

Meeting of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership		Integration Joint Board	
Held on:		13th December 2023	
Agenda Item:		9	
Title:		Signs of Safety; Implementation and Baseline Repeat Audit 2023	
Summary:			
<p>The following report is an update to the IJB on the implementation of the Signs of Safety model and the repeat base line audit which took place in the second half of 2023. The report reflects very positively on the positive implementation and the evident change in culture and practice of Childrens Services and how it is experienced by children, young people and their parents and care givers.</p>			
Author:		Mark Inglis, Head of Children’s Health, Care and Justice	
Recommendations:			
<p>It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the successful implementation of the Signs of Safety ii. Note the Repeat Audit of the Baseline measures as evidence of improvements 			
Route to meeting:			
<p>This has been discussed at the HSCP Director Management Team Meeting.</p>			
Directions:		Implications:	
1. No Directions Required	<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Directions to NHS Ayrshire & Arran	<input type="checkbox"/>	HR	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Directions to South Ayrshire Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Directions to both SAC & NHS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Equalities	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
		ICT	<input type="checkbox"/>

SIGNS OF SAFETY; IMPLEMENTATION AND BASELINE REPEAT AUDIT 2023

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to an update the IJB on the implementation of the Signs of Safety model and the Repeat Baseline Audit which took place in the second half of 2023. The report reflects very positively on the positive implementation and the evident change in culture and practice of Children Services and how it is experienced by children, young people and their parents and care givers.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board

- i. note the successful implementation of the Signs of Safety**
- ii. note the Repeat Audit of the Baseline measures as evidence of improvements**

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is acknowledged by the Health and Social Care Partnership and Integrated Joint Board that there have been historical challenges in how the South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership have delivered supports and services to children and families. In particular, the Care Inspectorate report in 2016 highlighted that South Ayrshire had a disproportionate number of children in costly external care placements and that there was a lack of early intervention services and too many children referred to the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration.
- 3.2 To enable a whole system improvement and culture change required within Children Services, a paper requesting transformational investment was presented to South Ayrshire's Leadership Panel on 18 February 2020 by the Head of Service, Mark Inglis.
- 3.3 This paper outlined three specific transformational proposals to support this change which required, namely, The Belmont Family First Model, the creation of an additional independent living flat attached to Cunningham Place Children's House and the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach. The paper was well received, and funding was approved by the Leadership Panel on 18^{February} 2020.
- 3.4 The purpose of this paper to the Integrated Joint Board is to focus specifically on the Signs of Safety model and its implementation. The Signs of Safety model draws on solution-focused therapy and the direct experience of effective practice by child protection social workers and the experiences of families within the child protection system. The model empowers and enables families to make the necessary behavioural changes to live together safely. It is a strengths-based approach and works with families' assets to support change, reducing the need for

more significant intervention from statutory agencies to remove children from families.

4. REPORT

4.1 Childrens Health Care and Justice Senior Manager, Jackie Hamilton, and Service Manager Aileen Barker have led on the implementation of the model from February 2020. Leigh Taylor, a licenced Signs of Safety Trainer and Consultant, has also been key in the successful implementation of the approach.

4.2 The implementation of the model is to be understood as a continuous learning and development cycle with the practice approach at the centre.

4.3 As an essential part of the implementation, a “*Baseline Audit Measures*” was undertaken for years 2020 - 2021. The Baseline Audit gives a baseline measure of how services are received by those we serve as well as an understanding of culture and quality of care as recorded in casefiles.

The baseline measures were split into 4 key areas providing a more holistic view of the organisation and its culture, namely;

- Parents/Caregivers and children’s surveys
- Leadership and staff culture surveys
- Collaborative casefile audits – based on What Works in safety planning
- Core data set

4.4 In September 2023 a Repeat Baseline Audit was undertaken and fed back to the Childrens Health Care and Justice Senior Management Team. This reflected an in-depth picture as to whether the Signs of Safety model had been successfully implemented and whether it had made any tangible difference in the experience of those receiving our care and support, culture and staffs experience of leadership as well as the quality of evidence around how this care was being recorded and over all outcomes for the service and families.

