

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 21 September 2011

Agenda item: 5

Wards: All

Subject: Strategic Objective Update – Children and Young People

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley – Director, Children Schools and Families Department

Lead member(s): Councillor Maxi Martin; Councillor Peter Walker

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt

Recommendations:

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- A. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel consider the content of the report.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council at its meeting on 2nd March 2011 approved the Business Plan 2011-15.
- 1.2 The Business Plan represents the way in which the council will deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy, which is grouped into five strategic themes (sustainable communities; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities; older people; children and young people).
- 1.3 This report provides the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities that are to be delivered under the 'children and young people' theme.
- 1.4 The ambition for the theme is to work with partners to deliver 'outstanding services which improve outcomes and life chances for the borough's children and young people. We are particularly determined to help those facing obstacles or challenges to overcome them and to narrow the gap in outcomes which exists between these children and young people and their peers'. (Children and Young People's Plan 2011-12)
- 1.5 The portfolio holders are Cllrs Maxi Martin and Peter Walker.
- 1.6 The full Business Plan can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan.

2 DETAILS

Background

- 2.1 The Children Schools and Families Department aims to improve outcomes for children and young people in Merton through commissioning and providing a range of universal, targeted and specialist services. These include:
- Early years services in children's centres and settings
 - Primary, secondary and special schools
 - School admissions, pupil place planning and school capital strategy

- School improvement
 - Integrated youth services
 - Social work assessment and casework
 - Services for looked after children and care leavers
 - Integrated services for children with special educational needs and disabilities
 - Commissioning, procurement and contract management
 - Policy, planning and performance management
- 2.2 The Department leads the local Children’s Trust, a partnership of agencies from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors which develops strategy and plans for the delivery of co-ordinated and integrated services for children, young people and families. Many of the Council’s children’s services are provided through this partnership approach with, for example, integrated teams, multi-agency jointly delivered services and some co-location of staff.
- 2.3 Strong partnership working is at the heart of our approach to ensuring that children and young people are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic wellbeing – formerly known as the ‘every child matters’ outcomes framework. The Children’s Trust Board has commissioned for a number of years now a Children and Young People’s Plan, an overarching strategic plan which sets local priorities and describes actions agreed by partners to address these outcome areas. The current priorities of the Children and Young People’s Plan can be found in **appendix one**.

Performance relating to Children and Young People

- 2.4 Children’s services are amongst the most highly regulated of public services with several hundred performance measures applied by a range of government departments and an extensive inspection regime. Key performance data has been extracted for the purposes of this report and is contained in **appendix two**

Commentary and key achievements relating to Children and Young People

- 2.5 The majority of children’s services subject to external inspection or regulation are rated as adequate or better. Having previously achieved an overall rating of ‘good’ in JAR inspection and in annual performance assessment (APA) rounds, we were disappointed to receive an annual assessment of adequate in 2010. Whilst our performance in the majority of inspections and data measures is improving, our rating slipped, primarily, because of the weighting given to Secondary school inspections within the new overall performance profile. A significant number of local authorities were similarly affected as the weightings mean that performance in any one category can limit the judgement overall. Some of our services, schools and settings are rated outstanding or excellent while many are good. APA ratings for 2011 will be published in November. As there may be changes in the way ratings are calculated, it is not possible at this stage to predict Merton’s position.
- 2.6 All councils were required to engage with the national Commissioning Support Programme during 2010-11 in evaluating and developing local Children’s Trust arrangements. External consultants undertaking this work concluded that Merton has strong partnership arrangements in place, good joint planning and commissioning processes and a clear outcomes focus. We have made progress

with our agenda of increasing joint commissioning and integrated delivery of children's services, and in developing a performance focus and shared accountability.

