

## What is a Safety Scale?

Safety scaling is used at multi-agency meetings and throughout the assessment process; it is a tool to gather a judgement from everyone involved in the case, so that everyone has the opportunity to rate how safe they think the child is on a scale of 0 to 10.

Family members are asked to use the safety scale, as well as the social worker and the other professionals. Where appropriate the child is also asked the safety scale question.

The Safety Scale question is written to reflect the specific circumstances of the case; it will look something like this:

### Safety Scale:

On a Scale of 0 – 10, **where 10 means** that you are confident that the child is safe enough to close the case and **0 means** that you are certain the child will be harmed - or harmed again – where would you rate the situation right now?

0 ←————→ 10

(See page 5 for a more specific example).

There is a Safety Scale question to match each danger statement and safety goal. So, if a case has three danger statements there will be three safety scale questions.

## Benefits of Safety Scaling

The safety scale allows us to capture people's judgements about how effectively the parents/network are keeping the child safe.

By using the safety scale, it makes it easier for the family to understand what each professional is thinking and the extent of their worries.

It also provides a measurement that everyone can understand and, when used overtime, will show how much progress is being made.

The safety scale enables everyone to share their perspective on the child's safety, this starts conversations about what needs to happen for things to improve and to achieve the safety goal.

# The Safety Scale Process

<b>1</b>	Go round the room and ask each person to rate the situation against the safety scale question.
<b>2</b>	Ask them to explain the reason for their rating.  <i>"Provide all the reasons that brought you up to this number?" (for child protection cases three reasons are required).</i>  Or, if their rating has stayed the same or reduced since the last meeting...  <i>"What keeps you at this number?"</i>
<b>3</b>	Ask follow up questions to further unpick the reason for their rating and to understand what the person needs to see in order to get this higher.  <i>"What would need to happen to make you rate a bit higher?"</i>

## Safety Scale Rules

- The Safety Scale is always 0 – 10 where 0 is negative and 10 is positive.
- When you read out the Safety Scale Questions, explain what 10 looks like first (always present the most positive scenario first).
- All professionals and family members should be asked to complete the Safety Scale, as well as the child where appropriate.
- The Safety Scale questions should be written to reflect the Safety Goal at 10 and the Danger Statement at 0
- There should be a Safety Scale Question for every Danger Statement/ Safety Goal.

## Remember!

- People will differ on their assessment of the situation, it's not necessary for everyone to agree on a number but it is important that everyone understands the reasons why people's views differ. This will inform the safety planning for the case (what needs to happen).
- There is no right or wrong answer, however, each contributor needs to say what has happened to get them to their current rating and what needs to happen for them to increase this number. The

Social worker, Early Help Worker or IRO should give their rating last so their answer doesn't influence others in the room.

- The fundamental purpose of the Safety Scale is to establish how safe the child is, not the parent's capacity to care for the child.

## Examples of Safety Scale Follow Up Questions

Follow up questions will generate conversations to help everyone at the meeting consider each other's point of view. Responses will inform decision making about 'what needs to happen' to be included within the safety plan and help shape the safety goals. In line with the Signs of Safety approach, questions should be solution focused where possible:

**What are the parents doing now that brings your rating of them up to a four?**

**What would a ten look like for you?**

**At the last meeting you rated the situation as a two and you have now rated it at a four, what's better now?**

**For me, your rating of a two is lower than I expected, given what we've written in the danger statement, are there any worries that you think we have missed?**

**Okay, so you have rated the situation at a four, what would need to happen for you to increase this to a five?**

## Other uses for Scaling Questions

The safety scale is a scaling question, you can incorporate scaling questions into your conversations with children, families and colleagues in many ways to establish how they feel about a particular issue and as a reflective tool within supervision.

### Discussion with a child example:

On a scale of 0 -10, **where 10 means** that you really enjoy going to school and **0 means** that things are so bad that you don't want to go to school at all. How would you rate how you feel about school?

"What brought you up to that number?"

"What would need to happen at school to make you rate one step higher?"



# Safety Scale Example

**On a Scale of 0 to 10, where would you rate things today?**



**0 means that:**

If the children returned home tomorrow to live with Lee and Fred:

Nothing has really changed at all and there is no plan for how things could be different, and even though Mum and Dad really love and miss the children, things would probably be the way they were when the children went into foster care and it wouldn't be long before they were scared, sick or in danger of getting hurt again.

When you present the Safety Scale always explain what 10 looks like first.

**10 means that:**

If the children returned home tomorrow to live with Lee and Fred:

It would be to a home that is warm and clean, where there are people to help, with a clear plan in place that shows how the girls will have clean clothes and good meals, will be able to attend all their doctor appointments and are cared for by a safe and sober adult.