



Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D Annual Report 2019-20 – Executive Summary

I. Introduction

S.H.I.E.L.D. is the safeguarding partnership for children and young people in Bexley. S.H.I.E.L.D. stands for: Shelter, Haven, Inspiring, Empowering, Leading and Defending; the name was chosen by young people in Bexley. This annual report describes the work of the partnership in its second year since the transition from the old arrangements (Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) to the new (safeguarding partnerships). A new partnership 3-year plan for 2020-23 is also introduced (a visual record of the plan can be found in **Appendix I of this executive summary**).

The full annual report for 2019-20 can be found on the partnership's website: <https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/news-publications/annual-report/>

I.1 Statutory requirements for safeguarding partnerships

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) sets out the statutory requirements for safeguarding partnerships in each local authority area and who the statutory lead partners for these arrangements are. For Bexley, the leads are the London Borough of Bexley Children's Services, the SE London Clinical Commissioning Group, and the SE Basic Command Unit (BCU)/Metropolitan Police. Working Together 2018 also requires partnerships to produce a report at least annually of all of its activity to be submitted to the Department for Education. This is S.H.I.E.L.D.'s second annual report since the partnership was launched in October 2018.

I.2 How Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. has continued to operate since March 2020 – responding to Covid-19

In March 2020, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive moved from a structure of 8 meetings per year to initially weekly and subsequently fortnightly virtual meetings in response to Covid-19. Meetings were chaired by the Local Authority and initially focused on establishing and sharing the business continuity plans for the 3 safeguarding partners and Bexley's relevant agencies. A log of actions was established and these were reviewed at each meeting to ensure timely follow-up was achieved wherever possible. Colleagues from Bexley CAMHS, Community Safety Partnership, Bexley Voluntary Services Council, INQUEST, and Bexley schools and colleges were invited to specific meetings to provide expertise and feedback to inform the Executive's strategic planning as well as to provide assurance around key safeguarding issues. Going forward into the third year of the partnership, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive will continue to meet virtually on a fortnightly basis.

As a result of the pandemic, the Partnership Board planned to take place 27 April 2020 was reorganised as a meeting where business was carried out with Board members by correspondence during May 2020. The Partnership Board on 13 July 2020 took place virtually. Partners have responded well to the virtual meeting platform and effective engagement has been maintained.

In response to the pandemic, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. developed a business continuity plan in late March 2020 for its programme of activities including training and development. Learning events were subsequently moved online and the Practice Review and Learning Manager worked with training providers to establish the provision of virtual training options wherever possible. Training e-bulletins were issued on a monthly basis to direct the professional network to all multi-agency training opportunities. A Covid resources bulletin was also produced on a fortnightly/monthly basis alongside

the partnership's main e-bulletin and feedback about the usefulness of the Covid resources for practitioners to use with families has been received. The partnership's new website was launched in October 2020 and houses all of the bulletins.

2. The work of the Partnership Board and Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive

In August 2020, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive revisited our vision, ambitions and values and recommitted Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. to achieving them for our children, young people and their families. In this reporting year, our Partnership Board and Executive have continued to meet, moving to virtual meetings during 2020. Our Executive has met more frequently since March 2020 to coordinate business continuity plans and disseminate key information to partners. A number of safeguarding practice issues spotlighted by the pandemic have been explored in the Executive's meetings with other relevant agencies invited to join discussions to provide their expertise and share feedback – issues have included domestic abuse, mental health, and supporting children and young people going back to school. Engagement from our relevant agencies at the Partnership Board has remained high and we will continue to explore the use of virtual meeting platforms for some groups going forward (whilst anticipating the return to in-person meetings and all of the advantages around relationship-building that they bring). **Sections 2 and 3 of the annual report** set out the activity around the Partnership Board and Executive in 2019/20 including any key decisions made.

