



Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. e-bulletin

March 2020

Message from the S.H.I.E.L.D. partnership operations team

We hope this e-bulletin finds you well. The current outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) presents new challenges for how we work with children and families. During this time of significant change, we hope you will find some of the specific COVID-19 resources included in this edition helpful, for example, those around keeping young people safe from domestic abuse, helping them to understand what is happening in the world and also apps and websites to maintain your own health and wellbeing. Please stay safe and well and take note of the government guidance on [vulnerable children](#) and on [restrictions on leaving home](#).

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. business continuity plans in response to COVID-19

We sent out some information on 18th March 2020 to outline our Business continuity plans for the partnership. In case you missed this communication, to reiterate as of now, we have agreed the following:

- In general, meetings, training courses and learning events will be postponed or business and decision-making done by correspondence and phone call with the partnership team
- The Partnership Board in April will do its business by correspondence and (where required) phone call with the partnership team – supporting paperwork will be sent out in advance
- Our Executive (made up of our CCG, Police and Local Authority leadership group) will monitor the progress of the partnership's work programme, do its business and decision-making done by correspondence and phone call where required
- The Learning Hub will be managed by correspondence and phone call with the partnership team until the Hub groups are able to meet again
- Responding to serious incidents and making decisions about notifications to the National Panel will be done by correspondence and phone call
- Multi-agency auditing will be led by the partnership team and focus on reviewing young people's records online with follow-up calls with practitioners where required.

We will of course respond to the ongoing changes to how we need to be working and recognise we all might be required to support frontline duties in our respective organisations.

Our Partnership Board members will also be receiving updates from our 3 statutory lead partners – Police, CCG and Local Authority – so we anticipate they will be cascading key messages relevant to your organisation/agency type.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. will also be disseminating any information from partners to the wider system on an ad hoc basis – please look out for this as we are hoping to continue to share useful resources for yourselves and the children and families you are supporting. Please let Amanda, Tim and the team know if you have any questions or comments – or contact shield@bexley.gov.uk.

COVID-19 and domestic abuse services in Bexley

Message from Deborah Simpson, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy Manager:

"During this time of uncertainty I wanted to reassure you that our provider for domestic abuse, Solace is continuing to operate. The duty line on 0203 1984 659 will continue to operate during office hours (Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm). During this time of isolation there has been speculation that we could see an increase in reporting due to the isolating factors and we will continue to bring you updates and information. We will be updating our website with the information and support available www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org.uk

With regards to Bexley MARAC, we will be using audio conferencing for the meeting and your referrals and queries should continue to be submitted to marac@bexley.gov.uk.

solace

Duty: 0203 1984 659 (Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm)

Duty inbox for referrals bexley.community@solacewomensaid.org

Unless you are referring from MASH then its bexley.mash@solacewomensaid.org

Please ensure you complete the safety calling information and whether the victim lives with the perpetrator. If possible please include details of the victim and perpetrators work status i.e. if they are a key worker and when they are out of the home and hours it is safe to call."

Additional sources of help and support are available [here](#). For the latest information, please see:

<https://www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org.uk/>

COVID-19 resources for children, professionals and families

There are a range of resources available to help during this difficult time. These include resources:

- For children and young people to help them understand and make sense of what is happening including from [Childline](#), [CBBC Newsround](#) and a [booklet for the under 7s](#) from Mindheart.
- For professionals including a [podcast](#) from the Association for Child Mental Health on the coronavirus and children and young people's mental health, [How to have difficult conversations with children](#) from NSPCC learning and [an article](#) by the NSPCC's Head of Policy and Public Affairs, "For many children, home is far more dangerous than school right now – we must do all we can to protect them"
- For professionals and families including a list of [helpful apps and websites for emotional well-being](#) and on [SEND COVID-19 resources](#) from Sunshine Support.

A fuller description of these resources is available [here](#). Thank you to partners for sharing some of these. If there are any other resources you would like to share across the partnership, then please let us know via shield@bexley.gov.uk and we will include them in the next edition.

