



together for
children
SUNDERLAND

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN PRACTICE STANDARDS



Putting the Child First



putting
the child first

Together for Children Practice Standards

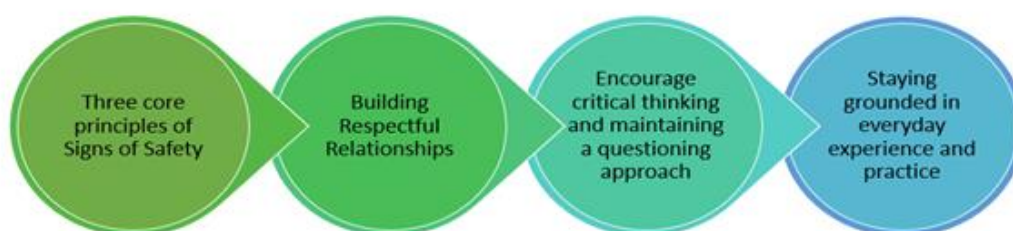
Contents

Together for Children Practice Standards	2
Our Practice Model - Signs of safety	3
Why do we have Practice Standards?	4
How do we measure Practice Standards?	4
Practice Standards	5
1 How we work with children and young people.....	6
2 Building Trusting Relationships and Meaningful Networks	7
3 Purposeful Visits and Meetings	9
4 Child/Young Person and Family Focused Assessment and Planning.....	10
5 Recording	13
6 Children in Need	15
7 Child Protection.....	17
Strategy Meetings.....	17
Child Protection Enquiries (Section 47)	18
Child Protection Conference.....	18
8 Cared for Children and Young People.....	20
Permanency Planning	21
9 Care Experienced	24
10 Supervision	25
11 Management responsibilities.....	27
Visiting Timescales at a Glance	29
Assessment Timescales at a Glance	31
Meeting Timescales at a Glance	33
Appendix Case Summaries.....	34
Glossary	35

Our Practice Model – Signs of safety

In Together for Children (TfC), children, young people and the people who are important to them are at the centre of everything we do. [Signs of Safety](#) is our overarching practice model, which is a relationship, strengths-based and solution focused approach that will underpin all our work. The key to how we achieve this is through building meaningful respectful relationships.

The Signs of Safety Model will be explained and the way we will be working with children, young people and their families will be covered in our very first visit and conversations. Our model and way of working will be clearly explained to all agencies and professionals involved to help bring clarity and a consistent approach.



Using Signs of Safety we will:

- Work to **identify and build on family strengths**: To help create lasting safety for children and young people.
- Work in partnership with families to **build purposeful and respectful relationships** and see families as people 'worth doing business with'.
- Make sure that all children and young people will have naturally connected networks.
- Work with the whole family and their networks, to **create family-led safety plans**

Areas in Together for Children	The terms we use are...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child in Need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Wellbeing/ Signs of Safety/ Signs of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cared for Children, Fostering, Connected Carers and Adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Experienced Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Success

Why do we have Practice Standards?

By setting out our practice standards we aim to:

- Put children and their families at the heart of everything we do to improve their lived experiences and improve outcomes as a result.
- Support practitioners to understand their responsibilities, to be confident, knowledgeable, thoughtful, compassionate, and balanced in their work.
- Create an environment where practitioners can learn, reflect and grow.
- To ensure that we are offering a consistent approach and high-quality service to children, young people and their families.
- Promote the ability for practitioners to quality assure their own work and measure our practice through audit.

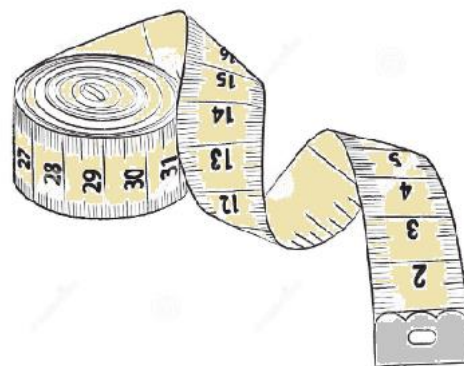
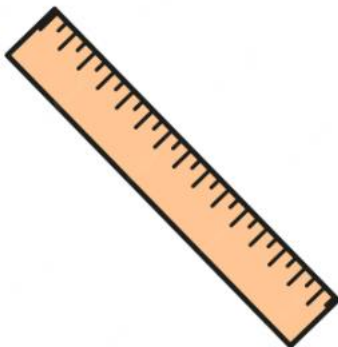


Our Practice Standards are informed by statutory guidance and regulations and should be understood within the context of:

- [Professional Capabilities Framework](#).
- [The Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics outlined by Social Work England, the regulating body for social work practitioners](#).
- [The Department for Education's Knowledge and Skills Statement for approved child and family practitioners](#).

How do we measure Practice Standards?

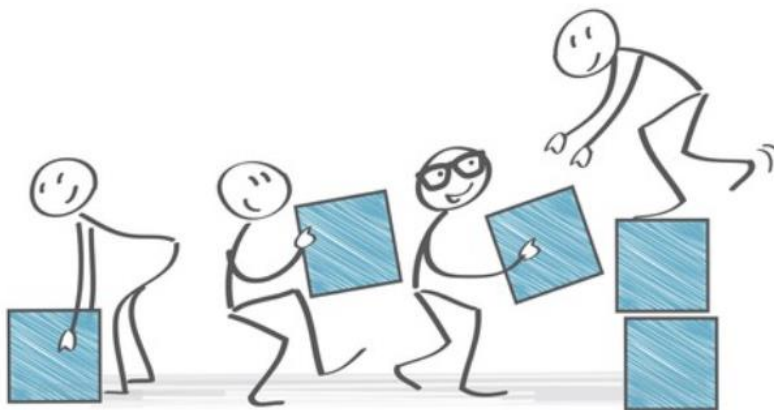
We have a robust performance and quality assurance process in place to ensure that we are offering a high-quality service to our children and families. We measure standards through audits, supervision, seeking feedback from children, young people, carers and families and the Thrive appraisal. ([QA Framework](#))



Practice Standards

To support our practitioners in their work Tfc has produced a set of 11 overarching Practice Standards that define good practice and what is expected when providing a service to children, young people and their families in Sunderland.

1. How we work with Children and Young People
2. Building trusting relationships and meaningful networks
3. Purposeful Visits and Meetings
4. Child and Family Focused Assessment and planning
5. Recording/ Evidencing Our Work
6. Child in Need
7. Child Protection
8. Cared for Children and Young People
9. Care Experienced Children and Young People
10. Supervision
11. Management responsibilities



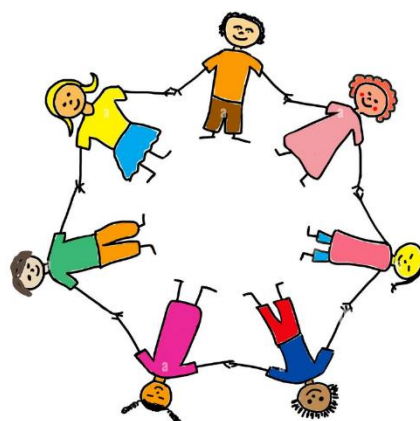
1 How we work with children and young people.



