

APPENDIX TO ITEM 5 (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – SERVICES AND KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2011/12)

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Overview of CSF Department Services

- 1.1 The CSF Department is led by the Director of Children's Services and 3 Heads of Services who manage operational and strategic services.
- 1.2 Education Division
- School Standards and Quality including primary and secondary school improvement teams ; continuous professional development of school staff; schools ICT support; school governor support service
 - Early years and children's centres services including children's centres development; family information service; child care quality, standards and provider support; play strategy
 - Integrated service for Children with disabilities and SEN including social work service, shortbreaks service (including Brightwell), statutory assessment; educational psychology; sensory impairment; parent partnership
- 1.3 Social Care and Youth Inclusion
- Social Work Services for Children and Families including safeguarding; children in need; children looked after; care leavers
 - Quality assurance of social work services
 - Fostering and Adoption Services for children looked after
 - Independent Sector placement finding for children looked after
 - Virtual School for children looked after
 - Social work/LSCB Training
 - Youth Inclusion services including Youth Service; Youth Justice Service; Education Welfare Service
- 1.4 Commissioning, Strategy and Performance
- Children's Services Strategic Planning including Children and Young People Plan; Sustainable Communities Plan; Council and Departmental Business Plans
 - CSF/Children's Trust performance information and management
 - CSF Policy
 - Merton Children's Trust and partnership engagement
 - Children's Services Commissioning
 - CSF School Organisation including pupil place planning, school admissions and capital strategy
 - CSF Contracts and Procurement
 - CSF Central Business Support
- 1.5 The three Divisions work separately, together and with key partner agencies to meet statutory responsibilities in the following key areas.

- Early Years – the provision of sufficient, suitable childcare and education
- The provision of sufficient and suitable school places for children and young people 0-19yrs including appropriate provision for those with special/complex needs
- Improving school standards and pupil attainment
- Co-ordinating school admissions; ensuring school attendance; quality assuring home education, alternative education,
- Safeguarding and protecting children at risk
- Looking after some children and young people through compulsory & voluntary means
- Achieving permanency for Looked After Children through adoption, fostering and leaving care services
- Intervention with and supervision of youth offenders and prevention of offending
- Providing support services to children with disabilities and their families
- Providing positive activities for young people and a suitable local youth offer

1.6 Key Service Challenges

The key challenges facing CSF department stem from three main factors:

- Major demographic growth in the borough and consequent rising demand for universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families
- Significant reduction in funding for children's services and the need for 'transformation' of the way services are organised and delivered
- Legislative and public policy changes introduced by the present government

1.7 Demographic Factors and Demand for CSF services

Merton's 0-19 population is rising significantly. From a baseline of 45,725 in 2005, there were 48,781 in 2010 and we project a figure in the region of 50,200 by 2015. This growth places inevitable pressures on children's services. The rising demand for primary school places in the borough and the financial and logistical challenges resulting has already received much attention. Increases of children receiving specialist services, eg children looked after and children with disabilities, although relatively small in number, place particular pressure on council budgets because of the inherent high cost of such services. The diversity of the population is also increasing significantly with particular growth in numbers of children from Asian and other black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Services need to be flexible and responsive to these changes with, for example, particular demands on language teaching in schools, how family support and child protection services are provided and the need for targeted recruitment of carers for an increasingly diverse population of children looked after by the council.

1.8 Funding and Service Transformation

For a number of years under the previous government, funding for children's services nationally grew, with mainstream funding accompanied by an increasing number of ring-fenced or special grants. The more recent economic pressures have led to a significant reduction in these additional grants and, in parallel, the department has had to make significant savings from its share of the council's overall budget. Since April 2010, over £5 million has been saved from CSF department budgets, amounting to some 26% of overall controllable income (excluding schools funding). An initial savings target for CSF for 2012-13 of £1.9million has already been set.

These significant budget reductions represent a critical challenge to CSF and to other council departments, mirrored across most other public services in the country. The council is responding to this challenge through its 'transformation' programme designed to re-engineer organisational structures and models of service delivery to ensure that by 2015 it will have made appropriate plans to manage on a budget approximately 30% smaller.