4.5 What the Repeat Baseline Audit told us;

Parents/Caregivers surveys

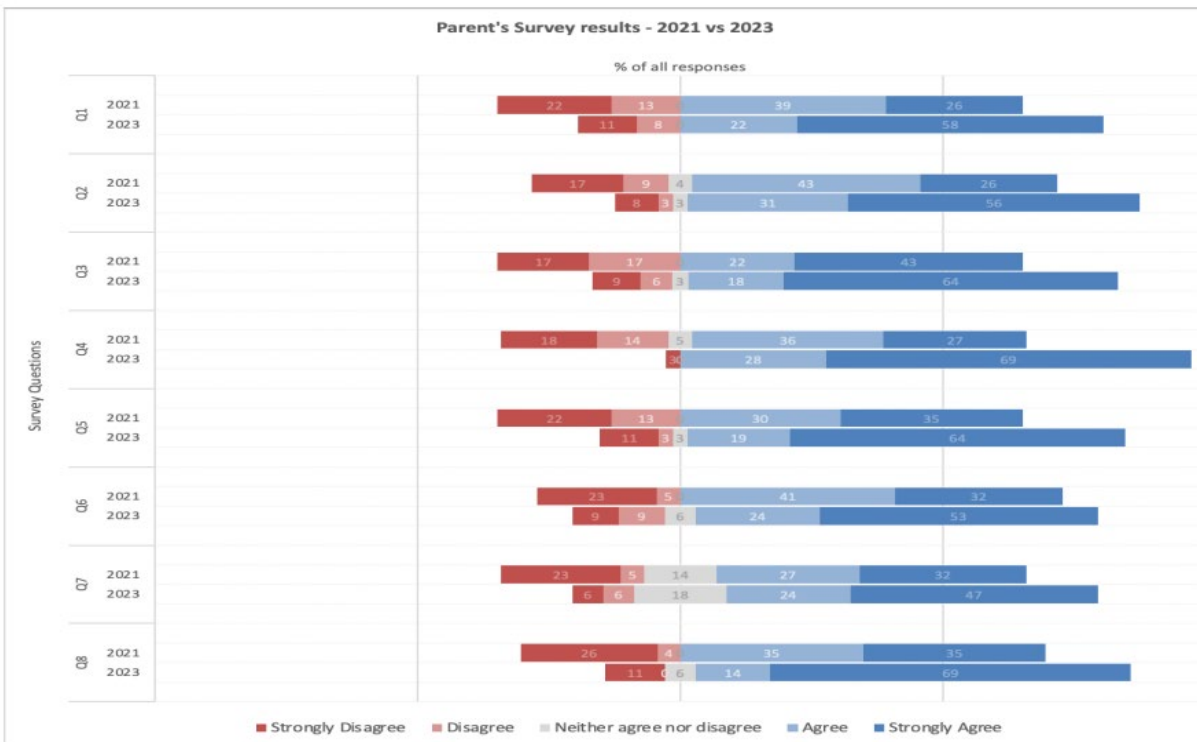
A total of 36 parents/carers were interviewed. This is an increase in respondents from 2021 by over 56%. (*Please refer to pages 5 & 6 of the Repeat Baseline Audit 2023 for full details*)

The graph below and in the appendix demonstrates a shift in feedback from parents and carers indicating the majority interviewed are experiencing positive working relationships with their social workers. For example, 64% of respondents state their social worker has been clear with them about how they see the concerns within the family, this contrasts with 27% of respondents from 2021. In relation to families feeling that social workers care that their family resolves their problems, this has improved from 35% in 2021 to 69% of respondents in 2023. With regards to social workers noticing what is working well within families, again this has increased from 43% in 2021 to 64% of all respondents strongly agreeing

in 2023, evidencing the incorporation of strength-based practice. There is a strong correlation between strength-based approaches and improved outcomes for children and their families.

From the 8 questions asked in the 2021 audit to the repeat audit in 2023, there are significant improvements in **all areas** with parents/carers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that their social worker is practicing in a relationship-based manner with them and their family. This feedback identifies improvements have been made and align with leadership’s vision of embedding and growing relationship-based practice across South Ayrshire’s Children’s services. Relationship based practice is critical to evoking change and improving outcomes for families, hence this is important evidence that helps explain the shifts in quantitative data (reduction in number of child protection registrations and children’s hearing referrals for example) towards reducing intrusive practices done to parents.

Parent/Carer Surveys 2021 v2 2023



In addition to the surveys, two open ended questions were asked of parents and care givers, and replies recorded included the below;

“Would Change Nothing, fantastic experience,”

“Workers do everything they can.”

“Would not change workers but processes are difficult and need changed.”

“Would want better Communication, workers to really listen so parents/carers feel heard and respond in a timelier way.”

“Felt listened too, truly supported, spending time with children, getting to know them, going above and beyond, would change nothing!”