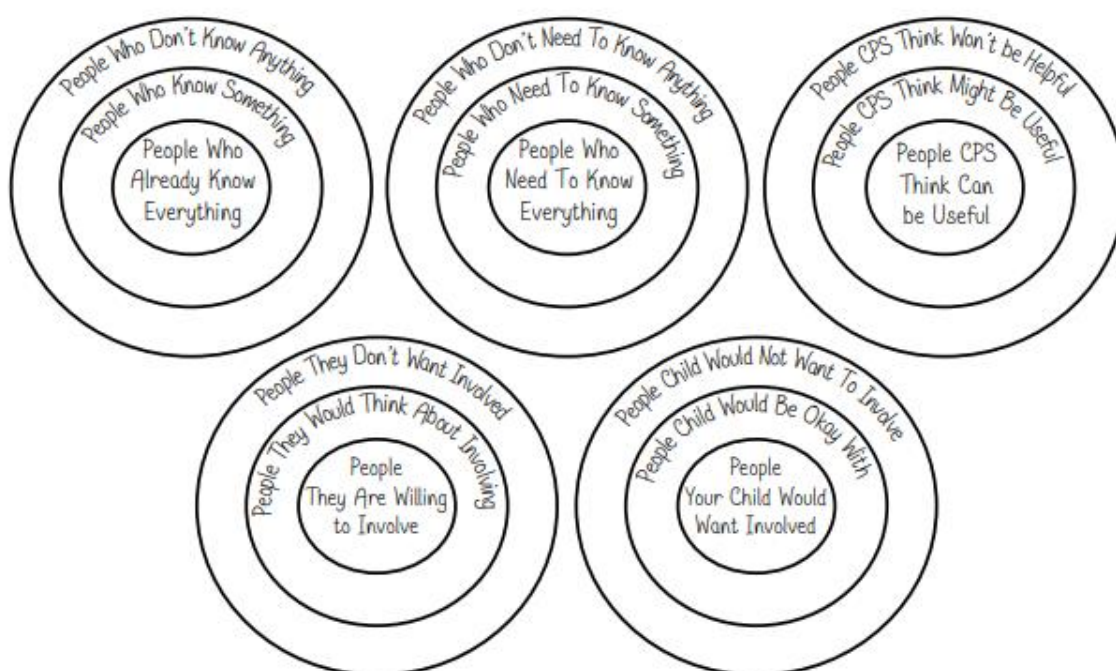
- We will be creative in the way we build relationships with children and young people, taking time to get to know them, thinking about their likes, dislikes, interests, and identity.
- We will understand children and young people's ethnicity, religion, culture and any disabilities they may have. This is because we know each child and young person is an individual and we may need to change our ways of working to best understand their views and needs. [Social Gggraaaaccceesss](#).
- Each child/young person within the family is unique to their brothers and sisters and will be treated as individuals when we are working with them.
- We will tell children and young people how often we will see them, how they can contact us and keep them updated on what our planning looks like for them and the reasons why.
- When we visit children and young people, we will work with them to understand what life is like for them. Their views and wishes will be threaded throughout our assessments and recordings and will influence our decision making.
- We will speak to children alone (where possible) in a place where they feel comfortable and safe enough to talk about how things are going for them.
- We will use different ways of working with children and young people which takes into account their age, needs and level of understanding, thinking about language barriers, cultural difference or additional needs. To do these we use a variety of tools and resources such as [safety house](#), [three houses](#), [children's mapping](#) and free online resources such as [CYPMeFirst](#).
- When we work with babies, younger children and those who aren't able to tell us how they are feeling. We will write about what we see when we visit and talk to people who know them best. This will help us to understand who they are, how well they are developing and what their relationships with important people around them are like.
- We will help parents and carers make [words and pictures](#) explanation, using their own word to help them understand why we are working with their families and sometimes why tough decisions are made.
- All work will be saved on the child/young person's electronic file, we will use clear language, without jargon. It will be balanced, honest and respectful with a question in mind 'Would I say this to the child?'
- Every child and young person will be offered [Mind of my Own](#). They will also have the right to share their views and know how to do this, which can be via [Children's complaints and advocacy service](#). When a child or young person wants to speak to an independent person, we will make sure this is done for them.

2 Building Trusting Relationships and Meaningful Networks

- Working relationships will be at the heart of our practice, where we will always remain respectful, honest and transparent in our work with children, young people, parents, carers and family.
- We will work “with” rather than doing “to” and “see families as people worth doing business with”.
- We will talk about worries, have tough conversations and we will remain kind, compassionate, take a listening and curious approach to understand their perspective and lived experience.
- We will recognise that we do not have all the answers and work with parents, carers and family to develop a shared understanding of what needs to change and allowing them to bring their own solutions.
- Every child and young person will have a network around them, their families/carers.
- From our very [first interaction](#) we will talk to the family about the importance of having a network and the people around them like friends, family, and neighbours who help them the most.
- We will also talk about difficult relationships and what these mean for the child, young person and the family.
- We will help the family choose who is going to be in their network and set a time and date for the first network meeting. These will take place at least once per month.
- If there are challenges in finding a network, we will help the family/carers to think creatively about who could be in it rather than accept that they have ‘nobody’. Using tools such as [Safety Circles](#) and the [Family Finding Matrix](#).
- In the [first network meeting](#) we will read the [danger statement and safety goal](#), so everyone knows why we are worried and what we need to see, to know children and young people are safe and well cared for [Family Network Template](#)
- Our network meetings will help families build on their strengths and develop safety.
- At the end of each meeting the [scaling question](#) will be read out and each network member will be asked to scale from 0-10, how they feel things are going, why they chose that number, and what they would want to see to scale one number higher.
- The ‘Bottom Lines’ will be explained and shared within the network meeting. The network will be made aware of the contingency plan and what will happen if the bottom lines are not followed.
- We will work with the family and their network to think about what the worries are, how they are or will be managed to keep the child/young person happy, health and safe. The plan will be family led, identifying who will help to do this and when, so everyone will know what’s expected of them.
- The family will be supported in choosing who will be the best person to lead the network (boss of the plan) and how they are going to show us the plan being used, such as through the use of a [safety journal](#).



- We will make sure that everyone in the network will have a copy of the plan which will be clear and easy to understand.
- The network will work with their plan and record how this has gone. We will review the family plan at least monthly.
- We will not move the 'goal posts' if things do not go to plan. If this happens an urgent network meeting will be arranged, and the family and network will be supported to think about why the plan did not work and what needs to be changed to help them reach their safety goal.



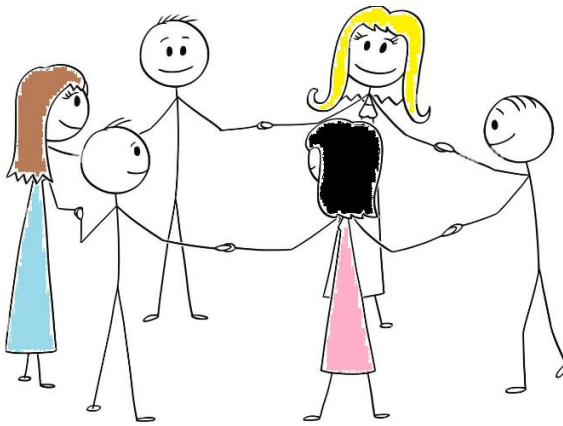
3 Purposeful Visits and Meetings

- All our visits will be planned with a specific purpose in mind. We will be professionally curious and ask best questions in visits and meetings to gather detail and add depth to our assessments. We will [Work in the middle column](#), and use best [questions for parenting assessments](#).
- Visits will be scheduled within statutory timescales, with dates and times agreed between families and workers. We will remember to see children's bedrooms and to include this in our recording.
- We will be flexible and visit more if needed, depending on the needs of the child/young person.
- At times we may need to visit unannounced, we will explain this to the family, so they understand the purpose of this.
- On our [First visit](#), we will explain our role, why we are working with them and our best hopes for them during this time.
- We will gain a family's consent before we talk to other agencies
- We will explain our agency 'Bottom Lines' which are asking families to build a network, develop [words and pictures](#) and create a family led [safety plan](#).
- We will prepare for meetings and make sure they have a clear aim.
- Parents/carers, professionals, network members and the child/young person (if age appropriate) will be invited to the meeting.
- If the child/young person cannot go to the meeting, we will speak to them before the meeting and use different [tools](#) to capture their thoughts, feelings and opinions. These can then be shared in the meeting on their behalf.
- In the meeting everyone will have a chance to share what they think is working well, what their worries are and what they feel needs to happen next.
- We will read through the [Danger Statements, Safety Goals and Scaling question](#), asking everyone to scale to track progress at every meeting.
- Any actions will be highlighted and given a timescale for children and young people to have the support they need. These will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- We will create a written record of the meeting and send it to everyone who was there. This will also be sent to anyone who could not make the meeting, so everyone is up to date.



4 Child/Young Person and Family Focused Assessment and Planning

- We will take the time to read the child's file when we start working with a child, young person and their family to help us understand what has happened in the past and if they have worked with Together for Children before.
- Right at the beginning we will start or add to the family [chronology](#) to help us understand past experiences patterns and the impact it may have had for the child/young person.
- We will make it clear to children, young people and their families why we want to work with them, what this will involve and what we mean by 'assessment'.
- We will ask for family's permission to work with them (consent) and explain their rights about this.
- We will think about the best way to share information with the child, young person and family, taking into account any communication needs they may have (language barriers, sight or hearing loss, learning disability and how we might need to work differently. (online free resource [CYPMeFirst](#))
- We will understand a family's culture, religion, ethnicity, and past experiences being mindful of this in our practice and understand how this shapes the family, the child/young person's identity, beliefs, day to day life and relationships



- We will talk to family to understand who their network is, including family, friends and those people who are important to the child and young person. This includes absent or separated parents and new partners.
- We will also work with them to create a detailed [Genogram](#) with a minimum of three generations and this will be created on the child's file, including updating the relationships section.