3. The partnership priorities and the work of the Learning Hub

In our partnership's second year, the 2 practice priorities explored through our Learning Hub – adolescent vulnerability (Priority 4) and basic child protection (Priority 5) respectively – have been considered by the 3 statutory lead partners to be very much appropriate priorities for the partnership during the pandemic. Work continued virtually from April 2020 after the start of the first lockdown and Priority 4 was completed online. Priority 5's Learning Hub group also met online. In the case of both priorities, a number of success measures were initially agreed and subsequently reviewed as the priorities were progressed.

Priority 4 - Identifying and better understanding the young people we are most worried about in Bexley as a multi-agency safeguarding partnership – successfully brought practitioners together from across agencies to collate a list of some of the young people those practitioners were most worried about. Intelligence was collected about prevalent risk themes for those young people and a series of well-being checks completed in June 2020 to seek assurance about where those young people were, who they were with, and how safe and well they were.

Priority 5 – Getting basic child protection right – addressed a range of practice issues relating to professional curiosity, children's mental health, and embedding learning, as well as revisiting work carried out in the partnership's first year to ensure activities had been progressed and impact demonstrated. A Section 11 audit was also carried out as part of this priority. Finally, work was undertaken to re-audit a number of children's records initially considered as part of a Joint Targeted Area Inspection on children's mental health by Ofsted and other regulators in January 2020.

Section 4 of the annual report has the details of the Learning Hub's activity including an update on the work we did in the first year on missing young people, parental mental health, and basic child protection practice, and how that has been taken forward and evaluated against the success measures agreed for these priorities including by the independent scrutineer. For Priority 1 (looking at young people who go missing), a review of the success measures noted the following positive developments:

- Consultation with the police lead representative confirms that whilst the numbers of young people who go missing may not have reduced down over a sustained period of time, there is a better understanding of the needs of the young people who go missing
- We have more detailed understanding of the profile of young people we are most worried about and therefore are better informed in relation to what is needed to support families and young people more effectively in the future

- The audit process and findings have drawn attention to some areas of practice in need of further development.

Similar impact reviews have been scheduled for the other Learning Hub priorities, starting with Priority 2 (on parental mental health) in January 2021.

4. Sub-group activity – the work of the Learning from Practice Group and CREST

The partnership has continued to take forward some of its core business – the work around learning reviews (including the multi-agency response to serious incidents and commissioning Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews), developing our Multi-Agency Learning Forum, and our collective response to young people at risk of exploitation. That work is described in **Sections 5 and 6 of the annual report**.

5. Feedback from Bexley’s relevant agencies

Bexley’s relevant agencies completed a Section 11 questionnaire in August 2020 which included reporting back on how they had progressed safeguarding priorities identified and set out in our previous annual report. In the majority of cases, there was clear evidence of these priorities being taken forward. A selection of highlights from their work are set out in **Section 7 of the annual report**.

6. Multi-agency training

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. reported back on its training and development activity for 2018/19 at the Partnership Board in January 2020 and set out its plans for 2020 in terms of training and development opportunities. Most of the planned training activity has successfully moved online during 2020 and the partnership team have worked with external trainers to support this process of making learning sessions happen virtually. **Section 8 of the annual report** describes the training courses delivered in more detail including to the partnership’s safeguarding champions network. **Appendix 2 of the annual report** sets out the content of and attendance at each of the 45 training ‘days’ (the equivalent of 25 different courses or learning events) delivered during this reporting period.

7. Independent scrutiny

The provision of independent scrutiny within the partnership arrangements is a statutory requirement. The role of a named scrutineer is described in the annual report. Nigel Richardson, Bexley’s independent scrutineer, provided a formal response to the Learning Hub’s work on missing young people (Priority 1) at the partnership’s annual conference in October 2020 – this is reproduced in **Section 9 of the annual report**. Going forward into the partnership’s third year, an expanded definition of independent scrutiny has been developed to comprise elements such as the work of the Learning Hub, Learning from Practice Group, and Bexley F.L.A.R.E.