- 2.7 We have continued to deliver robust safeguarding services overseen by the LSCB with clear improvement and development plans being implemented in response to inspection findings and peer review of these services. We have further embedded the tools for earlier identification of children with additional needs – our established Child Wellbeing Model and CAF procedures are well understood across agencies in Merton with practitioners from a wide range of agencies routinely working together to meet identified needs.
- 2.8 Strong partnership working between social care, education and NHS staff has continued to be a key feature of our work with looked after children contributing to improved outcomes for this group. We have now established our integrated service for children with disabilities with this multi-agency team already demonstrating benefits for children and families through improved co-ordination.
- 2.9 There is also well embedded partnership between local authority, NHS and community and voluntary sector staff in our Children's Centres with the Supporting Families framework ensuring that timely, well co-ordinated and targeted family support services are provided in addition to the universal children's centres offer.
- 2.10 Indicators relating to health outcomes are improving in Merton. Levels of breastfeeding and immunisations are rising. Rates of obesity remain challenging although there has been some reduction for children at school year 6. Merton continues to perform well in reducing levels of teenage pregnancy. Progress has also been made in promoting healthy lifestyles with increasing take up of healthy school meals and PE and sport. Merton's new adventure playground has attracted high levels of use. Partners have been engaged in developing a new emotional wellbeing strategy focusing on lower level interventions supported by the recommissioning of tier three CAMHs services.
- 2.11 Educational outcomes for Merton's children and young people continue to improve at Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2, GCSE and A Level. At the time of writing, provisional GCSE results for 2011 show Merton's best ever results with some of the most improving schools in the country. Around 70% of our schools are now rated good or better. School attendance and persistent absence rates are improving with permanent exclusion rates also decreasing. We have established additional SEN provision both within mainstream schools and at the new St Ann's secondary site. New 6th Forms have also been established in four secondary schools and one special school. Significant expansion plans in primary schools across the borough have also been progressed to meet rapidly increasing demand for places.
- 2.12 Schools have continued to play a key role in the Children's Trust partnership and in contributing to improving broader outcomes for children. Universal and targeted extended services provided by schools are promoting children's overall wellbeing and schools' engagement with safeguarding and common assessment procedures is, generally, strong.
- 2.13 Strong partnership between statutory and community and voluntary sector agencies also characterises our youth and youth offending services. Participation in youth services provided by all sectors has increased with young people achieving more accredited outcomes through this involvement.

Volunteering rates have increased. First time offending and re-offending rates have reduced. Integrating the commissioning of youth, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy services has improved targeting and value for money of these services. The young people's participation agenda has strongly progressed through their routine involvement in commissioning services and through the development of the new Young Advisor group.

- 2.14 There is an effective partnership approach to improving the economic wellbeing of children and young people in Merton. Targeted work in children's centres is focusing on income maximisation and employability of parents and levels of young people who are NEET have reduced. A new child poverty strategy is being developed for the partnership following a process of needs assessment.

Key Challenges

- 2.15 In common with all public services, council and partner services for children and young people are experiencing significant funding pressures. As a result of reductions in central government funding, including the reduction or loss of a number of specific grants, and in order to meet council savings targets, Children Schools and Families Department has seen its budget reduced by some 26% to date. More savings will be required to meet targets in the council's medium term financial strategy.
- 2.16 In these circumstances, it is essential that funding retained across children's services is used most effectively and that there is a sharp focus on value for money. The Lead Member for Children's Services is committed to continuing to develop our partnership approach with further joint commissioning across agencies designed to maximise the impact of investment in services locally. As part of the council's overall 'transformation' programme, Children Schools and Families Department is progressing a range of initiatives to provide services in new, more cost effective, ways including a number of shared services with neighbouring councils (eg shared school improvement services; shared school admissions); and developing new commissioning models for early intervention and prevention and youth services.
- 2.17 The Department and partners are responding to funding pressures at a time of significant demographic growth amongst children and young people in the borough. Between 2005 and 2015, population projections suggest there will be a 10% increase in the 0-19yrs age range. The impact of this growth on our schools provision is already well known with some 25 additional forms of entry required in our primary schools from a baseline in 2008 and significant expansion in our secondary schools anticipated from 2014-15 onwards. We will also experience additional demands on other children's services including those higher cost services for looked after children and children with special educational needs and / or disabilities.
- 2.18 In addition to funding and demographic pressures, public policy developments introduced by the present government are also impacting on children's services in Merton. Chief amongst these are:
- 2.19 The coalition government is seeking to broaden further the 'mixed economy' and diversity of school provision and also to increase the autonomy of schools. Nationally, the establishment of more academies and free schools is being strongly encouraged. The council recognises this policy drive and officers have held exploratory discussions prompted by a number of interested parties in recent months. Although the DfE and not the council is the decision-maker in

these matters, the council is prepared to support proposals which enhance local provision. However, members will be aware of the lack of sites within the borough for development including for new school provision and this has, to date, been a significant barrier to prospective free school providers.