- Assessments will use clear, jargon free [language](#) that is easy to read and understand.
- There will be a clear reason and purpose which will explain why we are working with the family, it will include any interim safety plans, be clear about who has been seen and spoken to and which agencies we have spoken to during the assessment.
- We will ask lots of questions to understand what has got us to this point, which will include what the family tell us is the first, worst and most recent event which brought Children's Services into their lives. This will include what the impact was for the child and young person.
- Assessments will be balanced and be clear about what is fact and what is opinion.
- We will work with the child, young person and family to understand the worries (harm) and anything that makes life harder for the family or for us in working with them (complicating factors)
- We will remember to work in the middle column, to identify what is working well for the child, young person and family, including their strengths and what existing safety there already is.

- The lived life of the child or young person will be at the heart of the assessment. We will be detailed and use their words, their thoughts, feelings and opinions when talking about their life. This will help them feel included and listened to, as they are the most important people we work with.
- We will include the direct work that we have done with the child and young person, ([How we work with children and young people](#)) and reflect how this has informed our planning and decision making
- Using their own words, we will include parents, carers and the networks views about what they think are the biggest worries, what are the best things, what keeps the child safe and what they think needs to happen to make things better.
- We will be professionally curious, avoid falling into a single-story mindset by considering different ideas about what is happening for that child or young person and being prepared to change our viewpoint.
- We will be reflective and talk about the information to test our theories.
- Our assessments will be analytical, we will ask ourselves the question “so what does this mean for the child?”. We will use tools to help us with this, such as the [Harm Matrix](#) to analyse risk. We will [develop best questions](#).
- We will think about the short and long-term future impact. We will use this information to create a shared [Danger Statement](#) with the family that captures what the worries and risk of future harm are clearly, and use this throughout our work
- This will be paired with a shared [Safety Goal](#) to give the family vision about what life will look like in the future when the worries are managed.
- A matching [Scaling Question](#) will also be created to track and measure progress.
- The Bottom Lines and Contingency Plan will be clearly recorded ([Building trusting relationship and Meaningful Networks](#))
- The assessment will inform the plan for the child or young person. The plan will be shared with them in the form of a [timeline](#), the steps within the timeline will be specific, measurable, agreed by everyone, realistic and timely (SMART).
- We will write a timeline for the family to show them when work will start, what will be happening week-by-week and when we expect the work to finish. We will give the child, young person and their family a vision of how to achieve their Safety Goal step-by-step.
- Assessments will be completed on time and will take no longer than 45 working days to stop there being any delay for the child, young person and their family.
- When completed, the assessment will be seen by a manager and their comments will be included, this will be a minimum of 5 days before the assessment date is due.
- Once approved, and wherever possible the social worker will meet with the family and share the content and outcome of the assessment.



- When working with unborn babies and their families we will consider whether the [pre-birth and post birth assessment pathway](#) is needed so that every unborn baby receives the same service
- When looking at risks outside the home will considered the [Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking Framework](#).
- We will always look to our [threshold documents](#) when assessing risk to a child or young person.
- When working with Children with Disabilities we consider the [Children with Disabilities criteria](#) to make sure we provide the right support in the right way.

Signs of Safety Assessment and Planning Framework

What are we worried about?	What's working well?	What needs to happen?

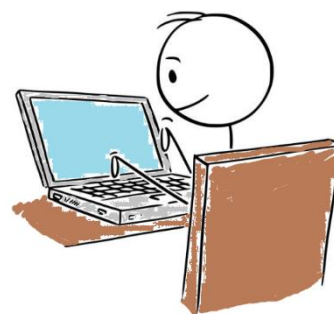
On a scale of 0–10 where ten means everyone knows the children are safe enough for the child protection authorities to close the case and zero means things are so bad for the children that they can't live at home, where do we rate this situation?
Locate different people's judgements spatially on the two-way arrow.

0 ← → 10



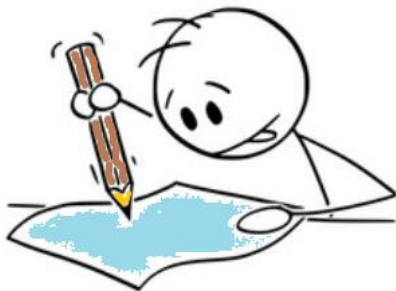
5 Recording

- A child/young person's record should be able to show what's happening for them at any given time. This means that a manager, new social worker or the out-of-hours team can immediately understand any worries, strengths, the child and family needs and how to support their plan.
- We will use recording as a tool that assists social workers in planning and making the best decisions for children and young people.
- Our recording will be of a high-quality which lets the quality of the relationship between social worker and child, and the social worker's aspirations for that child, shine through.
- We will record all information on children's electronic files that is easy to read, clear and free from jargon.
- Information will clearly show what is fact, opinion or professional judgement. Along with this being a descriptive account of what's happened, we will also provide our analysis on what this information means.
- We will always be mindful that in future years, when the child becomes an adult they might want to read their records to help them understand their childhood journey. We will recognise that for some, this may be their only link to their early life and family experiences.
- The [language](#) used in our recordings will be respectful, compassionate and empathetic towards children, young people and families circumstances, experiences and views.
- All basic family details such as names, with correct spelling, date of birth, address and contact numbers will be recorded correctly and kept up to date.
- We will record a child's religion, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, language and disability, as we know it's important that we understand all of who they are and what we need to consider when working with them.
- We will develop and keep an up-to-date [Genogram](#) and [Chronology](#) for each child so we know who is in their family, when key things happen in their lives. These will include good things as well as worries.
- When we use interpreters, we make this clear in our recording.
- Our recording will capture the child/ young person's lived experience through information about what is important to them and this will directly link to assessments and plans.
- When recording we will ask ourselves would I say this to the child or young person?
- Where [direct work](#) is completed including conversations, observations, interactions and where specific tools and resources are used this will be recorded in [blue](#).
- We will make it clear when we have seen the child alone (by ticking child seen alone) and if we're unable to see them alone, we will be clear why not.
- We will record all visits within [timescales](#). Where this cannot be achieved a manager will be informed.
- All children, young people, carers and adopters records will have a [summary](#) on their file that will follow the correct format and be updated within every 3 months or when a significant event



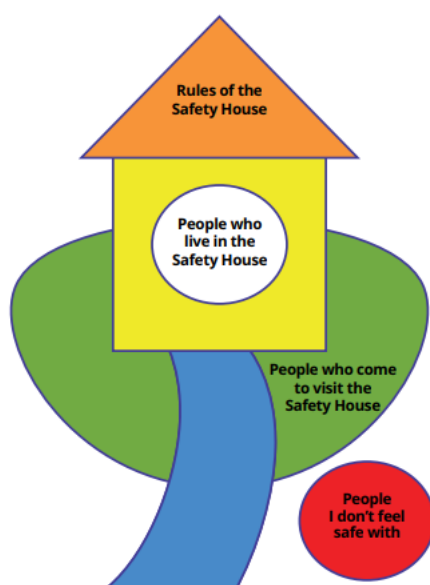
occurs.

- For clarity all senior management recordings will be recorded in **red** and management recording will be in **green**.



