The Family Roadmap

A process to elicit the views and ideas of family members, in preparation for detailed collaborative safety planning.

by Sonja Parker

Published by SP Consultancy. http://www.spconsultancy.com.au
The “Family Roadmap” process

The “Family Roadmap” process is a dynamic, participatory and collaborative child protection assessment and planning process that has been designed to elicit the views and ideas of family members (and their safety network) in preparation for the family’s participation in the development of comprehensive safety plans. This collaborative assessment process creates a platform of shared understanding that is necessary for professionals and families to then be able to work together to develop effective safety plans for children.

Developing meaningful and sustainable safety plans for children at risk of abuse or maltreatment is a complex and challenging process, which requires child protection professionals to bring their own assessment to the table while remaining open to the views and ideas of family members. Given that it is the family and their safety network who will be responsible for putting the safety plan into action on a day-to-day basis, any safety plan that is developed must be developed collaboratively with family members and their network.

And for the family and their safety network to be meaningfully involved in creating a safety plan, they must first be involved in a comprehensive and balanced assessment that focuses on what is happening in the family and what needs to happen in the future to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children. The more that the family and their safety network are involved in the assessment process, the more likely it is that the family will have a sense of ownership of the safety plan and that the detailed safety plan will be achievable and relevant to the family.

Eliciting family’s views can be a difficult task for child protection professionals, particularly given that we are working in a context where family members may be angry, may have little trust in professionals and may feel anxious about the possible consequences of speaking openly. The 'Family Roadmap' process has been designed to help families and child protection professionals with this challenging work.

The “Family Roadmap” process is a visual process that takes place up on a wall, on a large table or on the floor and can be developed with one person, a couple or a whole group (family and safety network, for example). What’s important is that everyone who is involved in the process can see everything that is being recorded in the ‘roadmap’, so that they have the greatest possible opportunity to participate in the process. This high level of participation is the other key characteristic of the “Family Roadmap” process, as family members and safety network members are actively involved in writing and creating the family roadmap.

The family roadmap process creates a visual narrative of the journey the family has already taken, and wants to take in the future, in providing safety for their children. The roadmap describes the family’s journey from when things were at their worst for this family (which may have been in the past or may be where they are at in the present) to a future vision of
how things would be in their family and for their children if life was at its best. The roadmap process begins by recording a rich description of both these times (‘life at its best’ and ‘life at its worst’). These two descriptions are then placed a distance apart on the wall (or floor or table) and a scale is created between these two positions.

For readers who are familiar with the “Partnering for Safety” approach or “Signs of Safety” approach, you will recognise the connection between safety goals and ‘life at its best’ and between danger statements and ‘life at its worst’. The beginning of the family roadmap process can be used to develop the danger statements and safety goals collaboratively with the family, or if this has already happened, the collaborative danger statements and safety goals can be used in place of ‘life at its best’ and ‘life at its worst’ at each end of the family roadmap.

The “family roadmap” process is divided into a number of steps, which can all be completed in one session or can be worked through over a number of sessions. Within each step, the participants are invited to write each piece of information that has been identified on a piece of paper and to stick it on the roadmap (or the facilitator can write it on the wall).

The steps in the “family roadmap” process elicit the following information:

- ‘Life at its best’ and ‘life at its worst’, as described on the previous page.
- Where each family member views the family as being right now (on the scale between ‘life at its best’ and ‘life at its worst’).
- What the family are already doing that has taken them this far along the scale (this far along the road to ‘life at its best’).
- What or who has helped the family to achieve these things (including what CPS might have done that has helped them to achieve these things).
- What obstacles or roadblocks they have had to overcome to achieve these things and be this far along the road.
- What each family member thinks would be different in the family if they were one step further along the road toward ‘life at its best’.
- Continuing to identify what would be different until each family member has worked out all the steps along the road to ‘life at its best’.
• What or who could help them to achieve these things (including what CPS could do to help them achieve these things).
• What roadblocks or obstacles they anticipate they could encounter and what they could do/what support they might need to overcome these obstacles.
• For each section of the roadmap (what is already happening and what needs to happen), the final stage involves asking the family to think about how CPS know or could know that these things are happening (demonstrating safety).

When can you use the family roadmap process?

The family roadmap process can be used anytime you want to hear more from a particular family (and their safety network) about their views on what is happening in the family and their ideas on what needs to happen in the future for the children to be safe. While the family roadmap process is by no means the only process that you can use to have these critical conversations with families, it can often be effective in eliciting more information because of the visual, collaborative and participatory nature of the process.

This might mean that you are using the family roadmap process:
• Soon after you have just begun working with a family, as a means of eliciting their views and as a precursor to sharing the agencies views in more detail.
• After you have been working with a family for a while, if you are finding that the parents/family members are finding it difficult to share their views and to hear the views of CPS.
• At the point that parents have begun to involve a safety network. The family roadmap process can assist the parents in sharing their views and ideas with the safety network, and begin the process of eliciting the views and ideas of the safety network.
• As a preparatory step for detailed safety planning with the family and safety network.

