

Sustaining Signs of Safety in Leicestershire

Plan January 2023 – January 2025

Purpose of this document: This is an over-arching plan to sustain high quality practice in Leicestershire, underpinned by a Signs of Safety approach. It should provide a steer to managers who are expected to identify the key actions needed in their area of the business to deliver the vision and the goals set out below. The approach underpins and supports our continuous improvement plan - The Road to Excellence 2021-2023.

Vision: Intervention in family's lives will be by Children's Services practitioners who are confident in the use of the practice approach, which will result in making a difference in children's lives by growing safety, stability and success alongside a trauma-informed approach.

Goal: Over the next 2 years our goal is to sustain our practice approach and achieve high quality and depth of practice with children, young people and their families, alongside aligning with trauma informed practice.

Values

In Leicestershire, sustaining high quality Signs of Safety practice is **everyone's business**. Our values are Leicestershire's definitions of the Signs of Safety's 3 core principles – of landing grand aspirations in everyday practice, Munroe's maxim of taking a stance of critical enquiry, and the importance of working relationships. These values underlie our practice with children and families, as well as with professionals and with each other throughout the organisation and to support our workforce.

This plan is focused on our A-B-C of 3 core values - **Aspiration - Being Curious - Collaboration**

What do we mean?

These core values are the bedrock of Signs of Safety practice and support the tools and processes as part of the approach – what does it mean for day to day practice.

Aspiration - Being aspirational for our children, families and the workforce

We will demonstrate that we want the best for the children and families that we work with. We want to build on the strengths already present within a family to help resolve any worries and provide safety.

Being Curious – Being Curious and paying attention to the detail

We will always be curious about why things are as they are, and what might help to change them. We will have open and curious conversations with children, young people, their families and professionals to try to understand everyday lives of families. We want to understand what lies

beneath the worries and what complicating factors are having an impact. We do not make assumptions but remain open to considering alternative hypotheses.

We recognise that we are not the experts in a family's life but are there to support, facilitate and develop. We know that everyday life is complex and things that are important can often be the small things, and so we will always pay attention to the detail and ask questions to dig deeper. We will use the 3 columns and 7 domains for case mapping, to write clear, thorough and detailed assessments and reports which recognise that complexities of the family's life and show curiosity and thought about what might help and support change.

We want to know a family's strengths and what works well for them now and has worked well in the past. We will ask questions to find out what is already working well and what has already helped to provide safety so we can build on this. We will ask questions to find the exceptions. We will use scaling questions to understand views of children, young people, families and professionals.

We will work with a family to explore their support network to find out who can offer help and support to develop strong and practice safety plans as we know that ongoing networks after the end of Children's Services involvement are key. We know that for change to take place, we must test our plans over time, monitor progress, and remain open to changes and developments.

Managers will demonstrate the same skills we use with families in supervision in terms of having open, curious and reflective discussions about families and their lives. Managers will use appreciative enquiry to support and develop good practice. Managers will use questions to talk about the existing strengths, safety and exceptions. Managers will be modelling this for workers to then use with families.

We will use Pod meetings to slow down our thinking and think reflectively and curiously about our work with families.

All organisational meetings will reflect the Signs of Safety approach of mapping the 3 columns.

Collaboration – Building strong working relationships

We are committed to building strong working relationships with children, young people and their families based on collaboration, cooperation and respect. We spend time with children and their families, getting to know them, their views, what is important to them and what they think needs to change.

We will work with families to develop danger statements and safety goals which frame our intervention and involvement for their understanding. We will use clear and jargon-free language. We work with families to develop and produce their own plans so that plans will include what is important to families, as well as being specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. We are focused on "doing with" not "doing to". Families will always have a copy of their own plans. We know that it is families and their networks that create and maintain safety for children and so we will work with families to develop a network who will be part of their safety plans.

We spend time with children alone to gather their wishes and feelings and to ensure that they understand their own plans and our involvement. We will use tools such as the 3 houses, fairy, wizard or safety house among others. We will work with children and their age and needs to ensure that they have a level of understanding of our role in their lives and their own plans. We will use Words and Pictures to explain our involvement. We will develop an age-appropriate plan for children.

