Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.

Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People

Our partnership arrangements April 2026

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

Our Partnership Plan 2026-2029

1 SHARED VISION:

In Bexley, we want positive and resilient family networks living in communities where they feel safe. We want children to gain the skills that they need and want whilst at school and college so that they grow up to be independent and achieving their goals. We want children and young people to contribute their views as to how we plan and deliver local services

OUR SHARED PRIORITIES

1. Getting basic child safeguarding right
2. Getting our collective response to adolescent safeguarding right

South East London

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Working together for a safer London

LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

BEXLEY Schools

OUR 5 SHARED AMBITIONS

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

OUR SUCCESS MEASURES

Restorative learning with families and children

1

Learning with practitioners

2

A kind and healing system

3

Bexley Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People

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Foreword

We are pleased to commend this revised document to you as the Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners in Bexley under our safeguarding partnership arrangements known as S.H.I.E.L.D. which were initially formalised in October 2018. Working Together 2023 required us to revisit our arrangements and strengthen them in 2024. Working Together 2026 was published in March 2026 and we have made additional changes to our partnership arrangements; the work we have undertaken is described in the chapters that follow.

Our S.H.I.E.L.D. partnership symbolises our commitment to safeguarding and protecting children and was named by our children and young people, standing for: Shelter, Haven, Inspiring, Empowering, Leading and Defending. In Bexley, we believe that some of the biggest changes and improvements we have made in the past few years have happened because of our strengthened and strengthening work as a partnership around local children, young people, young adults, carers and families and it was therefore important that they were at the forefront of our partnership arrangements – including choosing the S.H.I.E.L.D. name!

We reviewed our vision and values in 2026 when drawing up the partnership's 3-year plan for 2026-29 and they are set out below. We have continued to focus on a small number of shared priorities with a view to using our resources wisely to make a difference where this matters most to our children, young people and their families. These priorities are chosen as a result of triangulating the learning from statutory reviews, national learning, local data, and the work of the Learning Hub, and sit under the following umbrella headings: *Getting basic child protection right* and *Getting our collective response to adolescent vulnerability right*. We will shortly be entering our ninth year as a partnership and are making plans around the priorities we will be exploring from April 2026.

This document also describes the contributions of other organisations who we have named as relevant agencies for Bexley. They and others make up the children's safeguarding system in Bexley – and we endeavour to support them through our learning and scrutiny programme (the details of which are set out below).

We take our responsibilities to work alongside families and to support them to find solutions to their difficulties seriously. We want children to be safe and to grow up to be successful adults. We hope the ambitions and plans set out in this document will help explain and demonstrate to others that we are in this to make a positive difference for children.

Andrew Bland
Chief Executive Officer
NHS South East London Integrated Care Board

Paul Thorogood
Chief Executive
London Borough of Bexley

James Derham
A/BCU Commander
South East Basic Command Unit

Diana Braithwaite
Place Executive Lead (Bexley)
South East London Integrated Care Board

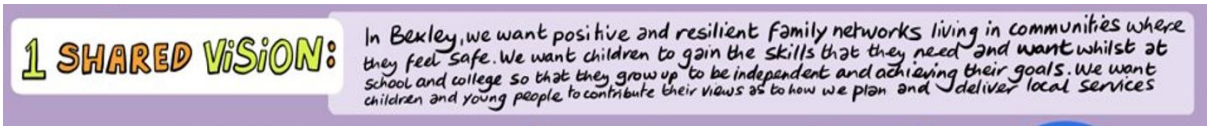
Stephen Kitchman
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Bexley

Melanie Pressley
Detective Superintendent Public Protection
South East Basic Command Unit

1. A shared vision and values

In October 2017, partners from Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group (now NHS South East London Integrated Care Board), the Police and the Local Authority in Bexley met to consider the implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 on local arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and young people in Bexley. We agreed a shared vision across the local area as well as shared ambitions for all children and young people and some overarching success measures for the partnership's work.

The partnership's Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) Group reviewed the vision, ambitions and success measures in March 2026 when drawing up the partnership's 3-year plan for 2026-29. The revised shared vision is set out below:



In Bexley, we want positive and resilient family networks living in communities where they feel safe. We want children to gain the skills that they need and want whilst at school and college so that they grow up to be independent and achieving their goals. We want children and young people to contribute their views as to how we plan and deliver local services.

Our 5 shared ambitions for our all children and young people arising from that vision:

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

Since 2018, we have agreed a series of shared priorities for our partnership which support these ambitions. Our priorities have included:

- *Reducing the number of children and young people missing from home or care including those subjected to criminal and sexual exploitation*
- *Responding effectively to the mental ill health of parents so they are supported to give their children the best start*
- *Getting basic child protection right (*this priority has run 6 times and focused on a range of practice issues including attendance at strategy meetings, use of chronologies, effective case closure, domestic abuse, working with under-1's, information-sharing, substance misuse,) gender and sexuality of young people, and neurodiversity)
- *Identifying and better understanding the young people we are most worried about in Bexley as a multi-agency safeguarding partnership* (this priority has run twice, the second time as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic)
- *Identifying and better understanding the mental health of children, young people and families in Bexley in light of Covid-19 and the services available to support them*
- *Better understanding and improving how we measure the impact of the work of the partnership*
- *Understanding the multi-agency response to and the service provision for Looked After Children in Bexley (including multi-agency practice in relation to completing Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires)*

- *Understanding the effectiveness of Bexley's Early Help services*
- *Developing a profile of young carers in Bexley and identifying the services in place to support them*
- *Developing a strategic multi-agency approach to Early Help in Bexley*
- *Better understanding the multi-agency approach in Bexley to (a) children and young people going missing and (b) safeguarding in and by the wider community.*

Our priorities for Year 9 were decided upon in February 2026 as follows:

- *Getting basic child safeguarding right* (with a focus on 2 areas of practice: Elective Home Education and working with under-1's)
- *Getting our collective response to vulnerable adolescents right* (with a focus on 2 areas of practice: care experienced children and Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion).

Our success measures are set out below:

Success measure 1: restorative learning with families and children

- A framework and approach to learning alongside families. Used to identify when practice makes a real difference to families and when it could be improved or further developed – replacing Serious Case Reviews with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (for good and less good practice) – this includes the Learning from Practice Group, Multi-Agency Learning Forum and Bexley FLARE (see **Section 7** for more information about FLARE).

Success measure 2: learning with practitioners

- Implementing the Learning Hub model which examines 2 priority areas of practice
- Each Learning Hub priority is supported by an agreed practitioner membership
- The Learning Hub's recommendations for practice improvement are presented to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group and Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group and shared with Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group.

Success measure 3: a kind and healing system

- Bexley FLARE (parent engagement group) is a central element of the partnership arrangements – they work with the system and professionals to influence the improvements we make – we extended the FLARE model to include engaging with children and young people and to seek their views on the partnership's priorities
- The work of the partnership will prioritise healing from the trauma children, young people and their families sometimes experience in their complex home situations or from challenges within their communities.

The partnership recognises that in order to be successful and work well together, we need the following context and system conditions:

- Relationship-based – both practitioners with each other and with families – a 'we' and not 'those others'
- A kind but accountable partnership
- Equality between statutory partners
- Engaging of a range of communities, schools, colleges, early years providers, voluntary partners and those whose work affects children.

2. The 3 safeguarding partners in Bexley

Bexley's safeguarding partnership for children and young people is led by the 3 named statutory partners, the London Borough of Bexley, NHS South East London Integrated Care Board and the South East Basic Command Unit (Police). These partnership arrangements cover one local authority area, Bexley.

Working Together 2026 names the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) from each of the 3 safeguarding partners: "Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Chief Executives of the ICBs, and Chief Officers of police forces" (Working Together 2026, page 29). For Bexley, the LSPs are:

Paul Thorogood	Chief Executive	London Borough of Bexley
Andrew Bland	Chief Executive Officer	NHS South East London Integrated Care Board
James Derham*	A/Chief Superintendent/Borough Commander	South East Basic Command Unit (BCU)

The joint functions of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) are detailed on page 30 of Working Together 2026.

