**When does a child need a safety plan?**

A safety plan in social work is required for all children who are at risk of harm within their home or other environment. This can be for a number of reasons, where there are concerns around domestic, physical or sexual abuse, self-harm or substance misuse. The safety plan should be designed to help the child to prepare for the possibility of further harm and provides guidelines to follow if they do not feel safe.

**Who writes / draws the Safety Plan?**

The safety plan needs to be completed with the child and their family. This can be them coming up with their own plan or facilitated through the social worker or other professional working with the family. The plan needs to be written in a format and language understandable to the child in line with their age and level of understanding.

**What needs to be included in the Safety Plan?**

To ensure the plan is the right one for the child it need to be done with them. They need to understand first what the **worries** **and risks** are. They also need to identify **safe place/space or person.** You can include **a ‘safe word’** for when the child wants others to know they feel Anxious, sad or in fear for their safety. It can also mean a safe place where they can go**,** or hide a phone and money. Consideration should be given to **an Escape Route -** if they need to get out - this could be from a person, situation or intrusive thoughts. they feel comfortable talking to when worried, knowing how to raise the alarm if in danger.

**Where do I keep the Safety Plan?**

The safety plan once written and agreed with the child/family should be left with them where it is safe to do so or in an agreed place where it is not safe to leave at home. A copy of the actions or photograph of the agreed plan should be uploaded to the child’s file.

**Tips on writing a plan that works for the child**

Talk to the child/young person in language they understand, about finding a safe place to go when they feel they may come to some harm.

Encourage them to do something that distracts or comforts them while the fighting is going on.

Sometimes older children or youths may want to leave the home while the risk of harm is there.

Who does the child/young person have in their support network (there is a support plan at the end of this guide) and how do they access them?

Depending on their level of understanding, have the child/young person:

• Identify people in their life they feel safe with.

• Draw a map or plan of their home.

• Explore with them where they can go and what they can do if they don’t feel safe when the fighting happens.

For example, neighbours? Does the child/young person know them? Are they safe? Would they help?

• If the child/young person lives far from town or other people, explore how they will get to a safe place outside the home?

• Plan with them how to care for or hide special belongings (pet, sentimental things) if they have to leave home in a hurry.

Help the child/young person identify what a safe place looks like both inside and outside the home. If it is safe and appropriate, you could walk through the home with the child/ young person to identify their safe places.

Alternatively, ask the safe parent/ adult to walk through the house with their child and point out the safe places.

Where domestic abuse or people who pose a risk of physical harm are relevant, talk with the child/young person about how being in the same room could be dangerous for them. Tell the child/ young person that it is safer for them, and their parent/carer, if they do not get involved.

Affirm with the child/ young person that they may need to remove themselves from the room or home or if they need or want to stay close by, advise the child/youth to stay out of sight, and if possible, to have a phone nearby.

Talk about what the child/ young person needs to do before, during, and after the risk is present so that they reduce the risk of harm.