“Better communication, desire for greater compassion/empathy from their worker, staff turnover and staff cover for holidays/sick”

Children and Young People’s survey

A total number of 28 children/young people (aged 8 years plus) were interviewed, again this represents a small proportion of the total number of cases open to Children’s Services.

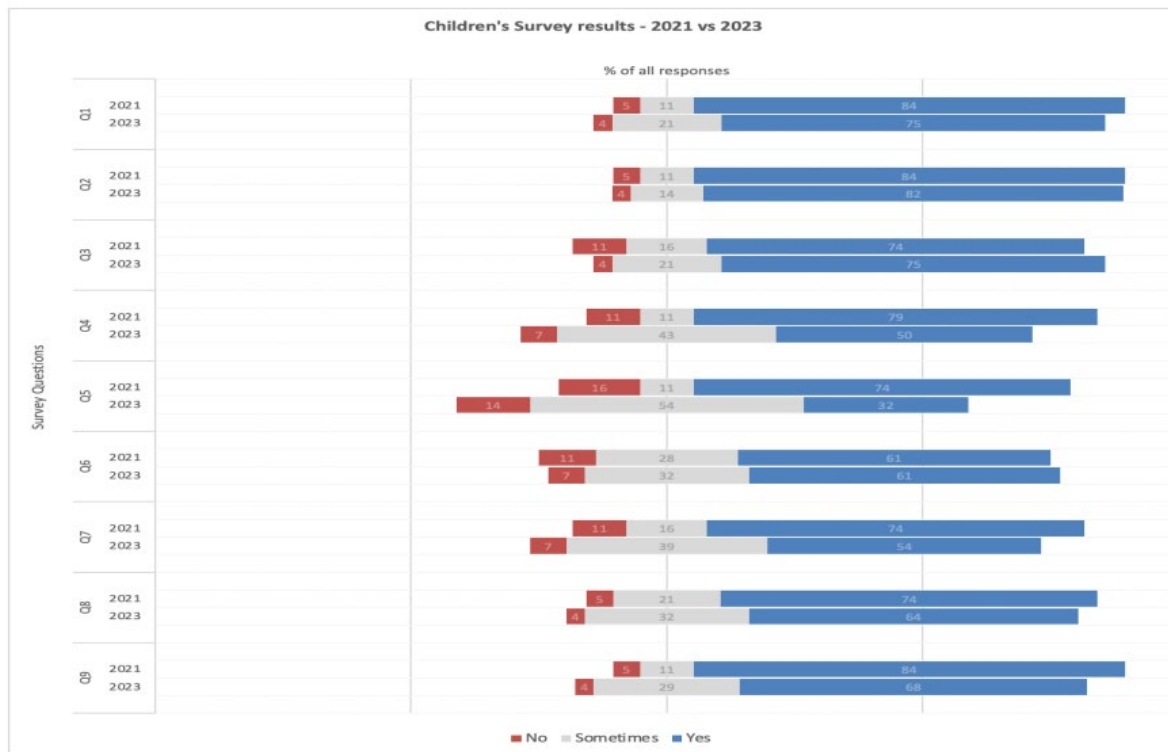
The interviews in 2021 indicated that the majority of children and young people had a positive working relationship with their worker. In 2023 this remains the same with very few answering “No”, for example only 4% of children and young people interviewed said they felt like their worker does not explain what is happening to help them and only 4% stating they feel their social worker does not help them. Whereas 75% of respondents answered, “yes, my social worker helps me”.

The most notable change is an increase in children and young people answering “sometimes” as opposed to “yes,” for example 54% of respondents said that their social worker only sometimes knows their family and 21% of respondents stated their social worker only listens to them sometimes. There is also a noticeable difference in a reduction in the “No” answers, with more children and young people likely to answer “sometimes”.

A theme emerges of young people suggesting they do not always feel like active participants in their own safety planning, that for some children, decisions are made that they do not always understand or contribute to.

Increasing the use of the Signs of Safety “*words and pictures*” explanations with children and young people will help to address the voice of children in their own plans. Overall, this highlights a need to tackle the identified barriers to hearing and collating children and young people’s views so they can continue to shape and influence practice across South Ayrshire’s Children’s Services.

Children's Surveys 2021 vs 2023



Since this second audit there has been the introduction of the Champions Board meeting with the Council key leaders, including the Director of Education, Chief Executive, Head of Service of Children Health Care and Justice, Chief Social Work Officer, Senior Management and Key Elected Members. The improvement of hearing the children's voice is also a key priority in the Children Services Plan and the Promise. (Please see Appendix for a breakdown by question of the children and young people's response including some feedback).