* In London, it has been decided by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) that this will be the Assistant Commissioner who is responsible for over 90% of policing relating to child protection and safeguarding. Within the London context of policing across the Metropolitan Police Service, the Assistant Commissioner (currently Matt Twist) will be the LSP for all London partnerships (and meetings will take place via the London Safeguarding Children's Partnership) but additional local meetings of Bexley's LSPs will be attended by the Borough Commander.

As Working Together 2026 sets out, each Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) should name a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) for their agency. Whilst they are able to delegate their functions to their delegate, they retain accountability for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their agency. In Bexley, the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) have identified the following senior officers in their respective agencies who have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA):

Stephen Kitchman	Director of Children's Services	London Borough of Bexley
Diana Braithwaite	Place Executive Lead (Bexley)	NHS South East London Integrated Care Board
Melanie Pressley	Detective Superintendent Public Protection	South East Basic Command Unit (BCU)

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) have delegated authority to speak on behalf of the safeguarding partner they represent, make decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters, and hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate in and implement the local arrangements. The functions of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) are listed on page 32 of Working Together 2026.

Working Together 2026 requires one of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) to take on the role of Partnership Chair. For Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D., this chairing responsibility will be rotated on an annual basis from January 2025 as follows:

- From January 2025 – Stephen Kitchman, London Borough of Bexley
- From January 2026 – Melanie Pressley, South East Basic Command Unit (BCU)
- From January 2027 – Diana Braithwaite, NHS South East London Integrated Care Board.

The functions of the Partnership Chair are described on page 33 of Working Together 2026.

3. Geographical boundaries

These partnership arrangements cover one local authority area, Bexley. However, in 2018, Bexley was successfully awarded early adopter status by the Department for Education in a tri-borough partnership with Greenwich and Lewisham. The early adopter programme provided Bexley with an opportunity to test out some specific priorities across a wider geographical footprint between August 2018 and March 2019. These priorities reflect the Metropolitan Police arrangements – the South East Basic Command Unit (BCU) – and the child death review arrangements; both sets of arrangements cover Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham.

4. Effective support – levels of need and support

We talk about effective support not thresholds – how to help rather than who doesn't qualify for help. In Bexley, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe children should grow and achieve within their own families when it is in their best interests and is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.

Schools and colleges are an important part of our safeguarding system in Bexley. They have responsibility to identify concerns early, provide help for children and prevent concerns from escalating. All our schools and colleges have designated safeguarding leads who meet regularly to discuss local issues. Bexley primary and secondary heads associations meet regularly with senior social care and education leads to explore and resolve safeguarding issues.

Bexley Police are fully committed to safeguarding and protecting children consistently and effectively. The safety of children and young people is a borough policing priority and an area of constant focus and scrutiny. The police have significant contact with young people and strive to make them safer by diverting them from crime and protecting them from harm wherever possible. Locally there is innovative partnership working between the police and local strategic partners and a commitment to train and develop the workforce so that they are sufficiently focused on the needs and experiences of children and young people.[1]

Local children and families also receive services from a number of health agencies. Their responsibilities include ensuring that those who are vulnerable are identified as early as possible. They do this in a number of ways:

- Universal pathway for 0-19 years which includes health visiting and school nursing to all families through the healthy child programme
- Specialist pathways for children and young people with additional medical and allied health service needs
- Maternity pathway delivered by hospital providers
- Acute pathway.

Wherever possible, health agencies will provide a targeted response in partnership with families who have an expressed or assessed need. This may include working with additional early help services. Health partners acknowledge that integrated early help services and good partnership working are essential to improving outcomes for children, young people, their families and carers.

The London Borough of Bexley and partners have developed the Family Wellbeing service to help families before their difficulties escalate. Family Wellbeing keyworkers support children who are living

[1] The Met's Children Strategy (issued in September 2024) informs the Police's policy and practice for officers and staff with regards to children

with domestic violence, the mental ill health of a parent or carer, parental drug or alcohol misuse or the threat of or actual exclusion from school. The Family Wellbeing service, whilst being accessible only with parental consent, is closely aligned to children's centres where help and support is available from universal services.

Children's Social Care has also established the Staying Together team helping families in crisis to strengthen and to focus on their children's safety and welfare. Social workers are committed to supporting families in relationships that make change possible. Where children cannot remain with their families or where Children's Social Care services are working to enable them to return home, the 'back together' specialists provide intensive help for parents and advocacy for children to support the changes that must happen before reunification is safe.

The statutory social work service is available for children who have been harmed or who are at risk of harm or significant harm.

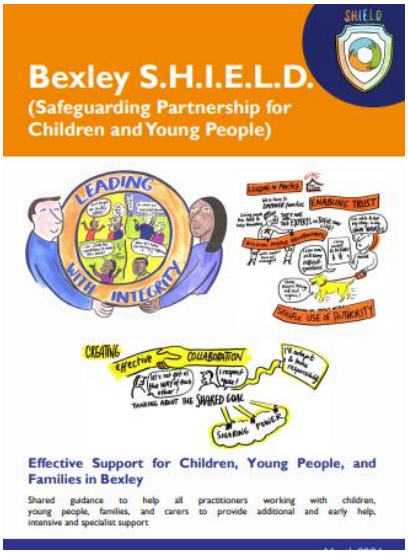
In Bexley, practitioners in all services are committed to the following principles which inform the work with children, young people, their families and carers:

- Wherever possible children and families' needs will be met by universal services
- As soon as any professional is aware that a child has any additional needs he/she will talk to the child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need
- Families will be encouraged to identify their own difficulties, strengths, needs and solutions. In most cases, outcomes for children will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents and carers to make changes. We use 'Signs of Safety' locally as our practice framework to help us in our work
- We will offer support and services to help families to find their own enduring solutions. Once improvements happen, services will reduce or end so that we do not create dependence on services.

The full 'Effective Support for Children, Young People and Families in Bexley: Shared guidance to help all practitioners working with children, young people, families and carers to provide additional and early help, intensive and specialist support' can be found on Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s website:

https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/for-professionals/effective-support-for-children-young-people-and-families-in-bexley/

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. refreshed the 'Effective Support' document and reissued it in April 2026. Further updates are expected in 2026/27 in line with the Families First programme reforms.



5. Relevant agencies

As agreed by the 3 safeguarding partners, the following have been identified as relevant agencies by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.:

Bexley Voluntary Service Council
All voluntary sector agencies working with children in Bexley are considered relevant agencies
Bromley Healthcare
Cafcass
Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust
Healthwatch Bexley
Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust
London Fire Brigade
London South East Colleges
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Probation Service
All Bexley schools are considered relevant agencies • A list of Bexley primary schools can be found here: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/primary-schools/primary-schools-your-child-can-go • A list of Bexley secondary schools can be found here: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/secondary-schools/admission-secondary-schools-26-27/secondary-schools-bexley • Information about special schools in Bexley can be found on the Local Offer website: https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Page/30890 • Information about independent schools in Bexley can be found here: https://www.isc.co.uk/schools/england/london-area/london-borough-of-bexley/
All Early Years settings are considered relevant agencies: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/early-years-education/childcare

The above partner organisations have been selected as relevant agencies given the key strategic and operational insight they provide to the work of this partnership. However, in line with Working Together 2026, the 3 safeguarding partners note the option to request representatives from other agencies/organisations as the partnership develops or the need arises from areas of partnership work.

5.1 Role of early years settings, schools and other educational establishments in the partnership

In line with the requirements of Working Together 2026, education representatives have been appointed to join Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group, and Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group (their details are set out in the table below). In addition, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. (through its business unit and education representatives) will be part of Bexley's Strategic Education Partnership.

Early years settings (including nurseries, playgroups and childminders) are represented within the safeguarding champions network (see **section 9.2**). Engagement happens via a series of learning events and the dissemination of resources.

