

Signs of Safety Progress Report



Signs of Safety Strategy

Cheshire East developed our [Signs of Safety Strategy](#) in July 2017 which sets out our aims and plan for implementation. This was based on our learning from other Local Authorities who have implemented the model. Our strategy and leadership for the practice from senior leaders is being used by our Signs of Safety Consultants nationally as examples of good practice.

Lead Practitioner for Signs of Safety

Based on feedback from other local authorities on the support needed to successfully drive and embed Signs of Safety practice, we appointed a Lead Practitioner for Signs of Safety, Louise Wright, in November 2017, to support teams and partners to embed the approach. The Lead Practitioner has a key role supporting teams to use the approach, delivering training, briefings and workshops, leading the Practice Lead Network, and representing the views of practitioners back to senior leaders on the Signs of Safety Project Board.

Practitioners across the partnership are making use of the support offered by the Lead Practitioner, and feedback on her support has been very positive.

Practice Leads

We have Practice Leads for Signs of Safety across our services, including within partner agencies, who are leading the practice within their agencies and teams. Practice Leads are champions and leaders for good Signs of Safety practice, and are supporting the approach to embed within their teams by leading group supervision, offering support and advice, celebrating good practice, and disseminating information and key messages.

Practice Leads will receive additional training in Signs of Safety to support them to be leaders for the practice which includes five day advanced training, followed by eight sessions of Practice Lead training over a one year period to support them to develop and deepen the quality of their practice and their understanding of the approach.

Practice Leads Network meetings were established in November 2017 and take place every two months led by the Lead Practitioner. These meetings bring all the Practice Leads together, are used to share experiences of using the practice and what is working well, gain practitioner feedback on our implementation, generate ideas on how to successfully support and embed the practice, and disseminate key messages on the roll out of the approach and expectations of the Leads. They are also used as a safe place to practice using the elements of the practice that the Leads are expected to roll out within their teams to build confidence and skills.

Practice Lead Network meetings are effective forums for supporting the Leads in their role, to develop an identity as a group, and drive implementation within their areas. Leads are clearly taking ownership for, and being proactive in, implementing the practice and the culture of Signs of Safety. Within these sessions, the Leads have offered support and constructive solutions to issues raised by other Leads, including appropriate respectful challenge. Leads have fed back that they find these sessions valuable and supportive.

Signs of Safety Training

Our Practice Leads and senior managers across our services received the two day Signs of Safety training in November 2017 ahead of the training to their teams so they could start to plan, model the approach, and lead the roll out within their services.

Roll out of the two day training to our Children and Families Service, the front door, Children with Disabilities Team, @ct Team, FACT22, Safeguarding IROs, and Child in Need and Child Protection teams took place in January 2018.

Roll out to the Permanence and Throughcare teams, Cared for IROs, Fostering teams, Care Leavers team, Children and Families Support Team and Prevention teams will take place in May 2017. Three of our in house trainers will also be trained to deliver the two day training at this time so we can continue to roll out the two training to our wider teams and partners.

So far we have trained 285 people which has included key partners and Senior Managers including the Director of Children's Social Care and the Director of Prevention and Support. All training courses have been filled to maximum capacity to ensure value for money.

Half of our Practice Leads (a cross section across services) received the five day advanced training in February. This has allowed us to plan the changes we will need to make to our services to align with, and support, effective use of the approach which we will implement in a staged approach. The remaining half will receive their five day training in July 2018.

Training delivery has been very good quality, and the feedback from attendees has been extremely positive. People are coming out of the training inspired and enthusiastic about using the approach and the potential impact this will have on our families.

Aligning our Organisation with Signs of Safety

In order to support the approach to embed we are changing our organisation and how we work so that it supports Signs of Safety practice. A large body of work is underway aligning our processes, forms, policies and procedures and practice guidance, and how we measure our performance.

We have already changed the way we work at the front door to reflect Signs of Safety. The new process went live in November 2017. This has changed the questions we ask as part of the consultation process, and the way we record information, looking at the four elements of Signs of Safety; what's working well, what we are worried about, what needs to happen, and how worried we are on a scale of 0-10. Feedback from partners continues to be very positive about the new approach, with partners saying that the new questions are supporting them to think differently about risk.

The CAF forms have been aligned with the approach and these new forms went live at the beginning of March 2018. Feedback from partners on the new forms has been positive; partners are finding the new forms more family friendly and easier to use. The Early Help Brokerage Service are offering support and guidance to partners on completing the new forms, and CAF training now includes how to use Signs of Wellbeing. The forms will be reviewed again in response to practitioner feedback once more of our partners have had the opportunity to complete the two day training.

The new Children and Family Assessment is currently being piloted by four Practice Leads and will go live in May 2018.

A range of guides have been developed to support practice which are available on the [LSCB website](#).

Partner Briefing Sessions

Two Partner Briefings Sessions were run in February (delivered in house) which were well attended and positively received. They were attended by mix of schools, health, and voluntary services, including domestic abuse services. The sessions covered the Signs of Safety/Wellbeing approach and principles and applying Signs of Wellbeing within CAF, including a demo of the new CAF forms on the electronic system e-CAF. The majority of schools who attended asked to be early adopters of e-CAF.