Volunteering to help others in Bexley during the Coronavirus pandemic

The Council and Bexley Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) are working together to support Bexley residents who are able to give their time to support vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local residents who would like to help can register at [Bexley's Volunteer Hub](#) - BVSC's volunteering scheme - which will match them with local charities and community groups.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection on children's mental health

In January 2020, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary, Fire and Rescue services (HMICFRS) and HMI Probation (HMI Prob) undertook a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to children's mental health in Bexley. This inspection included a 'deep dive' focus on the response to children's mental health needs. The [final outcome letter](#) was received in early March 2020. We need to produce a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in the letter - this needs to be a multi-agency response. This will be submitted to Ofsted in April 2020 (our deadline is 18th June 2020).



Update on priority 4

The partnership's Priority 4 - *Identifying and better understanding the young people we are most worried about in Bexley as a multi-agency safeguarding partnership* – commenced work in the Learning Hub in January 2020. The methodology for this work has been developed and Learning Hub members have begun to discuss examples of adolescent risk. Whilst the Learning Hub members are not able to meet in person, their feedback will be collated individually and some initial analysis prepared for future Learning Hub events. We will report back on next steps and a revised timeline for this work in the next issue of this e-bulletin.



'Children and Families Learning Circle' update

The 'Children and Family Learning Circle' met in February and the plan is to meet monthly moving forward. Due to COVID-19, work is continuing, but takes place online and by telephone. The members are currently in discussion about a new name for the group. There were lots of ideas and we're hoping to have a final decision by the end of the month. The work plan will at times be led by the parents themselves but specific pieces of work have already been identified, for example, work will continue around the production of a range of information leaflets for families and young people, parents will support at events and conferences and there is a plan for workshops and training to be co-facilitated by parents.

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. is currently working on Priority 4, around adolescent risk and identifying those children and young people we are most concerned about in Bexley. The Children and Family Learning Circle has already contributed to this work through representation at the system learning event in February and will be key in ensuring the voice of the family is heard in this focussed piece of work.

Phase 2 of the Children and Family Learning Circle will focus on the formation of a young person's group to run alongside the parents' group, giving a voice to the children and young people of Bexley, in service and practice development.

If you have any parents you think may wish to be involved in this work and they have expressed an interest, please email the S.H.I.E.L.D. mailbox shield@bexley.gov.uk with contact details and a member of our team will contact you. Also, if you have a piece of work you think would benefit from parents' input, please contact us through the S.H.I.E.L.D mailbox.



Parental mental health marketplace event: 6th March 2020

Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D. and partners from the Clinical Commissioning Group organised an event for organisations working within the field of mental health to showcase their services. This event invited both professionals and members of the public to visit the stands of some of the services available in Bexley, giving them the opportunity to find out about the range of support on offer. [20 organisations](#) were showcased at the event, which was well attended by a number of professionals working with families where parental mental health is a factor. Members of the public also came and spoke to a variety of professionals who offered advice about support services available in the community.

Quotes from stallholders and visitors:

"Just wanted to thank you and your team for the event today. We found it lively, with a really good mix of organizations as well as members of the public looking for services. I look forward to hearing about future events that we can get involved in."

"I found the event really useful. As well as for families, it was a good opportunity for the professionals to be able to meet and network with each other. I also found out that trauma counselling for children is now available in Bexley."

"...most useful, thank you!"

The marketplace event also launched the '[Parentcare](#)' leaflet, designed to encourage parents who are feeling low in mood to access the [directory of services](#) which signposts parents to information on local services and resources that support the mental health and wellbeing of Bexley's parents and carers.

Key messages we are promoting...

"Speak up! Asking for help, helps! You will be heard. People will help you build your confidence to cope."

"You're not alone. Help yourself to help your baby. Bexley supports mums to keep their babies healthy and safe."

"There are services for everyone / there are all sorts of mums, Real advice is out there, connecting with other mums can reduce anxiety."

"Help is available for families, it's not just mum, we're in it together."

"There's support for serious mental health issues, it takes time to get better but you can get the right services for you, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

"We're here for dad's too."

