



# Signs of Safety Newsletter

Hello, and welcome to the fourth 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 GO LIVE: 4 months

### WHAT IS WORKING WELL

#### Having a go!

We continue to see and hear that people across the service, and partner agencies, are having a go at using SoS which is excellent. People are encouraged to and are now using the SoS mailbox for questions or queries.

**A headteacher said how SoS had made the plan very clear and the TAF meeting productive.**

Partner agencies, are feeding back that they are seeing a difference in meetings they attend.

**We want to hear your feedback on how you are using SoS and what impact this has had for families, to inspire us all. Please send your feedback to the SoS mailbox.**

#### Training

Since the SoS virtual training offer was introduced in August, training has been very busy. Thank you to Mel and Paul for your time to rewrite all the course material for virtual delivery as well as delivering all the sessions.

Your feedback on training is very important, and we review the evaluation forms after each session.

Please make sure that you take 5 minutes at the end of the session to complete the evaluation form, so we can form, continue to strengthen our training offer.

**If you would be interested in becoming a trainer and delivering elements of the model, please contact [TraceyHorseman](#)**



SoS will be used across the whole of Children's Social Care. What is important is understanding the model's principles and applying them to the work that you do.

Regardless of the service you work in, the three core principles of SoS remain the same:

- **Working relationships are paramount-** being firm but incredibly kind, open, clear and using clear and simple language to explain the worries.
- **Thinking critically-** use a questioning approach to analyse, not just gather information.
- **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.

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## NEXT STEPS

### New training dates

We now have the 2021 schedule on Learning Together for January-March and further dates will be added shortly. Alongside the existing courses, there is a new workshop available called Analysing Harm.

The demand for training is exceptionally high so course registers will be checked frequently. You may be asked to rebook onto a different course, so we can manage this as best as possible.

Please note all future course instructions, documents for the sessions and links will be shared via Learning Together not the SoS mailbox

#### To help us, please:

- **Check the training matrix before you book any training and only book the training that is aligned to your role.**
- **Book onto the bitesize sessions if you have completed the 2-day SoS training in the last 2 years but feel you need a refresher; you do not need to re-do the course.**
- **If you are no longer able to attend a course you have booked, please cancel it through Learning Together so somebody else can use the space.**
- **Most courses will be delivered on Zoom. You will need to download this if it is your first time using it.**
- **Please log into the session 15 minutes before the course start time so the session can start on time.**

## Welcome

From January 2021, Neil Newcombe and Diane Hillier-Hall will be joining Mel and Paul to deliver SoS training. Neil will be part of the delivery of the 2-day programme and workshops, and Diane will be delivering the bitesize sessions. They both bring lots of experience and enthusiasm.



## Meeting expectations

From January 2021 we will be piloting a new format for Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences. The expectation will be that social workers will bring danger statements, safety goals and scaling questions to the conferences. In Early Help the expectation will be that a worry statement, wellbeing goal and scaling questions are brought to all initial TAF meetings.

## Practice expectations and bottom lines

Teams across the service have been preparing their practice expectations and bottom lines, which we will be including in our new practice handbook which will be launch in line with our implementation.

Thank you to everyone that has been involved in this work so far! We will be adding expectations and bottom lines to the handbook as our Practice Leads continue to support teams across the service, as part of their support trajectory.

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

### Update from our Practice Leads

Mel and Paul have moved on from supporting the locality teams in safeguarding and early help services and are now working with the Safeguarding unit, 14+/18+ teams and DCT.

They are working on embedding group supervision and developing practice as well as providing one to one support on using the tools and Signs of Safety model wherever they can.

Mel and Paul are really enjoying the challenge of bringing the model to different service areas and thinking much more about 'Signs of Something'. They have been really impressed with the teams wanting to have a go and really try out the different tools and aspects of the model; they have been looking at mapping, use of language and the harm matrix in detail.

Mel and Paul have continued to support workers from the teams that they have been in with cases and want you all to continue to send feedback about where you have tried elements of the model and it has gone well or where you have found challenges.

As Practice Leads, Mel and Paul have also continued to attend training with Andrew and Pene Turnell on the middle column, words and pictures, my 3 houses and networks. They look forwards to sharing this with you all through the bitesize workshops. They are learning too!

From January 2021, Mel and Paul will be focusing on delivering training, but they will still be available to answer your questions and queries about practice and are keen 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!**

“  
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

### What you have told us...

We have recently had Mel and Paul with them over the last 8 weeks, and whilst the time flew over it gave the injection of excitement that was needed to reignite SoS within the team again.