There is real enthusiasm for the approach – practitioners feel that this is the right step for Cheshire East and that the practice reflects their values and how they want to work with families. Partners are welcoming being involved at the start of our journey and that we are learning together. Further sessions are planned for April and May.

In House Training Offer

To build on and sustain our use of Signs of Safety, three of our own trainers will be trained to deliver the two day training during the two day training sessions in May.

These people are:

- Louise Wright, Lead Practitioner for Signs of Safety
- Laura Hindhaugh, Manager in Early Help Brokerage and CAF Trainer
- Vicky Moran, LSCB Training and Development Officer

This means we will be able to offer two day training in house from June 2018. We are currently planning the programme of in house training.

To enable us to establish a solid foundation from which we can embed Signs of Safety practice and culture, and establish this as our way of working in Cheshire East, we will be offering half day briefings and the two day training for the first year of implementation to all agencies.

We will also train trainers within partner agencies to deliver this training to ensure we can sustain Signs of Safety as our approach in the long term.

We also have an e-learning module on Signs of Safety so we have a range of training offers.

Existing LSCB Training and CAF training has already been aligned to incorporate Signs of Safety/ Wellbeing to support the approach to embed.

Practitioner Feedback and Impact on Practice

Practitioners are enthusiastic about the adoption of Signs of Safety and are keen to use the approach. The message from senior leaders has been for practitioners to give the practice a go, which practitioners are embracing. A number of good practice examples of the work completed by practitioners were shared in the five day training in February as a celebration of good practice.

Although we are at the beginning of our Signs of Safety journey, practitioners are seeing a positive impact of using the practice for children and young people. Examples include:

- Using the three columns in meetings for children and young people. Practitioners report this is pulling out the strengths of the family which would otherwise have been unexplored, making the issues and the risk much clearer, and is leading to different outcomes for children and young people which are more positive for them.
- Completing the three houses/ wizard or fairy tool with children and young people. Practitioners are finding these very powerful tools in communicating the impact on children and young people to parents and carers and other professionals.
- Creating worry/ danger statements and wellbeing/ safety goals, which is supporting practitioners to clearly communicate with families what the concerns are and what we want to achieve.
- Completing genograms with families, which is helping practitioners to explore who can help and support the family, which is part of building sustainable support in the long term.
- Completing words and pictures explanations for children and young people. One practitioner completed this work with a Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school, and said about doing this work that **“I learnt more about the case in an hour and a half than I had in the whole time I had had it”**.
- Mapping cases in teams in group supervision, which is building practitioners’ confidence in using the approach and demonstrating the power of the model to clarify and focus in on the issues.
- Using the three columns and scaling questions in supervision is supporting reflection on practice and the strengths-focus is resulting in different types of conversations which are solution-focused.

Partners have really engaged with the approach and our partner Practice Leads are fully committed and are leading practice within their agencies. Examples include:

- Starting to use the culture of Signs of Safety in A&E, which is about engaging with people and explaining if we are making a referral to social care services and why.
- Using the 3 columns in planning meetings for children and young people.
- Family Nurse Partnership are using SOS within supervision.

Feedback from practitioners more widely has been that there is greater awareness of Signs of Safety from partner agencies.

Evaluating Impact

One of the work streams has focused on aligning our quality assurance activity with Signs of Safety to ensure we measure what matters for children and young people.

We will evaluate the impact of Signs of Safety on the quality of practice and outcomes for children, young people and families through:

- A survey for families which will be carried out in May 2018 and repeated annually. This will assess children, young people, parents and carers’ experiences of the support they receive. The survey in May will be used to establish a baseline from which we will evaluate the impact of Signs of Safety on work with families.
- Staff survey - the Social Work staff survey was carried out last July 2017, this survey will be repeated annually to assess impact.
- Audit of casework – our audit processes have been aligned with Signs of Safety and access the key elements of the practice. Internal audits are carried out quarterly.

- Performance monitoring through a Signs of Safety scorecard – this will allow us to monitor any trends as a result in the change in practice.

Senior managers will also participate in group supervision in teams, and their observations, the observations of the Lead Practitioner, and those of the Practice Leads will also inform our evaluation. We will also tailor our quality assurance of the practice to match our trajectory for implementing different elements of the practice so we can check the quality and consistency of these and support them to fully embed.

Learning Case

Our Signs of Safety consultants are working with us to develop a learning case. They will support us with applying Signs of Safety to a live Cheshire East case, observe multi-agency meetings and will support practitioners to reflect on the case and how they are working. This will help to inform the changes we need to make to our organisation to support the practice.

Support from North Yorkshire as our Partner in Practice

We are being supported by North Yorkshire as our Partner in Practice. North Yorkshire have been using Signs of Safety for 6 years. This support has included advice and guidance, and visits to observe the practice within North Yorkshire. A number of people will be visiting North Yorkshire in May for a workshop services for on cared for children and planning for permanency.

Feedback from Consultants

Our Signs of Safety consultants continue to feedback that they are consistently impressed with the level of engagement and enthusiasm for the approach from our practitioners, including partners.