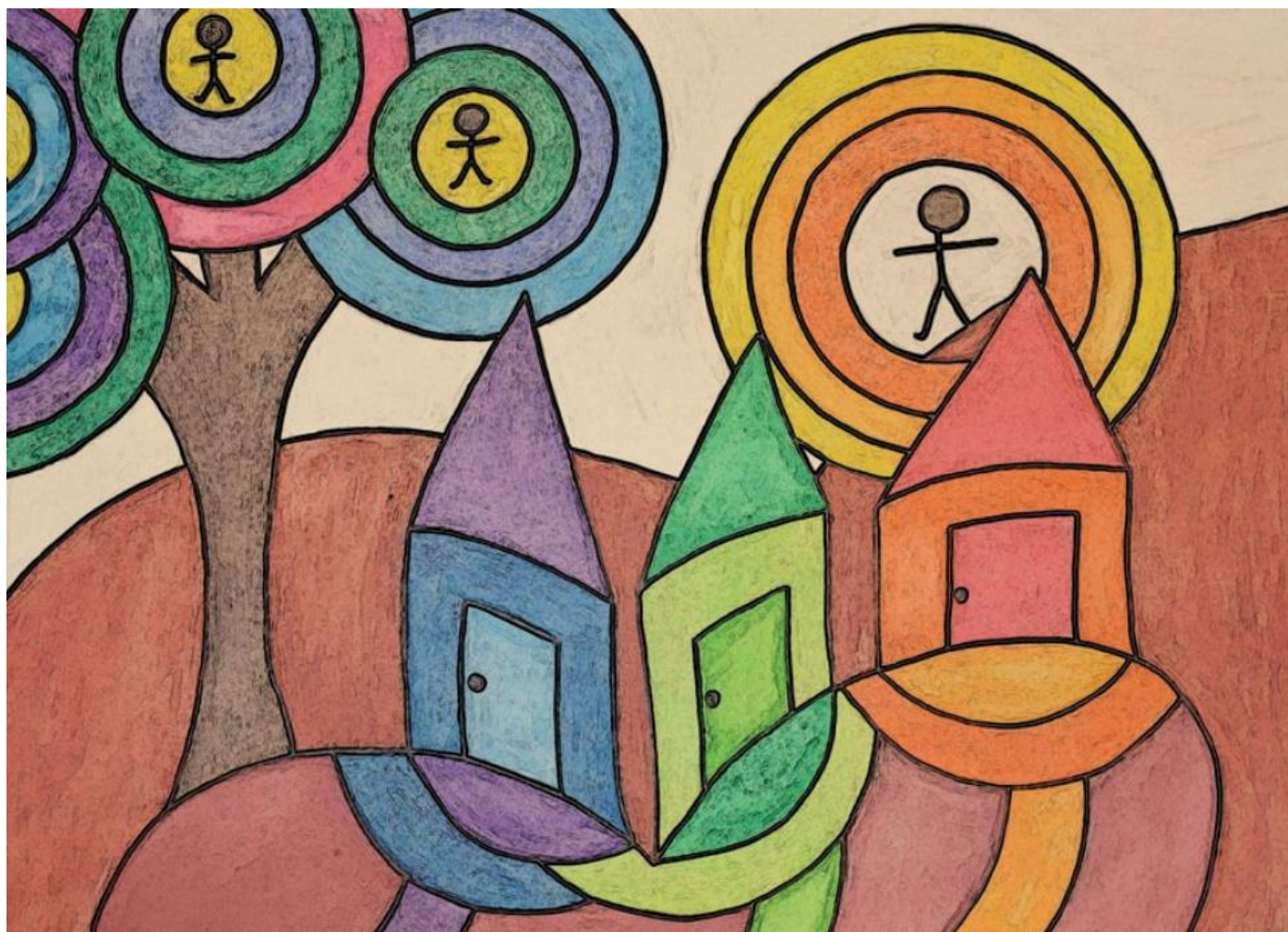
6 Children in Need

- We will work with families and gain consent to do this. They will know they have a choice and can say no to working with us.
- We will contact the child, young person and their family and arrange to meet them within five working days of becoming the allocated worker.
- Everyone in the family will know how to get in touch with their worker and their manager.
- The child or young person will be visited every 20 working days.
- Families will know how they can provide feedback to Together and Children about our work.
- We will explain to families why we are working them, what they can expect from us, and our way of working, using the Signs of Safety Model will be clearly explained.
- Children and young people's safety will always be our priority; we will see, speak, and listen to them to understand their lived experience.
- We know that [Building Trusting Relationships and meaningful Networks](#) is essential to help children, young people and their families create lasting change.
- We will encourage every family to develop their own [Networks](#), where they can work together to build on their strengths.
- We will work with the whole family, not leaving anyone out. We will encourage the family to meet so that they can be part of developing the child's plan.
- A family led assessment will be completed within 45 working days. We will update the assessment after any significant life event or after a maximum of every twelve months. ([Child/Young person and Family Focused Assessment and Planning](#))
- The family will develop their plan with help from the worker and will include; bottom lines, contingency planning, a clear timeline of work showing when our work with the family will end.



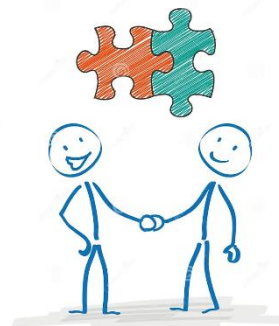
- The plan will set out who is involved and what they are doing to help them. There will be a named network lead, clear plan rules and an explanation to the child/young person about why we are involved and a [child/young person's version of the plan](#).
- Scaling questions will be developed with families and professionals to understand the views and experiences of children, young people, and their families to help understand how the support in the plan is helping to make a difference.
- Child in Need reviews will take place every 20 working days and the family, network and professionals will be invited to attend.
- The review will look at the progress and impact of the plan with the family, network and professionals.
- The Child in Need reviews will have the danger statements and safety goal read out loud at the start of the meeting. The structure will use the three columns of what we are worried about, what is working well and what needs to happen. The meeting will be strength based and focus on any new worries. The scaling question will be used to measure progress of achieving the plan.

- We will include the child or young person's views within the meetings, this can be through direct work, sharing their views before the review or in person.
- For children and young people who have additional needs or complex disabilities their visiting patterns may be different ([Visiting timescales at a glance](#))
- Managers or Assistant Team Managers will chair Child in Need meetings every 6 months and the closure meeting



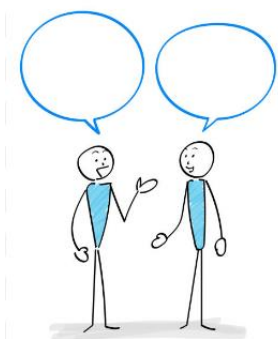
7 Child Protection

- When working with families where there are Child Protection worries, we will maintain a focus on safety.
- We will co-operate with the person and not the potential abuse and see everyone as people worth doing business with.
- We will recognise that all families have signs of safety.
- We will keep children/young people and their families up to date along every step of this process. They will be told what is happening, why it is happening and what will be happening next.
- Children/young people, their parents/carers and family will be invited to all meetings (apart from the Strategy Meeting) and encouraged to share what they think is going well, what they are worried about and what they want to happen.
- Children/young people, their parents/carers and family will be given a copy of the minutes from each meeting they go to, as well as any reports that are prepared before the meeting.
- Parents/carers have the right to bring their own Legal Representation to the meeting, who can give them legal advice based on what they have heard.



Strategy Meetings

- When there are immediate worries that the child/young person could be at risk of 'significant harm' a Strategy Meeting will be held.
- A Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager will chair this meeting, and all professionals who know something about the family will be invited to share information. A minute taker will also be invited to make sure a full record of the meeting is taken.
- The Danger Statement and Safety Goal will be read out in the meeting and everyone will have the chance to share what they feel is working well and what they are worried about. The Scaling Questions will be read out at the end and everyone will give a number, their reasons for that number and what they would want to happen to scale one number higher.
- At the end of the meeting there will be several tasks and timescales which will be delegated out to the professionals attending the meeting.
- Based on the information that has been shared each professional will make a recommendation on whether they feel the child/young person is at risk of significant harm and whether child protection enquiries should take place. The chair of the meeting makes this decision based on the information shared and everyone's recommendations.



enquiries should take place. The chair of the meeting makes this decision based on the information shared and everyone's recommendations.

- Although, the child/young person, parents/carers and family are not invited to this meeting they should know that it is taking place. The Social Worker will talk them through what a Strategy Meeting is, why it is being held and let them know what the outcome is.
- A Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken even if the outcome of the strategy meeting is that child protection enquiries are not required. This assessment will require consent from the family, and it is their right to accept or decline.