I can't thank Paul enough for his support as he has supported us with live documents and joined us on a video call which was helpful, and he was very patient!

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## Developments across the service...

**Central Safeguarding Team** now have established fortnightly group supervisions which everyone is committed to. Social Workers have really enjoyed the bitesize training sessions and feel that this has been a good refresher from the two-day training. The role out of the new case summary template and core group/care team minute template is being used regularly and is getting everyone into the use of SoS language and increasing people's confidence with the model.

**Family Time** staff are now accessing training. Elements of the model are being used such as what are we worried about, what's working well and what needs to happen in discussions to review and reflect on situations or issues.

**Northumberland Family First (NFF)** are implementing monthly group supervision sessions and this has been beneficial especially when workers have been stuck with cases. They are also using SoS within their case plans, family networking, case recordings on LCS and in case supervisions.

Each team within the **Family Placement Service** are looking at the forms and tools they use and adapting them to have a SoS focus. Staff are now thinking about the language they are using to reflect the model, for example using Signs of Stability and Signs of Belonging.

The **Kinship Assessment and Support Team (KAST)** are considering using scaling questions at the beginning and the end of their assessments with family members and friends, when they are talking about risk. There are plans to do more direct work with children, so their voices are stronger, for example, in the Annex A document. There are also, ongoing discussions about using a strength and safety matrix, both with family members and with older children.

### **North Early Help Service:**

The management team are using SoS in their supervisions and the weekly management huddle check in/out. Reports for the advisory board are now produced in a mapping format which supports partners to understand what is working well, as well as what we are worried about and what needs to happen. This has been useful when dealing with any worries around services and mapped this out together.

The family team are working hard to embed the ethos of SoS throughout their practice. Regular group supervisions are taking place, looking at worry statements, wellbeing goals and more recently the development of scaling questions to help move cases on. The Harm Matrix has been used when considering if a case needs to be stepped up and to develop safety plans with families, so everyone is clear what needs to happen.

Admin staff, early years workers, early year practitioners and children centre Co-ordinators are also accessing training to build their knowledge and confidence of SoS.

**The Enquiry and Referral Administrators (ERA)** in First Contact are now using their 'best questions' crib sheet, to develop their questioning approach when responding to calls and referrals from families and partner agencies.

The **South East Early Help Family Team** have set up sessions to support workers to write their worry statements, wellbeing goals and scaling questions, which has been received well. The team are working on using clear and simple language, which they see makes a difference for families as well as themselves.

Thank you to everyone that has shared their feedback this month

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## This month's focus: My three houses



The My Three Houses tool is designed to capture the voice and opinions of the child so the child themselves and their views shape the decision making and planning throughout the involvement the family have with our services.

It is used to gather information about what is working well, what they are worried about and what needs to happen, similar to how we do mapping with adults.

My Three Houses should then be used to help the parent understand what is happening for the child.

To make a difference in the outcome it is important that the tool is not used simply as a stand-alone method to get the voice of the child and simply put that on the child's file.

When to use this tool:

- As part of your first assessment.
- Following a change in circumstances for the child, for example if the child has changed placement, returned home or one of their parents has re-partnered.

Any direct work you are completing with families should be uploaded onto LCS and EHM.

**If you have any questions speak to your Practice Champion.**

## Top tips

1. When you want to start to think through the issues within a case the best place to start is to complete the mapping. The [mapping tool](#) can help you think through all the issues or to look in more detail at a specific worry or concern. The mapping tool should be used with the family and the professionals involved who have information about the child or the worrying behaviour.

Using the mapping tool helps you think through everything that is working well in a family or where there might be safety already happening, as well as looking at the worries or harm. The mapping will help you gather the information needed to inform your worry/danger statements and wellbeing/safety goals, which is the foundation of the family-led safety plan.

2. Check out this short useful [clip](#) on "How and when do you use Danger Statements, Safety Goals and Safety Scales after you have initially given them to the family?" The same would apply to worry statements/wellbeing goals etc.

3. There are lots of tips, resources and questions from practitioners answered on the Signs of Safety Facebook support group as well as free resources on the [knowledge bank](#).

## Question bank

We are starting to develop a bank of the frequently asked questions from training sessions and also those that are received into the mailbox. We want everybody to learn and hope you find the [link](#) useful.

## Feedback

We are always keen to understand what the best way to share information with you is, 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](#).

