

Merton Council

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

10 February 2020

Supplementary agenda

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Committee:

Date: 10th February 2020

Wards: All

Subject: Departmental Update

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Contact officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

Recommendations:

- A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report and identify any areas for more in-depth scrutiny.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments not covered elsewhere on the agenda and affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department, since the panel's last meeting. It focusses on those aspects of particular relevance to the department and those where the panel expressed an interest in receiving regular updates.
- 1.2. For this municipal year, the format of the report has changed slightly to include a paragraph about key issues in every service area within the directorate. This is to raise awareness and understanding of the full range of work in the directorate by ensuring even coverage across the services. Items specifically requested by scrutiny members will be covered under the service area to which they relate and are highlighted in the text as (*Scrutiny Request*).

2 DETAILS

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

- 2.1. Since the last CYP Scrutiny in November, a range of key multi-agency meetings have taken place, namely the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Exec Board, the Children's Trust Board and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 2.2. Among other agenda items at the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, we considered plans for the partnership's Annual Conference. Early Help is one of the Safeguarding Partnership's Business Plan priorities, and given the recent re-organisation of Merton Council's own early help services into the Family Wellbeing Service, which launches next month, we are now keen to broaden the early help discussion to involve the wider partnership.

- 2.3. We've had some challenges in progressing the priorities of the Children's Trust Board. After some great work to develop the Children and Young People's Plan last year, the implementation plan to support it has had a slower start.
- 2.4. Nevertheless we were able to review some of the actions taken to date under two of our priorities: 'Enjoying and Achieving' and 'Getting Involved; Having A Say'. We will continue to review two of the six priorities at each quarterly meeting of the Children's Trust Board, and will have a full annual review of all six priorities at the final meeting of the year. We are expecting the work to start to pick up speed now we've had our first meeting in the new format.
- 2.5. At the Corporate Parenting Board we heard from two young people who shared their experiences at the start of the meeting. This helped to focus the Board's attention on what really matters to young people in our care. The Children, Schools and Families Directorate is wholeheartedly committed to increasing children, young people and families' voice in everything we do; and we have agreed four recommendations which will help to build the relationship between the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children in Care Council, including an 'Away' session together, and – with effect from August 2020 – the Children in Care Council's workplan becoming a standing item on the Corporate Parenting Board agenda.
- 2.6. In other news, in early January we received the welcome confirmation that Ofsted accepted our Written Statement of Action (WSOA) in response to last summer's SEND inspection. This will guide many of our service improvements over the coming 18 months until Ofsted return to satisfy themselves that we've made enough progress. As we take this work forward we will be supported by both the Department of Education and NHS England. Our first progress meeting with them is scheduled for 12 February 2020.
- 2.7. In terms key Starters and Leavers in the directorate, we welcome David Michael and Joanne Brown as new Heads of Service in the Children's Social Care division. David joins us from Lambeth, to lead the services for looked after children and brings with him a wealth of experience and passion. Joanne joins us from outside the local government sector to lead our improvement work and service support. Paul Bailey, who was the long-standing manager for Merton's Safeguarding Children Board and Partnership has left us to join Surrey. In his place we are joined by Joanna Georgiades. Who immediately picked up the work on the recruitment for an Independent Person and Independent Scrutineer for the partnership's work.

Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division

MASH & First Response

- 2.8. Since the last scrutiny update, the First Response Team has lost two Team Managers. One to a higher paying local authority and the second to a Principal Social Worker post in another local authority. We have successfully permanently recruited to one post and the second post is currently filled by a permanent manager from the Safeguarding service.

- 2.9. In addition, our MASH Team Manager will be leaving in March having spent the last seven years in this role in various local authorities. She is now looking for a new challenge and will be a loss to Merton. We have successfully recruited a permanent manager to this post, who will join us shortly. This has ensured that we retain a permanent management team
- 2.10. With regards to social workers we continue to experience a level of instability. There are seven agency social workers across the MASH and First Response Team. We have a rolling advert for permanent social workers and continue to endeavour to recruit permanently to all posts.
- 2.11. Due to a quiet Christmas period we have enjoyed caseloads of 12-15 which are now starting to slowly rise again.
- 2.12. Our monthly performance data is positive with 93% of assessments being completed on time for the months of October-December 2019 and 95% of children being seen alone as part of the assessment process. The 5% not seen are our pre-birth assessments (for unborn babies). Despite some challenges in relation to resources, morale in the service continues to be good.

Safeguarding and Care Planning

- 2.13. In November 2019, one team manager and four social workers from Safeguarding and Care Planning Service moved to First Response on a temporary basis. This was to support First Response teams to meet high service demands. This has affected stability in the team, and has resulted in an increase in case load across the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service. The average case load is now 16 children per social worker which is an increase of 23% over a few months.
- 2.14. The Safeguarding and Care Planning Team is currently seeking to recruit 9 permanent social workers.
- 2.15. Number of children subject to Child Protection plans and Child in Need plans have remained stable for several months. Cases in care proceedings have increased slightly over the last few months.
- 2.16. There continues to be good feedback from the courts and CAFCASS. CAFCASS praised Merton for '*being responsive and having good care plans*'.

Permanency, Looked After Children and Access to Resources Team

- 2.17. The new permanent Head of Service for Children in Care and Resources, David Michael, began on 06/01/2020. The interim line management arrangements until the upcoming service transformation is that David will be responsible for the Children in Care/Permanence team, fostering services including special guardianship and connected persons assessments, Access to Resources. The 14+/Care leaver Team is currently under the leadership of the Head of Adolescent and Family Services.
- 2.18. With the regionalisation of the adoption service to Adopt London South, there have been some teething issues around roles and responsibility of key tasks – such as subject access requests and administration tasks, and, health partners sharing of information which may impact on the adoption

timescales of individual children. However, processes have been agreed, and are now bedding in.

- 2.19. One of the areas we will be focussing on is the use of semi-independent accommodation. This will include identifying more creative ways of finding better quality provision for young people in our care within existing financial envelopes. Our focus on this area reflects increasing levels of national coverage and interest.
- 2.20. The new HoS will take the lead on the fostering 'Mockingbird' project with the goal of soon being in a position to identify foster carers to the project. Lunch and learn sessions are currently being rolled out to promote Mockingbird across children's social care. Over November and December, 4 new foster carers were presented at the fostering panel and recommended for approval. SGO assessment training was commissioned and delivered. A fostering conference has been arranged for 5 March 2020.
- 2.21. The Children in Care/Permanence team has experienced considerable churn at both manager and social worker level but has now settled down with the appointment of a permanent Team Manager (started 01/12/2019). There are still social work vacancies which we are hoping to fill.

Quality Assurance & Practice Development

- 2.22. We have refreshed the audit framework and embedded a new audit programme for all managers to complete with a strong focus on collaborative and strengths-based approaches to auditing. We have strengthened and rolled out the use of monthly moderation and dip sample of audits by heads of service. This is increasingly allowing us to base training delivery on focused areas identified in our audits.
- 2.23. Our first 'practice week' took place in October 2019, and the second practice week took place from 3-7 February. The introduction of practice weeks not only allows us to identify strong practice, but importantly allows leaders from across education and social care to observe practice from across the directorate.
- 2.24. Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) timeliness is a strength in Merton. Only a very small number of ICPC's were delayed as a result of delays in receiving the request. The number of children subject to child protection plans has remained lower than at the beginning of the financial year.
- 2.25. As a service, we are under strength in terms of being able to support and resource development across children's social care. We are seeking to recruit two QA auditors/practice managers to support and strengthen practice across services. In addition, we are seeking to recruit signs of safety practice leads that will support and strengthen practice across services and we need to recruit to the QA fostering panel manager post on a permanent basis.
- 2.26. A new IRO manager joined us on the 2/1/2020.