Managers and the senior management team believe in doing with not doing to or for, coaching not telling.

Bottom Lines:

- **The ethos and core values of our approach will be visible to families, staff members, to partners, to members and to corporate colleagues in both our attitudes and our actions. This is supported by our Road to Excellence plan. Signs of Safety is an approach that gives us tools to embed our values and vision.**
- **Everyone working with children and families in the department at every level will commit to using the Signs of Safety approach and to the underpinning ethos and value base within their meetings, tasks and pieces of work.**
- **Every practice team will ensure that there is dedicated time once per month for practice development and learning.**
- **Challenge ourselves to consider the impact of our work and intervention on the children and families we are supporting and be curious about understanding their lived experience. This can take place at the end of a meeting, within case supervision, when key decisions are made, when work with families is planned.**

Detail of Commitment and Action Plan

Management commitment to sustaining Signs of Safety practice -

- To lead by example in terms of their own practice skills and the daily practice following the core values and approach of Signs of Safety
- Appreciate and celebrate good quality practice
- To model the approach in their relationships with staff and using supervision to apply this approach
- Demonstrate a commitment to valuing time for learning and reflection by enabling practitioner to attend learning events and prioritise time for learning
- To attend and engage in Practice Leads sessions and other learning opportunities. To leave these opportunities by asking yourself what 1 priority you will take away and implement in your practice.
- Use appreciative inquiry to 'unpick' good practice
- Support the resource commitment of a permanent team to drive practice excellence
- Work to achieve a balanced workload for staff to enable them to achieve good quality practice
- Work to align processes, policies and procedures with Signs of Safety practice model

Practitioner commitment to sustaining Signs of Safety practice –

- To follow the 3 core values when working with families as the bedrock of Leicestershire's Signs of Safety practice
- To use the tools of Signs of Safety approach when working with families to help to develop strengths and safety within families and networks
- To attend and engage in Practice Leads sessions (for practice leaders and champions), POD meetings to support and develop your own learning and supporting the learning of others, and other learning opportunities. To leave these opportunities by asking yourself what 1 priority you will take away and implement in your practice.

How will we do this:

Action	Who is responsible	Timeframes
Senior departmental leaders are visible to the workforce and demonstrate the core values which are the bedrock of practice and day to day business. They demonstrate and use the Signs of Safety approach in their day-to-day practice to model this for others – this includes structure of meetings, questions that are asked and stance taken.	DMT/SMT	At all times
Practice Leaders and champions to attend Practice Lead workshops and to be responsible for taking back the learning to their own team/service area to develop practice, including asking themselves what 1 priority they will take away and implement in their own practice.	Team Managers / Senior Practitioners / any other identified team champions	Half day workshop once every 3 months
Practice Challenge Sessions to take place twice per year to challenge senior managers on our practice framework and how it is used and embedded on a day-to-day basis.	Service Managers / Head of Service / Assistant Director / Practice Excellence	2 days per year.
Every team will ensure that there is dedicated time once per month for practice development and learning	Team Managers / Service managers	Once per month

Training and resources to be provided in Signs of Safety approach for all practitioners – including 2 day core training, e-learning, focused workshops and other records and resources. This key learning offer is aligned with our journey on becoming a trauma-informed organisation.	Practice Excellence Team / Learning & Development	<p>Training to be accessed by all staff when starting in their roles, within the first 2 months.</p> <p>Core training to be provided on a bi-monthly basis</p> <p>Introductory e-learning available to all and mandatory</p> <p>Resources bank available at all times on key areas of practice</p>
Embed our new IT recording system which is aligned to our practice model to support practitioners work with families. This includes all children and families' records moving to the new version of our system. To ensure that this system remains aligned to the ethos of Signs of Safety and has up to date functionality to be a support to practice.	Head of Service for Safeguarding, quality assurance and practice excellence as lead	<p>Go-live 14/12/22. Training, guidance, practice examples available from December 2022 and will continue to be updated between Dec 2022 – June 2023.</p> <p>All children to move across by March 2023.</p> <p>Future developments to be planned in advance with a challenge system in place to ensure changes are in line with the improved system – plan by April 2023.</p>
All procedures and changes in practice to reflect Signs of Safety value base, approach and tools.	DMT/SMT	At the point of procedure and practice changes.
Workshops and learning events to take place on a minimum of monthly basis which will reflect Signs of Safety practice, alongside other resources/tools/approaches to support practitioner's wider learning and toolbox. Staff to be enabled to attend.	<p>Practice Excellence Team to provide workshops and opportunities</p> <p>SMT to ensure opportunity for</p>	Monthly basis