Schools feed in their views via the primary and secondary leads on the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network and via the safeguarding champions' network. The Designated Safeguarding Leads Network is one of the main links to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and will carry out the functions previously held by the Safeguarding in Education Group. The Designated Safeguarding Leads Network meets termly and there is a standing agenda item for feeding back any relevant information to and from Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. The Network was re-launched in October 2019 and is supported by the Local Education Systems Leader (Safeguarding in Education) from the Education Improvement Service (LB Bexley). Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group currently includes primary and secondary Designated Safeguarding Lead representation. London South East Colleges are also represented.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. seeks assurance on schools safeguarding practice through the engagement of schools in the work of the partnership as set out below:

Group	**Local authority representation (*Education and Youth*)**	**Schools' representation**
Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group	• Director of Children's Services	• Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust • Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls • Headteacher, Old Bexley C E Primary School
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group	• Director of Children's Services • Deputy Director – Children's Social Care	• Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust • Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls • Headteacher, Old Bexley C E Primary School
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group	• Director of Children's Services • Deputy Director – Children's Social Care • Deputy Director – Education Services for Children • Head of Specialist Adolescent Services	• Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust • Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls • Headteacher, Old Bexley C E Primary School • Deputy Headteacher/DSL, St Catherine's Catholic School • Deputy Headteacher/DSL, Willow Bank Primary School
Learning Hub	• Under the partnership arrangements, there will be bespoke invites for each Learning Hub theme	• Under the partnership arrangements, there will be bespoke invites for each Learning Hub theme
Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH)	• Head of Education Partnership, School and College Improvement • Local Education System Leader • Head of Specialist Adolescent Services	• *As per terms of reference, N/A*
Learning from Practice Group	• Head of Professional Standards & Quality Assurance • Local Education System Leader	• Schools' representatives attend Rapid Reviews and other statutory review meetings on an ad hoc basis

Meetings and forums that discuss safeguarding in education settings and links with Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s partnership arrangements are as follows:

Network / Forum	**Chair/representative**
Strategic Education Partnership	• Chief Executive, LB Bexley (chair) • Director of Children's Services, LB Bexley • Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust • Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls • Strategic Safeguarding Lead, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
Bexley Association of Secondary Leaders (BASL)	• Headteacher, Haberdashers Crayford Academy
Bexley Primary School Leaders (BPSL)	• Headteacher, Hurst Primary

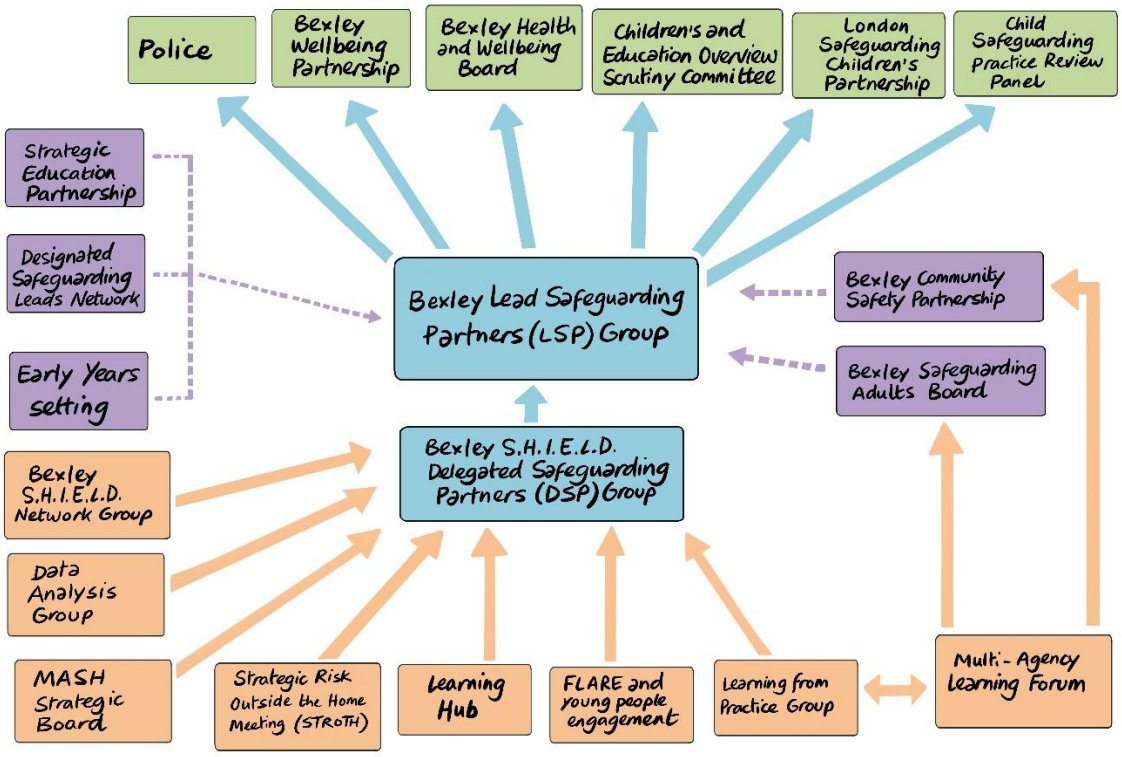
Network / Forum	Chair/representative
Designated Safeguarding Leads Network	• Facilitated by the Local Education Systems Leader (Safeguarding in Education) from the Education Improvement Service (LB Bexley)

5.2 Role of youth offending and custody services, children and young people who run away and/or are missing from education in the partnership

- Youth services in Bexley are well connected to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and are key contributors to the ongoing work of the Learning Hub (see **section 6.4**) and Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) (see **section 6.6**) in sharing expertise around joint work with teenagers.
- The work of Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) and the monthly Operational MACE meeting that consider children and young people who go missing are described in **section 6.6**. There has been an ongoing focus on practice relating to missing in the Learning Hub and within tri-borough partnership meetings (with Greenwich and Lewisham LSCPs).

6. The architecture of Bexley's safeguarding partnership

The revised overarching governance arrangements are shown below:



6.1 Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group

In line with the requirements of Working Together 2026, the purpose and responsibilities of Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group are to:

- Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing priorities for Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
- Explore individual contributions (including financial) to the shared priorities across Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D., ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold partners to account for the delivery of agency commitments

- Review and sign off key S.H.I.E.L.D. partnership documents such as the published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the annual report, and the thresholds document (Effective Support)
- Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious safeguarding incidents (Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews), and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice
- Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice
- Ensure all relevant agencies and responsible authorities are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

In addition, Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group aims to:
- Provide a strategic forum to consider the cross-cutting safeguarding themes from Bexley's statutory learning reviews (Adults SARs, DHRs, and CSPRs) and shared safeguarding priorities (including where there are opportunities to align workstreams)
- Support a culture of joint learning and working together on shared safeguarding priorities.

The Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group meets twice a year for 90 minutes in July and January but may meet more regularly if required. Meetings will be chaired on rotation by the Lead Safeguarding Partner from one of the 3 statutory partners for Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and on an annual basis from January to December as follows:
- 2026 – MPS South East BCU
- 2027 – NHS South East London ICB
- 2028 – LB Bexley.

The membership of the Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group comprises:

Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs)	Chief Executive	LB Bexley
	Chief Executive Officer	NHS South East London ICB
	Borough Commander	MPS South East BCU
Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs)	Director Children's Services	LB Bexley
	Place Executive Lead (Bexley)	NHS South East London ICB
	Detective Superintendent – Public Protection	MPS South East BCU
Other members	Independent Chair	BSAB
	Director of Adult Social Care & Health	LB Bexley
	Chair, Bexley Community Safety Partnership (Director of Place)	LB Bexley
	Detective Superintendent – Neighbourhoods	MPS South East BCU
	Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding	Primary First Trust
	Headteacher	Blackfen School for Girls
	Headteacher	Old Bexley C E Primary School
In attendance	Independent Scrutineer	Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
	Strategic Safeguarding Lead, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. (business support for the meeting)	Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
	Practice Review and Learning Manager	BSAB
	DASV Strategy Manager	LB Bexley

The agenda for the Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group will comprise 2 sections:
  - Part 1 – all members: focused discussion on shared safeguarding themes and priorities
  - Part 2 – Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. members: agenda items to meet statutory requirements of LSPs as set out in Working Together 2026.