Child Protection Enquiries (Section 47)

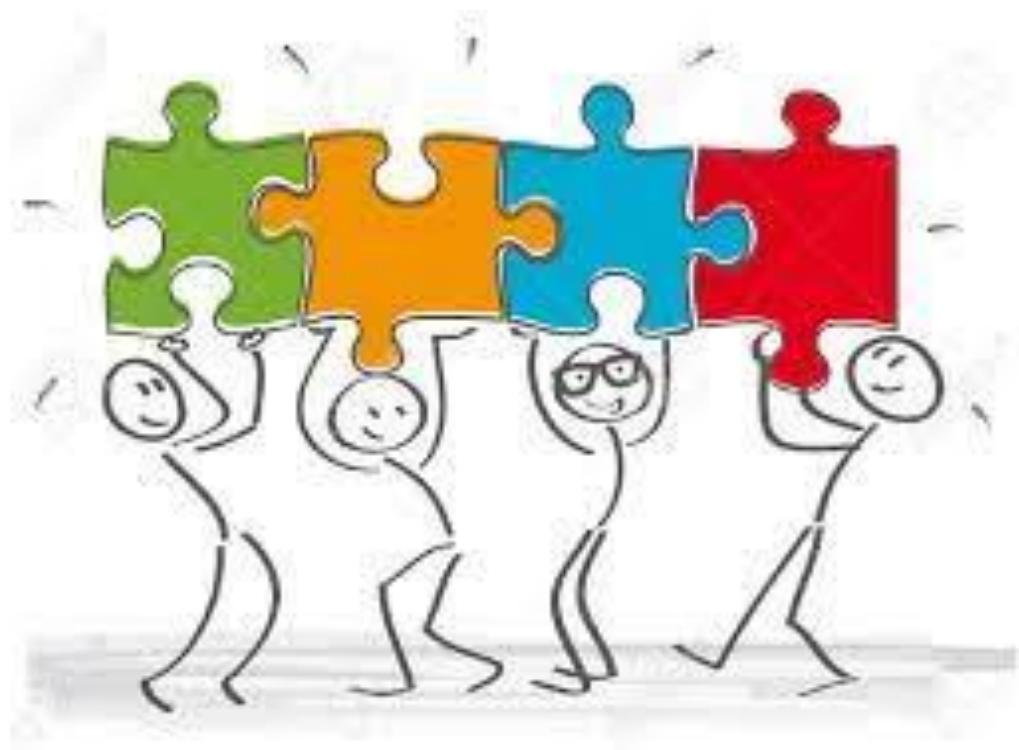
- The Social Worker will contact other professionals and services to make sure that they have all the information they might need to understand what has happened. ([Section 47 Enquiries](#))
- Although you do not need parent/carers consent to make these enquiries, we will always inform parents and carers about who we are contacting and why.
- The tasks from the Strategy Meeting and agency checks will be completed within 15 working days.
- A provisional Initial Child Protection Conference must be booked at the first opportunity after the Strategy Meeting.
- We will always search for detail to fully explore, understand and analyse the situation that led to the child protection enquiries ([Child/Young Person and family Focused Assessment and Planning](#))
- The Social Worker will meet with their Manager to talk about any new information gathered 5 working days after the Strategy Meeting. They will decide on whether there needs to be an Initial Child Protection Conference and if so, the provisional booking will be confirmed.
- The Social Worker will visit the child/young person and their parents/carers over a 15 working day period. During this time the child/young person views will be gathered through direct work ([How we work with children and young people](#))
- Parents/carers will be given advice around the Child Protection Process including the right to Legal Representation and Advocacy.

Child Protection Conference

- An Initial Child Protection Conference will take place within 15 working days after the Strategy Meeting.
- Parents/carers, the family network, the child/young person (if age appropriate) and the professionals who know something about the family will be invited to the meeting.
- The parents/carers will receive the social workers report 48 hours before the conference and will have the opportunity to talk through the report with the social worker
- The Conference Chair will lead the conference and before this takes place will meet with the parents/carers/family to gather their views, make sure they have seen everyone's reports beforehand and talk about any worries or questions they have about the meeting.
- The Danger Statement and Safety Goal will be read out in the meeting, and everyone will have the chance to share what they feel is working well and what they are worried about. The Scaling Questions will be read out afterwards and everyone will give a number, their reasons for that number and what they would want to happen to scale one number higher.
- After hearing all the important information, professionals will make a recommendation about whether they feel the child/young person is at risk of significant harm and if they need a Child Protection Plan. They will also make a recommendation about what category is most appropriate for the child/young person because they are at risk of either physical harm, emotional harm, sexual harm or neglect, considering [Working Together \(2018\) definitions](#). It is important to familiarise yourself with this document regularly.



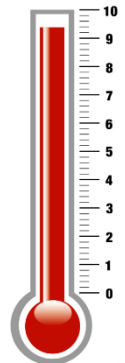
- In exceptional circumstances the Chair of the Child Protection Conference can formally change the decision that conference members have made regarding the threshold for a child protection plan.
- Exceptional circumstances will include where no agreement can be reached within conference or where the Conference Chair believes that there is a safeguarding need to override the view of the professionals and believes that the child is in need of a Child Protection Plan.
- The proposed Child Protection Plan, bottom lines and safety plan rules will be discussed so that everyone knows what is expected of them and what needs to happen. Any changes will be agreed and made together at this point.
- At the end of the meeting the Conference Chair will book in the First Review Child Protection Conference, which will be within 3 months of the Initial Child Protection Conference (6 monthly afterwards).
- The Social Worker will book in the first Core Group Meeting within 10 working days of the Conference, and this meeting will be chaired by a Manager or Assistant Team Manager.



8 Cared for Children and Young People



- We know that children and young people are best living with their families and people who are naturally connected to them.
- At the centre of our practice is keeping children and young people safe so that they are not at risk of harm and making sure their voices, wishes and feelings are heard.
- Families will know why we do not think it is safe for their children to be living with them. We will explain that Parents/Carers should get their own legal advice.
- When it is not safe for a child or young person to be cared for by parents or carers, we will always look to family members or people in their network to care for them first. To do this we will complete a viability assessment. ([Kinship Care \(Family and Friends carers Policy\)](#))
- The first day that it becomes unsafe for a child/young person to live at home will also be the first day we work with parents/carers and their networks to safety plan and work towards them returning home.
- This will be achieved through regular family network meetings, using a clear timeline, and trajectory following the [Safety Planning Barometer](#).
- We will work with families to create a Words and Pictures explanation of why we are worried and what the safety plan is. This will be shared with the child or young person and their network.
- We know it is important that children and young people keep their sense of belonging by remaining connected to their families and communities. Family time between children, young people and their families will always be promoted.
- There will be regular meetings to talk about the child or young person's plan, so we know the best decisions are being made for them. Children and young people will be invited to all their reviews and meetings about them so that their wishes and feelings can be heard, if they do not wish to attend then their views will be gathered before the meeting. For children who are old enough we will complete the [Signs of Success Mapping Tool](#) to do this.
- A child/young person's first Cared for Review will happen within 20 days of them becoming cared-for. This will be chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the social worker, carers, and any important family members and professionals will be there.
- The social worker will complete the Cared for Review assessment and Care Plan these will then be shared with the family at least three days before the first cared for review and five days before every other review.
- Children/young people will also have an Initial [Health assessment](#) which will take place within in 3 months of becoming card for if not sooner. This is then reviewed every six months for children under the age of 5 and every 12 months if they are over the age of 5. Parents will be invited to these assessments.



- Personal Education Plan (PEP) will be completed within 10 days of becoming care and within 20 days if a child/young person changes school. They will be completed in consultation with Sunderland Virtual School. These are reviewed every term i.e. 3 times per year 6 months, or in the event of a major change (e.g. school move).
- A child/young person's second Cared for Review will take place within three months of the first review, and subsequent reviews every six months following this. Unless a child/young person's Care Plan changes when we will inform the IRO and then hold an early review.
- Children's care plans and young people's pathway plans will be individual to them, we will listen and will honour the views of children, their family and their carers.
- All children will have a copy of their care plan in a way they can understand and they will receive an updated care plan after every review.
- Care team meetings will happen every 6 -12 weeks so that the child, social worker, carers and any important family members and professionals can make sure that the child's care plan and tasks from the review are being carried out properly.
- We will share important information about the child/young person with the carers to help them understand and provide the best possible care. This will include things like their routines, their likes and dislikes, family history, their health and education.
- When a child moves to a new home, the carer, the child, the foster carers social worker and the child's social worker will agree a Safe Care plan that supports any day-to-day safety and wellbeing worries like where children sleep, and who will help the child with personal care.
- Every 12 months we will reassess the child/young person's situation by completing a Child and Family Assessment, we will work with child/young person, their carers, family and network to make sure we still have the best and right plan for them. The Care Plan will be shared with the family and carers.
- We will support children and young people to access advocacy and [independent visitors](#) so that their voices can be heard.



- Every child/young person will have a completed Words and Pictures explanation from their family and we will complete life story work with the child/young person so that they can understand their journey.
- A child/young person's social worker will contribute to the annual review of the foster carers who are caring for the child/young person.

[Permanency Planning](#)

- [The Children Act 1989](#) identified permanence as 'the long-term plan for the child's upbringing...to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood

and beyond and to give them a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging’.

- We know that this stability is one of the things that helps children to achieve good outcomes which is why working towards permanency from the very start is so important.



- For some children/young a plan of permanency will mean returning home to their family. For other children it could mean living with a relative or someone else known to them under either Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order and for others a plan of adoption might need to be considered.
- Similarly, long-term fostering arrangements can offer a stable home allowing family connections to remain.
- Wherever possible we will involve children/young people in their permanency plans, explaining how decisions are made and the reasons for those decisions.