CSF has a number of 'transformation' projects in progress, chief amongst these are:

- Exploring economies of scale and service efficiency through shared services with other councils. Shared school admissions and school improvement staff are already in place with LB Sutton with whom we are also exploring shared early years and youth offending services.
- Transforming youth services in Merton. This work is exploring new models of youth provision with partner agencies from, for example, the local third sector and housing providers. The aim is to secure a continuing universal youth offer in the borough despite council savings through drawing in resources and capacity from other sectors.
- Re-commissioning early intervention and preventive services. These services, if successfully delivered, prevent the need for more expensive and intrusive interventions with vulnerable children and their families and are critical to CSF's ongoing ambition to retain relatively low levels of children looked after or subject to child protection plans. While significant reduction in lower level family support services will be necessary, the department is committed to working with partners to retain and/or develop services for those children and families most vulnerable to poorer outcomes through sharper targeting of available resources and the commissioning of more evidence based preventive services.
- Establishing a commissioning 'hub' for schools. Although schools' funding has, thus far, been relatively protected from public sector savings, CSF considers it essential to support ways in which their budgets can be most efficiently used in order to maximise available funding for delivery of the school curriculum and further improvement of school standards. A trial procurement hub, hosted within CSF, is being established to achieve more efficient procurement of goods and services and more joint procurement across schools.

1.9 Legislative and Public Policy Changes

The coalition government has initiated a number of changes in the ways children's services are delivered through introducing legislation, new regulation and guidance. Government commissioned review reports which are likely to result in further change have also been published. Together, they provide a significant change agenda for children's services at a local level and a significant challenge for the department. Amongst the most significant are:

At a local strategic level, the government has relaxed requirements on local areas to have Children's Trusts and to produce local Children and Young People Plans. Partners in Merton's Children's Trust, however, have re-committed to the model and to the importance of partnership and the integration of services in promoting positive outcomes for children. As lead agency in the local Children's Trust, CSF department's challenge in the future is to retain and further strengthen engagement with key partners at a time of major turbulence across health, policing, and community and voluntary sectors.

The education white paper, 'The Importance of Teaching' signals the present government's major reform intention to increase the diversity of schools and increase, in particular, the numbers of Free Schools and Academies. The way in which all types of schools are funded will be reformed through a possible national funding formula, designed to be fairer, and more funding being channelled directly to schools. Growth in a school to school model of mutual support, challenge and school improvement activity is also to be encouraged alongside significant curriculum changes.

The reforms outlined in the white paper envisage more autonomy for schools and a more 'hands off' strategic role for local authorities with significant potential impact on the function and functioning of the council's current education services.

The SEN green paper, 'Support and Aspiration' introduces what are potentially very significant changes to the way special educational needs of children are identified and met. The government is seeking to introduce means of earlier identification and assessment of special needs and more integrated assessment by education, health and, where appropriate, social care services. It is considering introducing greater independence from local authority influence in the conduct of SEN assessment and greater parental choice in the provision obtained to meet identified needs through increasing use of personal budgets.

These proposed reforms are also likely to impact significantly on the council's current SEN services as well as those of partner social care and health services. The greater parental choice and use of personal budgets will, in

particular, challenge the council's commissioning function and, quite possibly, the budgets allocated to fund services for this group of children.

In the field of social care, the Munro Review of child protection and safeguarding services, commissioned by the previous government following the death of baby Peter Connelly, also signals potential fundamental impact on the ways in which social workers and professionals in other agencies operate. The present government is currently considering recommendations including the loosening of central control over how local services ensure children are protected, a reduction in national targets and frameworks, a greater emphasis on the quality of practice supported by improved training and supervision of social workers and a stronger emphasis on local preventive services to promote earlier intervention with families where children are at risk.

NHS whole system reform also presents the department with major challenges. Health services are key partners in the commissioning and delivery of children's services and how CSF engages with the new commissioning arrangements in health, and in particular with GPs, will be critical in the future. On the provider side, the department has already begun to engage with the new local provider of community health services and we should anticipate further changes in providers of some services as the reforms progress in the coming years. The public health white paper envisages transfer of some key commissioning functions to the local authority which gives the opportunity for further integration of commissioning across children's services.