**Whose views are included in the family roadmap?**

The family roadmap is an assessment and planning process and so it is important that the views of all the significant people in the child’s life are included in the family roadmap. How this looks in practice will depend on the family and the extent to which other family members/safety network people are already involved in the assessment process.

For some families, it will be important to initially create the roadmap just with the parents, so that they feel able to express their views without the pressure of having other people involved in the process. If this is the case, then at the end of the process of creating the family roadmap with the parents, you can ask the parents to think about:

• Who else needs to see the ideas that the parents have expressed in their roadmap?
• Who else is significant in the child’s life and might have ideas that can be added to the family roadmap?
• Who have been named in the parents’ roadmap as important support people?

If the family roadmap is initially created with just the parents, then the next step involves sharing the parents’ roadmap and eliciting/incorporating the views of other significant people. In my experience, this is usually best accomplished in a family meeting or conference, which all of the significant people can be invited to attend.

For some families, and particularly if other family members/safety network members are already actively involved in the assessment process or at least in meeting with the child protection agency, you will be able to move directly to creating the family roadmap with the whole group.
Sharing the views of CPS

An important question in understanding the “family roadmap” process is the question of when and how the views of the child protection agency are shared. In answering these questions, it’s important to think about the purpose of this process. The family roadmap process has been created with the intention of eliciting the views of family members, and so any sharing of the views of the agency that happens before or during this process needs to happen in a manner that communicates and maintains a spirit of curiosity and partnership.

My experience in working with families has taught me that family members are most willing and best able to participate in child protection assessment and planning processes if we take time to listen to the family’s views and if we let them know that their views and ideas will inform our own views and assessment. If the views of the agency are shared in too much detail and as absolute positions before hearing the parents’/family members’/safety network members’ views, this can tend to constrain or shut down the ideas and views offered by the parents and significant others.

Putting this principle into action within the family roadmap process means that this process is entirely focused on exploring and recording the views of the parents (and other family/safety network members). All of the steps, and the questions used within each step, are designed to elicit the family’s views and ideas. As you read through the family roadmap process, you will notice that the following following questioning sequence is used within each step:

- Firstly, the parents are asked for their views.
- Secondly, the parents are asked for their perception of the agency views.

This prioritising of the family’s view within this process in no way diminishes the importance of the views of the child protection agency (or other professionals) or minimises the importance of sharing the professional views with family members. Both of those steps are critical steps in the safety planning process. However the family roadmap process is focused on putting professional views aside for long enough to be able to listen well to the views and ideas offered by family members.

My experience has been that once parents have talked about their views and have had the opportunity to think about and articulate what they think are the views held by the child protection agency (or other professionals), that this usually creates a platform that makes it easier for parents to hear the (sometimes) difficult or challenging views held by child protection.
Preparing to create a “Family Roadmap” with a family

To use the “Family Roadmap” process effectively with a family, you need to be well prepared and the information below will help you in your preparation.

To be able to facilitate the family roadmap process, you will need to be really familiar with the process (although don’t hesitate to have your notes beside you and to be transparent about the fact that you are just learning this process).

Before using the family roadmap process to elicit the family’s views, it is important that you have clarified your own views by analysing the case information that you currently have (for example, using the “Partnering for Safety” framework or the “Signs of Safety” framework). The more that you have worked through your own assessment and thinking about future safety (based on the information that you currently have), the more clearly you will be able to listen to the family's ideas and ensure that you ask questions that cover all of the identified dangers to the children.

At a minimum, you need to be clear about:
• Your views (or the agency’s views) on what you are worried might happen to the children in the future (statements of future danger).
• Your views (or the agency’s views) on what changes you would need to see the family put into place to be confident that the children will be safe in the future (safety goals).

In terms of practical preparation, there is a list of the materials on the next page that are needed for the family roadmap process.

Materials

This process works best when it is created on a wall, on the floor or at a minimum, on a very large sheet of paper (which can be put on a table). The family’s ideas in all the different parts of the family roadmap are added on small bits of paper or are written onto the large paper using different coloured pens.

You will need:
• A large wall or floor space (or a large piece of paper – table size).
• Two A3 pieces of paper (for the “Life at its best” and “Life at its worst” elements).
• Lots of smaller pieces of paper (eg. half A4). It helps to have different colours that you can use for each section (eg. green for what’s going well, yellow for ideas for the future, blue for CPS’s involvement and red for roadblocks/obstacles). I usually have at least 20 pieces of each colour.
• Blue tac or sticky tape to stick everything on the wall.
• Some way of taking a photograph of the completed “family roadmap” (or the interim “roadmap” along the way).
Creating the family roadmap

This next section of the booklet describes the family roadmap process in detail, with suggested questioning that can be used within each part of the process.