- 2.20 While it is recognised that schools' autonomy is likely to be further promoted via the new Education Act and through a new schools funding mechanism currently being considered by government, at a local level the administration is keen to retain and build further the strong partnerships which have been developed in Merton for some years now across schools and between schools and the council. The Lead Member for Education and officers are, for example, engaging schools in the developing 'Merton Education Partnership' which is examining ways in which schools and the council can progress approaches such as school to school support for improving standards and joint procurement mechanisms to achieve economies of scale from schools' spending.
- 2.21 The possible new schools funding mechanism noted above is likely to have a significant impact on the council's education and other services. With the likelihood of direct funding to schools, the sustainability of council services will be increasingly dependent on schools choosing to use these services, as opposed to accessing them from other providers. Council services, more so than ever, will therefore need to demonstrate best value in order to retain schools' 'business' – although implications will be most significant for education support services provided by the Children Schools and Families department, impact on other council services eg human resources and legal services may also be significant.
- 2.22 The council is awaiting the anticipated reforms to social work practice following the national Munro review of child protection services. The review has sought to redefine the purpose and role of social work with vulnerable families and has also restated the importance of early intervention and prevention services. Members may be interested to know that Merton's Supporting Families model was noted in the review as an example of best practice. In Merton, the Lead Member for Children's Services with the Independent Chair and officers are already working with partners to strengthen the functioning of the mandatory Local Safeguarding Children Board, in particular by embedding performance management across agencies and increasing the accountabilities of all agencies in the area of child protection. Officers and Children's Trust partners are also reviewing local early intervention and preventive services prior to making recommissioning recommendations. Although significant savings will be required from these budgets officers are seeking to mitigate the impact of funding reductions by improving the targeting of these services to children and young people most vulnerable to poorer outcomes.
- 2.23 The recent public disorder affecting urban areas nationally including Merton has caused a particular focus to be placed on youth services. National policy responses are anticipated and it is recognised that there is significant local interest in this service area. Local youth services transformation and recommissioning noted in paragraph 2.16 above will need to take account of learning about young people's involvement in the disorder.

Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Commission/Panels

- 2.24 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at issues relating to children and young people, including: children's social care, education, youth

services and youth engagement, youth offending, children's centres and the Children's Trust.

- 2.25 Last year, a task group review on exclusions was set up to investigate primary and secondary school pupils who live in Merton and are out of school due to truancy or persistent fixed term exclusions. This review looked at the measures in place to tackle this and what more can be done. There has been a particular focus on the role of alternative education provision for pupils out of school and the partnerships in place to support young people. The task group will bring its final report to Panel in September.
- 2.26 The task group review for the current year is 'Post 16 Career Pathways' with a view to examine the range of options available to young people in Merton to pursue post 16 education and training. The task group expect to look at how the new sixth forms can be developed and built upon and whether career pathways can be improved to help mitigate the continuing economic challenges ahead. The effectiveness of careers advice given to young people will also be considered.
- 2.27 In the past year, Panel has received presentations to bring it up to date on school sports co-ordination, the implications of the Schools White Paper and schools funding regime.
- 2.28 Panel meeting agendas have also included progress reports on expanding sixth form provision and the Children's Trust.
- 2.29 The Panel discussed the provision of primary school places and demographic information regarding where expansion was required.
- 2.30 As well as school standards, scrutiny of the budget and safeguarding, agenda items for the coming year include; looking at the new strategy for the youth service, teenage pregnancy, recruitment of foster carers, permanency of foster placements, dental services and vaccination rates.
- 2.31 Members of the panel will also be provided with appropriate informatives from time to time on the following; response to consultation on school funding reform, transformation projects, the green paper on SEN, speech and language therapy, Ofsted reports on the LA (when received) and recurring update on progress of any potential shared service with other local authorities.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Not applicable – this report is for information only.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Significant consultation has been undertaken in relation to school expansion and the development of the 6th Forms. The services delivered in Children's Centres and Extended Services have been informed by consultation with families. The Department is consulting schools closely over the development of the 'Merton Education Partnership'. Individuals and families receiving specific children's services are routinely consulted on services provided.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1 N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific financial, resource or property implications arising from this information report. All related services are delivered within existing resources.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific legal or statutory implications arising from this information report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific human rights, equalities or community cohesion implications arising from this information report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this information report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no risk management or health and safety implications arising from this information report.

