



## Norfolk's guide to Safety Planning using Danger Statements, Safety Goals and Bottom Lines



Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership



Norfolk County Council



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## Signs of Safety practice principles

- Working relationships are at the heart of practice
- Adopt a stance of critical inquiry
- Be aspirational for children and their families

## Getting started

This reference guide has been created for practitioners working with children and families in Norfolk, following the Signs of Safety framework.

When starting to safety plan with a family network, there are 3 key elements needed - danger or worry statements, safety or wellbeing goals and bottom lines.

We know if we get these right, the family network has a great chance at finding their own solutions to specific concerns there may be around the safety and wellbeing of the child we are working with, through robust safety planning.

This guide is designed as a reminder of the vision we work to in Norfolk, our aspirations for the children and families we work with and more importantly, to help practitioners think through what the danger statement, safety goal and bottom lines should include.

*We want to ensure we build resilience in families, that children are prepared and able to learn, and are living in family settings with lifelong networks around them. Vital Signs is our vision and overarching practice and leadership framework, which will thread throughout our work and intervention with families, at whatever level or stage in the child's journey.*



**Whole family**

We think about family, in the widest sense in all the work we do.



**Norfolk's Vital Signs for Children  
Signs of Safety, Well-being and Success**

These are the **Vital Signs** we want to ensure children's happiness and health.

**We believe it is vital that children:**

- Are resilient and able to learn
- Build positive, long-lasting relationships
- Receive family-based care



**Whole system**

We work in partnership to get the right support for children, young people and families regardless of organisational boundaries.



**Relationship Based**

We work to build consistent and trusted relationships with children, young people and families.



**Outcome Focused**

We do whatever it takes to achieve the best outcome for children, young people and families.



**Strengths Oriented**

We identify the strengths of children, young people and families and build on them to create positive change.



# Family Network Meetings and Safety Plans


- Family network meetings can happen at **any stage** of the child's journey but should happen at the **earliest point** possible. These can be initiated by any worker involved in the child's life.
- It is **never too late** to work with the child, young person or parent to establish a **lifetime network of support** around them.
- Every child we work with should be given the **opportunity** to involve their family, carers and social network in planning for their **long-term successful future**.
- **Safety plans are created and owned by the family network**, setting out what will be happening in the child or young person's everyday life to keep them safe and well looked after. They will **fully involve the child/young person** where age appropriate.
- If there is anything that workers think the plan must specifically address or include, this must be specified in the 'bottom lines'.
- There is an expectation that safety plans will be accepted, and professional support offered that could be helpful to the plan.
- The family network and workers will need to agree how they will all be responsible for monitoring and adjusting the plan to ensure it is successful.
- Only if the safety plan fails to keep the child safe will the workers impose their own plan (the workers or local authority contingency plan).
- The family network will always be given **clear, jargon-free, danger/worry statements and safety/wellbeing/success goals** to help them understand concerns and make a good plan. Any 'bottom lines' and contingency plans will be clear.