6.2 Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group

The purpose of the Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group is to coordinate the work of the safeguarding partnership. It is made up of representatives from the 3 safeguarding

partners – the South East BCU (Police), NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the London Borough of Bexley – as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and statutory guidance (Working Together 2026). The meeting will also have education representatives as core members and the partnership's business unit will also attend Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group is responsible for completing the initial work on scoping the partnership's practice priorities each year, identifying the key safeguarding issues for the multi-agency partnership, and making recommendations about the membership of the Learning Hub group to come together and work on each priority. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group will determine the agenda and content for the strategic Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group meetings and review the work of the Learning Hub and the partnership business unit.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group will be chaired by one of the 3 safeguarding partners at Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) level on an annual rotating basis (from January to December) with business support from the partnership's Strategic Safeguarding Lead. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group will only be quorate with a representative from each of the 3 safeguarding partners. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Executive meets monthly for 90 minutes.

Actions will be agreed at each meeting for Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group members and the S.H.I.E.L.D. business unit to follow-up on between meetings. The S.H.I.E.L.D. business unit will take items to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group meetings for decision-making by the safeguarding partners. Outside of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group meetings, decision-making will be made by agreement from a Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group member from at least 2 of the 3 statutory safeguarding partners and/or via the partnership chair.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group has a fixed core membership drawn from the 3 statutory safeguarding partners, education representatives, and the S.H.I.E.L.D. business unit, with the flexibility to co-opt other relevant professionals to discuss certain agenda items as and when appropriate:

Agency	Representative
LB Bexley	Director Children's Services (chair for 2025)
LB Bexley	Deputy Director Children's Social Care
LB Bexley	Head of Service, Professional Standards and Quality Assurance
Metropolitan Police Service	Detective Superintendent Public Protection, South East BCU
Metropolitan Police Service	Detective Chief Inspector Public Protection, South East BCU
NHS Bexley ICB	Place Executive Lead, Bexley, South East London ICB
NHS Bexley ICB	Head of Safeguarding/Designated Nurse
Education representative	Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust
Education representative	Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls
Education representative	Headteacher, Old Bexley C E Primary School
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Strategic Safeguarding Lead
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Safeguarding Practice Advisor
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Independent Scrutineer

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group reports directly to the Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group although it operates as a planning and facilitative group on behalf of the 3 statutory safeguarding partners.

6.3 Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group

The purpose of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group is to ensure engagement between Bexley's Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) and strategic leads from relevant agencies across Bexley who are responsible for safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will be led by the 3 named safeguarding partners – the South East BCU (Police), NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the London Borough of Bexley – as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and statutory guidance (Working Together 2026). The Group will come together, in person, twice a year. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will provide feedback about the effectiveness of safeguarding practice, progress with S.H.I.E.L.D. priorities, and suggest areas for development in the local safeguarding system. This analysis will inform the priorities set out in the partnership's 3-year plan. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will contribute to an annual report on all of its activity in line with the reporting requirements set out in Working Together 2026. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group meetings will also be informed by the reflections and improvements identified by the Learning Hub. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will provide a space for information-sharing, two-way feedback, networking, and relationship-building between relevant agencies.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will:

- Support Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. relevant agencies and other partners to discharge their statutory duties
- Feed the development of priorities and implementation of the annual business plan
- Support the progressing of recommendations and actions arising from learning activity
- Identify development needs for the effective functioning of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
- Ensure the voices of children, young people and families are embedded and underpin the work of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.

Expectations of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group members include to:

- Represent their organisation and proactively contribute, this includes ensuring their organisation is aware of key information and learning from the partnership and taking ownership of any actions on behalf of their organisation
- Provide supportive scrutiny and challenge
- Promote the work of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. within wider networks, for example by disseminating information and learning
- Identify a named deputy and ensuring their deputy is fully aware of discussions and can actively contribute
- Contribute items to the forward plan e.g. consultations, national reform, changes in legislation and discussions that would be beneficial to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group will be chaired on annual rotation from January to December by one of the 3 statutory safeguarding partners at Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) level with support from the partnership's business unit. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group meets bi-annually in person at the Civic Offices (or virtually as required). Actions will be agreed at each meeting for Group members and the business unit to follow-up on between meetings. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group (made up of the 3 statutory safeguarding partners) meets separately to plan Network Group agendas and business.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Network Group has a fixed core membership drawn from organisations across the safeguarding partnership in Bexley (Bexley's relevant agencies as set out in Working Together 2026) and with the flexibility to co-opt other relevant professionals to discuss certain agenda items as and when appropriate:

Agency	**Representative**
Bexley Voluntary Service Council	Head of Health and Wellbeing
Bromley Healthcare	Assistant Director
Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust	Director of Nursing & Quality
Healthwatch Bexley	Manager
Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust	Deputy Chief Nurse
LB Bexley	Director of Public Health
LB Bexley	Head of Specialist Adolescent Services

LB Bexley	Director of Children's Services (chair – on annual rotation)
LB Bexley	Deputy Director, Education Services for Children, Schools and Educational Improvement
LB Bexley	Head of Professional Standards & Quality Assurance
LB Bexley	Deputy Director Children's Social Care
LB Bexley	Head of Libraries and Communities
LB Bexley	Deputy Director Neighbourhoods
LB Bexley	Housing Service Manager
London Fire Brigade	Borough Commander
Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service)	Service Manager, Public Law
Metropolitan Police Service	Detective Superintendent Public Protection, South East London BCU (co-chair – on annual rotation)
National Probation Service	Head of Service
NHS SE London ICB	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children
NHS SE London ICB	Lead GP Safeguarding Adults and Children
NHS SE London ICB	Place Executive Lead, Bexley (co-chair – on annual rotation)
NHS SE London ICB	Lead Consultant Community Paediatrician and Designated Dr for Safeguarding Bexley
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust	Director of Children and Young People's Services
Education representative	Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding, Primary First Trust
Education representative	Headteacher, Blackfen School for Girls
Education representative	Headteacher, Old Bexley C E Primary School
Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network	Deputy Headteacher/DSL, St Catherine's Catholic School
Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network	Deputy Headteacher/DSL, Willow Bank Primary School
London South East Colleges	Group Executive Director of Student Experience and Safeguarding
LB Bexley	Lead Member for Children's Services
LB Bexley	Lead Member for Education
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Independent Scrutineer (observer)

6.4 Learning Hub

The Learning Hub is at the heart of the safeguarding partnership's work on multi-agency practice and central to its 'back to practice' model. The Learning Hub's role is to 'digest' and 'chew over' a range of information from a variety of sources relating to a multi-agency practice issue/safeguarding partnership priority. The Learning Hub considers these frontline challenges and successes and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve multi-agency working which are presented to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group and Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group by the S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads.

The Learning Hub was established by Bexley Local Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) in 2016 to improve the effectiveness of Bexley's safeguarding and child protection practice across partnership agencies. The aim of the Learning Hub is to ensure a clear line of sight into practice across the landscape of provision for Bexley's most vulnerable children including those in receipt of Early Help services. The Learning Hub should bring together the views of children, their families, and professionals to inform the continuous development of services and approaches aimed at protecting children from harm and making positive differences to their lives.

The Learning Hub will be chaired by the S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads and supported by the 3 statutory safeguarding partners. The group meets over a 5-month cycle at the Civic Offices, at other locations as agreed with the group, or online via MS Teams. Actions will be agreed at each meeting for the group members to follow-up on between meetings.

The S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads will gather information from a variety of sources and share this with the Learning Hub group to inform the first set of discussions about the practice issue being considered.

The S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads will present this information in a delivery plan which will include the following:

- Current data and performance
- Success and impact measures
- Relevant statutory and other guidance
- Evidence from previous Learning Hubs (where relevant)
- Evidence from visits and observations by the S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads
- Evidence from self-assessments and peer challenge
- Evidence from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other statutory reviews, child deaths, LADO, national reports, inspection reports (including from other areas).