Watch this space for a future event in Bexleyheath Broadway to promote positive mental well-being!

In the meantime, please contact the contact the [services](#) directly to find out how they are operating during the current circumstances. For example, Cocoon have moved their [support services online](#).



Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) consultation line

**Are you making appropriate MASH referrals?
Don't forget to use the MASH consultation service!**

In an average month, approximately 20% of referrals received by MASH are inappropriate, i.e. do not warrant a referral into Children's Social Care. This can generate additional work for both the referrer, filling out the form, and for the MASH service.

Sometimes, talking through your concerns can be useful. If you have worries about a child **but are unsure about the best course of action**, MASH offers a **consultation service**, giving you the opportunity to talk through your concerns to help decide the best way forward and you will be advised on whether a referral is appropriate. The consultation **does not require you to share the child's details**, and you can discuss your worries anonymously. The child's details need only be shared if a referral is required.

The type of questions you may be asked during the consultation include:

- What is the specific incident(s) of concern?
- What is the behavior of the adult that causes you concern?
- What is the harm caused to the child?
- What is the frequency of the concern?

Currently, about 90% of MASH consultations are with colleagues from education, who have benefitted from the advice they have received. This service can provide reassurance that you are making the appropriate decision when referring a family to Children's Social Care and is available to **all agencies**.

If you have concerns about a child and want the opportunity to talk these through with children's social care before deciding the best course of action, contact the MASH on 020 3045 5440 and ask for a consultation with a MASH social worker.

Please note during COVID-19 the MASH is operating business as usual, but within a remote working model with 90% staff, and all key partners, working from home.



Making referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – REMINDER

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) manages allegations and concerns about people who are paid or who volunteer to work with children in Bexley. **The LADO must be contacted without delay and within one working day** in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

A leaflet explaining the LADO process and a referral form can be downloaded from the safeguarding partnership website [here](#). Please contact the LADO if you want to talk about whether you should make a referral. The Bexley LADO is Rozelle Uter. If you require consultation on a LADO matter, please contact Rozelle. Her email address is: LADO@bexley.gov.uk and she can be contacted by phone on 0203 045 3436.

National guidance and useful resources

Podcast: infants and child development, NSPCC Learning, March 2020

NSPCC Learning has published a new [podcast](#) episode focusing on the [NSPCC's learning from case reviews briefing on infants](#). Practitioners discuss: the vulnerabilities of infants; how to listen to the voice of even the youngest child; and the importance of observation and professional curiosity.

It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, March 2020

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has published [a review into adolescent deaths or serious harm where criminal exploitation was a factor](#). The review examines the lives of 21 teenagers from 17 areas across England who died or experienced serious harm where criminal exploitation was a factor, and aims to identify what might be done differently by practitioners to improve approaches to protecting adolescents who find themselves threatened with violence and serious harm by criminal gangs. Findings include: boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds appear to be more vulnerable to harm from criminal exploitation; exclusion from mainstream school is seen as a trigger point for risk of serious harm; parental engagement is nearly always a protective factor; and more priority should be given to disrupting perpetrator activity. An NSPCC CASPAR briefing on the review is available [here](#).

Childline Report Remove tool (report a nude image online), February 2020

Childline has launched [Report Remove](#), a service that allows children and young people under 18 to report and get removed from the internet a nude image or video of themselves that might have been shared online. The webpage includes links to services and information offering emotional and safeguarding support.

Child sexual abuse: learning from case reviews, February 2020

NSPCC Learning has published a [learning from case review briefing on child sexual abuse](#). Key learnings identified include: professional curiosity must be displayed in interactions with families, carers and other practitioners; professionals need to be able to work within multi-agency frameworks effectively; professional must ensure there is a child-centred approach.

Useful links

Previous SHIELD e-bulletins are available [here](#).

The Bexley Safeguarding Adults Board latest newsletter is available [here](#).

Face to face training is currently on hold due to COVID-19. However, free online safeguarding children training is available [here](#).

