

The Golden Rules



Bromley Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Bromley safeguarding golden rules for multi-agency
working to safeguard children and young people from harm

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility

If you work with children, young people and their families or carers, you have a responsibility to safeguard. These golden rules will make everyone **SAFER**.

'S'hare information

- Communicate concerns across agencies involved with the child and family.
- Attend and participate in conferences, core groups, reviews, and meetings.
- Do not use data protection as a barrier.
- Seek advice if in doubt.
- Record your decision as to why you share or do not share information.

'A'ssess risk

- Always be child centred in assessments.
- Use evidence to analyse risk and protective factors.
- Maintain a multi-agency focus, include all children, read the history, and identify recurring patterns.

'F'ocus on the child

- Use multi-agency guidance policy and procedures.
- Record the child's wishes, feelings, and behaviour.
- Listen to what the child is saying.
- Do not take adult explanation of injuries at face value; have the confidence to challenge.
- Plans for children must be SMART

'E'vidence all decision making and **'E'**scalation

- All professions must know who to go to with safeguarding concerns.
- Supervision must be regular and robust.
- Managers must have regular oversight of case files.
- Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm, professional challenge and escalation should take place.

'R'ecording is paramount

- Records must be legible, accurate, dated and signed.
- Records must contain up to date information about the child.
- Share records as appropriate.

Sharing Information (& Working Together)

We expect everyone working within children's safeguarding to take a much stronger and influential position within local areas. We believe it is crucial to nurture good partnerships with others.

Practitioners at all levels need to be serious about inter-agency communication and invest time towards making sure this happens. If we want to improve the quality of safeguarding, our relationships with partner agencies are critical.

Middle managers and first line supervisors will have a critical role in developing relationships with partners.

With individual cases, practitioners need to keep the partnership informed of important developments, telling them when circumstances have changed and letting them know what is happening. This is non-negotiable.

We also need to demonstrate respect for the other professionals we work with and resolve professional difference far away from families. Well-coordinated and thoroughly planned interventions where professionals talk to each other will bring with it great benefits for children and families.

It's hard enough for families to have a number of different professionals involved in their family life without the relationships between those professionals being competitive, openly at odds with each other or non-existent.

Never hide behind information sharing. It will invariably be in the public interests for you to let partners know what is happening – even if specific consent hasn't been given. Always seek consent where safe, but do not think because this isn't written down you can't talk to other agencies.

Children at risk are more likely to die when professionals don't talk to each other – not when they do.

Assessing (& Managing) Risk

It's important to emphasise our recognition that safeguarding roles are challenging and require a range of skills and a sound knowledge base from which to practice. This includes:

- Having the skills and knowledge to successfully carry out effective assessments, analyse the findings and create solid care plans.
- Having the skills and knowledge to implement evidence-based intervention methodologies with families – doing and effecting change.
- Understanding both the physical and emotional development of children and young people.
- Having the ability to make positive relationships with families and other professionals.
- Having strong report writing skills and good communication skills

It also requires a clear understanding about the features of adult behaviour and health that create risk; often leading to dysfunctional and chaotic family circumstances which result in the neglect of children's needs.

Parenting capacity is often limited to a greater or lesser extent by parental mental ill health, learning difficulties, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence.

We need to develop our skills in response to these circumstances. This needs to involve partner agencies and a robust approach to assessing, intervening, and supporting families, with an acute focus on whether a child is at risk and what their experiences are at all times.

With some families, support must be long term. The level of family dysfunction within the families who come to our attention is often very entrenched and quick fix solutions will not work. We need to stabilise a family's situation and then consider how best to approach long term change where that is consistent with the welfare of the children.

Sometimes we need to accept that parents will not or cannot change but, particularly where attachments are strong, decide that the best we can do is to provide continued support to maintain children and young people safely within those familial networks and be aware of the need to review as circumstances change.

Critical to our assessment is an understanding of the importance of emotional warmth and positive attachment and the role this plays in predictions of future positive outcomes. Also critical is your ability to apply sound professional judgement to the circumstances facing you, reflecting on what you have assessed and using your professional expertise to determine likely outcomes for children and young people.

Underpinning all our work, we need to be always alert to the serious risk that some adults present towards children. In these circumstances the concept of dangerousness emerges.

The ability to accurately assess risk is crucial and the ability to act immediately is vital. Protective factors and the strengths of families need to be emphasised in every instance but in high-risk scenarios, a child's welfare and safety is always paramount.

Whilst we want to give a clear message that we are in the business of supporting families, child protection takes priority, every time. Where there is evidence of significant harm and action to protect children is necessary, we will fully support taking appropriate steps to secure their safety. This will result in the removal of the adult or where that is not possible, the child, from the family.

Focusing on the Child

Hearing the voice of children and young people is paramount to individual interventions and broader strategic planning. In our work with families, we need to listen carefully and think carefully about what has been said and the meaning this has for the child.

We need to try and understand what it's like for children living in families with whom we are involved. What's their experience? What is life like through their eyes? Is their care good enough?

When considering care plans for children, we should be asking the question, 'what does this child want to happen next?' This is not because their wishes will always be met, but they must be considered.

Most importantly, talk to and listen to children. And keep on listening.

Evidencing all decision making and Escalation

All practitioners need to take responsibility for their work by checking the facts and exploring the substance of allegations. Speak to parents / carers and children BUT ALSO talk to all other agencies and engage them all.

This is non-negotiable and we need to adopt a much stronger way of working that involves regular conversations with other professionals, not just having these at prescheduled meetings such as core group meetings or child protection conferences.

When in dialogue with parents / carers, never be overly optimistic and conclude something is correct, just because someone has said it. A lack of healthy professional scepticism is dangerous.

Have confidence in your ability to adopt a position on what you believe to be in the best interests of the child and test your hypothesis in circumstances safe for the child.

This is fundamental risk management and is a key skill that a safeguarding professional brings to the table as part of multi-agency engagement with a child and their family.

Whatever the circumstances, we must facilitate partnership with parents and show empathy in our professional behaviours. This is not about adopting “sides” with a parent or being focussed on the parent at the expense of the child. This is a clear message from research that reflects partnership as providing a platform for enhancing wellbeing, safety and the life chances of the children and families we work with.

Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with the BSCP [Escalation Policy](#).

- The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional activity.
- Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected.
- If the professionals are unable to resolve differences within the timescale given, their disagreement must be addressed by more experienced / more senior staff.
- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.

Recording

We all recognise the importance of recording. Of paramount importance is your ability to maintain good and accurate recording throughout the child’s case file. This can often be the “Achilles heel” of safeguarding practice, with practitioners not accurately reflecting the work they have done or not using recording to help critically evaluate and think through patterns of behaviour and risk.

This is not about the form, but the quality of what you record and the evidence you need to show that you have followed the basics of good quality safeguarding practice.

The following need to be of high quality in every case file:

- Genograms
- Chronologies
- Assessments
- Plans
- Observations / visits