Leadership and staff culture surveys

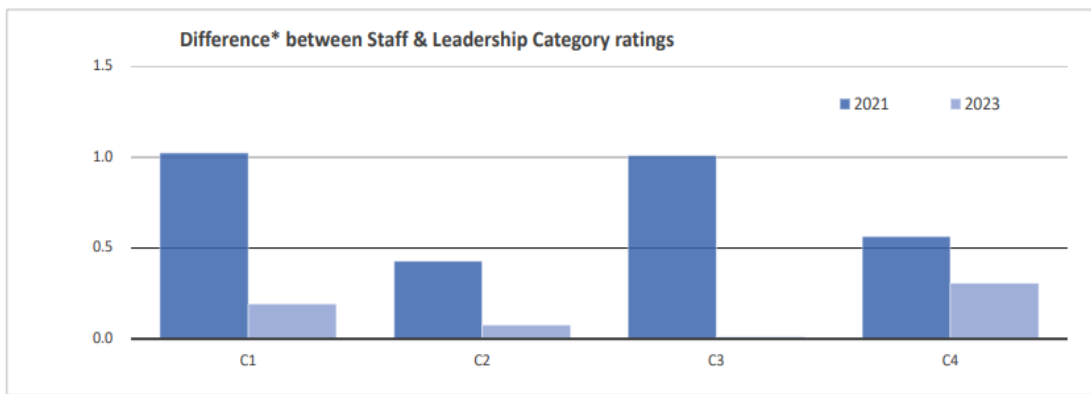
A total of 50 staff members completed the staff survey and 11 members of the leadership group.

A key component of Signs of Safety's theory of change is the concept of whole system implementation. It is important to reflect upon culture and climate and how this impacts upon practice and therefore outcomes for Children and Families. The staff and leadership surveys help the Children's Health Care and Justice leadership team reflect on the culture and climate and to consider how close leaders are to practice and how they can promote and manage a risk sensible culture that allow staff to feel supported and able to learn (Munro & Turnell:2017).

The purpose of the leadership self-evaluation is to reflect on whether there is alignment between the leadership and their self-evaluation and staff feedback through evaluation. This alignment or otherwise, evidences the organisational culture and climate as directed by leadership and how it is experienced and received by staff, in the way it is intended.

The outcomes of this re-evaluation have shown a significant decrease in differing views between staff and leadership. This is important in creating a positive climate and culture within South Ayrshire that aligns with the values that are more likely to contribute to a successful implementation. For example, in question C3 **“Creates a learning organisation so that everyone learns from success and struggles”** there is almost no notable difference between leadership and staff perspectives when compared to 2021 data. Once again, this is evidence of an organisation with strong and clear leadership that staff value and can relate to. Clearly this is an ongoing journey and will require ongoing attention to sustain.

- C1 - Listens to workers and families, understands and champions’ good practice.
- C2- Is curious builds relationships and creates reflections.
- C3 -Creates a learning organisation so that everyone learns form success and struggles.
- C4 -Clearly communicates bottom lines and measures progress.



There is a requirement to focus on of lines of communication which appears to be the greatest differential between leadership and staff, however there is still around a 50% reduction in the difference in the response in 2023 compared with 2021.

Leigh Taylor, Signs of Safety consultant, reflects;

“Importantly it is fair to argue that organisationally South Ayrshire’s climate and culture is aligned with the values that underpin the Signs of Safety approach and are vital in driving forward a successful implementation.”