# SAFETY PLANNING ROADMAP

WHAT	HOW (Steps)	TOOLS (Methods)
<p><b>DANGER STATEMENTS</b> What we are worried will happen to the child if nothing changes (the problem that has to be solved)</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 20px 0;"> <p>Safety planning always involves engaging the family and their support network. In a focused action learning process enabling them to decide on, practice and refine the actions that will create lasting safety.</p> <p>This is the how of safety planning; the trajectory that creates the final safety plan.</p> </div> <p><b>SAFETY GOALS</b> What we need to see to know the child is safe</p>	<p>1. Preparations with workers</p> <p>2. Develop Paired Danger Statements and Safety Goals with Matched Safety Scale Simple language, understandable to family.</p> <p>3. Identify everything constructive in direct parenting</p> <p>4. Develop worker's bottom-line requirements</p> <p>5. Develop trajectory including timeline</p> <p>6. Build vision of process for family</p> <p>7. Build informed network with family</p> <p>8. Create explanation for children (and everyone else)</p> <p>9. Build Safety Plan with parents and network Successive process where family demonstrate over time they can make children safe, regular review - honouring success and utilising struggles. All participants should rate safety at each meeting using the safety scales.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Need to dig into critical issues - dynamics, triggers and stressful times that make abuse / neglect more likely. The family must either come up with or fully own all the rules within the plan. 'Denial' issues must be dealt with throughout.</p> <p>10. Involve child</p> <p>11. Monitoring by workers and network</p> <p>12. Create final child-centred Safety Plan</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: #808080;">ONGOING PROCESSES</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 20px 0;"> <p>Authority Honouring Vision Questioning Compassion</p> </div> <p>Harm Matrix Signs of Safety Mapping My Three Houses or equivalent</p> <p>Signs of Safety Trajectory and Timeline Safety Journal</p> <p>Family Safety Circles, Network-finding Matrix</p> <p>Words and Pictures</p> <p>Regular Review Meetings Family and network must be given the opportunity to fail so they can demonstrate success, usually through and increasing process of contact. Workers must be mindful of the risk and manage this together with the family.</p> <p>Safety Journal, Safety Object Practice Rehearsals of Rules</p> <p>Child-focused Safety Plan</p>

# Signs of Safety Mapping and Assessment Tool, with the 7 analysis categories

Thinking about the child/teenager and the family situation		
What are we worried about?	What's working well?	What needs to happen?
<p><b>HARM</b> Past hurt, injury or abuse to the child (likely) caused by adults. Also includes risk taking behaviour by children/young people that indicates harm and/or is harmful to them.</p> <p><b>DANGER STATEMENTS</b> The harm or hurt that is believed likely to happen to the child(ren) if nothing in the family's situation changes.</p> <p><b>COMPLICATING FACTORS</b> Actions and behaviours in and around the family and child and by workers that make it more difficult to make sure the child is safe.</p>	<p><b>EXISTING STRENGTHS</b> People, plans and actions that contribute to a child's wellbeing and plans about how a child will be made safe when danger is present.</p> <p><b>EXISTING SAFETY</b> Actions taken by parents, caring adults and children to make sure the child is safe when the danger is present.</p>	<p><b>SAFETY GOALS</b> The behaviours and actions the worker needs to see to be satisfied the child will be safe enough or where relevant, for Children's Services to close the case.</p> <p><b>NEXT STEPS</b> The immediate next actions that will be taken to build future safety.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p style="text-align: center;">On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means the child/young person is safe enough and we can close the case and zero means things are so bad for the young person we must remove them into care immediately, where do you rate this situation today? Put different judgement numbers on scale for different people, e.g. different workers, child, parents etc.</p>		



# The Signs of Safety Harm Analysis Matrix

The Harm Matrix is a tool introduced to...

- Help both workers and referrers to think through the harm
- Enable workers to move beyond harm-causing behaviour (whether by adults or young people themselves) and explicitly analyse impact on the child
- Be especially useful in cases of long-term chronic/cumulative harm

Careful and detailed analysis of the past harm is the foundation for creating clear, behaviourally specific danger statements.

The matrix can be used to record information and to create questions for the family.

(An electronic copy of the Harm Matrix can be found at <https://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/signs-safety/>)

Time Actions and Experience	Timespan	First Incident	Worst Incident	Last Incident
<b>Behaviour</b> <i>The dangerous or harm causing adult behaviour. Can also be a young person's dangerous behaviour</i>	What is the worrying adult behaviour and how long has it been happening? How many times has that adult behaviour happened over the total time span?	When, and what was the first time your agency heard about the worrying adult behaviour?	When, and what was the worst event of worrying adult behaviour your agency knows about?	When, and what was the most recent event of worrying adult behaviour your agency knows about?
<b>Severity</b> <i>Describes how bad the harmful adult behaviour is</i>	Over the whole timespan the adult behaviour has been happening, how bad has the adult behaviour been?	How bad was the first event of adult worrying behaviour	How bad was the worst event of worrying adult behaviour?	How bad was the most recent event of worrying adult behaviour?
<b>Impact</b> <i>Describes the physical and emotional impact of the adult behaviours on the child</i>	Over the whole timespan the adult behaviour has been happening, what has been the overall impact on the children	What was the impact of the first incident on the child(ren)?	What was the impact of the worst incident on the child(ren)?	What was the impact of the most recent incident on the child(ren)?