Step 1: Life at its Best

The “Family Roadmap” process begins by asking the family to describe what would be happening in their family and for their children when life was at its best for them. This information is written on a large sheet of paper that has been stuck on the right hand side of a blank wall or floor space (or right hand side of a large piece of paper). Creating the family roadmap starts with this visioning process to identify the family’s positive vision for the future and to create energy and hope to work toward these positive changes.

To elicit the family’s vision of ‘life at its best’, I usually start by asking a question such as:

“Let me ask you a question. Imagine that it is six months down the track and you have managed to work through all the challenges or difficulties that you might be facing at the moment and life is at its best for your family and for your children. If life was at its best for your family, what would be happening? What would I see you both doing if things were at their best?”

As the family begin to answer this question, you record their answers on the ‘Life at its best’ page or section. Asking this initial question will usually just elicit a little bit of information, so you will need to use a lot of follow up questions to elicit a rich description or vision of ‘life at its best’. Follow up questions can include:

- “What else would be happening? What else?”
- “What else would you be doing if life was at its best for your family and your children?”
- “What would the children notice was happening when life was at its best?”
- “What would ___ (other significant people) notice was happening?”

Sometimes people find it hard to imagine the future or to vision a possible future. If this is the case, you can ask the same questions but focused on when things have been at their best in the past. For example:
“Let’s talk about the past for a moment. When things have been at their best in your family in the past, what was happening then? What else was happening? What else? What were you both doing when things were at their best? What was life like for your children when things were at their best in your family?”

The more detailed this vision of family life at its best, the easier it will be for the family to plan how to create more of this life, so you will need to ask lots of follow up questions to elicit details. The questions I usually ask are: Who? What? Where? When? How?

- Who (will be doing that)?
- What (tell me some more about what you would be doing?)
- Where (would this be happening)?
- When (might this happen)?
- How might this impact on the kids? What difference do you think it will make for them?

Continue asking “What else would be happening in your family and for your kids when life was at its best?” and other follow up questions, until you have a rich and detailed description of the family’s vision of life at its best for their family.

Views of CPS

The final stage in this first part of the family roadmap process involves asking the family to think about the views of child protection services. Asking the family to think about what CPS would want to see family life looking like when things were at their best is an important preparatory step to later being able to present the views of CPS. To invite families to think about the views of child protection services, I usually use questions such as:

- “Of those things you have described, which of those do you think CPS would also want to see happening in your family?”
- “What do you think CPS would see as the most important?”.
- “Is there anything else that you think CPS would want to see happening in your family?”
- “Is there any of this (what the family think CPS would want) that you would like to add to your picture of ‘life at its best’?”

Record the family’s ideas about CPS’s views on a piece of paper underneath the “Life at its best” page. Throughout the family roadmap process, CPS’s views are recorded at the bottom of the roadmap and in a separate colour.
Step 2: Life at its worst

Having described family life at its best, we then ask the family to talk about what life would be like, or has been like, at its worst in their family. The acknowledgement and exploration of life at its best will usually make it easier for families to then talk about the more difficult and challenging aspects of their lives (life at its worst). The family’s description of ‘life at its worst’ is recorded on a piece of paper on the left hand side of the wall.

To elicit the family’s description of ‘life at its worst’, I usually ask a question such as:

“We’ve talked about what life is like or would be like at its best in your family, but things are not always at their best and every family has difficult times. So if life was at its worst for your family, what would that look like? What would be happening in your family and for your children if life was at its worst?”

Again, you will probably need to use follow up questions to elicit a full description of ‘life at its worst’. Some examples of useful follow up questions include:

- “What sort of things would be happening in your family if life was at its worst?”
- “What else would be happening if life was at its worst?”
- “What sort of things would you both be doing if life was at its worst?”
- “What would the children notice was happening if life was at its worst?”
- “What would ____ (other significant people) notice was happening if life was at its worst?”

If the family are not able to relate to future-focused questions (thinking about what life would be like if things were at their worst), you can ask the same questions but focused on times in the past when things have been at their worst. For example:

“Could you think for a moment about times in the past when things have not been going as well as they are now. What were things like when they were at their most difficult and when things were at their worst for your family and your children?”
As the family start to describe what life would be like, or has been like, at its worst, you may need to use detail questions to elicit the necessary detail. The more detailed this description of family life at its worst, the easier it will be for the family to come up with ideas for how to address these challenges and problems. Detail questions you can use include:

- Who (would be doing that)?
- What (tell me more about what would be happening/ what you would be doing?)
- Where (might this be happening)?
- When (might this happen)?
- How might this impact on the kids?