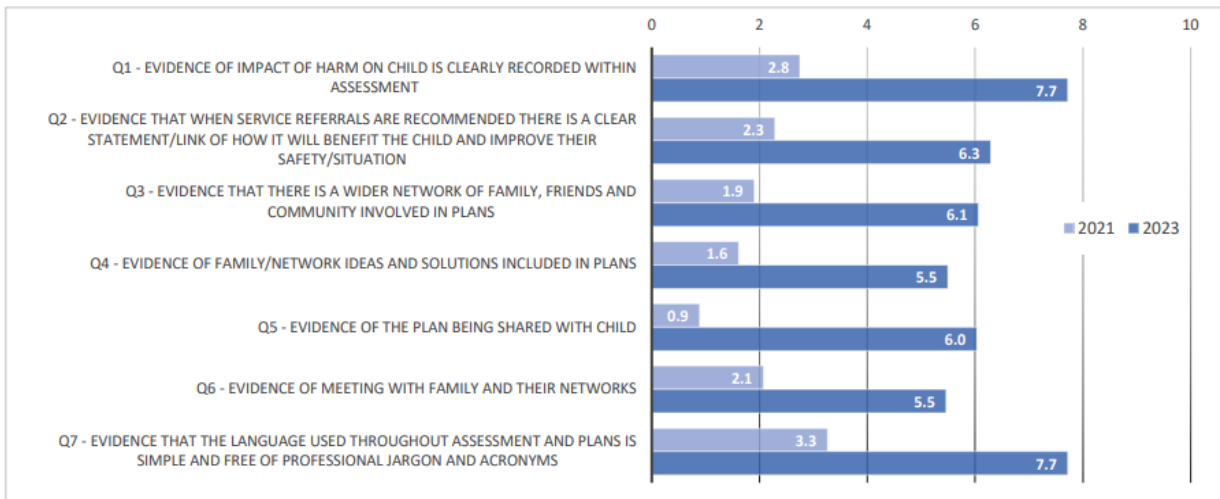
Collaborative casefile audits – based on What Works in effective safety planning

Child Assessment and plans are critical elements of practice, they are how we present/communicate our assessments and plans to families, our partner agencies and legal forums, but they are also a significant part of inspections. Most importantly it is their role in supporting relationship-based practice that is often neglected. It is important that social work values and relationship-based practice are reinforced through written assessments and plans. Families retain copies of their assessment and plans and when written in ways that do not reflect practice values or behaviours, this can undermine the working relationship between families and workers. It is also extremely important that assessments and plans are inclusive and co-produced with the families because they are more likely to

have positive outcomes. It is all of these factors combined that formulate the basis for the collaborative case file audit.

The audit team evaluated 129 open case files between March - July 2023, looking at the most recent assessment and plan for the child. There are approximately a total of 1200 cases open across South Ayrshire Children’s Services, so this sample represents 10% of all open case files split equally across Child Protection, Looked After Children and Team Around the Child.

2021 vs 2023 Collaborative Case File Audit (Graph A)



In 2021, 33% of cases audited did not evidence impact of harm on the child in the assessment; this reduced now to 5% in 2023. In 2021, 71% of assessment and plans audited did not have any evidence of the plan being shared with the child, this is in stark contrast to now when only 14% of assessments and plans audited had not been shared with the child. 88% of audited assessments and plans scored 5 or higher, evidencing the language used through and assessment and plan was simple and free of professional jargon, thereby making them understandable and accessible to families. All of this contributes to better working relationships and most importantly is evidenced based practice, linked to improved outcomes for children and their families.

Core data set

Please refer to the appendix, November Child Protection Trend Analysis report, which gives a current reflection on the core data set and the improving trends in South Ayrshire.

5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

5.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 2 & 3 of the Children Services Plan 2020-23 **“Tackling inequalities”** and **“Love and support for our Care Experienced young People and Young Carers”**. As well as **“Health and care systems that meet people’s needs”** and **“Improving outcomes for care experienced children and care leavers”**.

South Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Plan (Wellbeing Pledge)
South Ayrshire Wellbeing Strategic Group (Children and Young People)
South Ayrshire Council Plan, to Grow Well, Live Well, Age Well

IJB Strategic Plan 2021-2031
South Ayrshire Wellbeing Strategic Group (Children and young people)
Other South Ayrshire CPP SDPs including Children's Service Planning

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

6.1.1 There are no Financial Implications from this report.

6.2 Human Resource Implications

6.2.1 There are no Human Resource Implications from this report.

6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 There are no Legal implications from this report.

6.4 Equalities implications

6.4.1 There are no Equalities implications from this report.

6.5 Sustainability implications

6.5.1 There are no Sustainability implications from this report.

6.6 Clinical/professional assessment

6.6.1 The Chief Social Work Officer has been vocal in his support of this report and the improvements evidenced in the Parent/Carers experience and the improvement in Case recordings.

7. CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

7.1 Details of the second Baseline Audit were shared at a Signs of Safety celebration based at South Ayrshire Council, County Hall, Ayr, where some 100 partners gathered to hear the outcomes and the impact on children and families as well as on the staff group.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1. There is no risk in this report. This report supports strong Social Work Practice which reduces risk.

REPORT AUTHOR AND PERSON TO CONTACT

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Repeat Baseline Measures – South Ayrshire Council 2023 – available as separate document

Appendix 2 – Child Protection Trend Analysis – available as separate document

Date: 6 December 2023