11 APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Appendix 1: Children and Young People’s Plan Priorities 2011-12
- Appendix 2: Performance Data

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 20011-15 Council Business Plan

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Appendix 1

Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2011-12 Priorities

CYYP Priorities

Improving health outcomes for children and young people

- Ensure a sharp focus on improving children's health outcomes is maintained during the period of transition and organisational change in the governance, commissioning and providing of local health services
- Continue to implement strategies to increase the take up of immunisations; reduce obesity; alcohol misuse and levels of teenage pregnancy
- Apply the learning from targeted initiatives Targeted Mental Health In Schools (TaMHS); Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)) in the future shaping and commissioning of local services to improve the mental health and psychological wellbeing of children and young people

Maintaining robust safeguarding of children and young people

- Strengthen the governance role of Merton's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and review and redefine the relationships between the LSCB, Children's Trust Board and Health and Wellbeing Board
- Review the use of the Child Wellbeing Model, the Common Assessment Framework and the Lead Professional role as key tools for multi agency identification, assessment and planning for children with additional needs
- Develop a new Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) Strategy and improve the targeting of EIP commissioned services

CYPP Priorities

Improving educational outcomes for children and young people

- Work with early years settings, schools and families on reducing attainment gaps for individual pupil groups in the context of improving attainment for all pupils
- Support the development of self-sustaining and self-improving schools and extend collaboration between schools and with partner organisations
- Develop sustainable strategies with schools, early years settings and families which contribute to meeting the wider needs of children and young people

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Promoting the positive contribution of children and young people

- Work across the Children's Trust Partnership including voluntary youth organisations and other key stakeholders to develop and commission a new model of youth service provision
- Strengthen the voice of children and young people in the further development and improvement of services in Merton including embedding the role of Young Advisors
- Reduce levels of youth crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough

CYYP Priorities

- **Promoting the economic wellbeing of children and young people**
- Develop and implement a refreshed Child Poverty Strategy for Merton
- Develop and implement a new commissioning strategy for information, advice and guidance (IAG) services in the borough
- Increase levels of participation and achievement of 16+ young people in education, employment, training and volunteering

Number	Performance Measure/Target	2010/11 Performance	National Average	Target 2011/12	Comments
1	School, Standards and Quality (SSQ) - Schools Service Level Agreement Buyback	98%	N/A	95%	SSQ provide school improvement services
2	GCSE 5+A*-C including English and maths	52.4%	53.4%	56%	This years provisional results show an increase of 8% to 60.4%, it is likely this will be over than national average and that some schools will be the most improved in the country
3	School Ofsted inspections (Good or better)	67%	68%	TBC	Performance in this area is in line with the national average
4	Key Stage 2 English and maths Level 4+	76%	73%	78%	This years provisional results drop of 1%, final publication data is expected to be at the same level as last year. Performance is above the national average.
5	Young Peoples Satisfaction with Primary Education	71%	66% (LA)	73%	Perceptions have improved this year and are above regional averages
6	Young Peoples Satisfaction with Secondary Education	65%	74% (LA)	67%	Perceptions have improved this year but are below regional averages
7	Provision of short breaks	428	N/A	430	Target setting was cautious due to funding uncertainty
8	Narrowing the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Non SEN gap. - Key Stage 2	51%	54%	49%	This measure measures the difference in performance for pupils with all levels of SEN compared to pupils without SEN
9	Narrowing the SEN and Non SEN gap. - GCSE	44.6%	46.0%	44%	As above
10	Percentage of final SEN statements issued within 26 weeks following a first statutory assessment without exceptions	90.7%	83.0%	89%	These statements are require local authority input only