Continue asking “What else was/would be happening in your family and for your kids if/when life was at its worst?”, using follow up and detail questions until you have a detailed description of what is happening in the family when life is at its worst.

**An important note**

As the family start to talk about the details of life at its worst in their family, they may describe some pretty difficult and challenging circumstances. It’s really important that you don’t get caught up in “evidence gathering” at this point and that the family feel able to talk without being judged or in danger of having this information used against them. The focus here is on understanding and describing the problems as clearly as possible so that these problems and challenges can be addressed together. If information is disclosed during the process that has you worried about the children’s immediate safety, you will need to take action to ensure the children’s safety, but using the family roadmap process to explore the parents’ ideas about future safety will create a greater opportunity to work collaboratively with the parents to build immediate and future safety for the children.

**Views of CPS**

The final stage in this first part of the process involves asking the family to consider the views of child protection services, using questions such as:

- “Of these things you have described, which of these do you think CPS would also be worried would be happening in your family?”
- “What do you think CPS would see as the most worrying?”
- “Is there anything else that you haven’t included, that you think CPS might be worried about?”
Step 3: Adding to “Life at its best”

In the family’s description of what life would be like at its worst in their family (and their ideas on CPS’s views about this), the family may describe issues or worries that they have not addressed in the vision of life at its best. The third step involves making sure that “Life at its best” covers all of the issues or worries that have been raised when talking about “Life at its worst”.

I usually do this by working with the family to compare the two descriptions and asking the family to check that each of the points that have been described in “Life at its worst” have been covered in “Life at its best”.

“Okay, now you have described what life would be like at its best in your family and for your children, and what life could be like at its worst (pointing to each of these on the wall, the board or on the table as you are talking). Can we just make sure that your description of “Life at its best” has covered all of the worries or difficulties that could create problems for you or for the children?”

Then work through each of the issues described in “Life at its worst” and ask the family to check if this has been covered in the description of “Life at its best”. For example:

- “The first thing you said in your “Life at its worst” was that you would both be using drugs again and spending money on drugs rather than on food for the kids, and that the kids would be hungry and pretty sad and getting sick. Does what you’ve got in your “Life at its best” describe what you want to have happening instead of that?”
- “The next thing you said in your “Life at its worst” was that you would be fighting with each other and screaming at each other and that the kids would be pretty frightened by all of that. Have you described what you want to have happening instead in your “Life at its best”?”

If the issue has not been addressed, or has not been addressed fully, use a questioning approach with the family to ask them to think about what might need to be added. Questions I usually use include:

- “So instead of fighting and screaming at each other and having the children frightened by that, what would be happening instead in your family when things were at their best?”
- “Everyone in relationships gets angry with each other or have times of conflict, so when life was at its best, what would be happening in your family when you get angry with each other? How would you be handling those times so that it was safe for the children?”

Use the same process to make sure that all of the issues that the family identified in what CPS might be worried about have been covered in their description of what they think CPS would want to see happening in their family.
Step 4: Scaling Question

The fourth step involves asking the family to say where they think things are right now in their family, on a scale from life at its worst to life at its best. This question is asking the family to articulate their assessment of where things are in the family and for their children right now, although we are not using formal assessment language with the family.

The scaling question I usually ask is:

“Okay, we’ve talked about what life in your family would be look like at its best and what it would look like at its worst. Imagine there is a road between “life at its best” and “life at its worst”. If “life at its best” is your destination and “life at its worst” is what you want to leave behind you, where would you say things are right now for your family and for your children, on this road between life at its worst and life at its best? Can you take a piece of paper and put yourself at that place on the road?”

Parents or family members may have similar or very different views about where things are right now and different people’s scaling positions are recorded separately. I usually reassure people that it is absolutely okay for them to have different views about where things are right now, by saying something like:

“People will often have very different views about where things are in the family. Sometimes one person might be at a 3 and the other person is at an 8, and that is totally okay. There is no right or wrong answer, but hearing from each person about where you are on the scale right now will help us talk and plan together about how to move forward”.

Sometimes, parents, children and family members will scale themselves at a 10 (‘life at its best’). In my experience of working with families, this usually happens if people do not trust that they can be honest with us or are anxious about the consequences of scaling lower. Rather than trying to argue or dispute someone’s stated view, you can still use their scaling position to explore the next stages of the roadmap (which explores what they are doing that has them this far along the road, what has helped them to achieve this, and what they need to keep doing for things in their family to continue going well). You can also ask the parents...
to assess where things were at their lowest point (for example, during the last year) and then ask them what they are doing now that has them higher and what has helped them to make these changes.