	staff to attend	
Think Practice to be used as a way to continue to promote good social work practice including a focus on our practice approach of Signs of Safety.	QAIT/Practice Excellence team SMT to promote and monitor the use of this by staff.	Two – three monthly
For the learning hub to be used as a centre for resources to support staff in their application of the practice approach, alongside other tools and resources.	Practice Excellence Team / Learning & Development Team	Updated on a monthly basis at minimum
Practice Excellence Team and some Practice Leads to have access to the Signs of Safety knowledge bank to utilise for sharing learning and practice across the wider services.	Practice Excellence Team	Used on a monthly basis to inform learning and practice – this will inform practice forums, workshops, 1:1 consultation and advice, practice leads sessions
A responsive and focused practice excellence team offer which responds to requests for support and input from practitioners, managers and service areas, and respond to areas highlighted thorough quality assurance tasks and wider learning activity.	Practice Excellence Team / Managers and SMT to utilise and embed learning	Over the next 18 months
Continue to liaise and communicate with regional Local Authorities who use Signs of Safety practice to share learning, thinking and offer networking.	Practice Excellence Team	Quarterly meetings with the region.

How will we know we are making progress? Measuring what matters

Within Teams and Services

Sustaining consistent practice framework by using the Signs of Safety approach requires commitment, drive and determination by all levels of the workforce, from practitioners working with families, to team managers and senior leaders.

All staff need to be committed to applying our ABC of core values to their work with children and families, and their interactions within the organisation. By doing this, we are making a commitment to a consistent, clear and transparent approach with core values at the centre. **All managers and senior managers need to ask of themselves and of their team and service:**

- Do we demonstrate these core values?
- Do we deliver what we have set out to families?
- Do we deliver what we have set out for staff?
- What would children and family tell us about our involvement in their lives?

Those key questions can and should shape key actions needed within service areas.

Quality Assurance

Our QA approach targets the primary elements of referral, assessment, planning, voice and management oversight to build depth and quality in practice. Each of these areas include measures against specific tools within the signs of safety approach including safety plans, network meetings and words and pictures. It also considers the demonstration of the practice framework in terms of the approach such as sharing plans with families, including and engaging families and networks.

Once our new recording system is embedded across all teams and services which is more closely aligned with our practice framework, it will strengthen how we will identify some quantifiable measures which will help us understand the extent to which we are making progress of embedding our practice framework. Once we have a baseline in place we will set a percentage increase target for each year.

Likely areas include:

- ▶ The number of families who have an identified a network and have had network meetings
- ▶ The number of families with a safety plan and the length of time the plan has been in place/tested
- ▶ Numbers of children with their own version of the safety plan
- ▶ Children and young people have a words and pictures explanation to explain key issues/our involvement

We will ask families and young people

- ▶ About the support from practitioners for families to work towards their goals and aspirations and an understanding of being valued
- ▶ About the demonstration of curiosity from practitioners and working to find the strengths and the detail

- ▶ About the quality of the relationships built and children, young people and parents involvement in developing their own goals and plans

We will also ask families and young people

- ▶ If they understand why they have a social worker involved and what the worries are
- ▶ What difference they have seen in their lives as a result of our involvement

To ensure we do not become complacent we will invite challenge to review our practice. Therefore, we will

- ▶ Undertaken bi-yearly challenge sessions with senior leaders to focus on our practice model and its use.