

Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 29 June 2016
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Committee rooms C, D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden
SM4 5DX

AGENDA

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|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Apologies for absence | |
| 2 | Declarations of pecuniary interest | |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting | 1 - 8 |
| 4 | Elected Member and departmental portfolio priorities | 9 - 18 |
| 5 | Performance monitoring
This item will include the selection of a Panel Member to act as a lead on performance monitoring. | 19 - 26 |
| 6 | Agreeing the Panel's work programme | 27 - 52 |
| 7 | Task group update: routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts
A verbal update will be provided at the meeting. | |
| 8 | School provision: new secondary school pre-decision scrutiny
To follow. | |

**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

Councillors:

Linda Taylor OBE (Vice-Chair)
Charlie Chirico
Edward Foley
Joan Henry
James Holmes
Marsie Skeete
Dennis Pearce (Chair)
Agatha Mary Akyigyina
Mike Brunt
Pauline Cowper
Jerome Neil

Substitute Members:

Sally Kenny
Peter Southgate
Adam Bush
Jill West

Co-opted Representatives

Helen Forbes, Parent Governor
Representative - Secondary and Special
Sector
Colin Powell, Church of England diocese
Denis Popovs, Primary School Parent
Governor Representative

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non-pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

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Agenda Item 3

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 22 MARCH 2016

(7.15 pm - 9.55 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Katy Neep (in the Chair),
Councillor Linda Taylor, Councillor Charlie Chirico,
Councillor Edward Foley, Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor James Holmes, Councillor Dennis Pearce,
Councillor Peter Southgate, Denis Popovs,
Councillor Jeff Hanna and Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Judy Saunders (Cabinet Member for Children's
Services)

Paul Angeli (Head of Children's Social Care), Paul Ballatt (Head
of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, CSF), Nick
Berbiers (Head of Young People's Services, The Who Cares?
Trust), Liz Broughton (Head of Access to Resources), Elizabeth
Fitzpatrick (Head of School Improvement), Jane McSherry
(Assistant Director of Education), Caroline Muller (Head of
Service Quality, Assurance and Practice Development), Yvette
Stanley (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department) and
Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Co-opted representative Colin Powell (Church of England, Southwark Diocesan
Board of Education) gave his apologies.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There was no declaration of pecuniary interests.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record
with the following amendment: Jeff Hanna provide his apologies to the meeting.

4 EXPERT WITNESS: NICK BERBIERS, HEAD OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES, THE WHO CARES? TRUST (Agenda Item 4)

The panel received a presentation from Nick Berbiers, Head of Young People's
Services at The Who Cares? Trust.

Nick is a qualified social worker who has worked as a practitioner and manager of
services for children and young people for over thirty years. The trust is a voice and

champion for children and young people in the UK living in care; its aim is to improve the day to day experience of all children and young people in care.

The presentation provided a background briefing for Panel members on scrutiny of the Council's corporate parenting role. This focused on:

- Scene setting: the key issues for authorities in fulfilling their corporate parenting role;
- Best practice: best practice in corporate parenting; and
- Scrutiny: what scrutiny of the corporate parenting role looks like.

The similarity between the role of corporate parents and that of good parents was highlighted as was the need to listen to the voices of the children and young people for whom the Council fulfils the role of corporate parent. Members were encouraged to understand the structure of corporate parenting in Merton as well as the characteristics of the care and care leaver population. The responsibility for corporate parenting across all parts of the Council was emphasised.

A copy of the presentation is available with the papers for the meeting.

In response to member questions, Nick Berbiers clarified that corporate parenting of adolescents, like other age groups, requires stability and security with support for emotional and mental health needs. It was highlighted that as in Merton, support is now extending into older age groups. The requirement for a plurality of resources determined by needs to support those in care and leaving care was emphasised.

RESOLVED: to thank Nick Berbiers for his presentation

5 WORKSHOP 1: CORPORATE PARENTING (Agenda Item 5)

This workshop looked at the effectiveness of the Council as a corporate parent.

