

Signs of Safety how to guide: Using the Wizard and Fairy



Wherever possible, inform parents/carers and obtain permission to interview the child

Sometimes child protection workers must interview children without advising, or seeking the permission of, the parents or primary caregivers. Wherever possible, the parents/carers should be advised or asked in advance.

It is good to show the parents/carers the wizard and fairy tool or explain it to them so they know that the worker will not only look at problems but will also focus on good things and hopes for the future.

Introduce the Wizard/Fairy to the child

Children can draw or write in the wizard/fairy.

Explain that:

- Worries – things that need to change - go on the clothes (as we can change our clothes) or in the tummy (that's where we feel worried)
- Things that are going well go on the fairy's wings or the wizard's cape (as these help the fairy or wizard to fly away and escape the worries)
- Wishes – how you'd like things to be in your life if all of your worries were sorted out – go in the fairy or wizard's magic wand.

Offer the child a choice as to where they would like to start – with the worries or the good things.

The worker can write what the child is saying but should use **the child's own words**.

If at any stage talking about worries becomes too difficult, be ready to ask questions about things that make them happy or to ask about how things would be if all the problems were solved.

Ask questions to find out more about the child's experiences, for example: 'What is good about where you are living now? What is good about school? What is good about the friends you have? What is good about your visits with Mum?'

The child can be asked to scale where life is for them between being really worried all the time (0) and that a life that is the way they would like it to be (10).

It is always a good idea before finishing the interview to ask the child if there is anything they want to add to the picture, as sometimes the things they are most worried about can be saved until the end.

Explain to, and involve the child in, what will happen next

Once the interview is finished, explain to the child what will happen next and obtain the child's permission to show the wizard/fairy to others, whether they be parents/carers, extended family or professionals. Usually children are happy for others to be shown their work.

For some children, there will be concerns and safety issues in presenting to others what they have described. In such a situation, it is important to talk to the child about what they are afraid might happen and discuss ways to make them safe.

Present the child's assessment to parents and others

Workers all over the world report that taking the child's work back to the parents or caregivers is often the catalyst that makes the adults see the situation differently and to face the problems more openly.

When bringing a child's wizard/fairy to the parents/carers, it is often very useful to begin with the things that are going well because it shows the parent/carer that the worker is able to see things in a balanced way.

A good strategy in bringing the information to the parents/carers is to ask them what they think the child would have described as good in their life, as their worries, and what they want to happen before presenting the child's work to the parents/carers. This strategy serves to engage the parents/carers in the process further and gives the worker a greater sense of the parents/carers' insight into their child's perspective.

Save the Wizard/Fairy on the child's file

The wizard/fairy is the child's assessment of their life, so it needs to be saved on their file as evidence of their experiences.

The child's own assessment is very often far more powerful and revealing than a professional assessment of that child and can have far greater effect on adults involved with the child. Judges receiving court reports on the child and family and authorities who review the files are consistently impressed to read children's assessment, because it directly communicates the child's voice and perspective and demonstrates the worker has engaged the child in the casework.

Reflect the child's experiences in your assessment

Use the wizard/fairy to inform your assessment, and remember to include the child's own words in the assessment.

Please share your practice examples with SignsofSafety@northumberland.gov.uk