You can also use the scaling questions to help parents/family members reflect on other people’s views about what is happening in the family, including the views of the children, significant family members and the child protection agency, by asking a question such as:

“Okay, we’ve talked about where you are on that road. If the children were here (or were old enough to talk), where do you think they would say things are right now? What about ____ (a significant person)? Where would they say things are? And just based on what CPS know about your family at the moment, where do you think CPS would scale things?”

Step 5: The journey so far

What’s already going well?

The fifth step in the family roadmap process involves asking the family to identify what they are already doing and what is already happening in their family that has brought them this far along the road toward “life at its best”.

This part of the process invites the parents/family members to write down what is already happening or what part of “life at its best” they have already achieved on small pieces of paper, which they then stick on the wall (or on the large piece of paper). These pieces of paper (represented by the green boxes in the picture below) are placed above the scaling line, in between “life at its worst” and their scaling position.
The questions I usually ask are:

- “When you think about where you have scaled yourself, what’s already going well in your family or for your children that has you this far along the road? What part of your “life at its best” is already happening in your family? Could you write that down and put it on the roadmap?”
- “What else are you already doing? What else? Could you write down all the things that are already happening and put them on the roadmap to show your journey so far?”
- “What would the children/other significant people say you are already doing that has you this far along the road?”

What’s helped them to achieve this?

Once all of the things that are already going well have been identified and put on the roadmap, the process then focuses on identifying what or who has helped the family to achieve these things and what or who will help them to keep doing these things. These supports or resources are also recorded on bits of paper and these are put up on the wall underneath the scaling line (represented by the green triangles or green people in the picture above).

The questions I usually ask are:

- “What has helped you and your family to achieve these things and what will help you keep doing these things?”
- “Who are the people who have helped you to achieve these things?
- “Who could support you or help you to keep doing these things? What can they do to support you?”

To help connect the identified resources/supports with the relevant ‘what is going well’, you can either put the paper directly underneath the relevant achievement, or if there are lots of bits of paper, you can use a numbering system or even pieces of wool or string to connect them.

Support from CPS?

The final stage in this part of the process involves asking the family to think about what child protection services may have done that has helped them to achieve what they have already achieved and or what CPS could do to support them in continuing to do these things. These ideas are recorded in the colour used to represent CPS and placed on the bottom line (represented by the blue triangles above).

I usually introduce this idea by saying something like:

- “I know it might sound like a crazy idea, but is there anything that CPS have done that has helped you to achieve these positive thing, even if it’s just been helpful in small ways?
- “Is there anything that CPS could do in the future that might help you to keep these positive things happening?”

Step 6: The journey ahead

Thinking about the future

The sixth step invites the parents/family members to think through the steps on the journey from where they are now, to where they want to be (the future they want for their family and their kids). This part of the process involves the family identifying what would be happening in their family and for their children, and what else they would be doing as parents, as they journey further along the road toward their ‘life at its best’ destination.

As for the previous steps in the process, the parents/family members write their ideas down on pieces of paper and then stick these on the roadmap. These pieces of paper (represented by the yellow boxes in the picture below) are placed above the scaling line, in between their scaling position and “life at its best”.

The questions I usually ask to elicit information in this part of the process are:

- “So let’s now focus on you moving further along the road toward “life at its best” for your family. Imagine if I came back next week to talk with you and you told me that you were a little further along the road, say one step further along (point to where this would be on the roadmap). What would be happening in your family and for your children and what would you be doing, if your family were one step further along on the road to your destination? Can you write that down and put it on the roadmap?”
- “What else would be happening in your family and what else would you be doing if you were one step further along?”
- “What if you were a second step further along? What would be happening if you were two steps further along from where you are now?”
- “As you keep looking forward, let’s identify what would be happening in your family and what you would be doing as parents as you move further along the road and then all the way toward “life at its best” for your family. Put each of those things up on the roadmap.”
This step in the family roadmap process may take some time, as the family are thinking through and talking through what they would be doing differently and what would be different in their lives as they journey closer and closer toward their goals (what they have envisaged as ‘life at its best’). It’s important to let this part of the process take as long as it needs and to use reflective questioning to encourage the family to sit back, have a look at what they have identified so far as the steps on their family roadmap journey, and to think about whether there is anything else that they would like to add.

Some questions you might like to use include:

- “As you look at all of those things you have now put on your roadmap, is there anything else you want to add?”
- “Looking at what you have described as ‘life at its best’ for your family and all the steps you have identified on your journey toward ‘life at its best’, is there anything else that you need to add to your roadmap? Is there anything else you would be doing along the way that will help you get to your goal of ‘life at its best’ for your family?”
- “Are there any other steps that you think other people would want to add – the children? Other significant people (name them)? CPS?”

What will help them to achieve this?

Once the family have identified each of the steps as they journey along the road, the process then focuses on identifying what or who will help the family to achieve these things. For each of the identified steps along the road, ask the family to think about what or who will help them to achieve this. These supports or resources are recorded on bits of paper and put up on the roadmap underneath the scaling line (represented by the yellow triangles or people on the picture on the previous page).

