

**Children and Young People's
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

7 February 2020



Signs of Safety Implementation

Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the progress made in the first year of the implementation of the Signs of Safety Practice Framework in Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 Significant progress has been made implementing the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across Children and Young People's Services. Large numbers of staff and partner agencies have received briefings and training and there is a good awareness of the framework across the partnership. The quality of practice continues to improve across services and the Signs of Safety framework is a key driver of this improvement. The focus of the ongoing implementation is now to ensure that systems and process are aligned to support all aspects of the framework becoming embedded in practice. The recent appointment of a Signs of Safety Co-ordinator is very positive. The post holder will work across Children and Young People's Services to support practitioners and managers embedding the framework.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
 - Note the contents of this report

Background

- 4 A decision was made in early 2018 to embed the Signs of Safety practice framework across Durham Children’s Services. At the time it was acknowledged that the quality of social work practice was inconsistent and that a practice framework would provide a key driver for improvement.
- 5 The Signs of Safety practice framework was initially developed in Western Australia in 1993 and is now being used in jurisdictions in North America, Europe and Australasia. It is a strengths-based and safety-focused approach to child protection work that is grounded in partnership and collaboration with families. It expands the investigation of risk to encompass strengths and Signs of Safety that can be built upon to stabilise and strengthen a child’s and family’s situation.

Summary of 3-year implementation strategy

- 6 The Implementation in Durham has been supported by a licensed Signs of Safety Trainer and Consultant, Tracey Hill. The overarching implementation strategy in Durham was for the Senior Management Team to access the advanced practitioner training in the first instance allowing them to gain a collective understanding of the Signs of Safety approach and lead the implementation. Following this the focus has been on rolling out training to practitioners and managers, and briefings to partner agencies. The learning from this training is then embedded by a number of identified “Practice Leads”. The Practice Leads have received additional bi-monthly workshops throughout the implementation. Having developed a breadth of knowledge and understanding across the workforce the focus of the implementation is now on aligning our policies, procedures and IT systems to support the practice model. As this alignment work continues, we have identified six frontline teams to work intensively with in order to ensure that the model is used skilfully and consistently. As these teams embed the model throughout their practice there will be a phased approach to targeting the remaining teams across the service.

Key Milestones

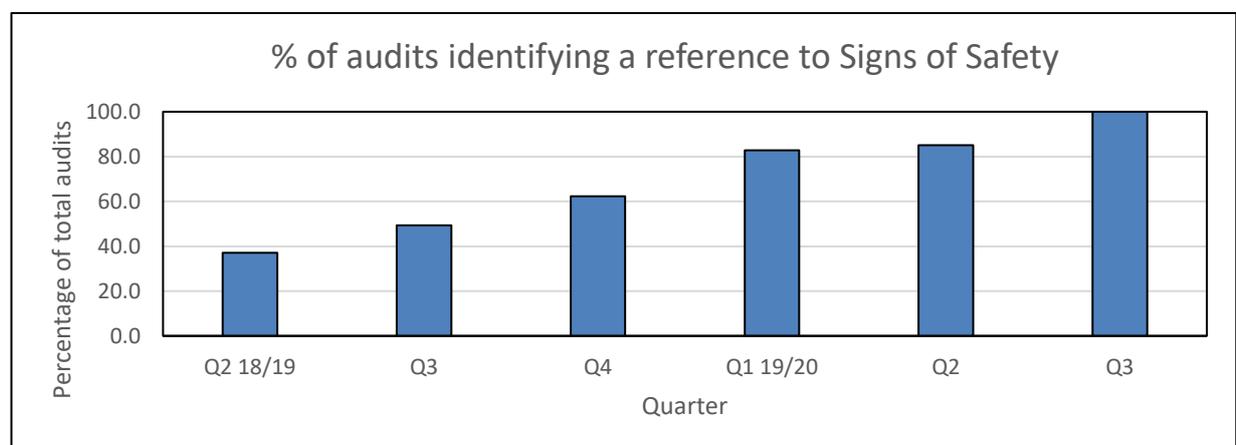
- 7 A number of key milestones have been achieved and are summarised below:

Key Milestone	Date achieved
6 Senior Managers attended Advanced Practitioner training	April 2018
Governance Structure established to manage the implementation.	May 2018

2-day training courses commissioned and delivered to 491 practitioners	
5-day training courses commissioned and delivered to 73 practitioners	
76 Practice Leaders identified	31.06.18
8 Bi-monthly Practice Leader workshops delivered	
Partner Briefings commissioned and delivered to 778 partners	
DSCP commissioned 2-day training course to 25 partners	04.06.19
Implementation of Group Supervision model within teams	
Elected Members briefing	06.06.19
Regional Judiciary briefing attended by the Judiciary, CAFCASS and solicitors	29.07.19
1-year on Conference attended by 126 staff and partners	22.11.19
Appointment of Signs of Safety Co-ordinator	Dec 2019

8 During the 1st year of the implementation we have tracked the use of various elements of the Signs of Safety model within children’s case files. Graph 1 below shows the steady increase in the use of the model over time.

