

Signs of Safety Newsletter

Hello, and welcome to the sixth 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: 8 weeks!

Remember “signs of something”

The wording you use can be adapted to whatever area of the service you are working (for example safety, wellbeing, success), but the 3 core principles remain the same:

1. **Working relationships are paramount-** being firm but incredibly kind, open, clear and using clear and simple language to explain the worries.
2. **Thinking critically-** use a questioning approach to analyse, not just gather information.
3. **Based on everyday experience of the child-** taking time to understand what life is like for a family and the child; what is their day-to-day experience and how can we build safety plans that build on real life.

SoS resources for everyone

There is lots of good practicing happening across the service, which we want everybody to access, so we are creating a [Northumberland SoS resource bank](#).

As good practice is identified the Practice Leads will add these examples to the SharePoint folder, as well as any resources they find that they think might be beneficial to you and your work with families.

If you're struggling with a specific element of the model and would like some resources that are not in the folder, please ask your Practice Champion or one of the Practice Leads, as there will be material on the SoS Knowledge Bank that can be shared with you.



World Social Work Day: 16 March 2021

We know that lots of people are having a go at using SoS and have been impressed by people's enthusiasm, so as part of this year's world Social Work Day we want to focus on celebrating our SoS journey.

Do you have any examples of good practice using a particular SoS tool?

Is there something you are particularly proud of and has helped you use the approach in your work with families?

Do you have an example of a positive outcome for a child that involved you using the model?

Nominations can be from across the service. Please share the details with the SoS mailbox and Su.Kaur@northumberland.gov.uk

The deadline for submissions is 26th February 2021.

Remember there are lots of free resources on the [Knowledge Bank](#) you can access that do not require a licence.

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WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

Feedback from families

Establishing working relationships with families is a core principle of SoS. For this to be successful, the use of clear language is crucial, especially in exploring what is working well, what we are worried about, what needs to happen and creating a family led plan to manage this.

From this month, our Child Protection chairs will speak with families before conferences to explore parents' views about the language used in the danger statement and safety goal prepared, as well as their involvement in creating the plan of what needs to happen next.



Their views will then be gathered following the conference, to understand their experience of the meeting. This will include what went well, what could have been different and to establish if they understood what was agreed and the plan moving forward.

This information will help us to understand the areas that are working well and areas we need to strengthen.

Have you booked on the training courses for your role, in preparation for the go live date?

If not, check out the [training matrix](#) to see what courses, you need to complete.

Child protection conferences

Our Child Protection chairs are all now using Signs of Safety in their conferences. This is to build on the expectation that social workers will be bringing danger statements, safety goals and scaling questions to all initial conferences. Work is also starting with some partner agencies to look at their reports to make sure that they are reflecting the model too.

C+F assessments

The SoS C+F pilot will extend to First Contact and the West Locality later this month. We want to support as many practitioners and their managers as possible, to understand and use the form, before the go live date. The assessment form should not be a guide to the practitioner, but it is an opportunity for practitioners to capture their Signs of Safety thinking and practice in the form.

Practice champion clinics

The champion in your team is there to support you with any queries you may have about the SoS model. Do you know who your champion is? If not ask your manager!


Training update

Lots of you have attended sessions from Early Help, locality safeguarding teams, residential, NAS, partners agencies and the leadership team! Having people from different areas of the service really helps with the learning and hearing the different experiences of using the model.

Courses are now running at approx. 80%. It would be fantastic if we could get these up to full capacity, so everybody is thinking about how SoS will be used in their roles, building on your knowledge of the model and having an opportunity to put your learning into practice and have a go.

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NEXT STEPS...

Counting what counts

We have now agreed our Meaningful Measures for the service.

1. Keeping children safe, supported, and improving their lives.
2. Working with families, listening, and developing family led plans.
3. Making sure children have a permanent safe place to live as soon as possible.
4. Working with partner agencies that need to be involved, to develop the best plans for children and families.
5. Making sure that all workers have the skills and knowledge that they need to best support the children and families that they work with.



The 5 Meaningful Measures align with our Leadership Pledge and the 3 core principles of the SoS model.

We all need to understand the measures, specifically what the information tells us about family's experiences so we can celebrate areas of strength and develop areas that need to be improved.

