

Signs of Safety Newsletter

Hello, and welcome to the first of your monthly Signs of Safety newsletters - keeping you in touch with all the latest SoS implementation news and developments.

Welcome

Welcome to our first Signs of Safety newsletter which I hope you will find an informative and interesting read. As we continue to embed SOS as the practice model in Children's Social Care this newsletter will be produced each month to provide information, updates and top tips to support staff implementing the model. Since Mel and Paul have been in post the implementation has progressed rapidly and we are keen to keep everyone updated.

Feedback from staff using the model is positive and it is clear that practice makes perfect so I would encourage everyone to 'have a go' and support each other to use some of the tools and techniques.

What is Signs of Safety?

Signs of Safety is a strengths based, safety-organised approach to social care practice. The approach can be used in Early Help (Signs of Wellbeing) through to Child Protection (Signs of Safety) and Leaving Care (Signs of Success). It is the practice model that is being adopted throughout Northumberland Children's Social Care.

Find out more from Andrew Turnell, the co-founder, who describes the approach [here](#).



We are keen to hear from people using the model and understand the challenges and successes so please let us know what is working well and how we can support you going forward.

Adele Wright,
Head of Service (Children's Social Care)



Baseline survey

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey in July, we had over 200 responses! It has been helpful in identifying areas that are working well, and areas that need to be developed in our implementation. These themes are now included in our plan and will be focus points for our Practice Leads to use when they work alongside your individual teams.


Our Implementation Plan

The implementation of Signs of Safety is a priority for 2020/2021 and will be the way in which everyone in Children's Social Care works with children, young people and families.

Whilst we are already using and embedding the Signs of Safety model into our work currently, it is the overall aim that we will go live as a whole service using Signs of Safety both in our practice and how we record the work we do with families, by April 2021.

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Practice Leads

Our Practice Leads, Mel Atkins and Paul Thompson, will be working alongside your teams in the run up to our go live date to support the development of Signs of Safety practice.

Managers have been asked to think about and share the areas of the Signs of Safety model with you and support you in using the model prior to Mel and Paul meeting with you, so a plan can be put in place to support you with any further learning you may require.

When the Practice Leads leave your team, a summary of what has worked well and areas to develop will be provided so the momentum to embed Signs of Safety continues, led by the management team and Practice Champions.

So far, Mel and Paul have worked with the Front Door and are currently working with the four locality Early Help and Safeguarding Teams. In November the plan will be to move onto work alongside the IRO service, NAS and DCT.



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Practice Champions

Practice Champions are your point of contact for advice and guidance regarding Signs of Safety. We have over 70 champions identified across the service, which is excellent.

They will be attending monthly practice leadership sessions where they will be developing their skills and knowledge of the model, which will then be shared within their teams.



Updating our recording system

Our practice with families will be different using Signs of Safety, so we need to change our recording system to reflect this.

There will be some new forms in EHM and LSC, but as you become more confident in Signs of Safety practice, recording the work you complete with families will become easier and quicker. In the interim, we will be using new templates of the forms to support practitioners in using the Signs of Safety model in their work with families.

We will be testing the new system in early October, which some of you will be involved in.

We then hope to invite as many of you as possible to use the test system with case examples, so you get an opportunity to see, and become familiar with the changes in the test system, before we go live in April.



How is the service changing?

Practice Feedback

“I have enjoyed using Signs of Safety from case allocation as this has helped me to map both strengths and safety, as well as worries from the start. This has been useful when creating danger statements and safety goals. I feel using signs of safety has made things clearer and simple to understand not only for myself but also the family.”

- Nicola Bell

Next steps - training

We would like you to feel confident in understanding how Signs of Safety applies to your role and how to use the model when in contact with families. There are a range of training sessions through Learning Together:

1. Signs of Safety Awareness e-learning module
2. Signs of Safety virtual courses- 3 hours or 4 sessions
3. Workshops that look at aspects of the model in more depth. Currently we have timelines and trajectories, and safety planning available and are developing a further workshop in Safety/Harm Matrix.
4. 30-minute virtual bitesize webinars. These started on 8th September and will continue to run on Tuesday mornings at 9am and Thursday afternoons at 1pm.

We have aligned the different roles across Children's Services to the most appropriate course in a [matrix](#), please check the matrix before you book any training, and ensure you are available for the sessions you book.

If you are unsure which training you should book, please speak to your manager or contact Tracey tracey.horseman@northumberland.gov.uk for advice on which sessions are most suited to your role.

Practice focus: Group sessions

Practice Champions will support the set up of group supervision sessions for your team on a monthly basis. These sessions should not replace individual supervision but can be a very helpful learning process as you will benefit from others skills and experience. Sharing of ideas and experiences can be done across teams and services and will help build resilience, providing an opportunity to deal with uncertainty and a way of accessing support.

Group Supervision/case mapping as a group may be particularly helpful for:


- Cases or issues that are 'stuck'
- Cases or issues that are very complex
- Cases or issues with a lot of uncertainty
- Cases or issues with disagreement
- Learning how to apply aspects of the model

The Practice Leads can share the group supervision guidance and talk through the process.



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Top Tips

Here are a couple of ideas to support you through your Signs of Safety journey.

Tip 1- Sign up to the Signs of Safety Facebook page for more information, ideas and support.

- Signs of Safety- Children's Services Support Group for practitioners and Team Managers.
- Signs of Safety- Child Protection Leadership Support Forum, for Senior Managers.

Both groups have lots of practice tips and discussions, further information about elements of the model and live webinar/question and answer sessions are advertised. You need to be a member of the group to access the live sessions.

Tip 2 - Check out this [article](#) on “hanging out in the middle column” which reminds us to take a strength based and balanced approach to the work we are doing with our families.

Tip 3 - Give Signs of Safety a try, doing is the best way to learn.

New developments

To help practitioners become familiar with what the new forms will look like and to use the model with families, we have developed a range of new google templates that can be used now:

- Care team minutes
- Core group minutes
- Harm and safety matrix
- Network finding tools
- Safety plan (plan rules)

These templates will be shared by the Practice Leads, who can explain how to use them and offer support to put them into practice, when they are working alongside teams and practitioners.



Frequently Asked Questions

This section is your opportunity to ask a question about anything relating to Signs of Safety, and we will make it a feature of future newsletters. Please send your questions to [Catherine MacDonald](#).

Equally, if you have any feedback, or would like to share an update in future newsletters, please contact Catherine MacDonald.