

Strengthening families | Protecting children

Framework for practice

Collaborative Assessment and Planning Framework

Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources Statements

What are Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources statements?

The “What is working well” column of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning (CAP) Framework is used to document examples of actions of protection and belonging, as well as strengths and resources within the family. The actions, qualities and resources listed and analysed should relate to the **harm statements and complicating factors that have been recorded in the relevant sections of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning (CAP) framework.**

Harm statements focus on the past and outline parental actions or inactions and the resulting physical, emotional and psychological impacts for the child. Complicating factors are any issues or concerns that make the situation more difficult for the family to protect and care for the child and/or make it more difficult for the family and Child Safety to work together.

Protection and belonging describes any time when the parent/caregivers have taken action or made a decision that **resulted in the child being safe**, when they might otherwise have been harmed. Actions of protection are clear, specific and have a direct observable effect. These actions can be supported and built upon over time to create enduring safety for the child.

Strengths and resources describe attributes, attitudes, capacities and supports that are present in the child, parent, caregiver or network and are positive **but don't on their own create safety for the child.** Strengths and resources can be harnessed to support future growth and change.

Documenting what is working well is important because it identifies what parents, carers and support networks are already doing that is positive and can be built upon in relation to the children's safety, belonging and wellbeing. Affirming what is already working highlights that change is possible, and aids in growing engagement and motivation.

When to write a Protection and Belonging or Strengths and Resources statement

Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources statements are written whenever you are undertaking an assessment and/or planning process with families. These statements will be continually updated as part of the case review process. Hopefully, new strengths and resources will become apparent as the parents engage with and work through detailed action steps. On the way to achieving the documented goal statement, new actions of protection and belonging should also emerge and be recorded.

Whenever a complicating factor is removed from the CAP framework, information should be recorded under either the strengths or acts of protection section to explain what has happened to resolve or address the complicating factor.

If a Worry Statement (and corresponding Goal Statement) is removed from the CAP framework, actions of protection in relation to this worry statement will need to be recorded under the Protection and Belonging section. These actions of protection and belonging will need to have been demonstrated over a significant period of time to evidence that the goal statement had been achieved and that the worries had been addressed.

Using Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources Statements with Structured Decision Making (SDM)

Any item scored as an A or B on the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment and Parental Strengths and Needs Assessment tools should be included in the Strengths and Resources section of the CAP framework. Careful exploration of these strengths may also reveal times where the strengths have been translated into actions of protection or belonging.

Where additional Strengths and Resources and Actions of Protection and Belonging statements are documented, these will inform the completion of the following SDM tools:

- the Family Risk Re-evaluation for in-home cases, in particular question R10: Progress with the case plan and
- the Family Reunification Assessment, in particular question R2: Family's progress with the case plan and the parent/child contact evaluation.

How to write a "Protection and Belonging" or "Strengths and Resources" statement

Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources statements make clear

- who (child, parent, carer or network member)
- does what and
- how this improves the situation for the child (safety, belonging, wellbeing)

For in-home and short-term cases with a goal of increased safety in the home or reunification, statements about actions of protection and belonging taken by the child, parents, carers and the network must be specific and describe the behaviours that resulted in increased safety for the child.

Similarly, strengths and resources statements will reflect strengths and resources used by the child, parent, carer and network that are improving the situation for the child or young person.

For cases where the goal is long-term out-of-home care and stability for the child or young person, protection and belonging and strengths and resources may relate to actions undertaken by the parent, carer and/or network to meet the child's safety, belonging and wellbeing needs. Young people may also demonstrate personal strengths and acts of protection on their own behalf and these actions and decisions should also be documented as Protection and Belonging or Strengths and Resources statements. For children in long-term out-of-home care particular attention should be given to recognising and promoting the importance of connection to culture as a strength and resource.

Tip: Protection and Belonging and Strengths and Resources statements should not reflect the absence of something, for example “no previous child protection history” does not describe an action of protection, while in contrast, “the family has worked together for the past 7 years to provide child care, meals and cleaning to keep the children safe when mum has been depressed” is an action of protection.

Statements about “what is working well” should be written in plain language that is easily understood by the family and relate directly to the documented harms and complicating factors. Do not use jargon or words that don’t have clear, shared meanings. Statements should be jointly constructed with the child, young person, parents, carer and or network.

Example statements

Example of a pre- investigation and assessment Protection and Belonging statement in response to worries about neglect

- The school says that Leanne (mum) brings Cara to class every day on time and that Cara is always clean, dressed right for the weather and has everything she needs including school books and a healthy lunch.

Example of pre-investigation and assessment Strengths and Resources statement in response to worries about neglect

- Mum is seeing a psychologist every fortnight to help manage her depression.

Example of a substantiated investigation and assessment Protection and Belonging statement

- For about 5 months from January 2015, Maria did not pinch or hit the boys after Maria’s mother-in-law, Terry, stopped Maria from pinching the boys and hitting them with a cane on 4 or 5 occasions in January. Terry told Maria that hitting and hurting the children as discipline is not okay.

Example of a substantiated investigation and assessment Strengths and Resources statement

- Maria has joined a local playgroup where she has made new friends and is learning new ways to play with her children.

Example of a LTG to the CE ongoing intervention Protection and Belonging statement

- Nathan’s mum Colleen and his carer Judy have worked out a plan where they will take Nathan to the Healing Centre classes together so that they can support and encourage him to learn about, embrace and celebrate his culture and heritage as a member of the Turrbal people and help Nathan to know who he is, where he comes from and belongs.

Example of a LTG to the CE ongoing intervention Strengths and Resources statement

- Nathan has started driving lessons and plans to sit his driving test at the end of the year.