The Learning Hub will be structured around a 5-monthly cycle of events as follows:

- Month 1 – initial scoping
- Months 2, 3, 4 – single- and multi-agency auditing (as required), feedback from children, young people, families, practitioners (as required)
- Month 5 – agreeing recommendations and actions.

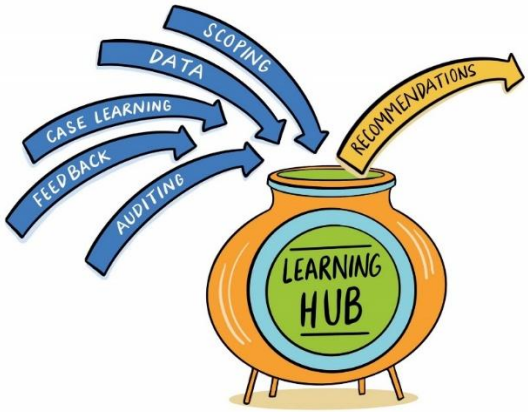
The Learning Hub annual cycle of events is shown below:

May	• Introductions • Revisiting the Learning Hub model and membership • Scoping current issues and challenges in system • Presenting first phase knowledge (draft success measures/hoped for future change, data, research, guidance) • What do we need to know more about? • Set up plans for audits / feedback events / other activities and agree any other next steps	**Priority** Getting basic child safeguarding right
June	• Gather learning from any single agency audits • Multi-agency audits (as required) • Feedback events for children, young people, and families (FLARE) – work of the Participation Officer • Feedback events for practitioners (as required) • Other focus groups/activity (as required)	
July/August		
September		
October	• Hub does the final analysis and identifies the actions and recommendations to take forward • Recommendations presented to October Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group	
September	• Introductions • Revisiting the Learning Hub model and membership • Scoping current issues and challenges in system • Presenting first phase knowledge (draft success measures/hoped for future change, data, research, guidance) • What do we need to know more about? • Set up plans for audits / feedback events / other activities and agree any other next steps	**Priority** Getting our collective response to adolescent vulnerability right
October	• Gather learning from any single agency audits • Multi-agency audits (as required) • Feedback events for children, young people, and families (FLARE) – work of the Participation Officer • Feedback events for practitioners (as required) • Other focus groups/activity (as required)	
November		
December		
January	• Hub does the final analysis and identifies the actions and recommendations to take forward • Recommendations presented to February Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group	

In Months 2-4, Learning Hub members will contribute to a programme of multi-agency audits and will assist with collecting feedback from children, young people, families, and practitioners. In Month 5, the S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads will present an updated plan with information from Months 2, 3, and 4 activities. This will then be considered as the Learning Hub agrees any recommendations it wishes to make both on an operational and strategic level to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group and Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group.

The Learning Hub is made up of nominated members who attend a set of events relating to one of the safeguarding partnership's priorities and who have tasks to complete between these events to progress the Hub's work. Where possible, the 3 statutory safeguarding partners will nominate a lead to work closely with the S.H.I.E.L.D. team on progressing the Learning Hub's work. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group will make recommendations as to the membership of each bespoke Learning Hub group. Prospective members of the Learning Hub will receive an invitation from the S.H.I.E.L.D. team outlining how the Learning Hub operates, the practice issue/priority area being considered, and the mandatory nature of their attendance. Typically, membership will include representatives from the main statutory agencies – Local Authority, Police and Health – together with education settings and the voluntary sector.

The Learning Hub reports to Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group via Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group. The S.H.I.E.L.D. team leads will produce reports from the Learning Hub detailing any recommendations and other feedback requiring strategic discussion and decision-making.



6.5 Learning from Practice Group

Professionals and organisations protecting children and young people need to reflect on the quality of their services and learn from their own practice and that of others. Good practice should be shared so that there is a growing understanding of what works well. Equally, when things go wrong there needs to be a rigorous, objective analysis of what happened and why so that important lessons can be learnt, and services improved to reduce the risk of future harm to children.

The Learning from Practice Group forms part of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s framework for learning and improvement which aims to drive improvements in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The remit of this group is to:

- Consider and review new serious incident referrals, determine next steps, oversee all open serious child safeguarding incident cases and their corresponding action plans
- Make recommendations to the statutory safeguarding partners on whether the criteria for conducting a Local (or National) Child Safeguarding Practice Review (formerly known as Serious Case Reviews) are met in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Make recommendations for multi-agency learning events based on the findings arising from learning reviews and audits
- Ensure family participation in reviews is considered and supported from the onset of the review
- Learn together through discussion so that as and when serious incident cases arise, there are good processes in place to ensure an effective response
- Consider examples of good practice and ensure this is also shared with the Multi-agency Learning Forum (MALF).

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s statutory partners and relevant agencies aim to work alongside families and children wherever possible and believe that they have valuable contributions to make to the learning from practice framework. Learning events and action plans associated with informal learning reviews, multi-agency audits, and child safeguarding practice reviews therefore need to include opportunity for family and young people participation (although it is noted that this is not a requirement for statutory Rapid Reviews). It is therefore the role of the Learning from Practice Group to ensure any actions and planned learning incorporates this and adheres to a restorative practice ethos enabling a kind and healing system for families and a positive learning experience for practitioners.

Key findings from learning reviews are then shared with the safeguarding partnership's Multi-Agency Learning Forum (MALF), Learning Hub and S.H.I.E.L.D. safeguarding champions to disseminate learning points across the network to ensure a real impact on improving outcomes for children.

The Learning from Practice Group will be chaired by the Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children. The Learning from Practice Group will meet quarterly virtually or at the Civic Offices, Bexleyheath (as required) – additional meetings will be arranged in response to any serious incident notifications requiring the Group's input (i.e. as the core review panel).

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. has procedures for the management of serious incident cases (see below). The statutory safeguarding partners will determine whether a case meets the criteria to be referred to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (known as the National Panel). A referral (if accepted) will trigger a statutory Rapid Review.

Depending on the type of review undertaken, the Learning from Practice Group may have an active role in developing a plan of action, or may monitor the progress of existing action plans. Rapid Reviews must be completed within 15 days and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews within 6 months. Learning should be disseminated throughout these reporting periods and not wait until completion of the report. The Learning from Practice Group has a scrutiny function in ensuring actions are completed in a timely way.

Members are encouraged to bring examples of good practice as another means of developing our understanding of what works well. The Group seeks to learn through examining good practice and near miss cases.

The Learning from Practice Group has a fixed core membership drawn from organisations across the safeguarding partnership with the flexibility to co-opt other relevant professionals to discuss certain cases as and when appropriate:

Agency	**Representatives**
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Safeguarding Practice Advisor (deputy chair)
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Strategic Safeguarding Lead (deputy chair)
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Independent Scrutineer (observer)
Bromley Healthcare	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children
LB Bexley	Head of Service, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance.
LB Bexley	Service Manager, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance
Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, Darent Valley Hospital
LB Bexley	Local Education System Leader
LB Bexley	Sustainable Housing Pathway Manager, Housing
Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children
LB Bexley	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy Manager
LB Bexley	Public Health Strategist
Metropolitan Police Service	Detective Inspector, Public Protection, CAIT
NHS Southeast London ICB	Lead GP Safeguarding Adults and Children

NHS Southeast London ICB	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children (chair)
NHS Southeast London ICB	Lead Consultant Community Paediatrician and Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Bexley
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children

In order to ensure a coordinated response that fully addresses all systematic concerns surrounding serious incidents, all relevant data should be shared and reviewed as permitted within the stipulations of the Data Protection Act, the Caldicott Principles and Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026). Agency representatives must sign a confidentiality agreement, including sharing and securely storing information. In no case should any agency representative disclose any information pertaining to any individual case other than pursuant to the mandated agency responsibilities of that individual or for the purposes of joint investigations.

The Learning from Practice Group will provide update reports on the activities of the group to the Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group quarterly and Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group annually; this will include evidence of how learning is being disseminated, monitored, and reviewed in relation to impact. The impact of reviews on improving services to children and families and on reducing the incidence of serious harm to children is described in the Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s annual report.

