



# 7-minute briefing: FLARE (Parent Champion Network)

For all those working with adults, children and families

Visit <https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/> for other useful resources



## 1. WHO ARE FLARE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

FLARE (Parent Champion Network) is a group of parents and members of the community who started to come together in 2020. The group exists to provide training, peer support and mentoring opportunities and signposting to parents in the borough. FLARE welcomes new parents and parents/carers who have children up to the age of 24.

The group meets regularly face to face, virtually, and stays in touch via Whatsapp. The group can offer advice in accessing services, and shares useful information, and has for example supported others to access advice on housing, counselling, parenting, and to support one another in the challenges of caring for children and young people with additional needs.

The group is facilitated by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. (<https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/>) and Bexley Moorings, and benefits from training workshops, guest speakers, and professionals with specialist skills. The group leads on identifying what they need in respect of training and this ensures the voice of parents and community is heard and that the group works to meet their needs. Through FLARE the group build on their existing life experience and expertise, and are able to help parents or members of the community who may need peer support and who wish to build on their informal networks of support.

The FLARE group is often invited to join in with professionals at workshops, conferences, learning events and invited to give valuable steer and feedback into developing services, and to ensure professionals learn from FLARE.

## 2. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

- The group was set up and initially facilitated to ensure the voice of parents and carers was respectfully heard in Bexley, encouraging a collaborative approach to working with families, and better understanding the needs of the 'whole community'. This was born out of the desire to build 'a kind and healing system' in Bexley, recognising that organisations could learn from those who had accessed services, and be better informed on what could be improved.
- There are personal development programs and workshops for members of the group should they wish to focus on particular topics and or areas of need, so they can then use this learning to support and advise others.
- The group also welcomes those who just wish to develop their peer support network, and who value the support of others with 'lived experience'.
- The group is diverse and adopts a culture of inclusiveness and is working hard to ensure the most marginalised or disadvantaged families know about them and the support that can be offered.

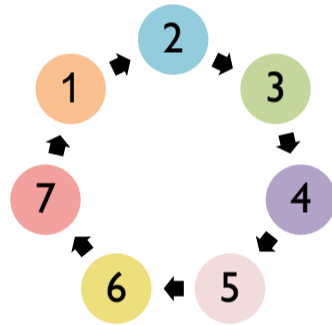
## 7. USEFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

If you think you know of any parents or those involved with children and young people, who may be interested in joining FLARE and or need to discuss how they could be involved, then please contact any of the below for more information:

- Alanna Lauder – [Alanna@bexleymoorings.co.uk](mailto:Alanna@bexleymoorings.co.uk)
- Anne Bennett – [anne@bexleymoorings.co.uk](mailto:anne@bexleymoorings.co.uk)
- Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s mailbox is [S.H.I.E.L.D.@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:S.H.I.E.L.D.@bexley.gov.uk)

Also see the FLARE page on the S.H.I.E.L.D. website:

- <https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/flare-2/>



## 3. WHAT FLARE OFFERS

- Signposting, advice and friendship
- Training and education
- Support network
- Space to be with other adults to explore issues
- Social events
- Voucher rewards for time given to service and practice development
- Portfolio of training and development workshops which can support in broadening opportunities for individual members (this includes a pathway to becoming a Parent Mentor with tailored training facilitated by Bexley Moorings).

## 6. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES, MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

There is a schedule of training events and learning events constantly being refreshed to reflect the needs of the FLARE group. Newsletters include forthcoming dates for face to face meetings and invites for events.



## 5. WHAT WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH

- Tell us about any parent/network groups who may wish to link in with FLARE and / or who you think we should know about. We want to keep recruiting and wish to be fully inclusive and to invite participation and / or connection with male carers, parents identifying as LGBTQ+ as well as parents from across the borough to reflect a diverse community.
- Give some feedback about any ideas you may have as to how FLARE could be involved with your organisation?
- Invite us to come and present on the work of FLARE.
- Spread the word and keep a look out for newsletter and S.H.I.E.L.D. bulletins to keep you updated on the progress of FLARE and how it is impacting on services and local community.
- Ask to be added to invite list for events and conferences.

## 4. FLARE ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- The feedback and ideas drawn from consultation with FLARE has informed on service development, and continues to contribute to practice development work across the partnership.
- Police, education, health and children's social care have all started to engage with FLARE and request their input into events, and learning processes.
- Some group members have engaged with panels responsible for the selection of and planning for students wishing to embark on social care careers.
- FLARE are regular participants in induction programs and recruitment events so that the message is clear from the start.....'Doing *with* and not *to*'.
- Actively engaged in trauma Informed practice training, exploitation awareness, parenting young people and children with additional needs, supporting parents who may be otherwise vulnerable to becoming isolated, supporting families experiencing challenges with parenting, and strengthening awareness and understanding of youth violence, crime, and exploitation in the borough, resulting in more cohesive approach to prevention, diversion, and information sharing.
- FLARE enrich the learning experience of practitioners from across all partnership agencies, and are helping agencies to embed learning.
- Feedback about the involvement of FLARE is consistently positive. "Hearing the experience of families first hand from them and what we could have done better is so powerful".

