



# Safety Planning Practice Tool

# Safety Planning

## Safety plan vision

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board and its statutory and non-statutory partners agree that safety plans can be an important part of safeguarding, particularly when considering risks to children and families due to abuse, neglect, or other harmful situations. Safety plans are a way to help children, families and the agencies and organisations working with them plan for potential dangers and proactively reduce the risk of harm.

Safety plans should be personalised, practical, and developed collaboratively with children and families.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board and its statutory and non-statutory partners recognise that agencies and organisations will have existing safety plan templates and related documents that they use and adapt to meet the risks that apply to the children and families they support.

This document does not seek to replace existing safety plans. It is intended as a practice tool for agencies and organisations to use as a guide when drafting safety plans, and to help them to reflect when reviewing existing safety plans.





## Why is a practice tool needed?

During reviews including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and Multi-Agency Case Audits (MACAs) there were inconsistencies in the meaning of a safety plan in different organisations. The plans ranged from verbal advice through to very comprehensive plans which may not have been aligned to each other. This guidance has been produced to help create a better shared understanding.

For further information about this and other learning from local reviews visit the [ESCB website](#).

Effective safety planning should:

- be a collaborative process, involving children (where appropriate), families, and agencies and organisations in identifying risks and developing solutions.
- be based on children and families lived experience and their views, which are understood clearly.
- have the safety of children and families as its central objective.
- minimise risk factors and maximise protective factors.
- become a roadmap for the journey from danger to safety, outlining steps, tools, and ongoing processes including information-sharing and regular review to ensure that the safety plan remains up to date and relevant.
- avoid families having multiple safety plans where possible.
- allows people to pause and reflect in order to improve safety.



## Considerations before completing a safety plan

Consider safeguarding processes as per SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. If there is an immediate risk take urgent action before completing a safety plan. Speak to your agency safeguarding lead for advice.

- Does a safety plan already exist with another organisation, and could they be combined to create one effective plan. Would it be beneficial to arrange a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting to collaborate.
- Where possible safety plans should be co-created and completed collaboratively, while acknowledging that some safeguarding factors may need to be taken into consideration for relevant agencies.
- What are current risks posed? Consider is this in the home/ online/ school etc.
- Parties must have capacity and have given consent \*\* to enter into the plan, parties should not feel coerced into agreeing to a plan. It is important to request consent to share the plan with other agencies, (reiterating safeguarding limitations around this in a clear and concise way).
- Consider the specific purpose for the plan and what we are trying to achieve.
- Ensure the plan is written from the child's perspective, dependent on age and developmental stage.
- Which agencies do the family consent to share the plan with, information sharing should not be a barrier to effective safeguarding.
- All children should be included, which family members should be involved?
- It may be necessary (particularly when domestic abuse is a factor) to have a Safety Plan that the suspect/ perpetrator is not aware of, as well as a family Safety Plan. Or a separate plan for the adults and children, to ensure children are not exposed to adult concerns.



## The safety plan (Seek guidance within your own organisation on safety planning)

- A Safety Plan is a step-by-step plan that tries to prevent or minimise risky or harmful behaviour or situations.
- A safety plan is preventative and responsive and while they can be time limited, safety can be considered before an incident (preparation for safety), during (reaction to risk) and after an incident (next steps).
- It uses very simple language that everyone can understand (ensuring adjustments have been made for any learning need).
- It aims to address the immediate risk and defines who is doing what to keep the child safe and when the person will do this.
- Look for situations where an incident/episode has been avoided in the past and use this to build on strengths so the family can do this again.
- It includes a contingency plan if the person who is undertaking the safety action is not available.
- It should contain clear expectations and timeframes (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time- bound actions SMART).
- Consider including places of safety/contact numbers of a safe person to call and emergency contacts.
- Multi-agency safety plans should have a clear outline of each professional's responsibility and when and how they need to action concerns.
- The plan should be uploaded to documents on the child's record with a clear start date.

## Demonstrating impact on child of the safety plan

- The plan must address both the immediacy and the impact of the risk of harm to the child.
- For each risk identified it must state clearly what the impact of that issue will be on the child right now, and in the short term. Be mindful of language used with this if child is involved in safety planning.
- Consider monitoring wellbeing regularly and updating plan as needed.
- The actions put in place must state how they are protecting the child from each of the specific risks of harm identified and how effective they will be.

## Sharing the safety plan

- Once complete, the Safety Plan should be shared (with consent of the parents/ adults who 'own' the plan) with partner agencies and it is essential that any other person who is involved with a role in the plan should have their own copy.
- The person responsible for sharing the safety plan with the young person and/or parent/carer should be identified and named within the safety plan.

## Reviewing a safety plan

Ownership and monitoring of the plan and how often it will be reviewed needs to be clear in the plan and details of what actions need to be taken if the plan is not being met. Situations and circumstances can change suddenly; the plan should be reviewed if this happens and shared with all agencies working with the family, if consent has been given.

## Further Resources

- [Mind Mid and North Essex - Tips for creating a safety plan](#)
- [Lets talk about suicide](#)
- [Papyrus – Prevention of young suicide](#)
- [Parental substance misuse NSPCC Learning](#)
- [The Children's Society – substance misuse and exploitation](#)
- [ESCB – Exploitation \(Risk in the Community\)](#)
- [Sexual abuse/harmful sexual behaviour Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Safety planning in education –harmful sexual behaviour](#)
- [Safety planning - Space for Women DA The Traveller Movement](#)
- [Honour based abuse – Karma Nirvana](#)
- For further advice and information on services for those affected by domestic abuse - [Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse partnership website SETDAB](#)

## Things to consider within your safety plan (this is not an exhaustive list)

<b>Family</b>	Include family and significant others.
<b>What is important to the family?</b>	Culture/religion/race/beliefs/spiritual beliefs/communication needs.
<b>Special Educational Needs of the children / adults</b>	Are the children's needs understood, what support are the parents accessing? What reasonable adjustments need to be made to meet the children's/parents needs?
<b>Concerns</b>	What are we worried about? Do the family need specialist support (see resources). Do the family recognise / understand the risk. For some families who have endured trauma they may not recognise the risk that other professionals see. Access to finances in the home - benefits/housing/ immigration issues that may be affecting the risk. What are the additional vulnerabilities – drug/alcohol use, mental health.

<b>Emotional Safety</b>	Often in safety planning we focus only on the immediate physical risk and do not consider 'emotional safety' planning what can someone do when they are feeling low/ lonely/ sad/ isolated. Adverse Childhood experience/trauma. Bullying.
<b>Safety in the community</b>	Are there areas/places family members feel safe or unsafe/not all communities have safe support networks and can increase the risk to families and victim/ survivors (HBA). Online/social media usage. Experiences of racism or discrimination.
<b>What is the family's support network?</b>	Give careful consideration to members within the family and community that are being considered as supportive. Not all communities have safe support networks and can increase the risk to families and victim/ survivors (Honour Based Abuse/Exploitation/Grooming).
<b>When this happens</b>	General safety planning for concerns- What have the family done before that works/ what additional support is needed/ are there any barriers (including cultural barriers)? What is the experience of the children – when an incident happens what can be done to ensure there is a response to keep them safe and support them? Who needs to be informed and by whom?