14+ and Care Leavers

- 2.27. The service is currently under interim service management following the departure of a Head of Service and realignment of teams in Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion. The workers have been engaged in discussions about the vision to increase the number of Personal Advisors delivering services to Care Leavers, which is also linked to a savings target. The engagement of young people in the consultation period is being sought with the support of the Participation Team and Children in Care Council.
- 2.28. The 14+ Team are currently delivering a Home Office funded project for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, who make up the majority of looked after children in the team and a large proportion of Care Leavers. The team hold a regular coffee evening to engage young people in accessing support and information. The team also continue to deliver independence skills workshops to support young people preparing for adulthood.

Adolescent and Family Services

- 2.29. The Youth Justice Team is preparing for Inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) which we are expecting at some point this year. This will involve an inspection of the governance and leadership, Court work and Pre-Court work. The team has been involved in Peer Reviews, external audits, visioning events with the Executive board and a self-evaluation of the newly updated National Standards. The board has been invited to join the team for the next Practice Week in early February to observe practice and confirm the findings of the self-evaluation. The team has received training in Restorative Practice to support all workers to provide a restorative practice focus for young people and victims.
- 2.30. The Tackling Exploitation Team continue to deliver services to vulnerable adolescents as per the Multiagency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation (MARVE) protocol. The Protocol has been reviewed and presented to Promote and Protect Young People (a sub-group for the MSCP). The Serious Youth Violence and Gangs worker from Transforming Families Team will be joining the Tackling Exploitation Team from February.
- 2.31. Both the Youth Justice and Exploitation teams have recently seen a worker leave to join the Step-Up to Social Work programme. These two posts are currently being held while savings proposals are being prepared.

Knife Crime (Scrutiny request)

- 2.32. The Service is also delivering aspects of the Early Intervention Youth Fund from the Home Office, which includes community engagement, contextual safeguarding and detached youth work. This has seen a rise in engagement and a reduction in knife crime incidents involving youth in the hot-spot areas targeted. The funding will end in March 2020. The service is working closely with Safer Merton to consider ongoing avenues of delivery.
- 2.33. The Multiagency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation (MARVE) panel reviews incidents each month and considers both individuals and broader contexts of harm for tasking. The co-chairs (Head of AFS and DCI Safeguarding Police)

report to the MSCP sub-group "Promote and Protect Young People", where data sets in regard to knife crime involving youth are also reviewed.

Education Division

School Improvement

- 2.34. The new Ofsted framework for inspection was introduced in September 2019. Since then, six schools have been inspected in Merton, representing the full range of inspection options open to schools:
- All Saints and Aragon were both inspected under Section 8 (previously known as 'short inspections'). All Saints maintained its 'good' judgement. Aragon's report has yet to be published.
 - Malmesbury was inspected under Section 5 (a full inspection) and maintained its 'good' judgement.
 - Singlegate, which has an 'outstanding' judgement, received what is called a monitoring inspection under Section 8. This inspection found many continued and significant strengths in the school, and so it has maintained its 'outstanding' judgement.
 - Bishop Gilpin, which also has an 'outstanding' judgement, received a subject focused inspection. Only 100 schools nationally are being inspected using this framework nationally; the inspection does not result in either the confirmation of or a change of an Ofsted judgement, and focuses on the curriculum in one particular subject (in this case Modern Foreign Languages).
 - Benedict received a monitoring inspection because it is currently judged to be inadequate (in special measures). This inspection identified that leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures; the Trust's statement of action is not fit for purpose; and the school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. Benedict, as an academy, is currently part of the Chapel Street Community Schools Trust. As a result of the Ofsted inspection outcome earlier in 2019 (when Benedict was judged to require special measures), the Regional School's Commissioner is now working to secure an alternative Trust to lead and manage the school.
- 2.35. Merton School Improvement Service continues to support schools to prepare for inspection under the new Ofsted framework. In particular, work over the next two months will focus on supporting schools with 'outstanding' judgements because the government have announced they intend to no longer exempt outstanding schools from routine inspection. They are currently consulting on this proposal and we expect this to become law from September 2020. This support will take the form of school reviews, led by the schools' partnership, ATTAIN.
- 2.36. ATTAIN continues to focus on common improvement priorities for Merton schools. In addition to providing reviews for schools expecting inspection,

these priorities include foci on: improving outcomes for pupils with SEND; financial stability for schools; foundation subject curriculum leadership; improving 6th form outcomes; and improving outcomes in primary phase reading and writing.

Education Inclusion

- 2.37. Our Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates continue to be low. The My Futures Team over the autumn tracks young people to ensure that NEET levels remain low and then key work young people with high needs. We have supported a number of young people who are on youth offending orders into employment through our assisted employment scheme with local employers. We have also had success in supporting some young people with special needs into good destinations. Going into December we had slightly higher NEET than last year of 17 year olds and we will be working to bring this down.
- 2.38. The MIAS Service has continued to support parents and receive positive feedback. The service is moving forward with developments supported by a grant from Council for Disabled Children including a new data base, funding for a Post 16 worker and re-establishing the parent led MIASS steering group.
- 2.39. Merton's participation service has had a busy autumn. The young inspectors have been working with the Children's Trust and looking at health services' quality assurance. The participation service has taken over the running of the Children in Care Council and is re-establishing that group. Young advisors worked very hard as part of the recommissioning of the risk and resilience service – including visiting potential providers and participating in the evaluation. They brought insight that was an essential part of the decision making process.
- 2.40. The Education Welfare Service continues to support the improvement of our school attendance figures. The two terms 18/19 figures show that attendance in every phase and type of school is better than either National or Outer London averages, and in most cases better than both. They have also been working with Ofsted to challenge an Illegal School running in another borough.
- 2.41. The Behaviour Support Service has restructured and has appointed new staff. These staff have had the challenge of taking over from staff who have worked in Merton for over 30 years and so we have been careful to establish and clarify ways of working. The team has continued to support schools where children have social, emotional and mental health needs. The team has been working with the Merton CCG and Child and Adolescent Mental Health service to establish a new regular network for school leads on mental health. We have discussed the rise in Permanent exclusions with secondary heads and we have agreed a deep dive into case files.
- 2.42. The Speech and Language Service recruited more therapists to respond to the rise in SEND issues over the last year. The team are facing a significant work load of assessments, buy back of SEN assessments and provision of therapy. The managers have been working on ways to refine the assessment process and proposing ways forward to meet demand.

2.43. The Youth Service had an excellent autumn with large number of children and young people accessing Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge youth centres and the Acacia Adventure playground. At the end of term, we celebrated with the young people through a range of parties, events and visits. The service continues to work with a large number of volunteers and partners who deserve thanks for the contribution that they make to the lives of Merton's young people. Of particular note was the celebration of achievement at Pollards Hill youth club just before Christmas that was attended by the Director of Children Services, other officers and community members. Striking was the number of young people currently at university who came back to the club to support the younger children. They were an inspiration and excellent role models

Early Years, Family Wellbeing and Early Help

2.44. The existing family support services delivered through the 0-5s Supporting Families Team, Bond Road Family Services, Transforming Families and Short Breaks have been reviewed and a service re-organisation has now concluded. The new, all-age (0 – 25) family support service went live on 3rd February, with ongoing development and service improvement until the formal launch in September 2020.

Early Years Provision – Funded Places Scheme (Scrutiny Request)

2.45. Each year the LA publish the statutory Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, which provides information about the take up of the funded places scheme. The most recent assessment can be found here: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/childcare/mertons-childcare-sufficiency-assessment>

2.46. We know that other local authorities (who are statistical neighbours) achieve a higher take up than Merton. A key focus for the service has therefore been to increase the take-up of free early education for eligible 2 years olds in Merton, living in households that are eligible for certain benefits or are Looked after by the local authority. Our local strategies/action to improve take up include a range of actions, such as:

- through the Children's Centre services, assertive outreach to families where known to be eligible,
- partnership working with health visitors, social workers and voluntary sector to promote the offer and encourage take up,
- childcare care brokerage service for families that guides them in the process of sourcing a provider and borough-wide promotion ie JC Decaux boards.

