

Signs of Safety
an option for a constructive and solution-oriented approach to
youth protection

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Villach 2019



Vlaanderen
is welzijn

What is Signs of safety

- an innovative strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework.
- “How can the worker build partnerships with parents and children in situations of suspected or substantiated child abuse and still deal rigorously with the maltreatment issues?”
- 3 principles:
 - Constructive working relationships between professionals and family members, and between professionals themselves
 - thinking critically, fostering a stance of inquiry
 - The single most important factor in minimizing error (in child protection practice) is to admit that you may be wrong (Munro 2002: 141)
 - Landing grand aspirations in everyday practice

SofS: A learning journey

With families...

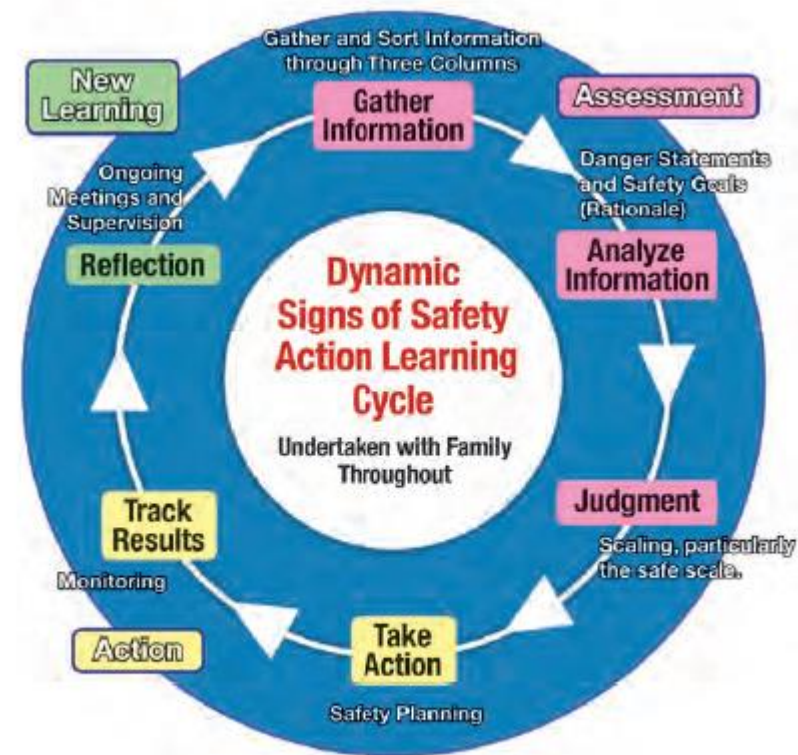
Slow thinking, fast action

Safetyplanning= creating a learning set with families

But also in the organisation

Learning culture

Appreciative inquiry



Action-Learning Cycle and Signs of Safety

Before our journey

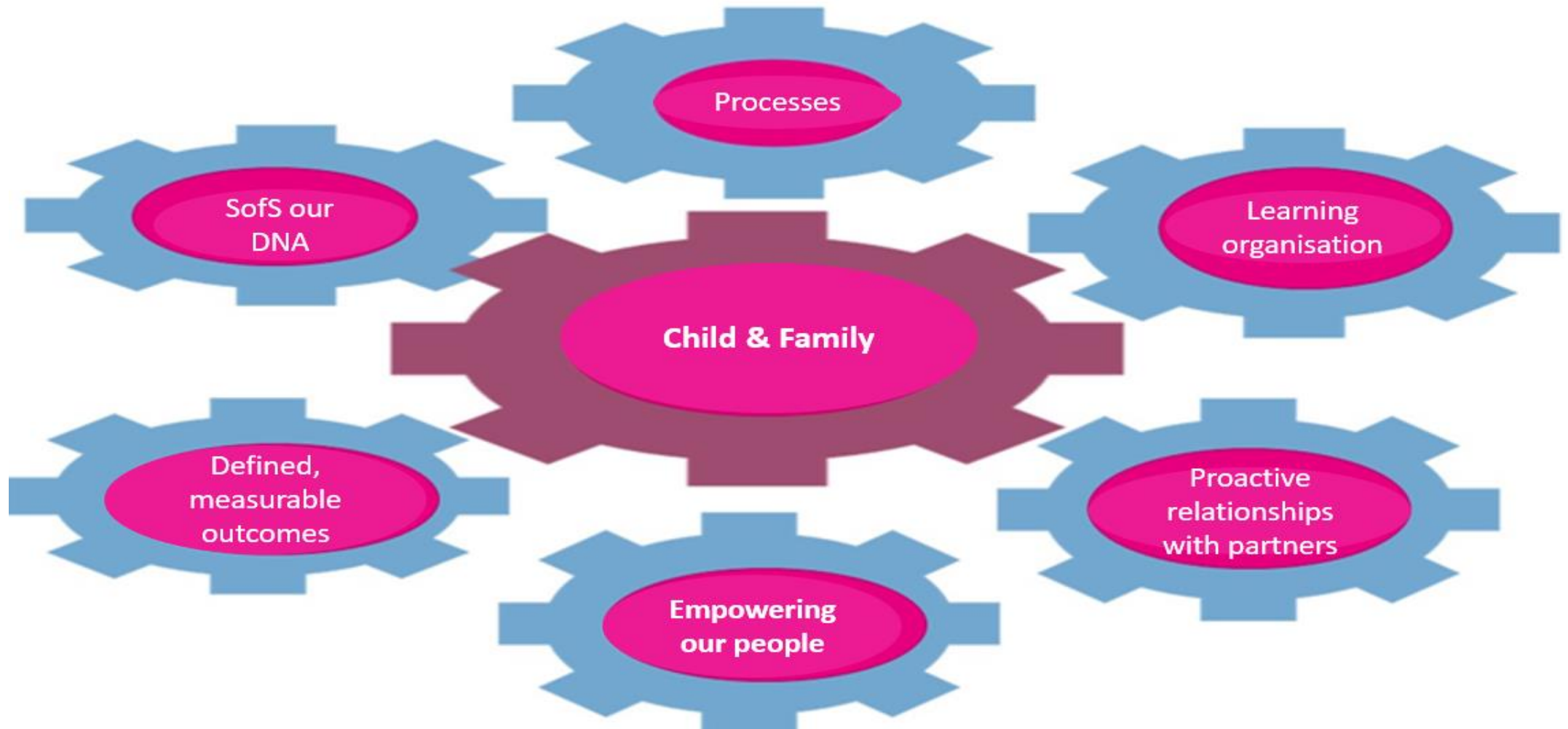
- Restructuring the youth care system
- Roadmaps: 'we want more SofS!'