In response to member questions, Paul Angeli outlined a number of criteria by which the Council's corporate parenting might be judged:

- Stability and permanency of placements/arrangements for children in care;
- The educational attainment of those in and leaving care;
- The degree to which the health needs of those in and leaving care are met; and
- The extent to which the Council aspires for those that are in and leaving care.

It was noted that all of these are easier to achieve the younger that children come into care; successful outcomes are much more difficult to achieve when care starts in adolescence.

Through its discussions the group identified the following specific current successes of the Council's corporate parenting role:

- Provision of mentoring support and opportunities that have supported those in care to develop confidence in a variety of situations;
- The recent intervention of the task group on the housing and employment offer for care leavers and looked after children has supported other Council departments to make this their focus;
- Through the use of robust Personal Education Plans the Virtual School supports the education of Merton's Looked After Children. Whilst educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 for those in care remain volatile (reflecting the impact of increasing numbers coming into care as adolescents and giving only a short time during which to achieve a positive outcome), outcomes at Key Stage 2 are positive;
- The Children, Schools and Families Department is successful in building partnerships to drive the quality of provision for children in and leaving care. An example is the developing relationship with registered social landlords with which the department is working to increase the provision of suitable housing options for care leavers;
- The quality of the relationship between the Children, Schools and Families Department and the Corporate Parenting Board is supporting both to provide better outcomes;
- The quality and permanence of the Looked-After Children (LAC) team. This is evidenced through reviews with Looked-After Children conducted by Independent Reviewing Officers. Success has been achieved by investing in the development of the LAC team;
- The quality of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) service for LAC; and
- Improvement in suitable housing options for those in care (which is up to 93%). This includes where foster carers have made a long-term commitment to an individual young person.

It was noted that the small LAC population in Merton means an individual child has a bigger impact on the statistical measure of performance.

The following issues were highlighted and potentially should be a focus for scrutiny of Merton's corporate parenting role during the coming year:

- The percentage of children in and leaving care that are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). It was highlighted that this is correlated with the increase in those coming into care at an older age (14 plus) and/or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is being addressed through the appointment of a targeted worker with whom Paul Angeli holds monthly reviews. Members were also reminded of the need to consider progress and not just attainment of cohorts where prior attainment is affecting outcomes;
- Obtaining quoracy at child protection conferences, in particularly securing the attendance of the police and school nurses. It was highlighted that some agencies have been under particular pressures but that work is on-going with those that are struggling to attend to ensure that this is addressed;
- The changing profile of the LAC population in Merton (coming into care at an older age) is affecting outcomes at KS4 for some pupils;

- The stability of placements is key to positive outcomes for children in care and should therefore remain a focus;
- Whilst a high quality LAC team has been successfully developed, there is a need to ensure that this is retained going forward. Additionally, there is a need to recruit more child protection officers;
- There remains a difficulty in securing foster carers within the borough and there is a desire to move away from foster carers that are sourced through independent agencies. (This can cause difficulties where these are also caring for Looked-After Children from other areas and there is no opportunity to plan cohesively for all children in their care. Additionally, this provision is expensive.) It was noted that all Merton's Looked-After Children are placed with foster carers within five miles of the borough and that better provision of foster carer places is a London-wide issue that is being addressed collectively with other authorities; and
- Housing provision is a real challenge as the Council fulfils its promise to allow children in care to "stay put" potentially up until the age of 25 years and older for those that require additional support. As a result, the Council needs to provide a broader menu of options which is reflected in the current discussions with registered social landlords to provide short term lets and supported lodgings. The Council is also discussing with a third party its interest in opening a children's home within the borough.

6 WORKSHOP 2: PLACEMENT PROVISION (Agenda Item 6)

This workshop considered the effectiveness of the Council's provision of placements for all Looked-After Children (LAC) in its care.

The Head of Access to Resources explained her role is to ensure young people have appropriate placements. This includes ensuring the placement meets the care plan, it is within (or as near as possible to) the local area (unless a more distant placement is required to meet particular needs) and meets ethnicity, language and cultural needs. It was emphasised that LAC in Merton have for many years been cared for beyond the age of eighteen and the department is still supporting a number of older care leavers, the oldest currently being twenty seven.

