

# Signs of Safety Newsletter

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

## COUNT DOWN TO OUR SofS GO LIVE DATE: 5 weeks!



### Message from your Heads of Service

There has been so much going on in preparation for 'Go Live' in April and it is really beginning to show in practice. There is a shift in language and some of the elements of the Signs of Safety model are being seen in most casework.

There is still a lot to do, and training and support is available to help workers increase their confidence. This is a learning journey for all of us so please ask for help from your practice champions, colleagues or the SofS team where you need to and equally offer to share your own learning with your teams.

The feedback we are beginning to get from families is positive so keep having a go and be brave!!



**Adele Wright (Head of Safeguarding)  
and Mary Connor (Head of Early Intervention and Prevention)**

## Signs of Safety check in


Thank you to the services that took the time to share where you feel you are at with our Signs of Safety implementation. The information you provided has been very useful to identify areas that we need to focus on in the next 5 weeks before our go live date, and where we need to offer more guidance and support.

### Key messages to share:

- This is a huge implementation for us all; it involves every service and every role within each team. We do not underestimate its size.
- We are really pleased that so many of you have been able to attend and engage in the training sessions, which are the foundation to us understanding the model and then embedding it in our practice with families.
- Thank you for all your efforts so far in having a go! even though it is new and difficult at times.
- You will have the opportunity to see all the new forms, have access to practice and system guidance, and there will be opportunities to use the test system, before the go live date.
- Remember whichever signs of... (safety, wellbeing or success) you use, the principles stay the same; positive working relationships, critical thinking and staying grounded.
- Signs of... does not replace the threshold document or limit the tools or research you can use.
- Signs of... is about analysing information, not just gathering it.
- Support and guidance is available, please ask.

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## WHATS WORKING WELL?

### New Multi-agency referral form (MARF)

Our updated MARF has been signed off and we hope this will be launched from 7th April 2021. The web-based referral form will be received by First Contact, where the details will be considered, and the next steps agreed.

Our partners have been part of the developments and are aware this will be used for any new referrals into Childrens Social Care, either for Early Help support requests or a request for statutory services. We have developed some guidance on how to use the form as well as a top tip guide to improve the quality of information shared. This will be available on Tri.x when the form is launched.

### New form guidance

Not all the forms we use in EHM or LCS will change to a SofS format in April 2021, but you will be planning and recording your work in a Signs of Safety way.

We have now completed guidance for all the new forms across the Early Help, CiN, Child Protection, CLA and Leaving Care pathways. They will be available to access from Tri.X and the Signs of Safety SharePoint from **22.3.2021**.

We would encourage everybody to look at the form guidance, discuss them in your team meetings, so you start to become familiar with the format and how practice will be recorded.

**Please remember that the forms should not guide our practice but are there to record the work that you complete with families.**

### Thank you

We see and hear elements of the model are being used every day and know that there is commitment and motivation to developing practice as we continue our journey.

Services that are not going to be recording into the new forms, like Family Placement, NFF and some teams in NAS are still having a go too and thinking about how the model will be used in their teams.

A lot of work is happening “behinds the scenes” too.

### The new system

We have included demonstrations of the new forms in training sessions and meetings the Practice Leads have attended. Lots of you want to see the new forms in the new system; your curiosity and enthusiasm is great!



If a system demonstration would be useful, please contact the SofS mailbox and arrangements will be made to attend a team meeting.

Between **29.3.2021** and **9.4.2021** there will be an opportunity to access the test system. Priority will be given to practitioners in Early Help Family Teams, First Contact, DCT, Safeguarding Teams, 14/18+, EDT, and the Safeguarding Unit as they will be using the new forms from the go live date.


Access to the test system needs to be carefully coordinated; logins need to be set up and test cases need to be progressed to reflect your role and the required stages of intervention, for example an Early Help Assessment, a C+F Assessment, Child Protection Conference, Child in Need review, Child Looked After or Pathway Plan review.

For the above services, if you would like to access the test system to practice recording, please send your request to the SofS mailbox by **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March** so the logins can be set up.

- The Performance Team are exploring new ways of showing how well we are delivering services to children and their families.
- The Systems Team are continuously testing to identifying issues, so they can be resolved for the go live date and so they understand the changes within the system to support you.
- Staff that do not work directly with families, such as admin teams, are learning about the model. Some teams, like West Early Help admin, are really embracing the ethos and core principles so they can support practitioners as best they can.

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

### Message from your Practice Leads

Mel and Paul have been concentrating on training since January but will be clearing time to support the workforce as we move towards the Go Live date.

If you are trying out a tool from the model and need some support then please get in touch, we can support you with developing timelines, safety plans and network meetings as well as offering advice and guidance for danger statements, safety goals and scaling questions, (or signs of something for other parts of the service).

There has been really positive feedback from workers who have attended training, but we know that the best learning happens through practice. The best way to build confidence is to have a go, if you try something out then please let us know. We have seen changes in the work we have seen, the language that workers are using and the great work that is happening with families.

We have also been gathering feedback after ICPCs and have heard great feedback from parents about being involved in their plans and really understanding the worries through the use of danger statements which has been a really positive step.

We will be offering time with all of the teams in the next few months as we move towards the new system, we can't wait to see what you can achieve once the system is aligned with the practice model.

### Celebration of good practice across the service

Last month we asked you to share some of your good practice examples with us, to celebrate World Social Work Day on 16th March 2021.