Number	Performance Measure/Target	2010/11 Performance	National Average	Target 2011/12	Comments
11	Percentage of final SEN statements issued within 26 weeks following a first statutory assessment with exceptions	85%	91%	89%	These statements require input from 2 or more agencies, for example health
12	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile 78 points or more	59%	56%	63%	This assessment is undertaken in the reception year. Merton performs consistently well with this measure.
13	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile gap between the lowest achievers and the median	27.7%	32.7%	26%	This measure is the difference in performance of the bottom 20% of pupils and the average performance of pupils. Merton performs consistently well with this measure.
14	Ofsted inspection Children's centre's (good or better)	100%	N/A	60%	Now there have been 3 inspections, all rated good with outstanding features (partnership working and assessment of need)
15	Ofsted inspection Nursery/EYFS Primary (good or better)	81%	N/A	81%	Performance in this area is top quartile
16	Ofsted inspection Child minders (good or better)	61%	66%	66%	Performance in this area is improving but is below the national average
17	Ofsted inspection Childcare (good or better)	73%	72%	75%	Performance in this area is in line with national expectations
18	Reading Test Age 6 Children and young people benefiting from parents attending Evidence Based Parenting Programmes referred by the common assessment framework or a request for service	N/A	N/A	N/A	This test has not yet been implemented by national government
19		82.0%	N/A	160	Targeted parenting support is a key element of early intervention and prevention

Number	Performance Measure/Target	2010/11 Performance	National Average	Target 2011/12	Comments
20	16-18 Year old Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)	5.6%	5% (SN)	5.6%	Good progress has been made, the forward target shows no reduction due to the recession and significant service reduction
21	Permanent Exclusions from Secondary Schools	0.17%	0.15%	0.15%	The new government are proposing significant changes to the permanent exclusion process
22	First Time entrants to Youth Justice system aged 10-17	144	N/A	200	Performance in this area is driven by a number of agencies and was good in 2010/11
23	Young people with Youth Justice Service sentenced to custody	6.58%	5.60%	7%	Performance in this area is driven by a number of agencies and was above the national average in 2010/11
24	Youth Service Participation rate	2531	N/A	1700	Targets remain static from previous years due to significant budget pressures in this area
25	Primary School Persistent Absence	1.2%	1.4%	1.10%	Performance is better than the national average and is targeted to improve further
26	Secondary School Persistent Absence (without academies)	4.6%	4.2%	3.8%	Performance in this area has improved, but not as fast as other areas
27	Rate per 10,000 Child Protection Plans	28.56	35.5	30-35	Rates are mid range compared to statistical neighbors
28	% of initial assessments completed within 10 days	63%	76%	75%	Assessment timescales remain a challenge, however this is in part due to a significant drive to improve the quality of assessments
29	% of core assessments completed within 35 days	78.1%	78.0%	75%	as above

Number	Performance Measure/Target	2010/11 Performance	National Average	Target 2011/12	Comments
30	% of Children with Child Protection Plans visits due completed on time (Child Seen)	93%	N/A	93%	This local measure, which is more taxing than national measures remains above targeted levels
31	Percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time	13.45%	13.50%	10-17%	Performance is in line with the norm
32	Rate per 10,000 Children in Care	34	58	33-35	Merton rates remain very low against all comparators
33	% of Children in Care using in-house foster care	57%	N/A	60%	Increases will lead to more local placements and cost savings
34	number of Children in Care adopted during the year	11	N/A	12	Performance being improved by LEAN review recommendations
35	Contracts Quarterly monitoring – % Green rag status	85%	N/A	95%	
36	Capital Projects on time – % Green rag status	95%	N/A	90%	
37	Capital projects - to cost - % Green rag status	90%	N/A	90%	
38	Research + Information data collections completed to time and quality	100%	N/A	90%	High levels of quality and timeliness are delivered through efficient planning and processes
39	Research + Information buy back rate from schools	96.2%	N/A	95%	This team are one of the few of its type to achieve income for services to school. Support is valued by schools.
40	Research + Information reports completed to time and quality	91.8%	N/A	95%	Performance is being address by renegotiating requirements and through efficiencies
41	Admissions - offers of places within regional timescales	100%	N/A	100%	High levels of service standards are consistently met by this team

Number	Performance Measure/Target	2010/11 Performance	National Average	Target 2011/12	Comments
42	Reception Year surplus places	3.6%	N/A	5%	Current vacancy rates are low and impact on parental choice, a significant expansion programme is underway to meet rising demand

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