

Signs of Safety Newsletter

Hello, and welcome to the fifth Signs of Safety (SoS) newsletter. We intend to use the newsletter to keep you in touch with any news and developments which relate to the implementation of Signs of Safety.

COUNT DOWN TO OUR SoS GO LIVE DATE: 3 months

WHAT IS WORKING WELL

North Practice day feedback

On 3rd December senior managers held a practice day in the North social work and early help teams. A range of practice was observed, and several staff were spoken to during the day.

The use of Signs of Safety was one of the key areas of focus throughout the day.

Overall, there was strong evidence of increasingly effective use of SoS in the case files and staff reported that they were feeling more confident with the use of SoS tools. It was clear that there had been a shift in the language used and good evidence of using family networks to create safety plans. The deputy manager spoke of how the social work team have embraced the group supervision model so that team members are now leading sessions.

It was great to get feedback about the process from the early help team structured in the 3 columns, which helped the senior managers develop their practice and build on what works well for future practice days.

Team timelines

Central Locality Team have reviewed their team [timeline](#). They are going to use scaling questions to measure how far the team progress from January through to April 2021.

All teams need a timeline, so the next steps, what they look like and the expectations and bottom lines are clear for everyone. This will help managers to be more focused on the areas that practitioners require support to move their implementation forward.

Having a go!

The Practice Leads have worked with a range of different teams including the ERA's, Triage, Assessment Team, Early Help and Locality Teams, DCT, 14/18+ and IRO service so far. The keys features of the teams that are progressing well with implementing SoS are:


- Prioritise practicing the elements of the SoS model through kind and supportive group supervision sessions at least fortnightly.
- Teams that create a rota so that all team members have the experience of bringing a case to group supervision, being a facilitator and an advisor.
- Good attendance and participation in group supervision sessions which has influenced positive changes in thinking and practice.
- Managers that encourage their team to attend training sessions and ask what they have learned on the training, to use in their practice.
- Team members that speak to the Practice Leads prior to and after using some of the SoS model with families directly to help plan, and review what they learned and how it went.
- Practitioners that check with the Practice Leads or their Practice Champions what good Danger Statements, Safety Goals and Scaling Questions look like and share good practice.

2021

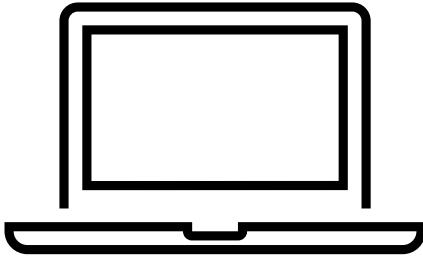
If you would like to share any examples of good practice or anything that has worked well, please send the information to the SoS mailbox so we can all learn.

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NEXT STEPS: Training

Signs of Safety training is available now for everyone to access. We want to support as many of you as possible to access the training aligned to your role before the go live date on **20th April 2021**, so you are prepared. Our offer includes:

E-learning module

This introductory module gives an overview of the Signs of Safety approach to help all practitioners and staff.

Who is this for? Staff who do not work directly with children, young people and families but who would benefit from an awareness of the model. Or Staff that work with children, young people and families who would like a refresher of the model.

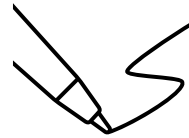
Safety Planning workshop

Timeline and Trajectory workshop

Analysing Harm workshop

Who is this for? Senior managers, managers and practitioners working directly with children, young people and families who will be using Signs of Safety as part of their day-to-day work and need a working knowledge of all aspects and tools.

You will need to have completed the 12-hour virtual/2-day face to face course before booking onto these workshops.



12-hour programme

The in-depth programme will provide you with an understanding of the practice model, an opportunity to see the model in action and to practice with some of the tools which are integral to using Signs of Safety with families.

Who is this for? Senior Managers, managers and practitioners working in frontline services and directly with children, young people and families who will be using Signs of Safety as part of their day-to-day work.

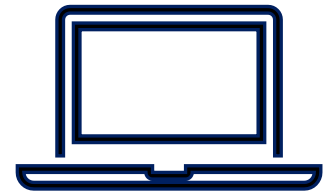
If you have already completed this programme in the last 2 years, then you do not need to complete this again.



3-hour programme

This condensed programme will provide you with an understanding of SoS, an opportunity to see the model in action and to practice with some of the tools which are integral to using SoS with families.

Who is this for? Partner agency staff and practitioners who may be involved indirectly with the assessment of children and families.



Bitesize webinars

These weekly 30-minute bite-size webinars focus on 10 specific areas of Signs of Safety practice. You can book on to all the sessions or the specific areas that you want to strengthen your knowledge.


Who is this for? All senior managers, managers and front-line practitioners working with children and families who will be using Signs of Safety as part of their day-to-day work.

If you have completed the Signs of Safety training within the last 2 years, these sessions are excellent short refresher sessions on aspects of the model.

The course details are available on Learning Together, through the links provided.

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Training Reminders

- When you book SoS training, you will receive a diary invite from Learning Together. If you do not receive this invite, please contact SocialCareTraining@nhct.nhs.uk
- If you are unable to attend the session you have booked, please cancel this through Learning Together so the place can be used by someone else.
- The link for the session and any materials you will need will be sent via Learning Together, at least the day before the session.
- Please log in to the session on time. If you have an issue logging in once the session has started it is very difficult for trainers to resolve this and it is also unfair on the other learners.