Special Educational Needs Service and EHCPs (scrutiny request)

2.47. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities integrated service has continued to see increased demand for statutory assessments. Currently, we have 1930 Education, Health and Care plans and are undertaking 190 new Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments.

2.48. This is a reduction from 2087 at the end of December and is due to the Local Authority ceasing to maintain plans for children who no longer need special

educational need provision. This is a significant development following a prolonged period of increase.

- 2.49. The service re-organisation will be completed by the end of March. This will add increased management capacity to better manage and increase the quality of the work undertaken by the SEN Team. There will be a particular focus on annual review processes.
- 2.50. Despite the decrease in the number of plans maintained, the high number of live assessments still impacts on the capacity of partner agencies to provide professional advice within the 6-week statutory timescale (currently at about 50% compliance). This, in turn, impacts on the SEN team's 20-week timescale to issue a plan.
- 2.51. In order to address the delays in receiving professional advice, the HoS has been working with partner agencies to pilot templates for professional advice. This will streamline the way in which partner agencies provide their advice.
- 2.52. Since the last scrutiny meeting, we received the welcome news that Ofsted has accepted our Written Statement of Action (WSOA) in response to last summer's SEND inspection. This will guide many of our service improvements over the coming 18 months until Ofsted return to satisfy themselves that we've made enough progress. As we take this work forward we'll be supported by both the Department of Education and NHS England.
- 2.53. The SEN case management system and EHCP Portal has now been procured, and we are working on data migration and implementation. The introduction of the EHCP Portal should improve the timeliness of professional advice that is put in the plan and therefore improve the 20-week timescale.
- 2.54. The SEND strategy has now been finalised and is due for publication shortly. The strategy has been co-developed by children and their families, as well as our partner agencies. It is supported by an agreed action plan.

Contracts and School Organisation

- 2.55. **School admissions for September 2020 entry** – Schools Admissions offer day is 2 March 2020 for secondary school applications and 16 April 2020 for primary school applications. The October census showed there to be only 30 Year 7 vacancies this year. Demand is expected to remain at relatively similar levels for the next 3 years. We expect to ensure that there will be a secondary school place for everyone that needs it again for this September without further expansion, though again with few spare places. Primary school resident applications are slightly down this year.
- 2.56. **Harris Academy Wimbledon** – The school has filled to its capacity for Years 7 and 8 in line with the increase in demand in Merton for secondary school places. It is also expected to fill for this September. At this stage the school roll will be too large for its temporary site in Whatley Avenue so the new school site in South Wimbledon needs to be completed for September. The council's role in this development was to ensure a clear site, and the construction scheme is being managed by the Education and Funding Agency. As can be seen from the public highway, rapid progress is being made for the 5-storey school to be completed to this timetable.

- 2.57. **Additional SEND places** – Following completion of construction works in late October the ASD additional resourced provision at Stanford Primary School is open, and the final phase of the Cricket Green expansion is due to be completed in early March. We are currently at the early design stages in expanding Melrose School to include primary school provision, alongside other projects that can be announced in due course.
- 2.58. **Review of PFI Contracts (Scrutiny Request)** – In June, work commenced by a specialist to review the effectiveness of the four school PFI contract, to assist us in holding the PFI contractor to account. Their stage 1 report demonstrated that there were issues that led the council, following a workshop with the PFI schools, to commission a more detailed stage 2. This includes undertaking specialist condition surveys over the February half term period. We can provide more information to CYP Scrutiny at a later date, which will need to be a commercially confidential item.
- 2.59. *Performance, Policy and Partnerships*
- 2.60. Since the last Scrutiny meeting, the Performance team has submitted the following statutory data returns:
- The autumn school census
 - The School Workforce Census
 - The annual School Attendance Report; and
 - The Children’s Social Care Workforce Census
- 2.61. Members of the Panel may wish to note that all returns were submitted on time despite experiencing a short period of considerable capacity pressures.
- 2.62. The Policy Team continues to support the Children’s Trust Board, and has introduced an accountability framework which will enable partners to both monitor progress against the action plan as well as ensure children and young people are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of agreed actions.
- 2.63. As part of the introduction of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, governance arrangements were changed to include the roles of an independent chair, independent scrutineer as well as a young scrutineer. Interviews for these posts have recently taken place.
- 2.64. Merton’s Safeguarding Children Partnership has considered savings plans for the next financial year. The existing in-house training offer will be replaced by a commissioned service. Whilst reducing our training offer (but remaining compliant with statutory minimum standards), this option offers agility as well as releasing the necessary savings.
- Joint Commissioning and Partnerships*
- 2.65. The Children’s Commissioning Team is experiencing some staffing changes. The long-standing Head of Service will be retiring shortly. In addition, an experienced Commissioning Manager will be leaving. As a result, the council’s Public Health Team in partnership with CSF is looking at reviewing the team’s structure and make-up.

2.66. Notwithstanding these imminent changes, some important pieces of work have been delivered since the last scrutiny meeting in October. The service continues to prioritise the integration of Children, Schools and Families' commissioning with Public Health and the CCG. This is currently particularly focussed on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people, actions within the ASD Strategy, and work towards the re-commissioning of our community health services, which incorporate a range of therapies, nursing in special schools, health visiting and school nursing.

2.67. The re-procurement of the Risk and Resilience Service is in the final stages. This service spans a range of service areas, including responses to substance misuse, smoking cessation, return home interviews for children missing from home, detached youth work and work round Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). The procurement exercise benefitted from the advice of a team of Young Commissioners throughout the procurement process ensuring the voice of Merton's young people was incorporated within decision-making.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. No specific implications for this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None for this report.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. N/a for this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Children, Schools and Families Structure Chart.
- Children, Schools and Families Glossary.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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Appendix A. Merton Children's Services: Glossary of terms (November 2019)		
Acronym/jargon	In full	Brief description (where necessary)
903		See 'SSDA 903'.
AA	Authorised absence	Absence from school authorised by the school - either the child is too ill to attend or the school has given advance permission. See also 'UA'.
Acacia Centre		Community Centre in Mitcham offering a range of activities for all ages. It is the location of one of Merton's children's centres, and the adventure playground. See also 'APG' and 'Children's Centre'. Formally known as the Intergenerational Centre
Academy	Academy schools	Publicly funded schools which operate outside of local authority control, described by government as independent state-funded schools.
ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services	National leadership association in England for statutory directors of children's services and other children's services professionals in leadership roles.
ALDCS	Association of London Directors of Children's Services	Pan-London body representing all of London's statutory Directors of Children's Services.
Alternative Education		Education provided to children who cannot attend a mainstream or special maintained school.
Annex A	The Ofsted ILACS Inspection, Annex A data and documentation. (see also Single Inspection)	The Ofsted ILACS inspection framework requires all local authorities to produce comprehensive child level data and a set of supporting documents for presentation to inspectors in week one of the inspection.
APS	Average point score	In education the conversion of attainment levels to scores; applies to a school or individual pupil.
ARP	Additionally Resourced Provision	Discrete resource in schools to support children with a Statement of Special Educational Need. See also 'Statement'.
ART	Access to Resources Team	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division, responsible for commissioning placements for looked after children and certain pupils with SEN. See also 'SEN'.
ASC	Adult social care	
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Communication and Interaction Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
Attain		
BAAF	British Association of Adoption and Fostering	London-based charity offering resources for those wishing to adopt, and to professionals working in adoption.
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Terminology used to describe people of non-white descent. See also 'BME'.
BASW	The British Association of Social Workers	The professional association for Social Workers the UK.
BESD	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulty	Category of Special Educational Need. See also 'SEN'.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic	Terminology used to describe people of non-white descent. See also 'BAME'.
Bond Road	Bond Road Family Centre	Team within the MASH and Child Protection [Service], delivering family support services. See also 'MASH and Child Protection'
BRAG	Blue, Red, Amber, Green	System of prioritising referrals to Merton's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - Blue (no significant concern), Green (low level concern), Amber (significant concern but immediate action not required), Red (immediate action required). See also 'MASH'.
Brightwell	Brightwell Respite Care House	Merton's residential care home offering specialist care for children with complex needs, severe learning disabilities and autism including overnight, after school, weekend and school holiday short breaks. See also 'Short Breaks'.
C&F Act	Children and Families Act 2014	Far reaching changes to child and family law which aims to improve: protection of vulnerable children, support for children in care (including extending care to age 21), the adoption system, the system of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, support for children whose parents are separating, and help for parents to balance work and family life.
CAF	Common Assessment Framework	Assessment tool used across the children's workforce to help practitioners develop a shared understanding of a child or young person's needs so that they can be met quickly and effectively. See also 'CASA'.
Cafcass	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service	National non-departmental public body which advises family courts and supports children in the court process.
CAIT	Child Abuse Investigation Team	Metropolitan Police Service responsible for investigating child abuse cases.
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	Service for children and adolescents who are experiencing mental health problems
CareFirst		Former management information system for Merton Children's Social Care, before the introduction of Mosaic. See also Mosaic
CASA	Common and Shared Assessment	Updated version of the Common Assessment Framework to be implemented in Merton Children's Services from April 2013. See also 'CAF'.
CCG	(Merton) Clinical Commissioning Group	Merton Clinical Commissioning Group is responsible for planning and buying healthcare services for the people who live or work in the borough; made up of local GPs and health professionals.