- New vision: **Together** with children, families and their network with '**safety**'
 - Solution focused and childprotection?

Choosing for Signs of Safety is choosing for...

an implementation plan



Choosing for Signs of Safety is choosing for... A shared goal and vision

mandatory

Hope

Together with
children, their
parents and
network

Safer future

supported



Challenges/ Complicating factors

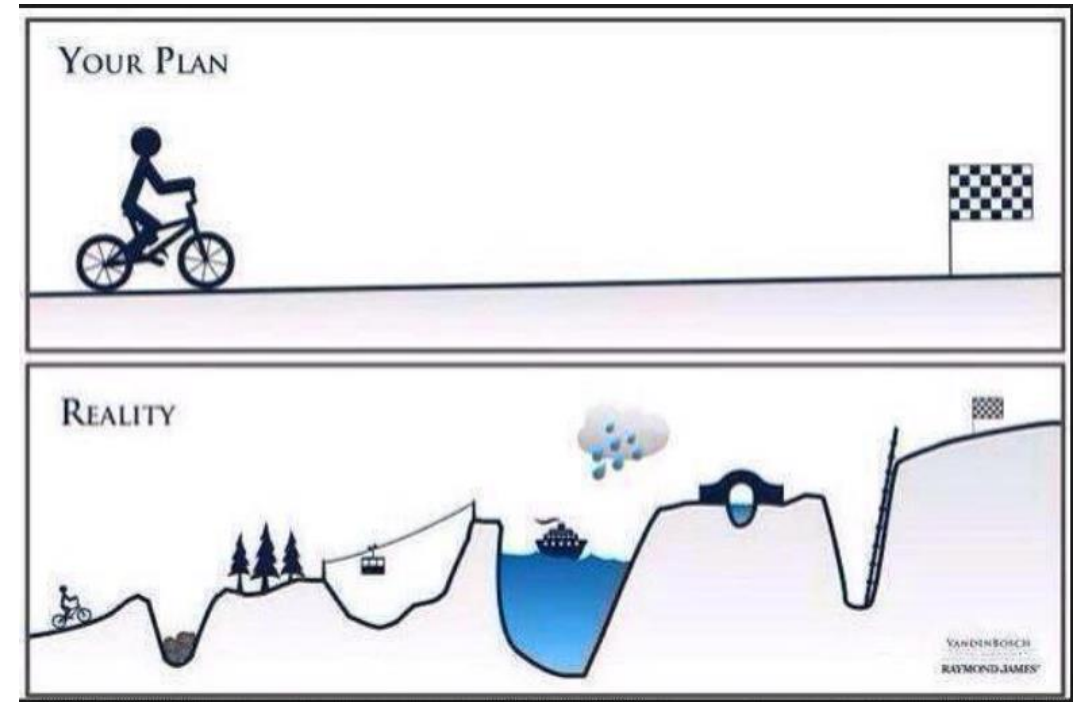
- Changing environment
- Anxious culture, defensive practice
- Caseload: 22000 open cases, on average 70-80 cases per caseworker
- 'No time'
- Structure of youth care in Flanders
- bureaucracy
- Paradigm shift: pressure of our professional partners