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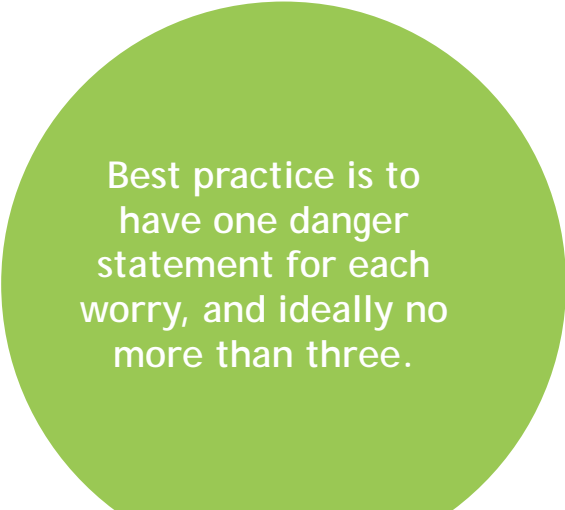
# Danger / Worry Statement

## What is it?

A clear, jargon free statement of ANALYSIS, setting out who's worried, what we are worried about and what will be the likely impact on the child if nothing changes.

## A good danger statement includes...

- The names and roles of people who are worried
- What has happened in the past (past harm) that has caused us to be worried
- Specific and factual examples that describe behaviour or actions, if possible including dates they took place. Avoid jargon/professional language like 'domestic violence' and 'neglect'
- The potential impact on the child/young person in the short and long term, if nothing changes
- Positives that help the hard messages 'land'



Best practice is to have one danger statement for each worry, and ideally no more than three.

# Danger / Worry Statement

## Key ideas

Focus on **specific observable behaviours**

Use **plain, simple language** that will be easily understood by children and families

Work **in partnership with the family** rather than being prescriptive or directive

Who caused the harm? ■  
Who was harmed? ■

Matt, we know you love Adam very much and want to do your best for him. We know that sometimes you find it hard to manage Adam's behaviour.

Who is worried? ■  
What happened? ■  
When did it happen? ■

Mandy, the social worker, Dr Smith, and the police are worried that when you are drinking alcohol you find this more difficult, like when you were drunk and hit Adam on Sunday 16 August. We know you feel awful about hurting Adam and the police are not taking any action as a result of this incident, however Adam is very sad and says he is scared to return home, in case he gets hurt again.

What was the impact? ■

What could happen in the future? ■

Dr Smith confirmed the bruising on Adam's head was consistent with being hit with both an open hand and closed fist. If this happens again, Adam may be seriously injured or even killed.

# Safety / Wellbeing Goal

## What is it?

A clear, specific, jargon-free description of what workers need to see to know the child is safe enough, so that the family no longer need our involvement. It sets out what the members of the family and their network will be doing that will demonstrate to us over time that the child is safe.

## A good safety goal includes...

- What we will see in the daily life of the child(ren) to end the need for our support
- What workers need to see that tells them that things are good enough. What will be happening, how will we know the child/young person is safe in their parents' /carers' care?
- Specific focus on the strengths and good things that will be happening and what people will be doing instead, rather than the bad things that will have stopped. E.g. say that 'Mum and Dad will have ways to resolve problems in a calm way', rather than Mum and Dad will not argue.
- Include how long you would want to see the plan working for or how long you need to see the changes maintained to be satisfied that this will continue in the long term.

# Safety / Wellbeing Goal

## Key ideas

Statements focusing on **specific observable behaviours**

**Plain, simple language** that will be easily understood by children and families, in all verbal and written communication

Work **in partnership with the family** rather than being prescriptive or directive

**Specific behaviours that will keep the child safe**

We will know Adam is safe when Matt is not drinking alcohol when Adam is with him and when Matt is managing Adam's behaviour in ways that do not cause Adam injury or harm, such as removing play items or rewarding him for things he is doing well. Matt will make sure Adam is cared for by someone Adam likes and trusts in his network if Matt wants to drink alcohol.