Reporting serious incidents

Ofsted published guidance on how local authorities should report a serious incident of child abuse or neglect, or the death of a child who is looked after. From 29 June 2018, local authorities in England must notify the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel within 5 working days of becoming aware of a serious incident. Notifications are made online using the online form for notifications of serious incidents for local authorities (separate notification forms are used for adoption support agencies, children's homes, independent fostering agencies, residential family centres, and secure children's homes):

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-child-safeguarding-incident

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s serious incident procedures can be found here:

https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/for-professionals/serious-incidents/

Multi-Agency Learning Forum

Established in 2019, the Multi-Agency Learning Forum (or MALF) forms part of a learning framework for safeguarding in Bexley. The MALF is a multi-agency space whereby professionals can share learning from case reviews, audits, and inspections which have been completed within a range of departments, including Adult Social Care, Bexley Community Safety Partnership, Children's Social Care, and the Learning Hub (Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.). The MALF can consider learning from cases overseen by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Learning from Practice Group, BSAB's Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) Subgroup, and Bexley Community Safety Partnership Domestic Homicide Reviews which meets the criteria for 'multi-agency learning' and will consider how best to disseminate learning points across the wider social care system. The MALF will also consider learning from national reviews. This forum also provides for local debrief on less serious cases, incorporating learning from a range of cases where similar themes emerge and ensuring the learning is captured and shared through learning events. The MALF will ensure schedules for training take account of any case learning identified. A forward planner for events (including a concentration on where learning can be embedded and or included) will be kept under regular review.

Key responsibilities include:

- Seeking assurance on single-agency training activity within Bexley and that agencies are meeting their statutory responsibilities in terms of safeguarding training

- Assisting with the formation of training and development plans for Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D., BSAB, and Bexley Community Safety Partnership
- Commissioning and coordinating multi-agency safeguarding training
- Sharing good practice and looks for opportunities to pool resources and encourage joint working
- Planning multi-agency learning events in response to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s priorities, the work of the Learning Hub, and any Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and/or multi-agency learning reviews
- Planning multi-agency learning events in response to BSAB's priorities and any Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)
- Planning multi-agency learning events in response to Bexley Community Safety Partnership's priorities and any Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)
- Monitoring the impact of learning from reviews on practice across the multi-agency system.

The Multi-Agency Learning Forum meets quarterly. It is also a sub-group of Bexley Safeguarding Adults Board and Bexley Community Safety Partnership and is jointly chaired by the 3 partnerships. In terms of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and its governance arrangements, the Multi-Agency Learning Forum is effectively a companion meeting to the Learning from Practice Group.

6.6 Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (STROTH)

The Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) is a partnership group which is responsible for working collaboratively to ensure a strategic response to the exploitation of children and young people, including criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, drugs, gangs, serious violence and modern-day slavery; as such, it provides a strategic response to the contextual safeguarding of children and young people within Bexley.

The previous strategic multi-agency exploitation panel was known as the Strategic MACE. Bexley's Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements were renamed in 2024. The StROTH meeting was renamed with updated terms of reference in line with the revised London Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) and Harm Outside the Home Protocol (unpublished as of April 2026).

The Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) will ensure partners are compliant with national and/or pan-London protocols; have robust procedures and policies in place; and exercise their duties and responsibilities in working with exploitation. The Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) will review the methods of prevention, disruption, intervention and enforcement and agree the most appropriate lead agency for ongoing monitoring and/or management. The panel's purpose is not to provide day-to-day management of the case work.

The key responsibilities of the Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) are:

- To oversee the performance of the weekly Operational MACE and review the information arising from the meetings to ensure that it is used by all partners to promote working practices that safeguard and support vulnerable children and young people
- When necessary, plan for and agree on activity to prevent, disrupt and reduce exploitation activity by working together with partners, working under Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue framework
- With the support of data and information sharing from partnership agencies to develop and keep updated a profile of exploitation across the borough adopting an analytical approach identifying trends and patterns in all forms of exploitation across Bexley including which crosses geographical boundaries into other local authorities
- To ensure the local data profile is reviewed quarterly and reported to the Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.
- To reduce the risk to the community of exploitation activity through the development and oversight of a communications policy on child exploitation and promote a safe environment for all young people in Bexley by delivering a partnership response to short, medium- and longer-term themes.
- To link together any relevant information between panels such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Prevention Panel (ASBPP), Operational MACE, Violence Intervention Panel (VIP), YJS Risk Management Panel (RMP), MAPPA, MARAC, Community Risk MARAC, Prevent, Channel Panel, Missing Panel, and from any other panels considered relevant
- To develop and oversee a thematic action plan to ensure all priority areas identified are being fully met.

The Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH)will meet quarterly and is co-chaired by the Deputy Director, London Borough of Bexley Children's Social Care, and the Detective Inspector, SE BCU (Police). The meeting is coordinated by Children's Social Care and Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.

Membership of the Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH) is set out below:

Agency	**Role**
LB Bexley	Deputy Director Children Social Care – co-chair
SE BCU (Metropolitan Police)	DCI Public Protection – co-chair
SE BCU (Metropolitan Police)	Detective Inspector
SE BCU (Metropolitan Police)	Detective Inspector
SE BCU (Metropolitan Police)	Detective Inspector
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Specialist Adolescent Services
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Children's Social Care and Child Protection.
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Service, Professional Standards and Quality Assurance
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Strategic Partnerships & Improvement
London Borough of Bexley	Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy Manager & Commissioner
London Borough of Bexley	Community Safety Manager
London Borough of Bexley	Serious Violence and Gangs IOM Coordinator
London Borough of Bexley	Violence, Risk & Exploitation Coordinator
London Borough of Bexley	Community Safety Coordinator (ASB People)
London Borough of Bexley	Community Safety Coordinator Prevent & CR MARAC
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Housing Services
London Borough of Bexley	Business Administrator
London Borough of Bexley	S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analyst
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Adult Safeguarding
London Borough of Bexley	Director of Public Health
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Libraries & Communities
London Borough of Bexley	Deputy Director Neighbourhoods
NHS SEL ICB	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children

Agency	Role
Oxleas, NHS Foundation	Sexual health Nurse
Probation	Head Of Operational Function
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Strategic Safeguarding Lead
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Safeguarding Practice Advisor
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Independent scrutineer (will attend on an ad hoc basis)

Operational MACE meeting

The fortnightly Operational MACE meeting is an operational group which is responsible for working collaboratively to ensure a tactical response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) including intra-familial abuse; sexually harmful behaviour; and contextual risk including exploitation by criminal gangs, modern slavery and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking, online abuse and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

The Operational MACE will ensure specific and robust operational oversight and effectiveness of Bexley's response to active CSE cases, young people who go missing from home, and or care, and who may also be missing education. The Operational MACE will consider all young people considered to be at risk of exploitation, including young people who are known to Children's Social Care, Community Safety and Youth Justice Service.

The Operational MACE is responsible for developing a local profile of exploitation and delivering services designed to meet the needs of the young people at risk of exploitation. It also establishes from a multi-agency perspective what is working well and areas to develop in terms of prevention, identification, intervention, disruption and prosecution. This will include consideration of those who are the highest risk of causing, or are victim of, child sexual or criminal exploitation in Bexley and neighbouring boroughs. The group will focus on reducing the impact of contextual risk across the community and the wider risks of child exploitation. Responsibility for reviewing the local profile rests with the chairs of both the Operational MACE and Strategic Risk Outside the Home Meeting (StROTH).

The Operational MACE is coordinated by Children's Social Care and co-chaired by the Police and Children's Social Care.

Screening MACE referrals

A pre-MACE referrals screening process is in place to support the Operational MACE. All partner agencies can refer into the Operational MACE via Bexley MASH and/or by completing a referral form. The criteria include all children and young people aged 0-25 who are involved in criminal or sexual exploitation and are at risk of serious violence. The pre-MACE screening process will discuss and screen all new referrals to MACE to determine if the threshold is met for the Operational MACE.