The questions I usually ask are:

- “What will help you to achieve each of these steps and to keep these things happening?”
- “Who could help you to achieve these things?
- “Who could support you or help you to keep doing these things? What can they do to support you?”

Support from CPS?

The final stage in this part of the process involves asking the family to think about what child protection services could do to support them in achieving and continuing to do these things.

The family’s ideas about this are recorded in the colour used to represent CPS and placed on the bottom line (represented by the blue triangles in the picture on the previous page).
Step 7: Showing everyone that these good things are happening

The seventh step in the roadmap process invites the parents/family members to think about how others (and particularly CPS and other professionals) will know that these positive things are happening and that the parents and family are putting these positive changes into action. This step introduces the importance of future safety being demonstrated, so that CPS and others can be confident that these positive changes are happening and that the children are being cared for safely.

All safety plans need to include comprehensive details about how the safety plan will be monitored, and this is usually one of the aspects of safety planning that family members find most difficult. Introducing the importance of changes being demonstrated during the family roadmap process will make it easier for the family and safety network to understand and participate in developing the monitoring component of the safety plan.

I usually introduce the idea of monitoring by saying something like:

“You’ve identified a lot of things that you are already doing and that you want to be doing in the future to create the kind of family life you want, where your children are safe and you are being the parents you want to be. While you achieving this for your children is the most important outcome, it’s also important that CPS (and other people) know that you are doing these things so that they can be confident that your children are safe and they can then close your case and let you get on with being a family. So can we talk now about how CPS (and others) can know that these important things are happening?”

As for the previous steps in the process, the parents/family members write their ideas down on pieces of paper and they then stick these on the roadmap. These pieces of paper (represented by the brown boxes in the picture below) are placed at the top of the roadmap on the “showing everyone that it’s happening” line.
Things that are already going well

Start on the left hand side of the roadmap and work through each of the things that are already going well.

- “Let’s start with the good things that you are already doing. Who has noticed that this is happening in your family? How do they know that you are doing this? Let’s write that down and put it up the top of the roadmap.”
- “Who else has noticed? How do they know?”
- “Who else would you like to know that this is happening? How could you show them? How could they know in the future that this is still happening and still going well?”
- “How could you show CPS that these things are happening?”

Continue until you have worked through all of the identified things that are already going well and the ideas about monitoring have been added to the top line of the roadmap.

Future actions

- “Now let’s look at the plans you have for the future. Let’s start with the first step. If you were doing this, who would be the first person to notice that this was happening? How would they notice? Let’s write that down and put it up the top of the roadmap.”
- “How could you show CPS that these things are happening?”

Continue until you have worked through all of the identified future actions.

Step 8: Watching out for roadblocks

The eighth step in the roadmap process invites the parents/family members to think about possible roadblocks or obstacles they might encounter in the future, that might get in the way of them reaching their goal of ‘life at its best’ and creating the future they want for their family and their children.

This part of the process involves identifying:

- The obstacles or roadblocks they have already dealt with and how they dealt with those.
- Possible future roadblocks.
- What they could do to avoid or deal with these roadblocks, and
- Who might be helpful to them in the future in dealing with these roadblocks.

I usually introduce the idea of roadblocks by saying something like:

- “I think you’ve done a fantastic job of creating a roadmap to help you journey toward the future you want for your family and your children. Before we finish, let’s just do a bit of trouble-shooting and think about any roadblocks or obstacles that might get in your way and stop you going forward.”
Roadblocks they have already dealt with

- “Let’s start off by looking at roadblocks or obstacles that you have already dealt with or are dealing with now. When you look at your roadmap and think about how far you have already come, what roadblocks or obstacles have you already had to deal with?”

- “Let’s write those roadblocks down (I usually have red ‘stop sign’ shaped pieces of paper available) and add them to the roadmap in the place they best fit into your journey so far” (The roadblocks are added above the scaling line, in the area between “life at its worst” and their scaling position, alongside the particular step that the roadblock relates to).

- “What other roadblocks or obstacles have you already dealt with?”

Roadblocks they might face in the future

- “So now as you think about moving forward and achieving all of these things that you have identified, what roadblocks or obstacles might get in your way and make it difficult for you to move forward? Could you add that to the roadmap?”

- “What other roadblocks or obstacles might you run into?”

- “What roadblocks do you think your children (and other significant people) might suggest could get in the way?”

- “What roadblocks do you think CPS might suggest or be worried about?”

- “Can you think of any other roadblocks that might get in your way in the future?”
Dealing with the roadblocks

With each of the identified roadblocks, the focus is now on identifying how the family have dealt with the roadblocks in the past and what might help them to deal with any future roadblocks. Ideas for dealing with roadblocks are recorded under the scaling line as one of the strengths/resources. I usually try to position these additional strengths/resources directly underneath each of the roadblocks so that everyone can see what strength/resource relates to each roadblock.