- A permanence plan will be agreed by the child/young person’s second cared-for review, and it will be formally reviewed in future cared-for reviews.
- We know the longest relationships a child/young person will have will be with their brothers and sisters. If there is a permanence plan that may include them being separated, this will be properly assessed and only happen in the best interests of the children. We will think carefully about how their relationship is maintained.
- When we write a Child Permanence Report, we will understand that it’s an important record which is kept long after an adoption order is made. The language of the report needs to be clear and balanced for everyone reading it to understand the life experiences and needs of a child.
- It will give the child a true account of their life story in the future about how the important decisions were made.
- The Child Permanence report will be shared with the Agency Decision Maker for them to approve the plan for adoption, it will also be shared with the child’s parents.
- For children living with Connected Carers we will write a support plan showing what we will do to help make this living arrangement work and it will include a financial assessment of the family.
- When the permanence plan is for long-term fostering, we undertake a matching process to find the right foster carers for the child/young person to live with.
- If there are worried about the stability of where a child/young person’s is living we will hold pre-disruption meeting chaired by a Team Manager. This meeting will identify who needs to do what, to support the living arrangement to maintain stability and sense of belonging.



For Children who are Cared for by Connected Carers and Foster Carers will follow these Practice Standards:



- All carers and adopters will have their own named social worker. They will be provided with the contact details (phone number, email address, office address) for their worker as well as the team duty phone number and Emergency Duty Team phone number.
- All foster carers and connected carers will be visited by their social

worker at least once per calendar month for supervision so that Together for Children can understand how each child's living arrangement is going, if the foster carers require any support or additional training and so they can make sure they are the best carers for our children.

- All foster carers and connected carers will receive at least two unannounced visits to their home per year by a social worker, this is to make sure this remains the best environment for any child/young person to be growing up in.
- All foster carers and connected carers will have an annual fostering review chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer that will look at what has worked well in the past year, what we are worried about and what needs to happen in the coming year.
- We will always obtain a criminal records check, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS check) and a fostering medical during the assessment process. These will be renewed every 5 years whilst a foster carer or connected carer is approved. This is so we can be confident that the carer can provide safe care.



9 Care Experienced

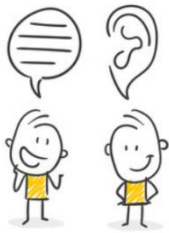
- We will have the same hopes, dreams and aspirations for our care experienced young people that we would have for our own children when they reach adulthood/ independence.
- We want them to be healthy, happy having skills and confidence to explore and venture out into the world to explore their dreams and to achieve and be successful to the best of their ability. We will advocate and empower them to do this.
- When young people/adults are ready to take their steps into independence we want them to have developed a degree of strength and resilience as well as problem solving skills for those times when life presents a challenge.
- To do this we spend time getting to know the young person/adult and work on building a relationship around respect, honesty, and trust. We will always ask questions that will help them understand what is going well for them.
- We will complete the [Mapping Success tool](#) to understand their aspirations and goals, and plan how to support them to achieve this. This will include what they are going to do, what support they need, who is going to support them and by when. We use scaling questions to measure their progress towards their goals.
- Pathway Plans will be clear and jargon free and are written by/in the words of the young person/adult. We will make sure they have equal opportunities to other young people their age.
- We will be open with the young person/adult about any worries or risks and help them understand why we are worried and work with them to bring about safety.



- We will listen and understand who the most important people in their lives are to help them create a network. This could include, family, friends, past carers, people in their community and professionals who they have a good relationship with.
- We will help them bring all these people together through regular network meetings to identify the people who will continue to support them through adulthood.
- We will make sure the young person/adult understands their identity and family history through meaningful life-story work.
- We will support the young person to access education, training and employment as well as understand how to access financial support to support further education.
- When we know young people/adults might feel reluctant to work with us we ask questions to understand the reason behind this and be creative in our way of working to re-establish a connection with them.
- Each care experienced young person/adult will have a different visiting pattern and statutory entitlement of support called 'eligibility criteria' ([Leaving Care and Transition \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://Leaving_Care_and_Transition.proceduresonline.com))

10 Supervision

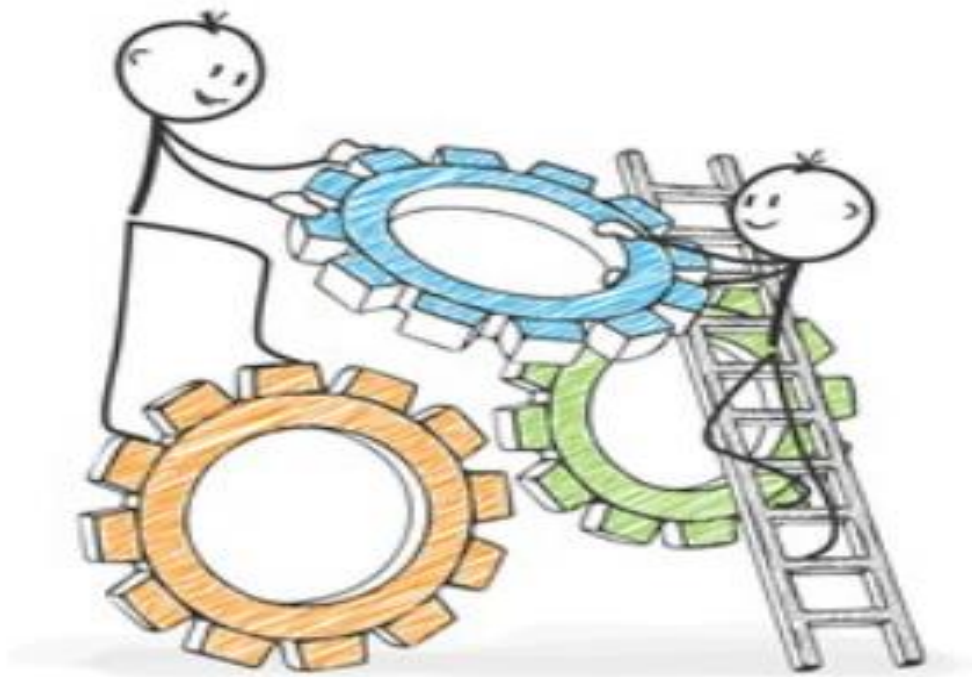
- Good supervision is a cornerstone of excellent social work practice and the way it is recorded evidences our thinking and professionalism.



- We will talk about the families we work with in supervision with our line managers, allowing us to strengthen our professional development through appreciative enquiry and reflective discussions, whilst making sure that aims and outcomes are progressed within timescales.
 - A supervision agreement should be signed and dated by you and your supervisor.
- Supervision relating to children and young people must be saved in forms on their liquid logic record.
- Management decisions will form a 'golden thread' through our recordings and demonstrate a 'guiding hand' of professional expertise on key decisions. Management decisions are made in consultation with social workers and other relevant staff, and this should be evidenced across recordings not solely within supervision records.
- We recognise that professional supervision is central to positive social work practice and that good supervision helps us to do our job well. It is vital for our well-being, professional development, and management oversight. Most importantly, good supervision will help us to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children and their families.
- Supervision will form a regular space to slow down our thinking and reflect on what has gone well, what has gone less well and to learn from both. Records will show how we have thought about and reflected on any previous supervision actions.
- Critical reflection will be an important part of the conversations in our supervision. It will show that we have thought about how our work has benefited a child's circumstances.
- Supervision records will always demonstrate evidence of the **quality and impact** of any supervision.
- We will use supervision to talk through the impact our work has on us personally, as well as exploring decision-making, planning and impact for our children and families.
- Supervision will be reflective and take place in an environment and relationship that feels safe, both to the supervisor and ourselves. It will be **emotionally supportive**, but challenge us to truly **think about our practice** and the impact for the children and families we are supporting.
- Individual supervision will be enhanced by (but not substituted for) **group supervision** which will always be recorded on our children's records.
- Supervision will happen in a **dedicated space and time**. This helps us know when to expect supervision so that we can rely on regularly having a safe reflective space.