CES	Corporate Equalities Scheme/ Strategy	Merton Council's Strategy to promote equality across race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. Titled as a 'Scheme' from 2010-2013, and as a 'Strategy' from 2013.
Children Act 1989		Act, relating to children, with a wide range of provisions including local authority responsibilities for providing services for children in need (CIN), children requiring protection, and LAC. See also 'LAC' and 'CIN'.
Children Act 2004		Act which makes provision for a children's commissioner and for Directors of Children's Services.
Children's Centre		Early years service for children aged 0-5 and their families offering childcare, family support and child health services.
Children's Trust Board		Local multi-agency body responsible for the governance of a wide range of services for children and young people.
CIC	Children in Care	See 'LAC'.
CICC	Children in Care Council	Forum for looked after children and young people to discuss their needs and views and inform service planning and delivery. See also 'LAC'.
CIN	Child(ren) in Need	Defined by the Children Act 1989 as children aged under 18 needing local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, and/or to prevent significant or further harm to health or development, and/or are disabled.
CLA	Children Looked After	See 'LAC'.
CLCH	Central London Community Health Care NHS Trust	The commissioned provider of community health services in Merton for children, young people and families including: health visiting; school nursing; speech and language therapy; physiotherapy; occupational therapy.
CME	Children missing from education	Child of statutory school age who is not registered at an educational provision; not registered as being 'educated other than at school' (e.g home schooling); out of education for more than 20 calendar days.
Continuous Improvement		Management culture in Merton's children's services which seeks to continuously improve processes and services, informed by performance management, inspection outcomes, research, and best practice.
Contracts and School Organisation		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Education Division.
Corius		Business analysis and reporting tool software.
CP	Child Protection	Activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. This is part of the broader remit of children's safeguarding. See also 'Safeguarding'.
CPC	Child Protection Conference	Case conference held following a Child Protection investigation, to enable professionals in the case to assess the information and plan how to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	Training and development for those working in children's services including schools.
CPP	Child Protection Plan	Plan detailing how a child will be protected and their health and development promoted; written and managed by the professionals working with the child and family.
CQC	Care Quality Commission	Responsible for ensuring that hospitals, care homes, GPs, dentists and home based services meeting national standards; this is done by inspecting services and publishing findings.
CSC	Children's Social Care	Shortened term for the Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division in Merton Council's Children, Schools and Families Department.
CSC&YI	Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion [Division]	Division in Merton Council's Children, Schools and Families Department.
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	Exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.
CSF	Children, Schools and Families Directorate	Department in Merton Council responsible for children's social care and education.
CSP	Commissioning, Strategy and Performance [Division]	Former 'Division' in Merton Council's Children, Schools and Families Department.
CTB	Children's Trust Board	See 'Children's Trust Board'.
CVA	Contextual Value Added	Statistic which shows the progress children have made whilst attending a particular school, which takes into account the circumstances of children attending the school including their age, gender, ethnicity, and economic background.
CWD	Children with Disabilities	Children with disabilities are children 'in need' as defined by section 17(10(c)) of the Children Act 1989 and are entitled to a range of support services depending on their circumstances.
CYP	Children and young people	

CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan	Multi-agency document setting out the priorities of the Children's Trust to commission and provide services for children and young people. See also 'Children's Trust Board'.
CYPWBM	Child and Young Person Wellbeing Model	Framework used across Merton's Children's Trust to identify need and secure appropriate services. See also 'Children's Trust Board'.
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	National body which carries out checks on people working with children.
DfE	Department for Education	Government department for education and children's social care since 2010.
DfES	Department for Education and Skills	Government department 2001-2007.
DV	Domestic Violence	Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality
Early Help		Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 states that 'early help' is providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. See 'Working Together'.
Early Years and Children's Centres		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Education Division.
Ebacc	English Baccalaureate	Introduced in 2010 as a performance measure recognising where pupils have secured a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects – English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language.
ECM	Every Child Matters	Framework of outcomes, introduced by the previous government, that are key to well-being in childhood - be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, positive contribution, and economic well-being (DfES 2004). See also 'DfES'
Education [Division]		Division in Merton Council's Children, Schools and Families Department.
Education Inclusion		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Education Division.
EET	Education, Employment and Training	Term used in relation to monitoring the number of young people aged 16-18 who are in education, training or employment. See also 'NEET'.
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan.	From 1 September 2014 the system of statutory support and assessment for children and young people age 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, brought about by the Children and Family Act 2014. The EHC plan replaces the SEN Statement and the Learning Difficulty Assessment. See also 'C&F Act', 'statement' and 'LDA'
EI	Early Intervention	See 'EIS'
EIP	Early Intervention and Prevention	See 'EIS'
EIS	Early Intervention Services	Providing support services at an early stage to improve outcomes for children and families and prevent the need for the involvement of more specialist services at a later stage. In Merton we have replaced this term with Early Help. See also 'Early Help'.
Enhanced	Enhanced level service	Service provided to children and families assessed as being at the enhanced level of need (medium level) on the Merton Well Being Model. See also 'MWBM'.
EOTAS	Educated other than at school	Education which takes place outside of a formal school setting.
EPS	Education Psychology Service	Team within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service responsible for the statutory assessment and statementing procedures for children with special educational needs (SEN). See also 'SEN'.
ESF	European Social Fund	European Union funding for initiatives which improve employment opportunities and help raise standards of living.
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	Department for Education's delivery agency providing revenue and capital funding for education for learners between the ages of 3 and 19, or up to 25 for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Also responsible for the delivery of building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies, Free Schools and sixth-form colleges.
EWS	Education Welfare Service	Team within the Education Inclusion Service area primarily responsible for the support and management of school attendance. See also 'Education Inclusion'.
Exclusion		When a school 'excludes' a child from attending on disciplinary grounds, through the procedure set out in the 2002 Education Act and related Government Guidance. See also 'Fixed Term Exclusion' and 'Permanent Exclusion'.
Extranet		Internal web based system for schools and early year's settings.
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	Set of learning and development requirements to be delivered by schools and childcare settings from age 2-5 (end of reception year in school).
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile	Formal assessment of a child's learning and development at the end of the Reception year. See also 'Reception' and 'EYFS'.
Family and Adolescent Service	Family and Adolescent Service	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division.