8. Governance arrangements

In our first annual report for 2018/19, we spoke about developing our parent engagement work; details about Bexley F.L.A.R.E. (Family Learning, Advocacy & Restorative Engagement) are included in **Section 10.1 of the annual report**. The pandemic has impacted on the parents being able to meet up in person but the group remains engaged and we look forward to supporting its growth in 2021. The work of the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network, a key conduit for sharing learning with our schools, is set out in **Section 10.2**. A number of other governance-related issues are reported on in **Section 10**:

- The role of youth offending and custody services, children and young people who run away and/or are missing from education in the partnership – **section 10.3**
- Bexley’s Joint Targeted Area Inspection on children’s mental health Jan 2020 – **section 10.4**

- Bexley's participation in the Department for Education's 'Developing an evidence base of good practice from multi-agency safeguarding partnerships' programme – **section 10.5**
- Our tri-borough work w programme with the safeguarding partnerships in Greenwich and Lewisham – **section 10.6**
- Full details of out Section 11 audit of relevant agencies – **section 10.7**
- Details of the partnership's operational team – **section 10.8**
- Information on the partnership's budget and expenditure for the reporting period – **section 10.9**
- Information about the partnership's statutory published arrangements document – **section 10.10.**

Appendix I – Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s 3-year partnership plan 2020-23

11th AUGUST 2020

Time to REDRAW our plan!

in a Post-covid world...



Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People

Our Partnership Plan 2020-2023

JTAI INSPECTION:
The Safeguarding Partnership is A REAL STRENGTH

CONNECTIVITY also helps us thrive
Good communication - great outcomes. Identified some GAPS. Need to focus on ASD & adolescents who go missing. What's our REACH?

How can we EMBED this knowledge?

OUR SHARED PRIORITIES

WE'VE CHOSEN TO RETURN TO THESE:

- 1 Help children to grow up in safe and supportive families
- 2 Improve our understanding and response to the number of children who run away from home or care
- 3 Protect the most vulnerable children from neglect, violence and harm
- 4 Protect children and young people from criminal and sexual exploitation, including the dangers of drugs, alcohol
- 5 Empower families to give children the best early start in life so that they are healthy and ready for school
- 6 All young people will have the offer of a school placement and be supported to attend

OUR SHARED 5 AMBITIONS

- All children & young people are safe from harm
- All children & young people are healthy and enjoy healthy lifestyles
- All children & young people enjoy + achieve at school and/or college so that they have the skills they need for life & future employment
- All children & young people have access to leisure & opportunities for fun as they are growing up
- All children & young people are active in their communities, their experiences count and they have a voice with influence

What difference are we making? "SO WHAT?"

OUR AGREED SUCCESS MEASURES

- 1 Restorative learning with families and children
- 2 Learning with practitioners
- 3 A kind and healing system

A SHARED VISION: In Bexley we want healthy, safe and resilient families, networks, communities that are safe for them. So that they attain the skills they need at schools and colleges, growing up to be independent and productive. We want children and young people driving our local growth and engaging in the plans we make and the services we deliver.







INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY Things to always remember:
LOOK THROUGH THE POST-COVID LENS
Don't make any ASSUMPTIONS where people "are" - things will have changed.

SHINE A LIGHT

Let's PULL the lessons together
LET'S LEARN FROM THIS!

Let's TALK!
Create a space to TALK!

THE LEARNING HUB AREAS TO CONSIDER THAT WORK WITH OUR 6 PRIORITIES:

- NEGLECT
- F.L.A.R.E.
- Understanding the stories of the young people identified in Priority 4
- Re-running Priority 4 with a new Learning Hub group
- Learning from COVID
- Issues of concern raised by Partnership Board members (May 2020)

PARTNERSHIP BOARD STRUCTURE
What has changed?
Is it an effective structure? Culture? Does it need changing? What's missing?



GRAPHIC RECORDING: www.sandrahowgate.com