



Resolving Professional Differences – Multi-agency Escalation policy *For professional differences and disagreements in multi-agency safeguarding and child protection practice*

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. is committed to the continuous improvement of multi-agency safeguarding and child protection practice.

Generally there is a good working relationship between partner agencies in Bexley. Differences and debates are all part of multi-agency working. If there are serious differences of views on how best to manage risk and safeguarding, and protect vulnerable children and young people, then escalation policies can provide a useful framework for exploring and resolving professional disagreements. The Safeguarding Partnership encourages agencies to speak up and arbitrate different views on practice issues. Any statutory agency can require a multi-agency meeting where there is a need to resolve professional differences. As a last resort the three partners can act as an arbitrator/mediator in the case of protracted or intractable disagreements.

All partners are expected to make use of escalation procedures to avoid exacerbating or prolonging conflict, and avoid any possible impact on children and young people. For professional disputes involving child protection procedures the London Child Protection procedures professional conflict resolution procedures should be used as appropriate, see:
https://www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/profess_conflict_res.html

Agencies will have their own escalation policies and should use these first. There is an expectation that agencies will have systems for recording when escalation policies are used and how disagreements are resolved. There is an expectation that the terms of reference for all multi-agency panels and meetings includes reference to what to do if there is a disagreement.

If it has not been possible to resolve professional differences between agencies, relating to safeguarding children, then this can be brought to the attention of the S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive. An email should be sent to the Programme Manager at shield@bexley.gov.uk, marked for the attention of the S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive setting out reasons for the differences and what has happened so far. S.H.I.E.L.D. will then support partners to resolve their differences.