FAS	Family and Adolescent Service	see Family and Adolescent Service
FDAC	Family Drug and Alcohol Courts	The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) is run by Coram and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. FDAC is a new way of dealing with care proceedings when parental substance misuse causes harm to children.
FE	Further Education	Education offered by sixth forms and colleges beyond the statutory school age.
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	Procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits for girls or women, can lead to serious health problems, and is a violation of their human rights.
Fixed Term Exclusion		When a school 'excludes' a child from attending for a specific period of time. This can be for one or more periods, and for up to 45 days, in one academic year. See also 'Exclusion' and 'Permanent Exclusion'.
FOI	Freedom of Information	Request made to the local authority for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
FR	First Response Social Work Team	Through the MASH process, the team to which cases are referred when there is a significant child protection concern. See also 'MASH'.
Free schools		Schools which are set up by groups of parents, teachers, charities, trusts, religious and voluntary groups and which are then established as academies and funded as such. See also 'academies'.
FSD	Family Services Directory	Merton website which provides details of a broad range of services for families in Merton. See also 'Local Offer'.
FSM	Free School Meals	Free school meals are provided for children whose families are in receipt of benefits such as income support or income based job seeker's allowance
FSP	[Early Years] Foundation Stage Profile	See 'EYFSP'.
FTE	First Time Entrant (to Youth Justice)	Young person who commits an offence and enters the youth justice system for the first time.
FTE	Full Time Equivalent	Term used in school finance to count the number of pupils who attend full time, calculated as 25 hours per week.
HE	Higher Education	Commonly used to refer to post-18/19 education in Universities or colleges.
HFP	Helping Families Programme	A model used in the Transforming Families Team which takes a systemic approach to supporting high risk complex families' working in partnership with the family to 'ensure a shared and common purpose, from the very first contact. See also TF.
HI	Hearing Impairment	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Sensory and/or Physical Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
HV	Health Visitor	Qualified nurse or midwife primarily providing health and support services to new parents and pre-school children.
ICPC	Initial Child Protection Conference	First Case Conference held when there has been a child protection investigation. See also 'CPC'.
IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index	Measure, in a local area, of the proportion of children under the age of 16 that live in low income households.
ILACS	Inspection Local Authority Children's Services	
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation	Measure of the level of deprivation in an area.
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer	Responsible for quality assuring the care planning process for looked after children (LAC) and children with a child protection plan (CPP), and ensuring that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. See also 'LAC' and 'CPP'.
IYSS	Integrated Youth Support System	Database which tracks young people's (aged 16-19) engagement in education, training and employment. See also 'EET' and 'NEET'.
Joint Commissioning and Partnerships [Service]		Service area co-located in the Children, Schools and Families Department and Merton Public Health.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	Assessment of the current and future health and social needs of people living in Merton to help inform commissioners of health and care services to best meet those needs
Joint Targeted Area Inspections	Joint Targeted Area Inspections	Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) of arrangements and services for children in need of help and protection in local authority areas in England. These inspections are undertaken by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation). See also: Single Inspection and Targeted Local Authority Inspection
JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspections	See: Joint Targeted Area Inspections
KS1	Key Stage 1	Legal term for schooling in maintained primary schools during Year 1 and Year 2.
KS2	Key Stage 2	Legal term for schooling in maintained primary schools during Years 3-6.
KS3	Key Stage 3	Legal term for schooling in maintained secondary schools during Years 7-9.
KS4	Key Stage 4	Legal term for schooling in maintained secondary schools during Years 10-11.
LA	Local authority	

LAC	Looked After Children (not to be used)	Child who is looked after by the state. This includes those who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care. The term is also used to describe 'accommodated' children and young people who are looked after on a voluntary basis at the request of, or by agreement with, their parents.
Permanency, Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Permanency, Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer	Local authority officer in children's social care who is responsible for managing child protection allegations against people who work with children in the local authority area.
LBM	London Borough of Merton	
LDA	Learning Difficulty Assessment	Assessment setting out the additional learning support a young person will need when continuing into post-16 education or training. Replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans from 1 September 2014. See also 'EHC' plan.
LDD	Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	Term used to refer to individuals or groups of learners who have either a learning difficulty in relation to acquiring new skills or who learn at a different rate from their peers.
LGFL	London Grid for Learning	Consortium of the 33 London local authorities and 2,500 schools working together to provide extensive and cost effective ICT services.
LiR	Learning Improvement Review	A review of a serious case, that does not meet the statutory threshold for a Serious Case Review (SCR), but where it is indicated that analysis of the case will provide a 'window' into the multi-agency safeguarding system, and inform improvements. See also SCR.
Local Offer		Merton website of information about the special educational provision for children and young people with SEN which the local authority expects to be available. This is a statutory duty of the local authority under the Children and Families Act 2014. See also 'C&F Act' and 'FSD'
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children Partnership	See 'MSCP'.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements	Arrangements for the management, by the responsible authorities, (Probation, Prison Service and the Police) of registered sex offenders, violent and other types of sexual offenders, and offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference	Multi-agency meeting where information is shared on the borough's highest risk domestic abuse cases.
MARVE	Multiagency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation	Panel which identifies and supports young people, aged 8 to 13 who are at a high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour.
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	Single point of contact to children's services where there is a concern about a child and their family. Staff in the MASH are from a range of agencies - children's social care, police, health, education - and combine their knowledge to make the most appropriate and informed decisions to keep children safe from harm.
MASH and First Response		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division.
MEP See also "Attain"	Merton Education Partnership	Formal collaboration of Merton state schools to ensure the best educational outcomes for children and young people through school to school support and joint procurement.
MI	Motivational Interviewing	to support engagement and An approach to counselling work with adolescents and families to facilitate behaviour change.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Cognition and Learning Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime	Function of Mayor of London. Funding source.
Mosaic		Management information system for Merton Children's Social Care, before the introduction of Mosaic
MSCP	Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership	Merton's Local Safeguard Children Board which ensures good and robust systems to safeguard children. See also 'safeguarding'.
MSI	Merton School Improvement [Service]	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Education Division.
MSI	Multi-Sensory Impairment	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Sensory and/or Physical Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
MST	Multi Systemic Therapy	Intensive family therapy in the home to young people with complex clinical, social and educational problems with the aim of preventing family breakdown.
MVSC	Merton Voluntary Sector Council	Support and advice to the voluntary and community sector in Merton.
MWBM	Merton Well Being Model [alternative for CYPWBM]	Framework used across Merton's Children's Trust to identify need and secure appropriate services. See also 'Children's Trust Board'.
My Futures	Employment, Training and Education [Team]	Team within Family and Adolescent Services, supporting young people at risk of not engaging with education, training or employment. See also 'Family and Adolescent Services'.