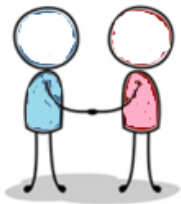


- Our supervisors will not expect that every child's experiences will be explored at every supervision session, as supervision should always be proportionate to risk: prioritising our greatest worries, but over a number of sessions, making space for all children's experiences to be discussed.
- Our supervision records will show that we consider any upcoming timescales and that any delays are understood and explored with the best interests of the child and family, whilst helping us to make sure we remain accountable for the service we provide to our children and their families.
- Personal supervision files will evidence how our professional development has evolved through training, skills development and knowledge, and how we have applied this in our practice with children and families. It will explore responses to stress, personal experiences and worries and how these impact on our ability to do our job, so that supervisors can make sure we have the right support to help us do this.
- Personal supervision records should be signed by both you and your supervisor and returned to your supervisor to keep on your file.
- Supervisors will strive to support us in meeting the government knowledge and skills statements, along with the [Professional Capabilities Framework](#).
- Supervision will contribute to how our performance is managed, and will include regular discussions linked to our individual [Thrive goals](#) and our overall practice development.
- We will never lose sight of the context of children's social work. Children and families have a right to receive help and care from properly qualified and experienced practitioners who are continually developing their practice.



11 Management responsibilities

- Managers will work with practitioners to make sure that children, young people and their families receive the best possible support and help. They will work in keeping with;
 - [TfC's Practice Standards](#)
 - [Social Work England, Professional Standards](#)
 - [The Department for Education's Knowledge and Skills Statement for approved child and family practitioners](#)
- Managers across the services, including Directors, Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, Assistant Team Managers and Registered Managers have an overall responsibility for making sure that our work with children, young people and their families is of a high standard, which includes the following:
- Ensuring children, young people and their families receive a professional experience from the beginning of our work with them, to the point at which our support or help is no longer needed.



- Make sure that practitioners working with children, young people and families are respectful in their work and recognise our children, young people and their families are people worth doing business with.
 - Make sure that decisions about the type of help and support we provide are clear and show the thinking behind them, ensuring that wherever possible this is done in partnership with the child, young person, their family and their support network.
- Work with our practitioners, to make sure they have the right skills, competence and capacities they need to offer the best help and support possible to the children, young people and families they are working with need.
- Provide clear direction and set ambitious priorities and aspirations for our children, young people and their families.
- Make sure that the child or young person's voice is heard and fully considered when making decisions and agreeing plans.
- Scrutinise children and young people's records to make sure that recordings, analysis of need and report writing are completed to a high standard, are clear and jargon free and written using language which the adult the child will become, could understand in the future.
- Provide regular, good quality supervision, that encourages and shows critical reflection, professional curiosity and clear direction.
- Provide annual appraisals ([Thrive programme](#)) and well organised staff and team meetings.
- Encourage and support practitioners to access practice development and training opportunities.
- Make sure staff work within a supportive team culture, with good communications, and routine commitment to rigorous professional practice.

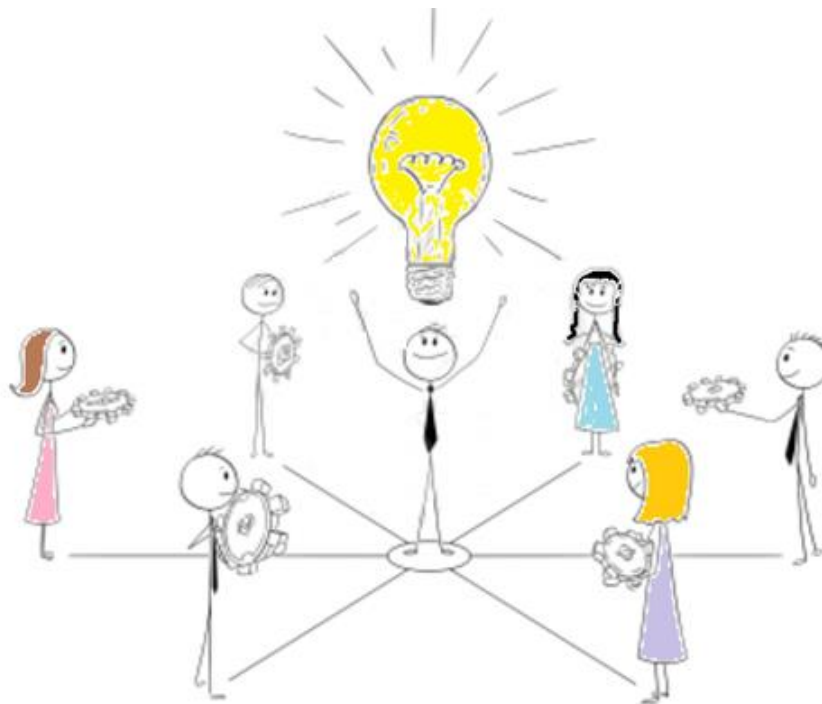


- Demonstrate effective multiagency collaboration and working in the best interests of our children, young people and their families.
- Use and scrutinise data reporting to monitor and improve performance, identify areas of practice improvement and support continual service improvement.
- Make sure Signs of Safety is fully embraced and implemented consistently across the service.

As well as the above, Registered Managers also have responsibilities as set out in the Children's homes regulations, including quality standards guide, which can be found [here](#)

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services can be found at [here](#).

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption can be found [here](#).



Visiting Timescales at a Glance

Assessment Team	<p>We will see the child or young person at home, alone (if appropriate) within the first 5 working days.</p> <p>Then at least every 20 working days afterwards.</p>
Child in Need	<p>We will see the child or young person at home, alone (if appropriate) within the first 5 working days.</p> <p>Then at least every 20 working days afterwards.</p>
Child Protection	<p>We will visit the child or young person will at home, alone (if appropriate) within 48 hours of having a Child Protection plan.</p> <p>Then at least every 10 working days afterwards.</p>
Cared for Children	<p>We will visit Cared for children on the day they move to their new house, then again within the first week of moving in.</p> <p>We will visit weekly until the first Cared For review meeting, unless the plan for them to move was previously ratified. If the move was previously ratified, we will still visit weekly for the first 4 weeks, before moving to a minimum of 6 weekly visits.</p> <p>We will visit children and young people who live with connected carers once every 4 weeks until they have been approved as foster carers. Then, we will visit once every 6 weeks.</p> <p>We will visit children and young people who live with foster carers once every 6 weeks. If the child/young person's foster home is ratified as their long-term home, visits can then take place once every 12 weeks, unless a need for this to happen more often is identified within supervision.</p> <p>We will visit young people living in residential homes once every 6 weeks no matter how long they have lived there.</p> <p>If the home is agreed to become permanent, we will visit once every 12 weeks.</p>
Children Living with Adopters	<p>We will visit children and young people living with an adoptive family within the first week of them moving in.</p> <p>We will visit the child or young person once every week for the first 4 weeks.</p> <p>Then, once every 6 weeks until an Adoption Order is granted.</p>
Privately Fostered Children	<p>We will visit the child or young person within the first 7 days.</p>

	Then, once every 6 weeks for the first year and once every 12 weeks afterwards.
Next Steps Team	We will visit Cared for Children and children and young people who have a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan within the timescales outlined above. We will aim to visit young people over the age of 18, once every 8 weeks.
Emergency Duty Team	We will visit a child or young person's home when there are urgent safety worries the same day.
	How quickly we will visit, will depend on risk and availability of partnering agencies such as Police if needed.
Connected Carers and Fostering Team	We will visit connected carers and foster carers once every month. We will visit carers unannounced at least twice per year.
Children with Disabilities	We will see the child or young person at home, alone (if appropriate) within the first 5 working days. Then at least every 20 working days afterwards.
Unregulated Homes visiting Pattern	We will see the child or young person at their home at least weekly, alone (if appropriate), determined by the risk assessment and the specific vulnerabilities of the young person.

Assessment Timescales at a Glance

All Assessments	<p>The Social Worker and Team Manager might agree to have assessments completed sooner depending on the situation or level of risk.</p> <p>All assessments should be shared at least 5 days before the conference, panel, or review.</p> <p>If the assessment is not being prepared for a meeting, it should be shared at the next visit</p>
Child and Family Assessment	<p>We will complete a child and family assessment within 45 days.</p> <p>We will complete a child and family assessment at least once every 12 months or following a significant event.</p>
Pre-Birth Assessment	<p>we will complete a brief child and family assessment within 10 days of allocation.</p> <p>A pre-birth assessment will start no later than 20 weeks gestation. We will complete this assessment within 45 days.</p> <p>A post-birth assessment will start the day the baby is born. We will complete this assessment within 45 days.</p>
Private Fostering Assessment	<p>We will complete a Private Fostering Assessment with the carer within 42 days or as soon of the outcome of the carers Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is received (whichever comes first) of being notified of the arrangement. If there's a need for Child in Need assessment this will also be completed within working 45 days, alongside the Private Fostering Assessment.</p>
Connected Carer Assessment	<p>We will complete a viability assessment within 10 working days of allocation.</p> <p>We will complete a Regulation 24 assessment within 16 weeks of the child or young person living with Carer.</p> <p>We might extended this assessment period through Regulation 25 for a further 8 weeks.</p> <p>We will complete a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessment within 12 weeks of receiving the referral.</p> <p>We will complete an SGO support assessment post order if requested within 6 weeks.</p>
Fostering Assessment	<p>We will complete an assessment of potential new foster carers over two stages.</p>

Stage 1 will be completed within 8 weeks.