**What will the network be doing?**

**What will we see when things are good enough?**

Everyone will know that the safety plan is working because Adam will not be frightened of Matt, will be happier at home and at school and will be doing enjoyable things together again, like when they used to go to the stock car races. We will see signs of a close and loving relationship between Matt and Adam when we visit.

**How long do we need to see the changes in place?**

We will no longer be worried, and where relevant close the case, if the safety plan is working for 6 months; the family network will check in regularly with Matt and Adam to make sure Adam continues to be safe and well looked after.



## Bottom Lines

### What is it?

- This is the worker's view of the non-negotiable requirements that should be included within the plan.
- Workers should keep the bottom lines they require to a minimum to create maximum opportunity for the family to develop as much of the safety plan as possible.
- It defines what must happen or anything that cannot happen under any circumstance because of the impact it will have on the child.
- Bottom lines are not always needed, for example with families who are receiving early help or family support services.



# Bottom lines:

## Key ideas

This is a minimum set of **non-negotiable conditions that are needed**

**Plain, simple language** that will be easily understood by children and families, in all communication

### Bottom lines

Who needs to be involved and what do they need to know?

Matt will involve family and/or friends in the safety plan and they will be fully informed about the concerns for the child.

A words and pictures explanation will be created to help Adam understand why the workers are involved and what will be happening to keep him safe.

What needs to be included in the safety plan?

The plan will state how Adam will be kept safe during those times when Matt wants to drink alcohol.

The safety plan will address any triggers and identify how Matt and the network will deal with these.

What will happen if the child is harmed again?

If Matt hits Adam again, Adam will need to live with someone else preferably within the family network, who is safe.

# Appreciative Inquiry - Using questions within Signs of Safety

## Key ideas

Signs of Safety is a questioning, **not an expert**, approach

### SOLUTION (SAFETY / WELLBEING) FOCUSED QUESTIONING

A line of reflective questioning, using the EARS method (Elicit, Amplify, Reflect, Start over) that focuses conversations on the worries (harm and complicated factors) AND what's working well (existing safety and strengths). It helps draw out an understanding of how goals can be achieved and supports learning and development for the future.

### SCALING QUESTIONS

General scaling questions can be used throughout the assessment and planning process. They can help to create a dialogue about any situation by enabling those involved to hear and share different perspectives, creating room for change and movement.

### SAFETY / WELLBEING (JUDGEMENT) SCALE

The Safety Scale distils all the information to capture the critical judgement that needs to be made in this situation, i.e. how close we are to achieving the (safety) goal on a continuum of 0-10 and what needs to happen to get to 10. It is critical that safety scale questions clearly define both 0 and 10 with definitions that are specific to the child and family's situation. This then informs safety planning and ensures family networks and partners share responsibility and take ownership of the planning

### Key Questions:

- Where would you scale this situation now?
- What puts you there? What would you need to see happening to be ½ or 1 point higher on this scale?
- Where would ... (others involved e.g. child, parent / carer, network people, workers) say they are on this scale now? What puts them at this point?

# Questions to help the family and their network build, develop and test their Safety Plan

## Key ideas

An effective Safety Plan will **contain a specific set of rules and arrangements** that describe how the family will **live its everyday life** and show everyone how the **child will be safe and well** in the future

Workers will use questions and mapping to help the family and network to think through 'who will do what' to keep the child safe and well looked after, whatever else is happening in their lives and particularly when the danger or critical worries are present.

## Key questions for Safety Planning with families and their networks:

- What do you think needs to be in place to show everyone that the children will be safe and well looked after when they are with you?
- Have there been times when these worries have been managed well or better in the past? (Looking for examples of existing strengths and safety)
- What have been or could be the triggers and stressors in this situation that may lead to these worries happening again in the future? Who will do what, when and how, to prevent this from happening?
- What would be the first sign that would tell us that the worries are building in this situation? What would be the 'red flags' that would tell us that the child is no longer safe or being well looked after? Who will do what, when and how to ensure the child is safe when the danger is present?



