

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: July 4th 2013

Agenda item: **9**

Wards:

Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Dept

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last update report in April 2013.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Members of the Panel will be aware of the outcome of the recent criminal trial following the death in 2012 of Tia Sharp, a child resident in Merton. The Serious Case Review commissioned by the Merton Safeguarding Children Board following the death of Tia Sharp has now been completed and the report is due to be published later this month – findings of the review and an action plan arising from the review's conclusions will be reported to the panel at a future meeting. Monitoring the action plan will be the responsibility of Merton's Safeguarding Children Board.

2.2 The council has received the report of the peer review of arrangements in Merton to end gangs and serious youth violence which was undertaken by the Home Office in spring 2013. The findings of the review are subject of a separate report on this evening's panel agenda.

2.3 The Department is continuing to develop and implement its departmental transformation programme, key elements of which are noted in the separate priorities report on this evening's panel agenda. The programme has been subject to recent scrutiny by the council's 2015 Board and by the Chief Executive.

2.4 In June 2013, Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board agreed the terms of a charter for disabled children promoted nationally by Every Disabled Child Matters and the Children's Trust Tadworth. The charter is designed to prompt local Health and Wellbeing Boards to prioritise improving the quality

- of life and outcomes for disabled children and young people. Its terms include commitment to securing comprehensive data about children and young people with disabilities; engaging more strongly with disabled young people and their families; developing and implementing clear strategic objectives for services; integrating services where it makes sense to do so and ensuring a strong focus on early intervention and prevention. Full details of the charter can be found at: www.edcm.org.uk. CSF department and partner agencies are already operating in line with many of the charter's terms and will examine further developments over the coming months.
- 2.5 Reports of Ofsted inspections of three further schools in Merton have been published since the panel's last meeting in April 2013. Bishop Gilpin primary school retained its rating of outstanding; Ricards Lodge secondary school retained a rating of good and the rating for Rutlish secondary school improved to good.
- 2.6 HMI monitoring visits to Merton's three primary schools rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement have been undertaken with all schools found to be progressing improvement plans well. Local authority support to these schools was considered to be effective.
- 2.7 Following its disappointing Ofsted inspection Benedict school was rated as unsatisfactory. Consequently, and in line with national government policy, DfE is undertaking a process to transfer the school to academy status. Details of academy sponsorship are not yet known at the time of writing this report.
- 2.8 A 'snapshot' of Ofsted ratings for Merton schools following inspection activity to date this year shows that 85% of the borough's schools are currently rated good or better. This compares with a London average of 80% and a national average of 74%. A recent study placed Merton in the top 10 local authorities nationally for pupils from maintained schools obtaining places at Oxbridge/Russell Group universities. This finding is particularly interesting in the context of a general assertion recently made by Ofsted's Chief Inspector that gifted pupils do not receive sufficient support in maintained schools.
- 2.9 As part of the council's ongoing strategy to provide sufficient primary school places in Merton, CSF officers have prepared a report for consideration by Cabinet on 1st July 2013 seeking approval for the permanent expansion of five further schools – Hillcross; Merton Abbey; Pelham; Poplar and Singlegate schools. Officers are also developing options for expansion of secondary provision and have recently received reports of commissioned site search and feasibility studies. The findings of these studies will be reported to the panel's Task Group on secondary places at its last meeting later this month.
- 2.10 Members of the panel may be aware that a Free School application made by a local organisation – Chapel Street – was recently approved by DfE. Although the site of this planned primary school is likely to be in RB Kingston, it will be close to the Merton/Kingston boundary and officers are engaging with Chapel Street and with RB Kingston on admissions issues.

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- 3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**
- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**
- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 5 TIMETABLE**
- 5.1. N/A
- 6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**
- 6.1. No specific implications.
- 7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. No specific implications.
- 8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. No specific implications.
- 9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. No specific implications.
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. No specific implications.
- 11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- N/A
- 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. None