Graph 1



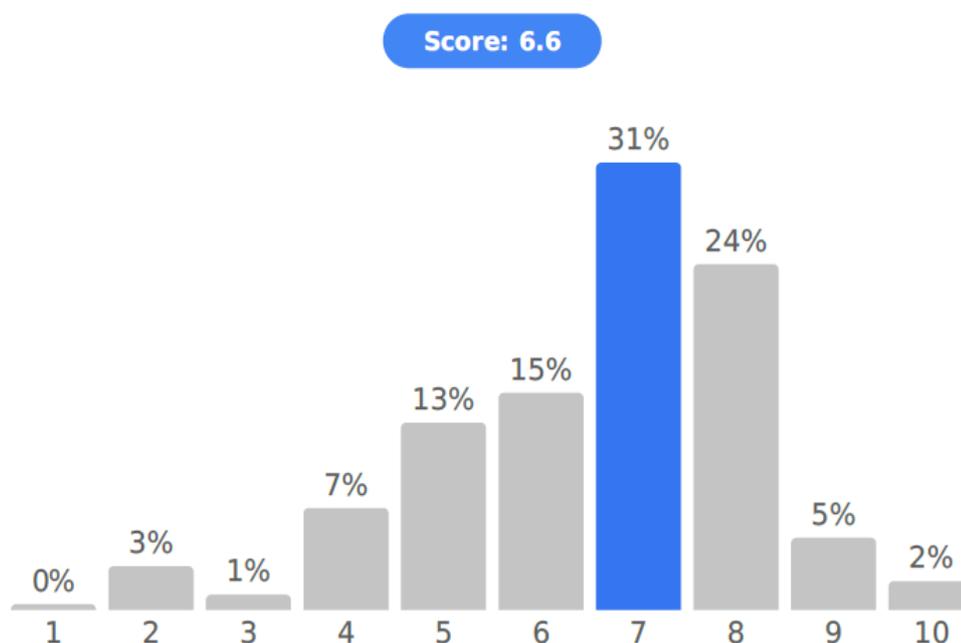
1 - year on Conference

- 9 A Signs of Safety 1 – year on Conference was held for Children’s Services staff and partner agencies. As part of the Conference we sought feedback from delegates. A summary of responses below shows the progress of implementation:

Have you used Signs of Safety in your practice in the last 3 months?



Thinking about the Signs of Safety Practice Framework as a whole how confident do you feel about using it in your practice where 0 is "I would not know where to start" and 10 is "I am confident in using it in all parts of my practice"?



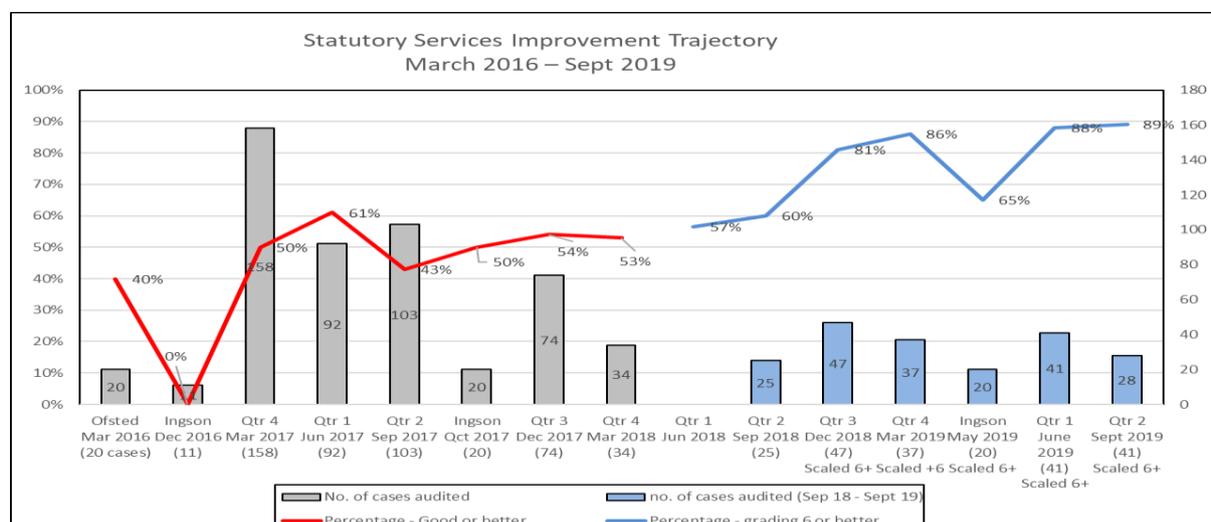
Since we started implementing Signs of Safety in Durham what has been your proudest moment?