New form guidance

This month we are developing the guidance that will accompany the new forms that will sit in EHM and LCS. Once the guidance has been finalised; they will be shared with the teams alongside a system demo. We have asked for the support of some services to complete the guidance documents, so we hope that some of you will be involved to share your knowledge.

Training

The current training offer for social care staff is available until the end of March. 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 have time to put your learning into practice and feel prepared for our go live.

Our offer includes:

- [E-learning module](#)
- [3-hour virtual course](#)
- [12-hour virtual course](#)
- [Bitesize sessions](#)
- [Safety planning workshop](#)
- [Timeline and trajectory workshop](#)
- [Analysing Harm workshop](#)

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

We are aware there have been some issues with the course links and this is something we are looking into with the Learning and Development Team. Training links are sent via Learning Together. If you don't receive the link in an email by lunchtime the day before the session, contact the SoS mailbox or [Learning and Development](#). It's likely there is an issue with your Learning Together account and we don't want you to miss out!

Practice and IT alignment workshops

We are busy arranging our practice IT alignment workshops, that will take place the week before our go live date. This is an opportunity for a small group of you to have a hands-on experience of using the new system in a test environment, experiencing how the elements of the Signs of Safety framework are recorded and how to evidence the work they are undertaking in a clear accessible way. Those that attend will then go on to support colleagues when we go live. More information will be shared shortly and invites to the sessions will be sent in the next 2 weeks.

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

Update from our Practice Leads

Paul and Mel have been busy this month delivering training. They have been really impressed with people's enthusiasm for the sessions, the questions people are asking and people being open to sharing their experiences and best thinking.

SoS is a whole service approach; you are telling us what difference the training is making to work with families and how SoS will fit in with your work:

“

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

“...another bit of the SoS jigsaw and after each piece of training it begins to feel easier to get to grips with. IT comes together in the end even if it feels overwhelming at the beginning of the journey.”

“...this training has excited me in how the model can really initiate change in simple forms for parents.”

“Not all areas are relevant to my role however a lot of the resources are transferable and can be adapted to use in residential/secure.”

“I have learned so much and will really be able to make my assessments great with this!”

“I've attended a lot of Signs of Safety training over the years, but I always learn something new or take something different away from each session.”

“I'm not a practitioner who uses it regularly but given my role in QA e.g. audits and practice days, it is really important to understand the detail of the approach.”


“The SW has prepared a child really well; he can say in his words why he is in foster care, and understands the risks associated with his parents, grandparents and how that makes him feel. When I meet him and continue that work, this will flow well for him. Co-working this direct work with social workers is really child centred and has long term benefits for the child.”

“The use of language and not jargon is a challenge but when simple and specific is very powerful.”

Paul and Mel are still be available to answer your questions and queries about practice. If you have a case or an issue where you feel stuck and need some support using SoS as your approach, then please contact them through the SoS mailbox.

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THIS MONTH'S PRACTICE FOCUS: Questioning

"It is not the answers that enlighten, but the questions."

SoS is a questioning approach. Asking the best question has many benefits:

- You can put things together
- You discover new things
- You remember things
- You resolve some issues
- You understand people better

Using EARS is a useful questioning model to help turn questions into conversations, covering strengths, worries and goals. You should use this questioning approach any time they are seeking information or to understand a situation more clearly.

E- Elicit first question: allows the person to choose a situation.

A- Amplify behavioural detail uncovers the detail (who, what, when, where, and how).

R- Reflect meaning, helps the person process their meaning of the behaviour.

S- Start over: ask another question.

Using EARS will help you think through and preparing your best questions before you contact families, staying focused on the reason why you are involved and to analyse the information you gather.

If you want to make a statement STOP and ask another question, remember your EARS!

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.

"A question not asked is a door not opened."

Top Tips

1. Join the webinar on 5th March at 2pm through the [SoS Facebook page](#). This will focus on how networks have been involved in practitioners work with children and families and how this is making a difference.
2. Remember your basics- danger statements, safety goals and scaling questions. Without these elements, you are not using Signs of Safety.
3. Use your practice champions for support; they can share resources with you and talk through ideas.

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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