



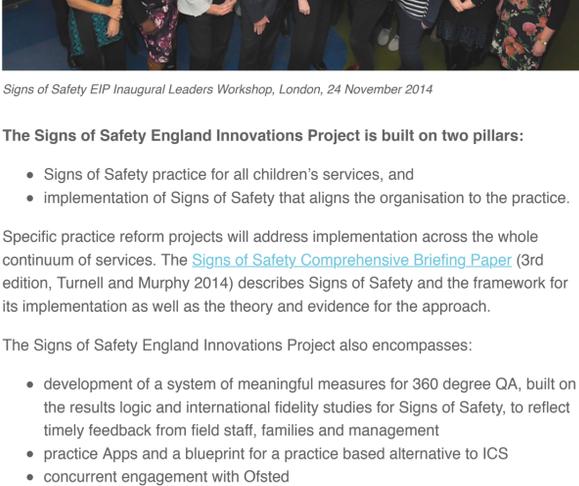
NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the first newsletter for the Signs of Safety England Innovations Project.

This will be produced every two months after leadership workshops with all the partnering local authorities. We hope the newsletter can inform all staff, elected members and partners of the local authorities as well as the broader children's services sector in England. Please forward it far and wide! If you have received the newsletter direct from info@munro.turnellmurphy.com you will continue to do so, if it has been forwarded, you can [subscribe by filling out this form](#) to receive copies direct.

Transforming childrens services in England



Signs of Safety EIP Inaugural Leaders Workshop, London, 24 November 2014

The Signs of Safety England Innovations Project is built on two pillars:

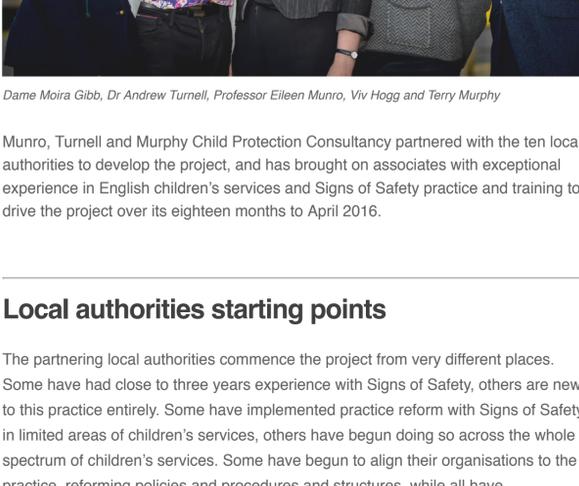
- Signs of Safety practice for all children's services, and
- implementation of Signs of Safety that aligns the organisation to the practice.

Specific practice reform projects will address implementation across the whole continuum of services. The [Signs of Safety Comprehensive Briefing Paper](#) (3rd edition, Turnell and Murphy 2014) describes Signs of Safety and the framework for its implementation as well as the theory and evidence for the approach.

The Signs of Safety England Innovations Project also encompasses:

- development of a system of meaningful measures for 360 degree QA, built on the results logic and international fidelity studies for Signs of Safety, to reflect timely feedback from field staff, families and management
- practice Apps and a blueprint for a practice based alternative to ICS
- concurrent engagement with Ofsted
- action research for continuous learning throughout the project.

Munro, Turnell and Murphy Child Protection Consultancy



Dame Moira Gibb, Dr Andrew Turnell, Professor Eileen Munro, Viv Hogg and Terry Murphy

Munro, Turnell and Murphy Child Protection Consultancy partnered with the ten local authorities to develop the project, and has brought on associates with exceptional experience in English children's services and Signs of Safety practice and training to drive the project over its eighteen months to April 2016.

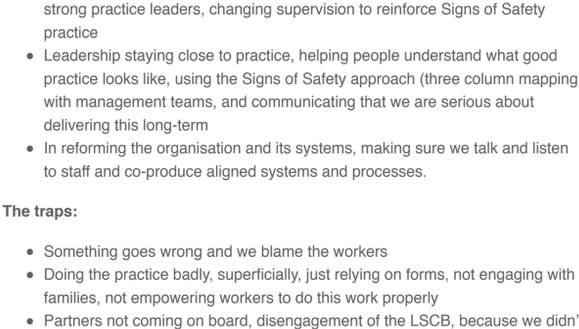
Local authorities starting points

The partnering local authorities commence the project from very different places. Some have had close to three years experience with Signs of Safety, others are new to this practice entirely. Some have implemented practice reform with Signs of Safety in limited areas of children's services, others have begun doing so across the whole spectrum of children's services. Some have begun to align their organisations to the practice, reforming policies and procedures and structures, while all have experienced the reality that transforming practice requires transforming the organisation.

Local authorities feel most advanced in Signs of Safety training, growing the practice, the voice of workers and families coming through, the leadership buy-in, and engaging partners.

Local authorities feel least advanced in their organisational capacity to support change, aligning all the parts of the system, and in developing practice consistency and depth.

Asked what excites them about their participation in the Signs of Safety England Innovations project, local authorities emphasized that people get the Signs of Safety practice, and while systems have repressed practice, Signs of Safety is bringing practice front and centre, and they are hearing the voices of children and families.