The team are trying to increase the pool of foster carers. There are currently sixty sets and sixty eight children have been placed. In response to member questions, it was established that an annual sufficiency statement is produced which outlines an analysis of need and the current provision of placements. At the moment, there is a need for placements for teenagers which could be fulfilled through a children's home (at the current time, there is no children's home within the borough and therefore no provision of this form of placement for children in Merton's care). Provision of foster care is also poorly distributed across the borough with fewer foster carers in the Wimbledon area.

In response to member questions the Assistant Director for Commissioning, Strategy and Performance highlighted:

- Commissioners are committed to getting the best value from all service provision although in Merton children are never moved or placed in provision for financial reasons;
- Merton does use different types of foster carers including same sex and single parents, although there is a need to expand the type of people approached and to try new ways of recruiting, (such as recruiting professionals experienced in working with adolescents as foster carers). Generally, the Council is successful at recruiting foster carers but it is a competitive market and there is a need for more foster carers for teenagers and those with complex needs;
- The Council will not provide its own children's home but rather is exploring either commissioning a small bespoke home or supporting a provider with whom the Council could negotiate nomination rights. A business case is currently being prepared to progress the commissioning approach and, in parallel, we are working with a third party organisation which has expressed an interest in providing a service. The Council is supporting the development of this provision including preparation for Ofsted registration and service planning; and
- The department is not complacent about feedback and is mindful that an 80% satisfaction rating in the young people survey of placements means 20% are not happy. It was highlighted that asking young people their views on their placements is a relatively new approach which Merton is committed to develop further. As yet there are no national benchmarks with which to make comparisons. It was highlighted by the Head of Access to Resources the cohort is small (only 35 children) and that the underlying reasons for young people's dissatisfaction will be explored further.

A panel member spoke about her personal experience as a foster carer. She highlighted foster carers need support in their role and to be given a full understanding of the background of the child to be placed in order to provide adequate care.

In summary, the following successes were highlighted about Merton's foster carer provision:

- The majority of Merton LAC are placed in or close to the borough;
- The quality of placements is carefully monitored and the department will not use independent foster carer agencies (or residential providers) if they do not meet our quality expectations; and
- Merton is relatively successful in recruiting carers and sourcing suitable placements more generally for children in our care.

Those issues that might be a focus for the scrutiny of foster carer provision over the coming year were also highlighted:

- Increasing recruitment of foster carers for adolescents;
- Supporting foster carers so they understand the vulnerability and complexity of the children they are looking after;

- Alternative options for placements for LAC aged 16 plus;
- Looking in detail at young people's views on placements specifically the response of those children that identify as dissatisfied; and
- Considering the options for a small scale children's home in Merton.

7 PLENARY SESSION: WORKSHOP FEEDBACK (Agenda Item 7)

Each workshop reported back to all Panel members and highlighted areas for scrutiny focus over the next year.

Members congratulated the Chair on the success of the workshop approach. It was noted that this had increased the amount of scrutiny being achieved at the meeting and made it easier for Panel members to contribute, to examine the scrutiny topic in-depth and question officers in detail.

RESOLVED: to consider a range ways of working to make scrutiny more effective in the next municipal year.

8 TASK GROUP REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

Panel members were reminded that two mini task groups had been established to investigate:

- Improving the education outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); and
- Preparing young people leaving care with specific reference to accessing and securing employment and housing.

The aspiration had also been for Panel members to be more involved in task group work, undertaking their own research and reporting back to the group.

Initial task group meetings established clear commonalities in the remit of both task groups and as a result it was recommended that these be merged to focus on routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts, specifically children with SEND and care leavers.

It was noted that the mini task group approach would not be abandoned and will be considered as part of next year's work programme.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina volunteered to join the task group.

RESOLVED: to merge the two mini task groups into one with the recommended focus.