Benefits of accessing the training courses:

- Taking the first steps to understand the SoS model or build on the knowledge you already have.
- Think about how SoS will be used in your role.
- An opportunity to put your learning into practice and have a go using the model before the go live date. You will be supported by the champion in your team.
- Feel more confident and prepared for the changes in practice and how this will be recorded within the system from April.

Back to basics

The basic elements of SoS practice include a danger statement, safety goal and scaling questions.

From this month all new cases are expected to have all three elements:

Danger Statements explain to the family what we are worried about and the impact of the worries on the child or young person.

The **Safety Goals** explain what is needed to make sure that the child is always safe and well.

Families, their network and the professionals involved will be asked to scale the issue that has caused people to be worried, using **Scaling Questions**.

Without these three elements, you will not be practicing Signs of Safety!

HOW IS THE SERVICE CHANGING IN RESPONSE TO SIGNS OF SAFETY?

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We are **here to help you** through this process.

Ask us - We can support you if you have any questions or queries.

PAUL THOMPSON AND MEL ATKINS

signsofsafety@northumberland.gov.uk



PRACTICE LEADS

The Practice Leads are coming to the end of their time with DCT, 14/18+ and the IRO Service.


Mel and Paul will now be focusing on delivering training, but they will still be available to answer your questions and queries about practice and intend to support you to set up or strengthen your group supervision sessions.

If you have a case or an issue where you feel stuck and need some support using SoS as your approach, then please get in touch with them - signsofsafety@northumberland.gov.uk.

Outlined on the following page is what has been achieved over the past few months.

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Update from our Practice Leads

DCT

DCT have prioritised and attended group supervisions being led by the Practice Lead's.

They have had the chance to practice many of the SoS elements including Worry Statements, Wellbeing Goals, and Scaling Questions and have spent some time focusing on how to use Plan Rules, Networks and Safety Journals in complex cases involving children with additional needs where there are worries about abuse and neglect. Individual team members have sought help and support to apply some of the elements to their own individual cases, including the use of Timelines.

14/18+

14/18+ have created a rota and have used group supervision for their more challenging cases. These sessions have been attended by team managers, workers and on one occasion the senior manager. They have had a chance to practice the Mapping Tool, Harm Matrix, Best Questions, Network finding matrix for working with people where there is no easily available network for whatever reason and have begun to make links between how some of what they already do with young people fits with the SoS model.

IRO

The IRO team manager, practice champions and some team members completed a mapping in October and then again in January to look at what their next steps needed to be to support their implementation.

Within that time, they have set up group supervisions and have reviewed the CP conference agenda to aim to bring in more SoS to conferences before the Go Live in April 2021, as well as considering Best Questions.

Those attending child protection conferences should expect to hear more of this from January 2021.



Top tips

1. Book on to the training that is aligned to your role, so you are prepared for April.
2. Check out some common misconceptions of Signs of Safety as a practice model, on the SoS Facebook [page](#). There are lots of other resources and tips on this page too.
3. Remember "signs of something" the wording you use can be adapted to whatever area of the service you are working, but the principles remain the same.
4. There are lots of free on the [knowledge bank](#) or if you want something specific speak to your practice champion.
5. Speak to your practice champion in your team or the Practice Leads, if you need some support or want to discuss some ideas on how to use SoS in your role.
6. Anyone that asks the Practice Leads for help and support should expect to be asked lots of questions back as a way of developing your potential; this is not criticism but just how the model works best. SoS is a questioning approach.

THIS MONTH'S PRACTICE

FOCUS: Scaling

What is Scaling?

Scaling is used to make a judgement about the **impact of a situation on a Child or Young Person**. It's a way of setting goals, monitoring progress and identifying achievements.

The scale goes from 0-10. When being asked to scale something, 0 and 10 will be defined so you know what they mean. 10 (what we are working towards) will always be presented first. The scale would usually be based on the danger or worry statement.

What is it for?

To help everyone understand each person's viewpoint.

To make professionals' thinking clear to the family and to the other professionals, and it helps professionals understand where different members of the network are at.

A starting point for exploring what is currently working in the family and what needs to change to go higher up the scale towards achieving the goal for the child/young person.

Provides a measurement process that everyone can understand, so everybody involved can keep assessing the situation and how much progress is being made.

A tool for supporting reflection, for example in supervision.

How is scaling used?

Everyone says where they are on the scale, and why. If you are in a multi-agency meeting this will go around the room, and each person's scale and reason should be recorded. Questions about where people have scaled can be used to:

- recognise the good things that are happening- what makes it a 3 and not 0?
- explore ideas for what should happen next- what would you need to see happen to make it one point higher?
- explore what we need to see to be sure the problems are sorted out- what would a 10 look like?

How do I scale?

Based on the concern or worry, and the strengths and safety within the family, you pick where you are on the scale of 0-10, considering the impact on the child/young person.

People will differ on their assessment of the situation. It is not important that everyone agrees, but it is important that everyone understands why people's views differ. It is also an opportunity to reveal if there is any information that hasn't been shared, or if we all have the same understanding of the information that has been shared.

There is no right and wrong answer, but you will need to say why you have chosen that number, and what you would need to see to increase the scale by one point.

Feedback

We are always keen to understand what the best way to share information with you, to support you as best we can as we move closer to our implementation date.

If you have any feedback or would like to share an update in future newsletters, please contact [Catherine MacDonald](#).



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