

# SIGNS OF SAFETY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL APPROACH TO  
CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE IN TUSLA

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# Programme

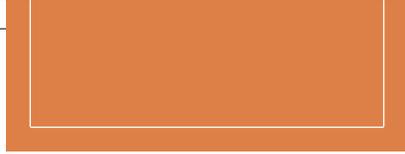
- Background & Context
- What is Signs of Safety/Principles
- Assessment Framework
- How it is applied in Tusla
- Scaling
- Networks
- What is expected of others?
- Q&A

# Background and Context

- Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Strategy 2017-2022
- One approach to child protection and welfare practice nationally
- 2017 – Signs of Safety was introduced in Tusla as the national approach.
- Information to be gathered and analysed rigorously at the point of referral

# What is Signs of Safety?

- A strengths based, safety focused approach to child protection practice.
- Places the family as the expert in their own lives
- Fostering a stance of inquiry (Questioning approach )
- Relationship based
- Landing grand aspirations in everyday life



# ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Thinking about the child/teenager and the family situation in this child protection case:

What are we worried about?	What's working well?	What needs to happen?
<p><b>HARM</b></p> <p><b>DANGER STATEMENTS</b></p> <p><b>Complicating Factors</b></p>	<p><b>Existing Strengths</b></p> <p><b>EXISTING SAFETY</b></p>	<p><b>SAFETY GOALS</b></p> <p><b>Next Steps</b></p>

On a scale of 0–10 where 10 means the child/teen 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 judgment numbers on scale for different people, e.g. different professionals, child, parents etc.



# When a report is made to Tusla

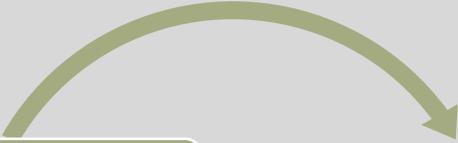
- Screened by a social worker within 24 hours & acknowledged
- A decision is made about whether there is potential harm or danger to a child that needs further information
- It moves from the screening process to the intake or preliminary inquiry process.
- If a decision is made at intake that further information needs to be sought from other people, the case moves from intake to initial assessment.
- An initial assessment is a participatory process with the family and others to gather and analyse information about harm, danger, strengths and safety.
- The immediate safety of the child is considered at every point in the process (through scaling questions).
- At the end of the initial assessment, a decision is made about whether the family require Tusla led safety planning (welfare or Conference) or whether the case can be closed or diverted for lower-level support (Hardiker).

Report  
Received



Reviewed by SW

Screening



Preliminary  
Inquiry  
(intake)

If there is possible harm  
or danger to a child



To determine if the child  
is safe at home and  
whether Tusla-led safety  
planning is required

Initial  
Assessment

Safety  
Planning  
Outcomes of  
Initial  
Assessment

## Safety Planning

- Network meetings with family & network

## CPC Safety Planning

- Child Protection Conference/CPNS
- Network meetings with family & network

## Safety Planning involves:

- A series of network meetings with informed network
- Shared analysis (Danger Statement, Safety Goal & Safety Scaling Question)
- Words & Pictures Explanation
- Trajectory & Timeline
- Scaling child safety at every opportunity
- A tried and tested safety plan

# Challenges with networks

- Challenges with networks are expected both in building and sustaining networks.
- Isolation, burned bridges, family members with similar worries, not wanting people to know etc.
- All issues and options are explored with the family.
- Always scaling safety.
- How can you demonstrate that your children will be safe in the absence of a network?

# What does a network meeting look like?

- A meeting led by a facilitator (usually the SW) using questions to get the family & network to think about the details of the worries, what has been safe in the past and what needs to happen now
- Danger Statement, Safety Goal & Safety Scaling Question
- Review of what is currently keeping the child safe (interim safety plan)
- Further exploration of a specific worry (one issue/one meeting)
- Adding to or refining the safety plan

# Safety Scaling

- The 0 and 10 must always be defined
- The number in and of itself is not the overall focus
- The purpose of scaling is to **open a conversation** about the safety of the child:
  - What brought you up to your number (strengths and safety)
  - What stops you from being higher (additional worries)
  - What would you need to move up one point on the scale (task that would increase safety for the child)
- It is the safety of the child that is being scaled/rated, NOT the parent.

# Involving Children

- Building relationships & getting their views (mapping with children using My Three Houses tool)
- Giving them an explanation of the worries (Words & Pictures)
- Checking to see if things have improved at home
- Keeping them informed of the rules of the safety plan
- Safety Object/Code word
- Child version of the safety plan (rules)

# Expectations of other professionals

- Often know a lot more about a family than Tusla
- To explore harm, danger, strengths and safety with the family and Tusla social worker
- To give a (point in time) view about how safe the child is (safety scaling).
- To give a balanced view about danger and safety.



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