MYP	Merton Youth Parliament	Forum for young people aged 11 – 19 years (or 25 for disabled young people) which ensures that young people's views are listened to and inform decisions about service developments.
NC	National Curriculum	Set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools so children learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught and the standards children should reach in each subject.
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training	Term used in relation to monitoring the number of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, training or employment. See also 'EET'.
NFA	No Further Action	Decision made about a case that is referred to the MASH process, where it is decided that there is no child protection concern. See also 'MASH'.
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker	Social worker who is in the first two years of post-qualification.
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher	New teacher's three-term period of assessment, usually completed in a single school year.
NRPF	No recourse to public funds	People who are subject to immigration control and have no entitlement to welfare benefits, Home Office support for asylum seekers or public housing.
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification	Work based awards that are achieved through assessment and training.
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills	Regulatory body for services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
OMP	Offender Management Panel	Multi agency panel that manages young people and adults who are a concern in the borough, as they are at a high risk of reoffending, and causing serious harm.
ONS	Office for National Statistics	UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and the recognised national statistical institute of the UK.
OTH	Other difficulty/disability	Type of Special Educational Need. See also 'SEN'.
PA	Persistent Absence	When a pupil is absent from school for 15% or more of the academic year.
PD	Physical Disability	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Sensory and/or Physical Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
PEP	Personal Education Plan	Individualised plan for learning for looked after children. See also 'LAC'.
Permanent Exclusion		When a child is excluded permanently from school and removed from the school roll. See also 'Exclusion' and 'Fixed Term Exclusion'.
PF	Private Fostering	Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity).
PH	Public Health	The responsibility for public health is now in local authorities. The Public Health team in Merton work closely in partnership with the support of Merton Clinical Commissioning Group. See also 'CCG'.
PI	Performance Indicator	Measure of success of activities within an organisation or service. These will include measure of process, quality, outcome, perception and value for money.
PLO	Public Law Outline 2014	Children and Families Act 2014 makes changes to Part 12 of the Family Procedure Rules 2010 and requires that all care proceedings are completed within a maximum of 26 weeks. See also 'C&F Act'.
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Cognition and Learning Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
PPP	Policy, Planning and Performance [Service]	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department
PPYPG	Promote and Protect Young People Group	Multi-agency group tasked with identifying and responding to issues of known or suspected child sexual exploitation in Merton
Prevent	Prevent Strategy	The Prevent strategy contains three objectives: to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it; to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and to work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit	Local authority maintained establishment that provides education for children who are excluded, sick, or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream or special maintained school. See also 'Exclusion'.
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education	Part of the national curriculum in secondary schools, a planned programme of education aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills to live healthily, safely, productively and responsibly. See also 'NC'.
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent [Sector]	Term used to describe organisations outside of the local authority. Commonly used in reference to nurseries and schools.
QA	Quality Assurance	Assessing the quality of service delivery by a standard set of criteria, or 'quality framework'.
QAPD	Quality Assurance and Practice Development	See Quality Assurance and Practice Development.
Quality Assurance and Practice Development		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division.
RAG	Red, Amber, Green	Rating system used to identify the level of success achieved against a performance measure.

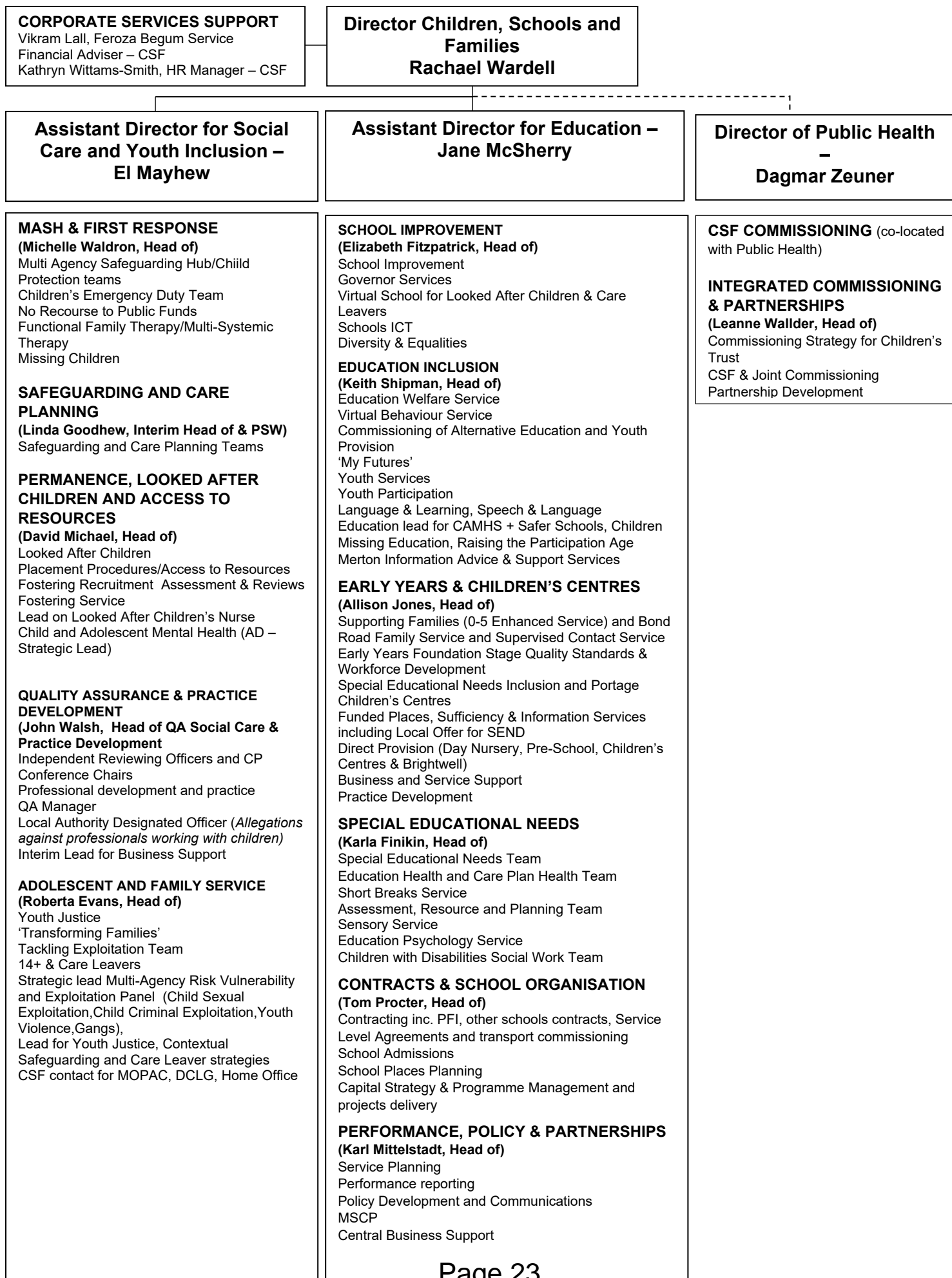
RCPC	Review Child Protection Conference	Case conference which is held within 3 months of the Initial Child Protection Conference. See also 'CPC' and 'ICPC'.
Reception		First year of statutory schooling, which in Merton begins in the September of the academic year in which the child turns age 5.
RI	Racist incidents	Incidents in schools, recorded by schools and reported to the local authority, involving racist bullying/ racism.
RPA	Raising Participation Age	Increasing the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training, requiring them to continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015.
S17	Section 17	Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 which covers Children in Need (CIN).
S47	Section 47	Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 which covers Children suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.
Safeguarding		Range of activities which seek to: protect children from maltreatment; prevent impairment of children's health or development; and ensure children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. See also 'Child Protection'.
SaLT	Speech and Language Therapy	Assessment and treatment of speech, language and communication problems in children and young people to enable them to communicate to the best of their ability.
School Action (A)		Support in school for a child with learning difficulties who is not making progress. This may involve extra teachers, different learning materials, special equipment or a different teaching strategy. This term has been replaced with 'School Support' since the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force. See also 'School Support'.
School Action Plus (P)		Process of support implemented when 'School Action' has not been able to help a child with learning difficulties to make adequate progress. At this level the school will seek external advice from agencies including the local authority support services, health services and children's social care. This term has been replaced with 'School Support' since the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force. See also 'School Support'.
School Support		Support in school for a child with learning difficulties who is not making expected progress, but who does not meet the threshold for an Education, Health and Care Plan. See also 'EHC Plan'.
SCR	Serious Case Review	In some instances where a child has suffered harm, a serious case review is carried out to see what lessons can be learnt about how local professionals and organisations worked together and to make recommendations so that the welfare of children is better protected in future. See also LiR
SDQ	Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	Completed by the main carer of a looked after child, and used in the local authority data collection on the emotional health and well-being of looked after children. This data is submitted to the Department for Education as part of the SSDA 903 return. See also 'SSDA 903'.
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning	Programme in schools which implements a holistic approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in school.
SEF	Self Evaluation Framework	Framework by which an organisation, service or team can evaluate their own performance. Also often used to refer to the document which is produced as a result of undertaking a 'self evaluation' of the organisation, service or team in readiness for an inspection.
SEN	Special Educational Needs	Pupils who have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of pupils of their age, or have a disability which means that they cannot make full use of the general educational facilities provided for pupils of their age.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.	Term used to describe children and young people with SEN (see 'SEN') and disabilities (see 'CWD').
SENDIS	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service	Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Education Division.
SGO	Special Guardianship Order	Secures permanent care for a child by a family member, such as grandparent, aunt or uncle, while maintaining a legal relationship with the birth family.
Short Breaks		Previously known as 'respite care' short breaks give children and young people with disabilities the chance to do something they enjoy, while giving parents time away from caring.
SLA	Service Level Agreement	Formal document that defines a working relationship between parties to a service contract.
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Communication and Interaction Needs' category.
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Cognition and Learning Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
SMART Centre (The)		See 'PRU'.
SN	Statistical neighbours	Local authorities who have a similar demographic profile to the London Borough of Merton, and thus make useful comparators to Merton.