Questions you can use to explore how to deal with roadblocks include:

• “With this first roadblock that you said you have dealt with in the past, what or who helped you to deal with this or to navigate around those? Could you write that down and add it to the roadmap?”

Work through each of the past roadblocks in this way and then focus on possible future roadblocks.

• “What could you do to deal with or avoid each of the possible future roadblocks? Let’s write that down and add it to the roadmap.”

• “Who could help you to deal with or avoid that roadblock? What could they do that would be helpful?”

Support from CPS?

• “What could CPS do to help you to deal with or avoid the possible future roadblocks? What else could CPS do that would be helpful?”

Record these ideas in the colour used to represent CPS and place them on the bottom line.

Final overview of the entire roadmap

Whether the family roadmap has been completed over one session or a number of sessions, take time at the end of the process to invite everyone to look over their roadmap and to check whether there is anything else that they want to add to the family roadmap.

The completion of the process is also a useful time to remind everyone of the purpose of the family roadmap process and the importance of the views of the family/safety network members being central to the assessment process and then to the safety planning process.

The next step is to then explore with the family/safety network members the question of who needs to see the important information contained within the roadmap and then to consider how they would like to proceed with a sharing of views: sharing their views with other relevant professionals or safety network members and having the views of the child protection agency shared with them in more detail.
Process Considerations ...

1. The amount of time it takes to create a “Family Roadmap” will depend on the family, but it can take as long as 2 – 3 hours, so you may need to do it over a number of sessions. Some families will want to complete it in one session and if this is the case, make sure that you have a break or a number of breaks, and that there are things in place to help everyone relax and stay focused, like water, tea, coffee, snacks, etc.

2. If you are creating the “Family Roadmap” over a number of sessions, try to finish each session at the end of a step, rather than finishing in the middle of a step.

3. When the roadmap has been completed or if you are doing it over a number of sessions, make sure that everyone has an immediate record of what has been created. I usually take photographs of the roadmap and make sure that everyone gets a copy of the photo (via email) or suggest that the family members also take a photograph.

4. If you are working in the family’s home, explore whether the roadmap can stay up on the wall between sessions as this will enable the family to continue adding ideas between sessions.

5. If the roadmap needs to be taken down between sessions, choose someone to be responsible for the roadmap components and then leave time at the beginning of the next session to put it all back up on the wall (the photos can help with this).

6. It is also useful to have a typed copy of the content contained within the family roadmap. If you are lucky, you might have an admin person who can help with this (and who is good at laying out documents in word or a desktop publishing programme) or you might just need to record each of the elements in a list form. Again, make sure everyone gets a copy of the typed version.

7. As discussed earlier in the document, it is important for the views of all the significant people in the child’s life to be included in the family roadmap. Whether you do this just with the parents first and then involve other people over time, or whether the family roadmap can be created with all the significant people at one time, will depend on the family and the extent to which other family members/safety network people are already involved with the assessment process. Sometimes it will be necessary to initially create the roadmap just with the parents so that they are able to express their views without the pressure of having other people involved in the process. For some families however, the family roadmap may be able to be created by the whole group, with the parents, children, extended family, safety network and professionals present.
8. After you have created the “family roadmap” with the parents to elicit and record the family’s views, the next step is to share the views of the child protection agency. One way you can do this is by showing CPS’s views that have been recorded within the “Partnering For Safety” framework (or “Signs of Safety” framework if that is what you are using) and working through how the family views that are expressed within the “family roadmap” are added to the PFS framework. The connections between the family roadmap process and the Partnering for Safety framework is outlined below.

Alternatively, you can work through how CPS’s views that have been expressed in the PFS framework can be added to the roadmap to create a “combined roadmap”. This “combined roadmap” or combined PFS framework then provides you and the family with the foundation for developing a detailed and collaborative safety plan.

Connections between the Roadmap and the PFS Framework

The “family roadmap” and the PFS framework are both assessment frameworks and are essentially gathering the same information. It is the way that the information is elicited and recorded that is different. The table below shows the connections between the two documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Roadmap Elements</th>
<th>PFS Framework Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Life at its best”.</td>
<td>Safety Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Life at its worst”.</td>
<td>Statements of Future Danger (may also contain information about Past Harm and Complicating Factors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaling position.</td>
<td>Scaling position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What they are already doing to achieve goals (the journey so far).</td>
<td>Actions of Protection (if they are actions that have kept the children safe or have protected them from the dangers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Roadmap Elements</td>
<td>PFS Framework Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What and who has helped achieve this.</td>
<td>Strengths/resources and possible safety network members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What they want to do in the future to achieve the goals (the journey ahead).</td>
<td>Next Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What/who could help them achieve this.</td>
<td>If the resource/person is already in their life, then a strength; otherwise a ‘Next Step’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What CPS could do to support them.</td>
<td>Next Steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadblocks/obstacles.</td>
<td>Complicating Factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What/who has helped them overcome this or could help them overcome this roadblock in the future.</td>
<td>Strengths/Next Steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing that it’s happening.</td>
<td>Next Steps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**From the “Family Roadmap” to the safety plan**

This section of the booklet explores how the “Family Roadmap” process, and the information that it elicits, connects with the creation of a collaborative and detailed safety plan.

