

Signs of Safety Strategy 2019 Short Summary

Why we adopted Signs of Safety

Cheshire East has adopted Signs of Safety (SOS) as our way of working with families because this will support us to achieve the type of service that children, young people, parents and carers have told us they want; one that:

- **Listens to them**
- **Develops plans together with them**, helping them to **understand what the concerns are** and why they need a plan
- **Is clear with them** about what is going to, or could happen.

Best practice is **child-focused, solution-orientated**, and **respectful and inclusive** of families, and this is what we want to achieve through adopting Signs of Safety.

What is Signs of Safety?

Signs of Safety is widely recognised internationally as the **leading approach** to child protection casework.

It is an innovative, solution-focused, strengths-based way of working with children, young people and families.

It provides a clear framework for **how** to work within children's services; how to build relationships with families and work effectively with them to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

For more information please see our [One Minute Guide](#) or the full version of our Signs of Safety Strategy.

What we've achieved so far

Cheshire East started implementing SOS in November 2017. Practitioners and families have welcomed the approach, and we have seen lots of examples where SOS practice has had a positive impact on families. Our first phase of implementation focused on these three areas:

Supporting Signs of Safety practice:

- We appointed a **Lead Practitioner** for SOS as a specialist source of support and advice.
- Identified **Practice Leads** across the partnership to lead and support good SOS practice in their teams.
- Established **Practice Lead Network meetings**, bringing Practice Leads together to support each other, learn and share experiences in a safe environment, and share ideas and best practice.
- Created a range of **how to guides** for practitioners on the [LSCB website](#).

Training Practitioners:

- We have trained **over 780** practitioners across the partnership to use SOS.

- We trained our **in house trainers to deliver the 2 day SOS training** so we can sustain our use of SOS in the long term. We have been delivering this training since June 2018 with very positive feedback from attendees.

Changing our work in line with SOS:

- Introduced **group supervision**
- Changed the **questions at the front door**
- Changed our **audits**
- Launched new **Early Help Assessments and Plans, Children and Family Assessments, Strategy Discussions and CSC Supervision Policy and forms.**

Our Focus for 2019

To fully implement Signs of Safety, we need to change our **culture, how we practice, and how we think about practice.**

Everyone has an important role in making this a success! For our next phase of implementation in 2019, we will be focusing on:

Strong, consistent SOS Practice:

- A Practice Lead Network for each service area will **drive implementation in their service** based on what each area needs.
- Practice Leads will use **different exercises in group supervision**, to help teams to practice and reflect on different aspects of SOS practice, e.g. words and pictures, scaling, plans.
- The Lead Practitioner will **observe group supervision** as an independent person, and will support teams to reflect on practice and will share learning across teams.
- We will continue to **develop our knowledge of SOS** through Practice Lead and 5 day training.

Changing our work in line with SOS:

We will continue to change our processes so they encourage and support SOS practice. This will include **CIN/CP planning, Care Plans, Placement Plans, Pathway Plans, Court work and step up and step down.**

At the end of 2019

We aim to be **a SOS organisation** by the end of 2019, with everyone understanding and using the practice, and our processes supporting strong SOS practice.

Our Vision for Cheshire East

In Cheshire East, we believe that...

All children and young people should be surrounded by people that care about them.

This means that:

We always want to find a way for children and young people to be **safe and happy living together with their family.**

When it's not safe for children and young people to live at home, we want **people they know and trust to take care of them.** We do our best to help children and young people return home, and we look for, if, when and how it will be safe for them to do so.

We work hard to make sure all children and young people have **good relationships with the people who care about them.** This means that they have people to share good things with, and who can help them throughout their life, even when they are grown up.

All children and young people need to understand why professionals are working with them and their family.

This means that:

We make sure children and young people have **an explanation they understand** for why professionals are working with them and their family.

We **listen to children and young people** and what they want to happen.

We make sure families are **able to talk about difficult things** and can be open and honest with each other.

The best plans are made by the family, as they are the experts on what will work for them.

This means that:

We **support families to make their own plans** helping families to think through what needs to happen and who could help. We look at what's working well to find out what good things are already happening and what we can build on.

We work hard to make sure **all families have people who can support and help them day to day.**

We **test the plan together** to make sure it is strong and will last over time, so that when professionals stop working with the family, we know things will be ok in the future.

To help make this a success, we expect everyone to...

Support good relationships

Work hard to build good relationships with families and colleagues. Help families to find and strengthen their networks.

Honour families and colleagues

Work hard to understand and recognise everything that is working well.

Work together WITH

Involve people, offer choices, be curious.

Learn and reflect together

Practice using Signs of Safety in Group Supervision, and reflect on practice with colleagues.

Be brave!

Be creative and try something different.

Share experiences

Share what you have learned, and learn from what others have tried and are doing well.