Special shout outs go to:

- Claire Forster and Tracey Aitchinson, North Early Help Team
- Helen Logan, Central Safeguarding Team
- Amy Grainger, South East Safeguarding Team
- Stephen Oxley, ASYE Academy
- Stephen MaGowan, 14+ Team
- Helen Russell, Central Early Help Team
- Amna Ahmed, North Safeguarding Team

Check out this [clip](#) to hear more about these great practice examples happening across our service.



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**

### Practice Lead support trajectory

Mel and Paul will continue to offer their support and advice, in the run up to the go live date.

Teams are encouraged to think about areas that they need support with prior to go live.


The Senior Managers of Early Help, First Contact, Safeguarding Teams, DCT, 14/18+, EDT and the Safeguarding Unit should send their requests to the SofS mailbox by **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

From May onwards, the Practice Leads will be offering their focused support into to wider NAS, the Family Placement Service, NFF, Family Time and Residential services.



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## NEXT STEPS...

Week	Event	Key Expectations
w/c 15.3.2021	Training offer for CSC staff and partners.	Staff will use the <a href="#">training matrix</a> to book onto and attend training aligned to their role, so they are prepared with the foundation knowledge of the model.
w/c 22.3.2021	Training offer for CSC staff and partners.	
	New SofS form guidance and system crib sheets will be launched, along with a document to understand how the use of forms will change from the go live date.	All teams to become familiar with the new SofS forms and how the forms will be used to record practice. All teams will have access to the system guidance prior to the go live date.
w/c 29.3.2021	System testing in EHM and LCS will conclude.	From 31.3.2021 the test system will represent the live system that everybody will use from 20.4.2021.
	Current training period ends.	Those that will be using the new forms from the go live date will have completed all mandatory training.
	The test system will be made accessible.	The test system will be available to those that will use the new forms, to practice recording information. The forms can be viewed using the guidance documents and system demos for the remainder of the service.
	Additional Practice Lead support.	Support and guidance will be available across the service.
w/c 5.4.2021	The test system will be made accessible.	
	New MARF form will be launched.	All referrals into Childrens Social Care will be sharing information in a Signs of Safety format.
	Signs of Safety Practice expectations handbook will be launched.	Everybody within Childrens Services will be familiar with the vision and what we want to achieve, using Signs of Safety as our practice model.
	Additional Practice Lead support.	Support and guidance will be available across the service.
w/c 12.4.2021	Practice IT alignment workshops.	A small group of practitioners, managers and senior managers will walk through the new system and record practice with a case example, with the support of our SofS consultant. They will then be the point of support in their service for go live.
w/c 19.4.2021	Go live on <b>Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021</b>	All new forms started in EHM or LCS will use the SofS new form templates.

**Next month we will share more details of the week of implementation, the expectations and the support that will be available. If you have any specific questions, please get in touch.**

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## True or False?

- ✗ 1. Using Signs of Safety will increase my workload, and I will have to duplicate work.**  
**FALSE-** SofS encourages you to analyse information rather than gather information. This may take some time to embed, but any assessment, direct work or reviews you complete always builds on the previous piece of work. It's like a jigsaw. SofS makes your work with families more specific to the worry and meaningful.
- ✗ 2. I will only be using Signs of Safety tools with families.**  
**FALSE-** SofS has its own tools, such as the three houses, safety circles etc but you can use any tool with families to ensure their views are clearly recorded.
- ✓ 3. Signs of Safety will be used across the whole service.**  
**TRUE-** The implementation of SofS is across the whole service, which including the leadership team, social workers, early help family workers, support workers, residential staff, admin staff. Partner agencies have also been raising awareness with their staff and attending SofS training in preparation.
- ✗ 4. From 20th April 2021 EHM and LCS will only use a SofS format.**  
**FALSE-** Not all the forms you use now will change to a SofS format, however the expectations is that you plan and record your work using the model format.
- ✗ 5. I am expected to have all my cases in a SofS format on EHM or LCS by 20th April 2021.**  
**FALSE-** All the new forms started after 20th April will be in a SofS format. We expect that each child's record is updated at the next planned review point. So within 6 months, any work that is completed with a family by a social care professional (early help or statutory services) will be recorded using SofS.

**A question-and-answer document is available [HERE](#), which hopefully will cover many of your questions and queries. However, if it doesn't, please send your question or query to the [SofS mailbox](#).**

## Useful information and links

- Our previous [newsletters](#) include information on elements of the model, top tips as well as our journey so far.
- Our Signs of Safety guide for families and professionals can be found [HERE](#).
- The list of all the forms that will be in a SofS format from 20th April 2021, can be found [HERE](#).
- A list of all the Practice Champions across the service can be found [HERE](#). Practice Champions should be your first point of contact for questions or queries about the SofS model.
- If there is a practice query that the practice champion cannot resolve, please contact our Practice Leads via the SofS mailbox- [Signsofsafety@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Signsofsafety@northumberland.gov.uk)
- We have a Signs of Safety [resource bank](#), that everybody can access to share learning. If you have examples, please email them to the SofS mailbox. This resource is only as good as what is shared.
- There are lots of **free** resources, tools and information available, to anybody without a licence, on the [Knowledge Bank](#) for all areas of the service. However, if there is something specific that you want to access which is restricted, please contact one of the licence holders who will happily help.
- A list of all SofS Knowledge Bank licence holders can be found [HERE](#). They can share resources with you.
- Use the SofS [Facebook group](#) to hear practice examples, Q+A, and periodically there are videos shared and live sessions.
- If you have a question about any aspect of the SofS implementation project plan, please direct this to the SofS mailbox.

### 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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