## Contingency Plan

### What is it?

- A contingency plan explains clearly what will happen if the bottom line is broken or the Safety Plan is not effective in keeping the child safe.
- The Family Network must be asked to create their own contingency plan, which describes what they will do if things go wrong with the safety plan.
- Professionals also need to let the family network know their contingency plan - what they will do if the safety plan and the family contingency plan are not keeping the child safe.
- A good example of a contingency plan will have detail, be agreed and understood by the Family Network and will NOT simply state that 'legal action will be initiated' or social services will become involved.

# Contingency Plan

## Key ideas

The family network needs to be involved in creating the family contingency plan

Plain, simple language that will be easily understood by children and families, in all communication

### Example of Family Contingency plan:

Who, within the family network, will take immediate action if the safety plan doesn't work and what will happen?

Adam and his family have agreed that if their plan doesn't work or if Adam feels unsafe at any time, he will call Aunt Sue or Patrick, the neighbour, who will come to collect him straight away. They will call Uncle Bill who will go and talk to Matt. Adam will stay with Aunt Sue or Patrick until it is safe for him to return home. The network will need to meet again to review and strengthen the safety plan.

### Examples of Workers' Contingency plan:

What will happen if the family network cannot make a plan that keeps the child safe?

If Adam needs to live with someone else, the network will be asked if any of them want to look after Adam. Anybody who does want to look after Adam, will need to be assessed by a social worker to check they can take good care of him long term. If not, Adam will need to live with a foster carer. These arrangements may be made legally permanent by the Court and they will decide how Adam and Matt will see each other. Adam will be given every opportunity to spend time with the people who are important to him and help keep him safe, even if he lives with a foster carer.

If the family network are unable to keep Adam safe, then the workers involved will have to continue to monitor Adam's safety very closely. This will mean ongoing visits to the family home until they are reassured that Matt is not drinking whilst caring for Adam and that Adam is not in any danger. Adam will also need to be regularly spoken to at school on his own, to make sure he has lots of opportunity to talk about anything that is worrying him. We know that this high level of involvement in family life will not be easy for Adam or Matt and it would be much better for them if Matt and the wider network could make a plan that is keeps Adam safe and feels normal for everybody.

## Other Signs of Safety tools to use

### THREE HOUSES (or equivalent)

Three Houses is a 'mapping' tool that uses a simple image of 3 houses (or equivalent) to describe good things happening in a family, what isn't good and how a family member, usually a child, would like things to be in the future from their perspective. It can help workers to actively involve the child on the assessment and planning process and to understand their experience and views.

### WORDS and PICTURES

Words and Pictures stories should be created with the parents to explain to children what the adults involved are worried about and what the plan is. This ensures there is a simple narrative that everyone understands. This is shared with children by the parents and workers to ensure the children know how everyone is working together to make things better or safer for them. Children should be asked to add in pictures to the narrative on the storyboard to further support their understanding of the plan.





## TRAJECTORY and TIMELINE

Trajectories describe the pathway or plan detailing all the steps that need to be taken and who needs to do what, to create safety for the child. The trajectory provides a clear vision for everyone about what needs to happen.

Timelines detail the timeframe for all the steps within the trajectory. The timeline is created between workers and the family, and specifies how long the Safety Plan needs to be demonstrated to satisfy everyone the plan will be maintained following case closure and assesses the reality of what each can do in the given timeframe.

## SAFETY CIRCLES

A set of tools devised by Susie Essex for children and parents, using concentric circle templates similar to ecomaps. They help children and parents explore who is in their network, and also explore issues of consent and sharing information with their network.

## SAFETY OBJECT

An object identified by a child that they will use to alert people if they are worried, hurt or they need to talk. When they move the object at home, or give it to a teacher or another worker, they will give the child the opportunity to talk about what has happened.

## SAFETY JOURNAL

A journal used by the family network to evidence their daily activity that has helped keep the child safe, and report on whether workers have done what they said they would do to help.



For further information:

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

[www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/signs-safety/](http://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/signs-safety/)





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