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**IMPLEMENTATION OF SIGNS OF SAFETY in CARDIFF COUNCIL**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. As part of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee 2018-19 Work Programme, the Committee requested a briefing report on the Continuing implementation with key partners of the “Signs of Safety” model, a strengths-based whole-service methodology for working with children and families in need of care and support.

**Background**

2. Signs of Safety is an integrated framework for the way children’s services work. It sets out the principles for practice; the disciplines for practitioners’ application of the approach; provides a range of tools for assessment and planning, decision making and engaging children and families; and describes the processes through which the work is undertaken with families and children, including work with partner agencies. This practice returns child protection intervention to being the catalyst that initiates behaviour change by families.
3. The three principles address key challenges of the work
  - a. Working relationships are paramount: to enable honest and respectful discussions of concerns and worries.
  - b. Thinking critically: to minimize error a culture of shared reflective practice and a willingness to admit you may be wrong is needed. Risk assessment is a core task and requires constant balancing of the strengths and dangers in a family to avoid the common practice problems of drifting into an overly negative or positive view of the family.
  - c. Based on everyday experience: assessment and safety planning is grounded in the everyday lived experience of the child.  
The core assessment tool is the ‘Three Columns’, an easy to understand

framework that is completed by the worker, family and other key professionals exploring 4 key questions:

- What are we worried about?
- What's working well?
- What needs to happen?
- Judgment, typically, on a scale of 0-10 considering how serious the professionals, the family and key people believe the situation is for the child?

4. Having developed a detailed understanding of how the family is functioning and a shared agreement of what needs to change, the next step is to undertake safety planning.. The aim is to create a proactive, structured and monitored process that provides parents involved in child protection matters with a genuine opportunity to demonstrate that they can provide care for their children in ways that satisfy the child protection service. The safety plan is a specific set of rules and arrangements that describe how the family will go about and live its everyday life that shows everyone, the professionals, and the family's own support people how the children will be safe in the future.

### **Implementing signs of safety in Cardiff Council**

5. To successfully implement Signs of Safety, it was agreed that a project approach would be adopted to help embed the framework across the service. A project team has been established to work alongside a Signs of Safety consultant and project leads assigned to the four key areas of the implementation:
  - A strategic approach to offering training and knowledge to staff and partner agencies
  - Defining what to communicate, to whom, how, and when, throughout implementation
  - Ensuring processes, forms, and policies are amended to reflect values of Signs of Safety
  - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to report successful adoption of the framework

6. A steering group approach has also been agreed as a means of developing internal forms and processes to best assist the implementation of Signs of Safety. The group membership has been established and includes staff across the service, including representation from the Intake & Assessment team; Looked After Children Teams (0-14 & 14+); Family Information Support Service; Integrated Family Support Team; Fostering; ARC; Personal Adviser Service; Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; Youth Offending Service; Business Support; and Training.
  
7. A detailed implementation plan has been produced to help shape how Signs of Safety is embedded into everyday practice. A verbal briefing will be presented on the progress being made to implement Sign's of Safety across all of children's services.

### **Scope of Scrutiny**

8. This report enables the Committee to review, assess and comment of the continued implementation of the Signs of Safety in Cardiff Council. In particular Members may wish to inquiry whether, the approach enables, practitioners to focus on the strengths, whilst considering actual and potential harm experienced by the child(ren), Encourages a strong emphasis in creating opportunities for children to be involved in the process, Promotes the need for children and families to remain together where it is safe for them to do so, and will achieve the desired outcomes as highlighted in the approach.

### **Way Forward**

9. Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families) and Claire Marchant (Director of Social Service) Deborah Driffield (Interim Assistant Director), will present the briefing report to the Committee, and will be available to answer any questions Members may have.
  
10. This report and verbal briefing will also enable Members to provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children & Families and Director of Social Services around the implementation of the approach.

## **Legal Implications**

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## **Financial Implications**

12. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Committee reviews the information provided at the meeting and offer any recommendations, comments or advice to the Cabinet Member and / or Director of Social Services.

**Davina Fiore**

Director of Governance and Legal Services

18 September 2019