SOA	Super output area	Set of geographical areas, (defined after the 2001 Census) of consistent size, whose boundaries will not change, suitable for the publication of data such as the Indices of Deprivation (IMD). See also 'IMD'.
SoS	Signs of Safety	A strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework used across Merton's children's services.
Safeguarding and Care Planning		Service area in the Children, Schools and Families Department, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division.
Specialist	Specialist level service	Service provided to children and families assessed as being at the specialist level of need (highest level) on the Merton Well Being Model. See also 'MWBM'.
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Cognition and Learning Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
SPA	Merton's Single Point of Access for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	Merton Single Point of Access is the one point of access for professionals seeking a referral for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
SSDA 903		Annual statistical return to the Department for Education about children looked after children. See also 'LAC'.
Statement	Statement of Special Educational Needs	Document setting out the needs of a child with a learning difficulty and specifying the extra help they should get to meet these needs. Replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans from 1 September 2014. See also 'EHC' plan.
Supporting Families Team		Team within the Early Years and Children's Centres Service, delivering 'enhanced' level services to children aged 0-5. See also 'Early Years and Children's Centres' and 'Enhanced'.
Tightrope (Model)		A tool used by Merton's Youth Justice Team which supports workers to engage young people in discussions to identify concerns and strengths.
SWLSEP	South West London School Effectiveness Partnership	Partnership between the London boroughs of Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth and Croydon to support their capacity for school improvement, through co-operation and joint project work.
TA	Teacher assessments	Judgement made by teachers on a pupil's progress and performance made at the end of Key Stage 2 and 3. See also 'Key Stage 2' and 'Key Stage 3'.
TAC	Team Around the Child	Multi-disciplinary team of practitioners established on a case-by-case basis to support a child, young person or family, using the common assessment framework. See also 'CAF' and 'CASA'.
TAF	Team Around the Family	See 'TAC'.
TaMHS	Targeted Mental Health in Schools	School based project aiming to improve the mental and emotional health in children and young people, focussing on both staff training, and interventions with pupils.
TF	Transforming Families	Merton's implementation of the national Troubled Families Initiative, which aims to address persistent worklessness, offending and anti social behaviour in families, and low school attendance. In Merton this type of intensive work with families was previously delivered by FIP (Family Intervention Project).
Think Family		A whole family approach to interventions to support and improve outcomes for children and young people. This is also a key priority in the MSCB Business Plan: Think Family – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes. See also: MSCB
TOM	Target Operating Model	A statement of how an organisation will deliver its services within a certain structure at a future point in time.
TP	Teenage pregnancy	Service responsible for delivering advice and guidance to young people on contraception and sexual health, sex and relationships and support to pregnant teenagers and teenage parents.
UA	Unauthorised absence	Absence from school not authorised by the school. See also 'Authorised Absence'.
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum seeking children	
Universal	Universal level service	Service provided to children and families assessed as being at the universal level of need (lowest level) on the Merton Well Being Model. See also 'MWBM'.
UPN	Unique Pupil Number	Unique identifying number assigned to school pupils.
URN	Unique Reference Number	Unique identifying number assigned educational establishments.
VA	Value Added	See 'CVA'
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls	
VBS	Virtual Behaviour Service	Team within the Education Inclusion Service area supporting pupils with behaviour problems in school. See also 'Education Inclusion'.
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector	Organisations and community groups with charitable objectives providing not for profit services.
VI	Visual Impairment	Type of Special Educational Need in the 'Sensory and/or Physical Needs' category. See also 'SEN'.
Virtual School for LAC	Virtual School for Looked After Children	Team within the Merton School Improvement Service area supporting the educational attainment of Merton's looked after children. See also 'LAC'.
VRQ	Vocationally Related Qualifications	Widely recognised professional qualifications, enabling learners to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding of specific areas of employment.
VS	Virtual School for Looked After Children	See 'Virtual School for LAC'.

Working Together	Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2013): A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.	Department for Education statutory guidance.
YA	Young Advisors	Merton Young Advisors are teams of young people aged between 13 – 19 who are trained and supported to work with community leaders and decision makers to ensure that young people participate in community life, and inform local decision making and service developments.
YJB	Youth Justice Board	Executive non-departmental public body overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. It works to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people under the age of 18, and ensures that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour.
YJS	Youth Justice Service	Team within Family and Adolescent Services. See also 'Family and Adolescent Services'.
YMT	Young Merton Together	Bi-monthly web based publication for Merton's Children's Trust.
YOT	Youth Offending Team	Merton team which is part of the criminal justice system, and also works with young people at early stages of offending, or who may be at risk of crime or anti social behaviour.
YP	Young person	

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CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT (January 2020)



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Committee: Scrutiny

Date:

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Fostering Service

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund

Contact officer: El Mayhew, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report was requested by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 7 October 2019.
- 1.2. Merton's values are that all children have the right to grow up in a safe, loving, family environment. We remain committed to ensuring that children who are unable to live within their family network are provided the very best care by maintaining a diverse group of skilled foster carers. Our foster carers nurture children in our care so they reach their potential, are proud of their cultural identity and have strong ties to their community.
- 1.3. Merton currently has 80 in-house foster carers who care for 44% of our children in care. Merton's fostering support to our carers is of a good quality. This is highlighted by our success at retaining carers and recruitment through word-of-mouth.
- 1.4. Although Fostering is a regulated activity, suitable private providers, registered with Ofsted, are permitted to recruit, assess and support foster carers to sell their placements to local authorities. These are referred to as Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA).
- 1.5. The overall budget for children's placements is overspent. The strategic rationale to reduce this by increasing our numbers of in-house foster carers is clear when comparing the average weekly cost for a child living with in-house carers (£432) as opposed to independent fostering agencies (£908) or residential homes (£3865).
- 1.6. Our annual recruitment target is 20 new foster carers and we are currently projecting to achieve 15. Since the start of the performance year 2019/20 the corporately held budget available for fostering recruitment has been repurposed to develop digital platforms. Whilst there is a belief that a greater focus on digital marketing to recruit prospective foster carers may be more productive and cost effective, the impact of this strategy and the reduction in other forms of recruitment activity requires assessment in the upcoming year.

