

These are guidelines for communications between health and local authority children's social care teams using the SAFER process when a child may be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

All verbal communications can be carried out using the SAFER process. The use of SAFER will ensure a uniform approach to communicating the level of risk to a child/children.

Section A: Prior to referral, ask yourself these questions:

- Have I assessed the child and documented my findings?
- Have I documented existing risk factors or issues?
- Is there any evidence of substance abuse, domestic abuse, mental illness, a chaotic lifestyle or missed appointments?
- Has a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) been followed?
- Has the situation been discussed with the child's parent(s)?
- Who else is in the household?
- Has the situation been discussed with the child's GP?
- Have I updated myself on the child's recent health history?
- Do I have knowledge of any siblings? May they be at risk of harm too?
- Is there a social worker already allocated? Have I discussed this referral with that social worker?
- Has the situation been discussed with a named nurse/senior colleague for safeguarding?

Prior to making a call, have the following available:

- the child's health record
- a list of recent events
- the evidence triggering the call.

Section B: Aide-memoire to support efficient and appropriate telephone referrals of children who may be suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm

S	<p>Situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the health visitor (give name) for (give your area). I am calling about ... (child's name(s) and address). • I am calling because I believe this child is at risk of significant harm. • The parents are/aren't aware of the referral.
A	<p>Assessment and actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have assessed the child personally (and done a CAF) and the specific concerns are ... (provide specific factual evidence, ensuring the points in Section A are covered). • Or: I fear for the child's safety because ... (provide specific facts – what you have seen, heard and/or been told and when you last saw the child and parents). • A CAF has/hasn't been followed. • This is a change since I last saw him/her (give no. of) days/weeks/months ago. • The child is now ... (describe current condition and whereabouts). • I have not been able to assess the child but I am concerned because • I have ... (actions taken to make the child safe).
F	<p>Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific family factors making this child at risk of significant harm are ... (base on the Assessment of Need Framework and cover specific points in Section A). • Additional factors creating vulnerability are • Although not enough to make this child safe now, the strengths in the family situation are
E	<p>Expected response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with <i>Working together to safeguard children</i>, NICE guidance and Section 17 and/or Section 47 of the Children Act I recommend that a specialist social care assessment is undertaken (urgently?). • Other recommendations. • Ask: Do you need me to do anything now?
R	<p>Referral and recording</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will follow up with a written referral and would appreciate it if you would get back to me as soon as you have decided your course of action. • Exchange names and contact details with the person taking the referral. • Now refer in writing as per local procedures and record details and time and outcomes of telephone referral.

(NB: The intention is to make reasons for referral factual and informative to assist the duty team in taking appropriate action.)

If a child is at risk of immediate, significant harm, the priority remains to move them to a place of safety. The police have the powers to remove a child to a place of safety without parental consent.

References

- DCSF (2010) *Working together to safeguard children*
- Your local safeguarding policy
- NICE (2009) *When to suspect child maltreatment*
- Children Act, 1989
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families.
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4003256
- What to do if you are worried a child has been abused. (2006) DCSF
- Pocket information sharing guide (2008) HM Government

The SAFER tool was developed from another SBAR which originated from the US Navy and was adapted for use in healthcare by Dr M Leonard and colleagues from Kaiser Permanente, Colorado, USA.