- When family were able to say something positive about their son despite lots of worries.

- Helping a child to resume contact with her dad after a long time.
- Conversations with team managers has been positive and solutions to complex cases have been great.
- Safety planning with 15 family members to keep a child with her mum.
- Using it to write a risk assessment to highlight all the positives about a young boy, to help potential foster carers understand there's a lot more to him than the risks he presents with.
- Seeing a real difference in conferences, families being more engaged, and empowering families to find their own solutions and involved in the planning.
- Repairing relationship between young person and mother which resulted in her returning home to live.
- When I am honest with families and they are honest with me and we can work from there to make a positive change.
- Getting a child home safely.
- Hearing from a child what is working well by asking the right questions.
- Helping families see their strengths and working with us to make things better for their family.
- Influencing internal and external colleagues to create a shift in the way they had been thinking about a family, moving towards a more strengths based, solution focused view.
- A mum in conference feeling confident enough to admit that the thing she was most worried about was losing her kids.

Impact

- 10 The overarching outcome of this implementation is to improve the quality of practice across children's services so that the outcomes for children and young people are consistently good. The graph below shows the continuous improvement seen through our case file audit programme.



Complaints and Compliments

- 11 The number of complaints and compliments reflects the quality of practice across the service. During quarter 2, Children and Young People’s Services received 21 statutory complaints, a substantial decrease from the previous quarters. Table 1 (below) provides a comparison over the rolling year.

Table 1

	Stage 1 complaints received by quarter					
Quarter	Q1 18/19	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20
Number of Complaints	32	38	26	41	34	21

- 12 During quarter 2, Children and Young People’s Services logged 50 compliments about social care services. Table 2 (below) shows that this is a small decrease from quarter 1 but is still much higher than the number recorded in quarter 2 of 2018-2019.

Table 2

Compliments received by quarter					
Quarter	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20
Number of Compliments	21	43	10	61	50

- 13 Two examples of compliments received are shown below to illustrate good quality relationship-based practice which is a fundamental principle underpinning the Signs of Safety framework.
- 14 For a newly qualified social worker in Families First Crook & Bishop Auckland:
- From a parent and child: “My children’s Social Worker is [name]. At first I wasn’t keen on her but now she is soundI can actually trust her and I don’t trust anyone.... She is a tip top Social Worker and goes the extra mile for me and my childrenMy youngest son really likes her and asks if she is coming every day I am very grateful for everything she has done for usshe is a good Social Worker, she bang on !!”
- 15 For a social worker in Looked After & Permanence team 1:

- From a young person:” We may have had a wobbly start but since then you have had my back in everything. You’ve been such an amazing help, not only with issues I’ve had but with socialising more. Honestly couldn’t be happier, [name] and the boys have you in their corner. Thank you for everything you have done for me and by far one of my favourite social workers. Lots of love”

OFSTED Feedback

- 16 In both the Focused Visit and ILACS inspections the progress of the Signs of Safety implementation was acknowledged:

“A model of social work practice is being implemented and staff have been trained to strengthen the analysis of risk within assessments. There was evidence of an increasing use of the framework in the assessments seen during this visit.”

Ofsted Focused Visit Jan 2019

“While the local authority is still in the process of rolling out its preferred model of social work, social workers are beginning to make good use of it to identify risks and protective factors.”

Ofsted ILACS Oct 2019

Conclusion

- 17 Significant progress has been made implementing the Signs of Safety framework across Children and Young People’s Services, and this was recognised in both OFSTED inspections in 2019. It has been a key driver in continuing to improve the quality of our practice. A Signs of Safety Co-ordinator has been appointed and the focus now is to work intensively with teams to ensure that the full framework is being used consistently and that our systems and processes are aligned to support this way of working.

Background papers

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Implementation of the Signs of Safety Practice Framework will ensure consistency of practice in carrying out the Council's statutory functions under the Children Act 1989 to support children in need and to carry out safeguarding investigations and where necessary, issue care proceedings to ensure that children are protected from harm.

Finance

The 'Signs of safety' Coordinator post is Funded within the CYPS base Budget. On-going training costs are funded from the Services Learning and Development Training budget.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.