2 CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

2.1. FOSTERING SERVICE

2.2. There are two teams within the Fostering Service:

- Fostering Recruitment and Assessment team
- Fostering Supervision and Support team.

2.3. The Fostering Recruitment and Assessment team undertakes the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers, Connected Person's and Special Guardianship assessments. Connected Person's and Special Guardianship assessments are most often assessments of family members and friends who are in the network of a child in our care or at risk of coming into our care. It is a statutory duty to arrange for children to be cared for by suitable members of the child's network.

2.4. The Fostering Supervision and Support team has responsibility for the supervision, training, support and reviewing of approved foster carers to ensure that children living with carers are safe and have their individual needs met. This team is responsible for facilitating a 'Merton Fostering community' so that carers can access peer support, collaborate, celebrate achievements and enjoy social activities together.

2.5. As at December 2019, there were 80 foster carers registered with the London Borough of Merton (77 approved foster carers, 2 Connected Persons carers and 1 Foster to Adopt carer. There were 3 vacancies (2 for children aged 0-11 and 1 for 12+ years).

2.6. The ethnicity of our foster carers is White (44%), Black Caribbean and African (40%); 7% are Asian. This reflects the ethnic profile of children in our care. 57% of our foster carers live in Merton, 17% live in Sutton, 15% live in Croydon and 3% live in Lambeth. 7.5% of Merton foster carers are aged 30+ years, 20% are aged 40+ years, 45% of Merton's foster carers are aged 50+ years, 20% are aged 60+ years, and 7.5% are aged 70+ years.

2.7. Fostering Recruitment uses a mix of marketing channels to raise awareness for our need for new foster carers. Our annual marketing strategy includes advertising in My Merton, local newspapers and using street banners and poster campaigns across the borough. We host fostering Information sessions bi-monthly at Pizza Express in Wimbledon and Coco Beanz Café in Morden and these continue to be a very cost effective way to raise awareness for Merton Fostering.

2.8. Our fostering recruitment publicity materials have been rebranded and we distribute these across the borough during each year to maintain visible presence. We have continued to build on our social media presence using our Merton Fostering Facebook page and the council's social media channels. Word-of-mouth recommendations continue to be a key recruiting channel and we have seen a steady number of IFA foster carers transferring to Merton's Fostering Service. Our support and retention activities are critical to maintaining positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

- 2.9. Our retention strategy is focussed on provide a high quality support, social opportunities, celebrations and recognition activities.
- 2.10. Once approved, foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker to offer them support, guidance and supervision. Every new carer is matched with a mentor, usually an experienced foster carer, to offer peer support. Our comprehensive training programme, delivered through both day and evening events, is designed to offer learning and reflection opportunities to develop our foster carers knowledge and skills. The training offer includes places at joint training with social workers on courses organised by the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP). Together with our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) colleagues, we have introduced Empathic Parenting training to our foster carers to develop their understanding of the impact of trauma on children in care. This year e-learning has been introduced for carers who find it difficult to access our day and evening courses.
- 2.11. Throughout the year, we organise activities to celebrate the achievements of our foster carers. In the summer we hold our Annual Foster Carers Dinner and Awards Ceremony and a Christmas Party in December. In October, the Service and Merton fostering community celebrate our diversity during Black History month. These events are always attended by senior council officers and either a Councillor or the Mayor.
- 2.12. These activities cement the department's relationship with foster carers valuing the contribution they make in the lives of our children. In addition, we support the Merton Foster Carers Association who run support groups, functions and activities for foster carers and their children.
- 2.13. Retention of foster carers is good in Merton, over the last three years, 13 foster carers have resigned as follows:
- 2017: 5 resigned – 2 retired and 3 left for family reasons.
 - 2018: 2 resigned – 1 was granted an Special Guardianship order for their foster child and 1 resigned for work reasons
 - 2019: 6 carers resigned – 1 was granted a Special Guardianship Order for their foster child, a named child placement ended when the young person reached 18 years, 2 retired and 2 resigned for work reasons.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

NO SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS REPORT

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Part of the Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion Division's savings plan 2020/21 is to review and amend the allowances and fees paid to foster carers, adopters and special guardians. A public consultation about the proposed changes is being planned. The Service will seek feedback from carers about their experiences of the current scheme and the changes they would like. Merton's foster carers are currently paid a fee (according to their

skill set) and an allowance for the child/young person which is based on the child's age.

5 TIMETABLE

N/a for this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Currently, we have a projected overspend to our placements budget of £1,540,252 for the 2019/20 financial year. The average weekly cost of one of our children living with in-house foster carers is £432 as opposed to £908 when they live with IFA foster carers.
- 6.2. The financial benefit of increasing our in-house capacity is clear. Residential Children's Homes have an average weekly cost of £3865. Whilst there will always be some children whose best interests are met outside a family setting, our plan is to invest in the recruitment, retention and development of skilled in-house foster carers so that the Fostering Service can meet the needs of children with complex needs.
- 6.3. The Fostering Recruitment marketing budget held corporate services has been re-purposed to deliver a digital platform, reducing available funds from £14,000 to £6,000 for 2019/20. Whilst a Digital Marketing Campaign may be more cost effective than previous recruitment activity the Fostering Service will review and feedback to corporate services colleagues the impact this approach has had on recruitment performance.
- 6.4. Local authority fostering services compete with other Boroughs and IFA in the recruitment of prospective foster carers. Sustained recruitment activity is required to stimulate and reach a wide group of people who may be interested in fostering. Physical publicity campaigns are an important way of raising awareness of fostering and 'sowing the seed' in people's thinking about what they might be able to offer. The service is concerned that a reduction in the budget available for such campaigns may lead to a reduction in recruitment.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Fostering Service operates under the Fostering Services Regulation 2011 and the National Minimum Standards 2011. To ensure children are safeguarded, all our foster carers and their household members (over the age of 18 years) have up to date Disclosure and Barring Service checks, medicals and safer caring policies.
- 7.2. We conduct monthly visits to all foster carers when they have a child living with them, and three monthly when there is no child placed with them. Twice a year we undertake unannounced visits for the purpose of robust quality assurance that carers are providing a safe and caring environment for our children.
- 7.3. Each carer has an annual review of the continued suitability to foster which is chaired by the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO). The FIRO is based in the Children's Social Care Quality Assurance Service in order to operate independently of the Fostering Service. The reviews ensure that

foster carers continue to meet the requirements for fostering approval and the National Minimum Standards. In line with the Fostering Services Regulation 2011, the first, and then every third, annual review is represented to the Fostering Panel for their consideration as to continued suitability of the carer to foster.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Children have a right to grow up in a family setting, safe from abuse, where they are loved, nurtured and develop to their full potential. For most children, the best people to provide this is their parents and extended family and it is a priority of Merton Children's Services that families are supported to safely care for their children before alternative care arrangements are made.
- 8.2. Article 20 of the UN Convention on the rights of a child states that '*If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion*'.
- 8.3. As corporate parents we seek, wherever possible, to match our children in care with families who reflect their race, culture, language and religion. The vast majority of our foster carers live within the borough or in close proximity enabling children to maintain a connection to their local community, friends and schools. We know that a sense of identity and belonging is important to a child's well-being. The larger our numbers of in-house foster carers, the more options we will have available to offer children and young people.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Web links to Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services and National Minimum Standards
 - <https://www.gov.uk/.../fostering-services-national-minimum-standards>
 - <https://ukfostering.org.uk/fostering-information/fostering-regulations>