6.7 Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Strategic MASH Board

Bexley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a multi-agency team of co-located professionals who serve as the initial point of contact for professionals and members of the public with concerns about a child's wellbeing or safety. Bexley MASH reviews all contacts within 24 hours and, where appropriate, undertakes enhanced multi-agency information sharing to support informed decisions regarding need and risk. These decisions guide referrals to the most suitable services. Bexley MASH is managed by LB Bexley Children's Social Care and includes professionals from key agencies working with children and families.

Bexley MASH Strategic Board is a new sub-group of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. in 2026. It has operational and strategic oversight of the work of Bexley MASH and is responsible for:

- Ensuring that national statutory requirements, national guidance and best practice in relation to information sharing are adhered to

- Ensuring that Bexley MASH works effectively and efficiently, maximising the use of partnership resources to achieve swift and information led decision making regarding thresholds and interventions
- Monitoring performance in relation to local data and ensuring that minimum standards across all partnership performance matrices are met
- Reviewing and monitoring partnership resources, including staffing, accommodation, information technology and support services within Bexley MASH for its effective operation
- Resolving any partnership issues or barriers which are inhibiting effective outcomes
- Providing an operational platform to discuss areas of improvement
- Promoting strong partnership working which will impact on high quality outcomes
- Monitoring compliance with the MASH information-sharing agreement.

Bexley MASH Strategic Board is managed by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and meets on a quarterly basis. The meeting is chaired by a member of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) Group representing one of the statutory safeguarding partners (and chairing will be rotated on an annual basis).

Membership of Bexley MASH Strategic Board is set out below:

Agency	**Role**
London Borough of Bexley	Deputy Director Children's Social Care (Chair - 2026)
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Service – Early Help/MASH (Deputy Chair)
London Borough of Bexley	Service Manager – Early Help/MASH
London Borough of Bexley	MASH team manager rep (on rotation)
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Service, Professional Standards and Quality Assurance
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Service, Referral and Assessment, Family Support and Safeguarding and Frontline
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Service, Corporate Parenting & Children with Disabilities (CIC, Fostering/Adoption & Placements, L&AC, CWDS)
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Specialist Adolescent Services
London Borough of Bexley	Local Education Systems Leader (Safeguarding)
London Borough of Bexley	Head of Housing Services
London Borough of Bexley	Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy Manager & Commissioner
Solace	Service Manager – Bexley SASS
Metropolitan Police Service	Detective Inspector Public Protection (MASH), South East BCU
NHS Bexley ICB	Head of Safeguarding/Designated Nurse
NHS Bexley ICB	Named GP
Bromley Healthcare	Associate Director Safeguarding
Oxleas NHS Trust	Head of Safeguarding
Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	Trust Lead Nurse – Safeguarding Children
Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children
Probation	Head of Operational Function
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Strategic Safeguarding Lead
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Safeguarding Practice Advisor

6.8 Data Analysis Group

The purpose of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analysis Group is to provide regular review and analysis of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s multi-agency dataset and make recommendations to Bexley's Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) in relation to targeting resources and focusing future audit and scrutiny in order to safeguard children and young people and promote their welfare.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analysis Group is a new sub-group of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. in 2026. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analysis Group will:

- Review and analyse the partnership's multi-agency dataset on a quarterly basis
- Identify additional data for the Group to review including in relation to the partnership's annual priorities
- Provide a quarterly report to Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. DSP Group with any recommendations relating to:
    - The targeting of resources (including for the purposes of disruption)
    - The highlighting of safeguarding trends/themes/locations
    - The highlighting of areas for future audit and scrutiny
    - The selection of future priorities by Bexley's Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs).
- Feed the production of the partnership's annual report.
- Ensure the voices of children, young people and families are embedded and underpin the work of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analysis Group is managed by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and meets on a quarterly basis. In its first year, the meeting will be chaired by the Strategic Safeguarding Lead, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Going forward from 2027/28, a member of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) Group representing one of the statutory safeguarding partners will chair the meeting (and chairing will be rotated on an annual basis).

Membership of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Data Analysis Group is set out below:

Agency	Representative
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Strategic Safeguarding Lead (chair in first year)
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Safeguarding Practice Advisor
Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.	Participation Officer
LB Bexley	Performance Analyst
SE BCU (Met Police)	Intelligence Analyst – Public Protection
LB Bexley	Head of Professional Standards and Quality Assurance
LB Bexley	Service Manager – Practice Review and Learning
LB Bexley	Public Health Programme Manager
LB Bexley	Head of Virtual School
NHS SEL ICB	Lead GP Safeguarding Adults and Children
NHS SEL ICB	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children
LB Bexley	Head of Specialist Adolescent Services
LB Bexley	Deputy Manager (Preparing for Adulthood)

6.9 Independent scrutiny

The independent scrutiny functions as set out in statutory guidance (Working Together 2026, page 37) will provide the critical challenge and appraisal of Bexley's multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements in relation to children and young people. The role of independent scrutiny will form part of these arrangements and do the following:

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of services to protect children
- Assist when there is disagreement between the leaders responsible for protecting children in the agencies involved in multi-agency arrangements
- Support a culture and environment conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge.

Key questions in terms of the scrutiny function:

- How effective are the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in getting a clear line of sight on single agency and multi-agency practice?
- Do the arrangements enable space for reflection and learning from practice?
- Do the partnership arrangements have a positive impact on multi-agency working and/or front-line practice?
- How and why were the partnership priorities selected? Were these the right priorities?
- What has gone well and what's the evidence to support this?
- What has potential but it is too early to assess impact?
- Any worries or issues which need addressing?
- What arrangements are there for learning with families and practitioners and is there a focus on healing and kindness in basic practice?
- How does relationship-based practice thrive and is the overall vision for families to stay together where it is in the children's best interests consistently led and implemented across the partnership?

The role of independent scrutiny is to:

- Assess how well organisations come together to cooperate with one another to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to hold each other to account for effective safeguarding
- Contribute to the content of the partnership's annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, their performance and the effectiveness of local services
- Assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families including early help.
- Assess whether the 3 safeguarding partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations
- Scrutinise any quality assurance activity (including multi-agency case file auditing and processes for identifying lessons to be learned)
- Scrutinise the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Provide the 3 safeguarding partners with the necessary assurances regarding the robustness and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for the borough
- Work with the safeguarding partnership operational team to plan their programme of activity
- Provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the extent to which appropriate and effective systems and processes are in place in all partner agencies so as to fulfil their statutory duties and

ensure that children are protected and that appropriate safeguarding strategies are developed and embedded
- Evaluate arrangements for the operation of the safeguarding partnership, including the purpose and functions of board meetings, and recommend and implement appropriate changes
- Support the implementation of the findings and outcomes of any safeguarding reviews, providing professional input to the development of any changes to existing models of delivery
- Confirm, or not, that effective performance management, audit and quality assurance mechanisms are in place within partner organisations which will support the 3 safeguarding partners to fulfil their statutory objectives, and which will enable the partnership to identify and measure its success and impact
- Ensure that the 3 safeguarding partners provide independent, robust and effective challenge to partners
- Ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are appropriately represented and heard in the work of the partnership
- Through personal example, open commitment and clear action, ensure diversity is positively valued, resulting in equal access and treatment in employment, service delivery and communications
- Support the development of innovation in the system in respect of relationship-based practice.

Independent scrutiny as a function in Bexley comprises the following elements:
- The provision of an independent scrutineer to provide strategic scrutiny, challenge and support to the 3 statutory safeguarding partners by asking the key questions set out above and having strategic oversight for the key responsibilities also described above – the approach followed is using the 6 steps to independent scrutiny: https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/268674/six-steps-independent-scrutiny-final.pdf
- Scrutiny activity will also be undertaken by Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s operational team in terms of planning and delivering the work of the Learning Hub and Learning from Practice Group (which includes the work of the Multi-Agency Learning Forum). The work of the Learning Hub includes multi-agency auditing and seeking feedback from children, young people and their families. The Learning from Practice Group scrutinizes the partnership's response to serious incidents involving children and young people.
- Bexley FLARE (Bexley's activity around parent engagement) will also contribute towards the scrutiny of the partnership arrangements.
- Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. will carry out activities in relation to the Section 11 responsibilities of its relevant agencies.

