parent ceasing a certain behaviour.

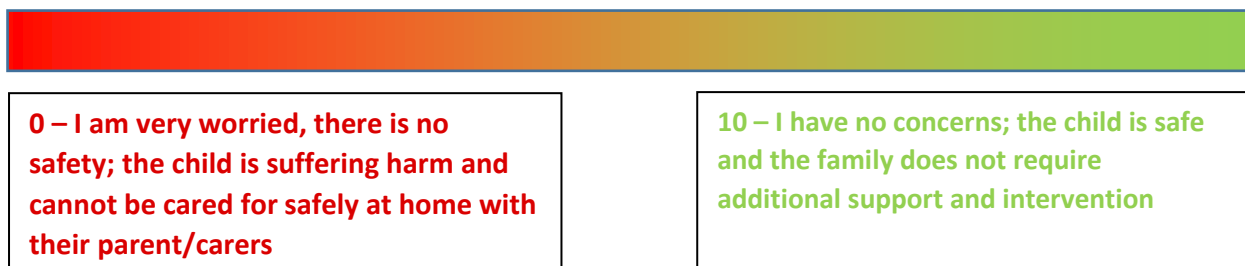
Safety

- Things that are currently in place and that have been shown, over time, to directly address areas of the risk and reduce danger for the child.

Safety scale

When all the necessary information has been shared and analysed, the chairperson will ask all agencies and family members to make a judgment about the safety of the child in their family home and the potential risk of future harm.

A safety scale will be attached to the wall and all participants will be asked to write down on a sticky note provided where they estimate the level of risk to be on the scale.



The Chairperson will collect each score which will be used as the basis for further discussion.

Safety goals and safety actions (the Plan)

The child's plan should be considered throughout the meeting. The Chair will support the identification of safety goals for the child in relation to the dangers / worries / risks that have been identified and the actions to be taken to achieve these goals. Agreed outcomes and actions will be recorded at the time they are discussed.

Decision making

Decision making will remain the same. The Chair will explain the threshold for a child protection plan and will ask each agency for their view about whether the outline plan developed in the conference constitutes a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan. The Chair will consider the views of all agencies and will then determine the final status of the plan. If the plan is confirmed as a Child Protection Plan the chair will ask agencies which category the child protection plan should be:

- Physical • Emotional • Sexual • Neglect