Participants at the first Signs of Safety EIP leadership workshop, 24 November, 2014

Anticipating the challenges... and solutions

Local authorities explored what would it take, first for the project to work brilliantly or on the other hand to go terribly wrong. The summarised answers provide a succinct snapshot of the traps and imperatives for transforming children's services in England.

The imperatives:

- For good practice, using the common language, working with the wider family, having clear goals and focusing also on child well-being
- With staff, allowing them to tell us when it is working and when it is not, having strong practice leaders, changing supervision to reinforce Signs of Safety practice
- Leadership staying close to practice, helping people understand what good practice looks like, using the Signs of Safety approach (three column mapping) with management teams, and communicating that we are serious about delivering this long-term
- In reforming the organisation and its systems, making sure we talk and listen to staff and co-produce aligned systems and processes.

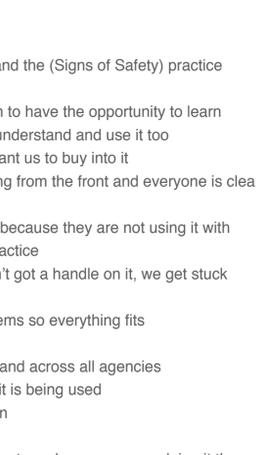
The traps:

- Something goes wrong and we blame the workers
- Doing the practice badly, superficially, just relying on forms, not engaging with families, not empowering workers to do this work properly
- Partners not coming on board, disengagement of the LSCB, because we didn't involve them
- Austerity and savings impacting capacity and managing this context badly by senior managers not keeping close to front-line practice
- Not stripping out the things we don't want front line practitioners to do and not identifying what we do want them to do, and not prioritising feedback from workers.

Imagine a recording system that workers want to use!

More than almost anything else child protection workers are frustrated by voluminous recording requirements and recording systems that have little connection to their actual practice experience and needs. The need to capture outcome and output data is unquestionable but for an IT system to be useful and useable it must also serve the operational purpose of supporting effective work with children and families.

MTM is working with Professors David Wastell and Sue White to develop new approaches in information management design. There are three interrelated parts to this project strand:



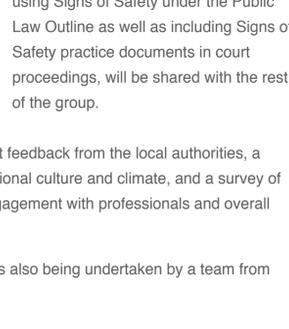
Dave Wastell
Professor of Information Systems

1. A blueprint for an alternative information management system to ICS based around the Signs of Safety practice model. This will be designed from user centred research with local authorities particularly focused on workers' experience and needs
2. Initiating a project with industry to scope and build this system, on an open source platform,
3. Developing Signs of Safety Apps for practice.

The ethnographic and focus group research involving a cross section of local authority professionals including workers will begin as soon as possible. Dave, Sue and their fellow researcher Dr Matthew Gibson will be in contact with local authorities to set up the initial research work.

It's all about the practice

The workshop discussed a presentation of practice by a senior worker in a high risk challenging case, from the Leicester 2014 Signs of Safety Gathering. This and other presentations are available at www.signsofsafety.net/events

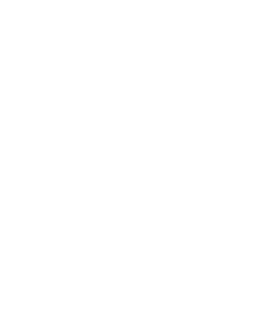


In a Signs of Safety training recently, workers themselves identified what they want from their leaders to feel confident in this practice:

- For the managers to thoroughly understand the (Signs of Safety) practice
- Use it in supervision
- Use it in team meetings to build cohesion to have the opportunity to learn
- For managers to partner agencies to understand and use it too
- Clarity about how much our managers want us to buy into it
- Acceptance that the managers are leading from the front and everyone is clear that this is how we do it
- Managers need mentoring on the model because they are not using it with families every day so they don't get to practice
- If we are struggling and managers haven't got a handle on it, we get stuck
- Permission to do things differently
- Needing support / focus around the systems so everything fits
- We need people to keep others on track
- Embedded right across the organisation and across all agencies
- Practice champions and audits to check it is being used
- Supervision particularly group supervision
- Embed in Ofsted process
- Need someone looking over our shoulders to make sure we are doing it the right way
- More time – can't just implement it easily and quickly straight away
- Implement from the very start – at duty or prevention services

Action Research

Action research will drive continuous learning throughout the project. The framework for the action research is based on the framework for implementation of Signs of Safety.



Baseline data will be collected in the next couple of months so we are able to see both how individual local authorities are improving relative to their starting points and how the set of local authorities are progressing. Authorities' experience in specific practice reform projects, such as using Signs of Safety under the Public Law Outline as well as including Signs of Safety practice documents in court proceedings, will be shared with the rest of the group.

The main sources of information are direct feedback from the local authorities, a survey of staff that will report on organisational culture and climate, and a survey of parents to track improvements in their engagement with professionals and overall experience of practice.

An independent evaluation of the project is also being undertaken by a team from Kings College, London.

Next Local Authority Leadership Workshop

The next workshop is scheduled for 26 January 2015.

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