The independent scrutineer will work independently of the 3 safeguarding partners and in liaison with the partnership's operational team. Jenny Pearce is Bexley's current independent scrutineer and can be contacted via shield@bexley.gov.uk.

6.10 Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. business unit

The 3 safeguarding partners are supported by an operational team (the Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. business unit). The team support all of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s activity including coordinating the work of the Learning Hub. The senior roles within the team were reviewed in 2022.

The current team can be contacted as follows:

Tim Woodings
Strategic Safeguarding Lead
tim.woodings@bexley.gov.uk

Ellie McPhail
Safeguarding Practice Advisor
ellie.mcphail@bexley.gov.uk

Nicola French
Training and Business Support Officer
nicola.french@bexley.gov.uk

Alanna Lauder
Participation Officer
alanna.lauder@bexley.gov.uk

The partnership mailbox: shield@bexley.gov.uk

The partnership website: https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/

7. Voice of children, young people and families

The 'back to practice' model ensures that children, young people and families have the opportunity to engage in the work of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and offer their views on the support we are providing to them in Bexley. The Learning Hub cycle (described in **section 6.4**) includes provision for collecting feedback from children, young people and families through existing mechanisms and bespoke feedback events. Engagement activities are supported by the partnership's business unit.

In addition, we will seek to do the following:

- Bexley FLARE was established in February 2020 as a parent engagement group and was named by its initial founding members. Bexley FLARE is a central element of the partnership arrangements – the group works with the safeguarding system and professionals to influence the improvements we will continuously make – Bexley FLARE is facilitated by S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Participation Officer
- Separate to Bexley FLARE is a consultation mechanism to engage children and young people to obtain the views of both children and adolescents – S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Participation Officer liaises with a range of young people groups and forums across Bexley to seek feedback on partnership priorities
- We will continue to ask our relevant agencies and other partners how they ensure they have captured the voices of children, young people and families in their work as well as identifying other innovative ways to gather this feedback through the partnership – including via Section 11 audit
- Where possible, we will involve families in learning reviews and events – see **section 8** below
- Our Bexley young Director and the participation team will support this work and advise on how best to link in with existing forums for children and young people in Bexley.

8. Local child safeguarding practice reviews

Section 6.5 above sets out the role of the Learning from Practice Group in considering cases that might meet the criteria for both national and local learning reviews (statutory guidance calls the latter Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or LCSPRs). The Learning from Practice Group will agree the terms of reference for each LCSPR, monitor progress with the review, and lead on the development of any improvement plans coming out of the review.

Chapter 5 of Working Together 2026 includes the following guidance for local partnerships:

- Purpose of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Decisions on local and national reviews
- The Rapid Review
- Commissioning a reviewer or reviewers for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
- Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Expectations for the final report
- Actions in response to local and national reviews.

In Bexley, the purpose of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is to ensure restorative learning with families and children and to encourage a kind and healing system (these success measures are described in **section 1**). Learning will happen alongside families, shifting the emphasis towards family practice learning inquiries. This approach is used when practice makes a real difference as well as when it isn't good enough.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel arranges national child safeguarding practice reviews.

9. Training and development

9.1 Training and development activity

Working Together 2026 sets out the responsibilities of the 3 safeguarding partners (ICB, Police and Local Authority) through the Delegated Safeguarding Partners in terms of "the provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training" (page 32).

The 3 safeguarding partners have identified staff working at 3 different levels:

- Level 1 – Staff / volunteers who have occasional contact with children and young people
- Level 2 – Staff/volunteers who might get involved in safeguarding processes
- Level 3 – Staff where a substantial amount of time is spent working with vulnerable and at risk children and young people.

Subsequent training and development programmes will target staff with these different levels of need. The table below notes the range of training and development activities commissioned by the partnership:

Activity	Current arrangements
E-learning	Basic safeguarding Level 1 and Signs of Safety online training are offered to all partners via MeLearning and are promoted via Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s monthly training e-bulletin.
Partnership monthly e-bulletin	Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. issues a monthly partnership e-bulletin (as well as a separate monthly training e-bulletin)
Briefing sessions on statutory basics	Briefing sessions take place monthly and topics include: Working Together 2026, Bexley's Effective Support document, the partnership arrangements, serious incident procedures, themes from learning reviews, Think Family, transitional safeguarding, and the role of the LADO.
Specialist training	Specialist training is arranged in relation to the Learning Hub's recommendations – recent topics include anti-racist practice, LGBTQ+ awareness, Think Family, domestic abuse, child exploitation. and substance misuse.
Safeguarding champions network	Safeguarding champions network meetings take place every 2 months and focus on supporting the work of the Learning Hub.
Conferences and community events	Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. holds bigger learning events (for example, a community conference) to review the work of the Learning Hub and other key learning from the statutory review process.

As set out in **section 6.4** above, the work of the Learning Hub will include recommendations and suggested actions to improve multi-agency practice – this may include training and development activity for the multi-agency workforce. Recommendations may also come from the safeguarding champions network (**see section 9.2** below), from other partnership subgroups, learning reviews, other learning events, or be necessitated by legislative changes. Any recommendations for training and development activity will be discussed at Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group and confirmed at Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) will commission a report on the impact of the partnership's learning and development programme of activity once a year which will be shared with Bexley Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group and Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Networking Group.

9.2 Safeguarding champions

The safeguarding champion role is central to the 'Back to Practice' model. A breakdown of the safeguarding champion's role and responsibilities is as follows:

- To be a conduit for passing on information to and from Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. (including learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, audits and local / national priorities) to staff within your setting through team meetings / training events / supervision
- To engage in focus groups, providing feedback on:
    - Learning Hub key work strands
    - Recommendations from learning reviews
    - The scope of a training course
    - A resource/policy that is being developed
- To feedback what's working well/not so well in individual settings in relation to safeguarding practice and what are the challenges in respect of working together with other agencies to safeguard children and young people in Bexley
- To be on the S.H.I.E.L.D. mailing list to receive bulletins/updates on relevant information to pass on to colleagues.

From 2026/27, network meetings for safeguarding champions will take place every 2 months.

9.3 Multi-agency auditing

As described in **section 6.4** above, multi-agency auditing forms part of the Learning Hub's 5-monthly cycle of activity. The audits will be planned by the Learning Hub and coordinated by the S.H.I.E.L.D. operational team. Learning Hub members will contribute to the case audits and practitioners working on the selected cases will be invited to a reflective discussion facilitated by the S.H.I.E.L.D. operational team. The Learning from Practice Group may also commission multi-agency audits as part of a statutory review or case referral made to the Group.

9.4 Partnership communications

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D publishes a monthly e-bulletin with partnership updates and local/national resources. In addition, a training bulletin is also issued on a monthly basis. Both sets of bulletins can be found here:

https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/news-publications/e-bulletin/

In 2025, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. launched an online monthly update (S.H.I.E.L.D. Live@9) that covers the learning from statutory reviews and other core business, news, and resources:

https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/s-h-i-e-l-d-live-9-broadcasts/

10. Funding

Bexley Safeguarding Children's Board was funded through a pooled budget, and this was formally transferred to the new partnership arrangements in October 2018. Income is from contributions made by LB Bexley, Health partners, the Police, and Probation Services. In 2025/26, contributions totalled £301,900 with an expenditure plan of £306,225. The budgeted expenditure for 2026/27 is £313,946. Partner contributions for 2026/27 were confirmed in January 2026.

11. Resolving professional differences – multi-agency escalation policy

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 polices can provide a useful framework for exploring and resolving professional disagreements. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. 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 3 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 Safeguarding Children Procedures should be used as appropriate:

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 also 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 Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group. An email should be sent to shield@bexley.gov.uk, marked for the attention of Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group setting out reasons for the differences and what has happened so far. Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group will then support partners to resolve their differences. For more information, see Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D.'s local procedures on resolving professional differences:

https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/for-professionals/resolving-professional-differences-escalation-of-issues/

As part of its Section 11 audit, Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. will routinely ask for information from all partner agencies on any issues escalated, including from panels, meetings and any cases escalated to the 3 partners. This information will be examined for any practice improvement lessons to be learned.