Together on the road on a life changing journey

A parallel journey

- Paradigm shift
- Leading the learning
 - Questioning approach
 - Slow down to get to action
- Hope
 - Roadmaps
 - Enthousiasm
- Partnerschip



Innovation

- Stregnth-based and solution focused attitude as a way of being
- Leading the learning
- Children have an active rol
- Healing in the network: network at the centre from the beginning to the end


An approach with many methods and tools



- Always focussing on the best interests of the child
- Preparing a child before a first meeting
- Hearing the child's voice, also in the decisionmaking
- **Words and pictures explanation:**
 - Explanation why we are involved,
 - what has happened and
 - will happen



- Sense of belonging - resilience
- It takes a village to raise a child
 - Professionals: Be the wind under their wings
- Safety = Openness
- A network is persistent, youth care professionals not
- 'Safety is temporary without healing and healing happens in the network.'

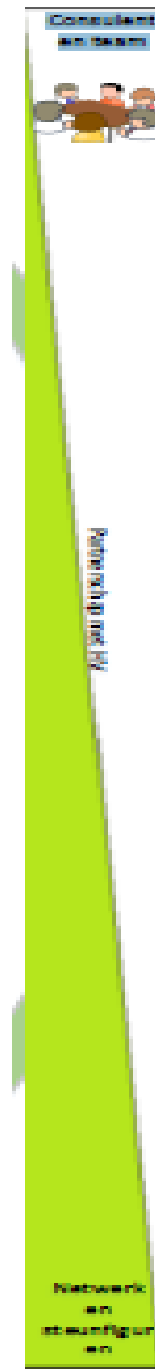


The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.
-Bruce D. Perry

ROADMAP: FAMILY-OWNED SAFETY PLANNING

What	How (Steps)	<i>Ongoing Processes</i>	Tools/Method
<p>DANGER STATEMENTS: <i>What</i> CPS is worried will happen to the child if nothing changes (the problem that has to be solved)</p> <p><i>The practitioners journey with the family from the danger statements to safety goals through a structured process to create the final safety plan.</i></p> <p><i>This is the <u>how</u> of safety planning</i></p> <p>SAFETY GOALS: <i>What</i> CPS needs to see to know the child is safe and they can close the case (not services).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Preparations 2 Develop your Danger Statements and Safety Goals Simple language, understandable to family 3 Identify Everything Constructive in Direct Parenting 4 Develop CPS Bottom-line Requirements 5 Develop CPS Timeframe and Trajectory for Closure 6 Build Informed Network with Family 7 Create Explanation for Children (and everyone else) 8 Build (Adult) Safety Plan with Parents & Network Successive process where family <u>demonstrate</u> over time they can make children safe, regular review - honouring success and utilising struggles. Need to dig into critical issues – dynamics, triggers and stressful times that make abuse/neglect more likely. The family <u>must</u> either come up with or fully own all rules. 9 Dealing with 'Denial' Issues 10 Monitoring by CPS and Network 11 Involve Child 12 Final Child-centred Safety Plan 	<p><i>Authority</i></p> <p><i>Honouring</i></p> <p><i>Vision</i></p> <p><i>Conversation</i></p> <p><i>Compassion</i></p>	<p>Signs of Safety Mapping Three Houses, Safety House</p> <p>Signs of Safety Mapping Three Houses</p> <p>Family Safety Circles</p> <p>Words and Pictures, Mapping Three Houses, Safety House</p> <p>Regular Review Meetings</p> <p><i>Family and Network must be given the opportunity to fail so they can demonstrate success, usually through an increasing process of contact. CPS must be mindful of the risk and manage this together with the family</i></p> <p>Safety House, Safety Object, Practice Rehearsals of Rules Similar-but-different Role Play Child-focused Safety Plan</p>

- Every child has a family and we could find them if we want to see it.
- Create or mobilize a network
- Focussing on partnership with the parents
- Responsibilities and tasks
- Child knows his network and their engagements



Working with a safety network

- Filmpje papa



Working with a safety network

- Filmpje voorzitter 1:21min



Biggest learning of the social worker

My biggest learning was working in two networks and keeping an overview the whole time. Even when your heart breaks when the network off mom gave up and mom was all alone.

Even then we could hold on the safetygoals, that wasn't easy. Fortunately I could reflect constantly with 3 colleagues (supervisor, social worker, and the coordinator of our team). We helped each other to keep the dangerstatements and safetygoals in mind, focussing on the children and not the need of the mother. Sometimes this needed to use my authority to follow the wish demands of the judge. It was very helping, that the judge shared the safetygoals and this manner of working.

What was usefull for mother is that the DS and Sg were written on paper en also translated in the language of here network. .

I'm most proud of

- after 1,5 year the trajectory can be close.
- The children are staying with the network of father, they are doing very well
- Father has a more active rol as a parent
- The network takes the total responsibility, they monitor themselves the situation, register in a logbook and even organise the network conferences
- We have confidence there is constant view on the safety from the children