If the carers progress through stage 1, stage 2 will be completed within 16 weeks.

We will complete a review assessment once per year for foster carers.

Adoption Assessment

We will complete an assessment for new adopters over two stages.

Stage 1 will be completed within 8 weeks.

If the carers progress through stage 1, stage 2 will be completed within 16 weeks.

We will also complete a review assessment once per year for adopters who are still waiting to be matched.

Next Steps Assessment

We will start a pathway assessment when a young person turns 15 years and 5 months. We will complete this within 16 weeks and the assessment is reviewed as part of the pathway planning process. The pathway assessment replaces the child and family assessment.

Meeting Timescales at a Glance

Family Network Meeting	<p>We will hold the first family network meeting within 15 working days after allocation.</p> <p>We will hold a family network meeting at least every 4 weeks.</p> <p>We will arrange a rapid family network meeting within 24 hours of a strategy meeting, or when a child or young person becomes Cared for</p>
Child in Need, Care Team Meetings	<p>We will arrange a child in need meeting once every 4 weeks.</p>
Strategy Meeting	<p>We will arrange a strategy meeting urgently when there are worries a child may be suffering 'significant harm'.</p> <p>If the child is not born yet, the strategy meeting will be held within week 28 of the pregnancy.</p>
Child Protection Conferences	<p>We will arrange an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), 15 working days after the strategy meeting.</p> <p>We will arrange the first Review Conference within 3 months of the initial conference, and every 6 months afterwards.</p>
Core Group Meetings	<p>We will arrange the first core group meeting 10 working days after the Initial Child Protection Conference.</p> <p>We will arrange a core group meeting once every 4 weeks.</p>
Public Law Outline (PLO) Meetings	<p>We will arrange a PLO meeting within 7 working days of parents receiving their PLO letter.</p>
Cared for, Care Team Meetings	<p>We will arrange a care team meeting once every 4 weeks.</p> <p>The Next Steps Team will arrange a care team meeting once every 6 weeks, or once every 8 weeks if the young person is settled in their home.</p> <p>We will arrange care team meetings once every 12 weeks for children who have a ratified care plan of long-term care (unless it is felt these are needed more often).</p>
Cared for Conferences	<p>We will arrange an Initial Cared for Review within 20 working days of the child or young person becoming Cared for by TfC.</p> <p>We will arrange the first Cared for Review Conference within 4 months of the initial conference, and every 6 months afterwards.</p>
Care Arrangements Meeting	<p>We will arrange a Care Arrangements Meeting within 3 days of the child or young person living with a new carer in a new home.</p>
Final Care Planning Meeting	<p>We will arrange a final care planning meeting, 1 week before assessments and reports are due to be sent to the Court for a final hearing.</p>

Appendix Case Summaries

Provide quick access to information that summarises the key issues regarding the children or young people and their family.

Ensures clear information is available, including details of:

- Child or Young Person's profile
- What's going well?
- What are we worried about?
- What needs to happen?
- Family network
- Professionals involved
- Backup plan

Should be updated at least every three months or when there has been a significant event, whichever is the sooner

Glossary

Signs of Safety has its own terms that you may not be familiar with, so we have created a glossary of terms to make sure that practitioners and partners are using a common language.

Signs of Safety is a strengths-based model, involving a questioning approach to working with children, young people, families and carers. It is used across all areas of work from Early Help, Cared for Children, Fostering and Adoption. It works to increase safety and wellbeing and reduce risks by highlighting what is already working well for children, young people, families and carers, and supporting them to strengthen this with the help of their support networks. It keeps children and young people at the centre and uses straightforward, plain language that everyone, including children and young people, can understand.

Family Networks include parents, carers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbours and friends etc. who can all be involved and have a part to play in building safety and success for children and young people. Even when children and young people are cared for, the network of people with who they belong to should be involved, to provide stability and continuity in their lives. The networks help parents, carers and other network members create safe and lasting plans.

Family Network Meetings are how we work with families and carers to create strong and manageable safety and success plans, by bringing the network together for a meeting facilitated by the practitioner. Family Network Meetings are ongoing over time, working with them to successively create and then demonstrate they can carry out the plan.

Rapid Family Network Meeting is an urgent meeting with the parents, carers and their network that is facilitated by a practitioner. This is usually held on the day of an emergency. The purpose of the meeting is for the family and their support network to develop an immediate Safety Plan to keep a child or young person safe.

Genogram/Family Tree is a structured, detailed picture of the family relations.

Eco-Map provides a visual means used to understand who is in the family, child or young person's network (be that family, friends, neighbours, school staff etc.) including who they see as important to them, who their close relationships are with, and how they view their relationships and connections around them.

Three Columns involves gathering and analysing information through a structured, questioning approach, covering what we are worried about, what is working well and what needs to happen.

Mapping is when the practitioner takes all the information they have gathered and analyses it across the three columns, adding depth by structuring this into the **seven Signs of Safety analysis domains** (harm, danger, complicating factors, existing strengths, existing safety, safety goals and next steps)

Existing Strengths are positive aspects of the parents, carers and networks' role in the child or young person's life that helps them grow up well and creates safety in relation to the worries.

Existing Safety is times when the worrying behaviour or danger was present, and the child was not hurt. Something that has happened in the past that was proven to keep the child safe. Building on how this worked well and who helped.

Complicating Factors are difficulties that a family are facing that may make it harder for them to address the worries, but do not cause direct harm to the child or young person.

Danger and Worry Statements are clear descriptions, in plain simple language, setting out who is worried, what they are specifically worried about (detailing the worrying adult or teenage behaviour) and the likely impact on the child or young person, now and in the future if nothing changes.

Safety, Wellbeing and Success Goals are clear descriptions, in plain simple language, of what we will see in the daily life of the child or young person that tells us that things are good enough, they are safe, achieving well in their lives and are being well looked after in their parents or carers care.

A Scaling Question is a question that asks parents, carers, networks, children, young people and practitioners to rate a situation, often linked to the Danger or Worry Statement, and to measure progress towards the Safety, Wellbeing or Success Goals. This is on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 and 10 are clearly defined. It allows space and reflection for people to think about what is working well and what needs to happen to make things better or safer for the child or young person.

Safety Planning the process in which the practitioner uses a series of questions (Strengths/Safety/Solution Focused) to help the parents, carers and their network to come up with a Safety Plan that addresses each Danger or Worry statement.

Solution Focused Questions are a style of question that a practitioner can use to help families to talk about problems and difficulties in a way that opens up more positive conversations, helping them to identify better ways of dealing with things in the future. They focus on things that are working and have worked well in the past, building on these for future solutions.

A Safety Object is used in the Safety Planning process to help the child or young person gain help when they feel worried or unsafe, taking the pressure from them in speaking out about this. The object is chosen by the child or young person and the network will know how to respond when their Safety Object is moved and who will help them.

A Safety Plan includes a specific set of rules and arrangements that describe how the family will live its everyday life and show everyone how the child or young person will kept be safe now and in the future.

Bottom Lines are a set of minimum non-negotiables set by the practitioner about what must or must not happen so the child or young person is kept safe.

A Contingency Plan explains clearly what will happen if the bottom lines are not stuck to 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. Children's

Services must be clear on the contingency plan if the family plans are not working out, and this is not an automatic assumption of taking legal steps.

Words and Pictures is a child-friendly method to help children and young people understand their worries, what has happened in their lives and what people are doing to make things better for them.

Timeline and Trajectory is a tool to provide vision to the family, showing them the aim of the work and setting out the steps and timeframe to achieve this.

Direct Work is specific pieces of work that are done with children and young people to understand their wishes and feelings, in order to help with the planning with their network and achieving goals.

My Three Houses is a Direct Work tool used with children and young people to help understand their wishes and feelings. It covers the three main analysis areas of worries, good things and things they would like to change/be different in their lives.

The Safety House is a Direct Work tool to use with children and young people to understand their wishes and feelings and what they need to see happening to feel safe in their lives and home.

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of using questions to help families or practitioners to look at what has gone well in the past, understand why it went well, and help them to reflect on this and come up with good ideas for future plans or practice.