

The Role of Practice Leader

The role of Practice Leader is crucial to the successful implementation of Signs of Safety. Training has been received very positively, we now need to maintain momentum and go on to develop confident, skilled practitioners with a profound depth of practice. This will be the role of the Practice Leader - stimulating, challenging and driving the development of Signs of Safety through the whole organisation. You will need to work together and be pro-active planning developments in your teams and within localities and as a County.

Activities:

Within your Team

- Be creative and take the lead.
- Adopt the ethos and approach of Signs of Safety (SofS) within all discussions.
- Celebrate and share good practice examples forwarding them to the web site for sharing.
- Have SofS on every team meeting agenda and drive forward its implementation.
- Use the updated supervision policy and incorporate SofS approach in to supervision.
- Encourage staff use the tools and mapping framework of SofS and develop the voice of the child.
- Set up opportunities for mentoring and peer support events within the team such as group supervision, celebration of good case examples, drifting and stuck case mapping sessions. (see extract from "Signs of Safety Comprehensive Briefing Paper" below).

Within Your Locality

- Be creative and take the lead.
- Set up a Practice Leader group within your "Locality" to plan and encourage implementation across your locality. Include other professionals e.g. Health Visitors and agree meetings and topics for next 6 – 12 months.
- Set up monthly seminars in the locality to create better depth of practice. Decide on the format and programme of topics and themes e.g. child's view from non-verbal children, creating danger statements etc.
- Have SofS on every management team meeting agenda, using mapping to address questions and concerns arising in the team meeting and seeking opportunities to drive forward and monitor its implementation.
- Include the development of the SofS approach in to existing network groups using links with cluster groups, LSCG, Lead H.V, children's centres, police, probation (180) integrated offender management, court user group, CCAS, anti-social behaviour action group to forward wider use and understanding of SofS.
- Support each other and share examples of good practice with other PL's.
- Identify and constantly review the inclusion of partners in Signs of Safety work.
- Create opportunities for group supervision (using anonymised cases) between and within teams and partners.

- Identify staff groups and partners who need to be briefed/trained and deliver three hour briefing sessions to them.

County

- In conjunction with L&D and the Principal Social Worker, contribute to the planning and content of an annual “gathering” in celebration of good practice in Signs of Safety.
- Attend County PL meetings, prepared to provide a review of how you have fared locally.
- Share good practice via the intranet.
- Send good ideas that have worked locally to the project manager.

Training and Support

- Attend mentoring sessions arranged by Innovations project.
- Consider shadowing existing trainers in order to become competent and confident in delivering the two day training to Norfolk staff and possibly deliver SofS content to local College courses.



Comprehensive Briefing Paper 3rd e

Click on this file to see the full text of “Signs of Safety Comprehensive Briefing Paper”

Extract from “Signs of Safety Comprehensive Briefing Paper”

Integrating learning into the organisation

70:10:20 approach, Jennings (2013) and others asserts that training accounts for only 10% of all learning, while 20% occurs when talking about practice with colleagues, and 70% happens when activities that also includes supervision, workplace based learning activities and structured exposure to practice experience, with review and feedback, are necessary for effective learning.

Skills training workshops

Skills training workshops focusing on specific areas of practice should be regularly available, both in workplaces and through formal programmes. These may include practice elements such as the analysis of assessments into the succinct and plain language, statements of harm and danger, developing safety goals based on the statements of danger, developing safety plans, using children’s tools, and the broad skills underpinning the approach such as leading by questioning.

Workplace learning sessions

Workplace learning sessions are particularly important to emphasise and realise the importance placed on learning and to encourage collaborative learning between colleagues. They provide an important opportunity to bring regular appreciative inquiries into workplaces, driving the vision for good practice and the confidence that can be achieved.

Supervision using a Signs of Safety format

Supervision using a Signs of Safety format, essentially using the three column approach, should recognise that supervision supports both case planning and workers growth and development. This will effectively align the the way that supervision occurs with the practice. Using a questioning approach is critical. This includes the hard questions that need to be addressed and does not preclude making statements about issues in an open and clear way, again mirroring how Signs of Safety practice occurs.

Group supervision

Group supervision is a key strategy for supporting workers’ growth and development. It involves all participants actively working on real, usually current, cases. It may involve undertaking or reviewing case mappings or working on particular aspects of case practice. These aspects might, for example, include case analysis through developing danger statements or questions for areas of practice that appear stuck.

Group supervision generally occurs in established teams. However, working across teams, with supervisors as a group, and open sessions for whole workplaces will also provide substantial learning opportunities. Leading group supervision is an important role for supervisors and one that can be shared with other practice leaders.

The learning that can be achieved in a group is generally greater than through individual supervision because it benefits from the skills, analysis and experience of the whole group and involves actively practising analysis and applied casework skills. As it can facilitate intense learning and development, group supervision can also provide a sense of empowerment that is essential to building the emotional and psychological health and resilience of staff. Group supervision is also a mean of sharing the anxiety inherent in casework, a strategy to deal with working with uncertainty, and a means of sharing the emotional support a team can provide.

Signalling and amplifying the centrality of learning

It is desirable that the centrality of learning is both signalled and amplified by significant learning events and supported by dedicated positions supporting case practice across the organisation.

There have been eight international Signs of Safety Gatherings between 2005 and 2014 as the approach has developed and been showcased. These predominantly involved practitioners presenting work of which they were proud using appreciative inquiries with families and staff. Increasingly, implementing jurisdictions have been holding similar events internally as part of their learning calendars.

Practice Leader in Norfolk will be aimed at embedding practice learning and increasing practice depth – for the whole organisation and at the workplace level – this includes coaching staff as well as review, advice on and participation in difficult practice activities. As well as being hands-on coaches and leaders of practice, these positions will drive organisation-wide learning and development priorities, particularly with like groups of practitioners.

Distributed leadership

To be effective in an organisation where front line and supervisory staff hold substantial authority and power, leadership must be distributed. Distributed leadership means both conferring an organisational leadership dimension to all roles throughout the organisation and expecting leadership to be exercised from all roles. Each person, from the front counter to the chief executive, has to be leading the organisation “to be what we want it to be”, clear and focussed about how we work, with practice and management and leadership congruent. Ghandi’s exhortation for each of us to be the change we want to see captures this sentiment and its possibility to occur if leadership supports this.

Bringing it all together in the learning organisation

The concept of becoming a “learning organisation” (Senge, 1990, 2006), can encompass these structural arrangements, learning strategies and leadership imperatives, and is a useful parallel commitment to the implementation of Signs of Safety. The theory of learning organisations emphasises tenets that are clearly consistent with the Signs of Safety implementation framework. These include:

- the way in which individuals work and interact being fundamental to meeting complex work challenges;
- systems thinking, recognising how all parts of the organisation affect the whole;
- personal mastery with the organisation supporting each and every staff member to meet their own learning goals
- the importance of the conceptual models that workers hold in their minds about the organisation influencing how they behave
- the necessity for shared vision throughout the organisation; and
- the centrality of team learning.

For child welfare organisations, the key day-to-day implications of the commitment to becoming a learning organisation are explicitly realised through communicating and driving:

- constant learning as being essential for personal professional growth and organisational development;
- every interaction, with families and colleagues alike, as being an opportunity for reflection and thus learning
- the recognition that mistakes occur and that each of these is an opportunity for learning and will be treated as such.