**Direction for the safety plan**

An essential first step in the creation of a comprehensive safety plan is the identification of the future dangers to the children (danger statements) and the safety goals (what everyone would need to see happening within the family to be confident that the children will be safe in the future). It is these danger statements and safety goals that provide direction for the safety plan. Families need to have participated in the development of the danger statements and safety goals if they are to meaningfully participate in creating a safety plan that addresses these dangers and meet these safety goals.

The family's ideas about 'life at its worst' and 'life at its best' are the family's views on the danger statements and safety goals. Once the family's views have been identified, the family's
views and the views of the child protection agency can then be shared and discussed to develop one set of mutually-constructed danger statements and safety goals (see image below).

**Process to Develop Mutually-Constructed Danger Statements and Safety Goals**

- Get clear on your views/the agency’s views on the Danger Statements and Safety Goals and write these down (to share with family after hearing their thoughts)
- Meet with parents/children/other significant people to elicit their views on the Danger Statements and Safety Goals, including their perception of CPS’s views. May happen over a series of meetings.

CPS and family meet together to share and discuss their statements and to develop one set of mutually-constructed Danger Statements and Safety Goals. May happen over a series of meetings.

Provide direction for the development of a collaborative and comprehensive safety plan.

For a more detailed discussion of a suggested process for working with families to create mutually-constructed danger statements and safety goals, please see relevant blogs on my website at [http://www.spconsultancy.com.au/blog.html](http://www.spconsultancy.com.au/blog.html) and on the right column under categories, choose danger statements and then safety goals.

**Adding to the family roadmap**

If anything has been added to the safety goals in the process of creating mutually-constructed danger statements and safety goals (ie. the child protection agency has worries that were not addressed by the parents’ ‘life at its best’ or safety goals, and so additional safety goals have been identified), then the family roadmap process can be revisited to explore the family’s ideas of:

- What they are already doing that might help to achieve this additional safety goal/s?
- What they need to be doing in the future to achieve this safety goal/s?
- Who/what has or could help them to achieve this?

**Details for the safety plan**

The ideas that the family (and safety network members) have expressed within the “Family Roadmap” provide the skeleton for the safety plan:

- The things that the family have identified they are already doing that is helping to achieve
safety for the children (to the left of their scaling position) are included in the safety plan as safety rules that are already working and that everyone wants the family to continue doing in the future.

- The things that the family have identified that they want to be doing in the future are included in the safety plan as safety rules that everyone wants the family to be following in the future.
- The details from the roadmap about who will be involved to help the family achieve these things (safety network people), and what they will do to help, are also included in the safety plan.
- The details from step 7 of how CPS (and others) will know these things are happening (how the safety plan will be monitored) are included in the safety plan.
- The ideas about how the family have dealt with any past roadblocks and how they will deal with any future roadblocks are also included in the safety plan.

Depending on how much detail is contained in the family roadmap, the necessary details for each of the safety rules/guidelines will need to be worked out during the safety planning meetings (see further information below for further safety planning resources that can help you with this). These detailed safety rules/guidelines are then written as clear statements in language that the children can understand.

As the family, safety network and professionals then work together over time to put the safety plan into action and to monitor and review the safety plan, the “family roadmap” can then be used as a working document to continue to scale everyone’s views on progress toward the safety goals (life at its best), to reflect on what is happening that has people this far along the road and to identify what needs to happen next for the family to continue moving closer to the destination of enough safety for the children.

Other safety planning resources

I have recently developed a safety planning framework that helps to provide some structure and guidance for the process of working with families and their network to develop the detailed safety plan. A booklet that describes the safety planning tool and its use with families will be available in the near future (please see the reference list). Andrew Turnell from Resolutions Consultancy has produced a DVD on safety planning, and there is comprehensive information on safety planning in the Resolutions book. For more detailed information on these resources, please see the reference list at the end of this booklet.

If you have specific questions or feedback about the family roadmap process, please feel free to get in touch with me on the email below or via my website.

I wish you all the very best in your use of this process and your work with families!
References


Turnell, A. (2010). Effective safety planning in child protection casework. [Workbook and DVD], Resolutions Consultancy (www.signsofsafety.net)