9 UPDATE REPORT: CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENTS (Agenda Item 9)

Secondary place provision

In response to member questions, Paul Ballatt clarified:

- Secondary place provision in Merton will be increased through a new school that is being commissioned by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and provided by Harris Academy. Members were reminded that whilst the Council is supporting this development, it is not responsible for the delivery;
- Due to the need for increased secondary places the Children, Schools and Families Department is taking an active role in the development of the new school including pursuing options for potential sites for the school with colleagues in the Environment and Regeneration Department. This followed a comprehensive site search which was limited by the shortage of available space in the west of the borough. There is currently a preferred option involving use of Council and third party owned land but because of commercial confidentiality this option cannot yet be publicised;
- The opening date for the new school is September 2017 but this may be delayed. Cabinet has already approved the expansion of Harris Academy Merton which will be able to accommodate some of the additional demand for places before the new school comes on stream; and
- Officers continue to consider that with the new school and between 1-3 further expansions (including Harris Merton as noted above) the Council will be able to fulfil its responsibility to provide secondary school places.

Academisation

In response to a member question, Jane McSherry clarified;

- The Children, Schools and Families Department is working with schools to plan for the implementation of the Government's recently announced academisation agenda (all schools to become Academies by 2020 or to have plans to do so by 2022);
- All schools have been contacted and advised that there is no rush to make a decision and that the emphasis is on thinking this through carefully. Meetings will be held with heads and governors next term and the department will also look at how other authorities are responding to the policy including those that already have multiple academies;
- There will be a need to liaise with the Catholic and Church of England Dioceses around their plans for implementation; and
- Most importantly, the department will work with all schools to ensure none are left isolated as this policy is implemented.

On-going scrutiny of children and young people's services

Paul Angeli highlighted there will be a need to consider how scrutiny of services for children and young people is achieved as some are regionalised or centralised across London. These services are likely to include adoption, youth offending and may also include other social care functions.

RESOLVED: to note the update report.

10 PERFORMANCE REPORT: CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
DEPARTMENT (Agenda Item 10)

In response to member questions regarding the red status of the percentage of child protection conferences that are quorate, Paul Angeli clarified;

- It is the attendance of the police and school nurses that is causing the difficulty;
- School nurses were sending reports instead of attending conferences. This approach has been reversed by commissioners and the attendance of school nurses should now be secured; and
- Discussions are currently taking place with the police to address this issue.

RESOLVED: to note the performance report of the Children, Schools and Families Department.

11 SCRUTINY TOPIC SUGGESTIONS (Agenda Item 11)

Panel members were reminded to complete the annual member survey that has been distributed and provides the opportunity to make suggestions for next year's scrutiny work programme. (The closing date for responses is Friday 15 April 2016.)

Additionally, it was noted that the topic selection workshop will take place on Tuesday 24 May 2016 to which all Panel members are invited and their attendance very much encouraged. Items to consider at the workshop will include those identified during this meeting.

Some suggestions were made for topics for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- The attainment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) cohorts;
- Ensuring the ethnic diversity of social workers to reflect the population characteristics of Looked-After Children;
- How to achieve the recruitment of foster carers from across the borough including areas where there is currently little provision (ie: the west of the borough, specifically Wimbledon); and
- Provision of secondary school places.

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 29th June 2016

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Overview of Services and Key Challenges for Children, Schools and Families Department 2015-16

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children's Services

Lead members: Cllr Katy Neep; Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Scrutiny Panel notes the report and considers the key service challenges outlined.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides members of the new Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an overview of services provided by the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department and the key service challenges facing the Department in 2016-17.

2 DETAILS

2.1 The work of CSF Department is informed by a complex legal and regulatory framework and by governmental public policy initiatives. In response to these drivers, the Department provides or commissions a comprehensive range of universal, targeted and specialist services for children, young people and families in Merton. Key statutory responsibilities of the Department working alone or with partner agencies include:

- Leadership of the statutory safeguarding and children's partnership arrangements in the local authority area
- The provision of sufficient, suitable early years childcare and education
- The provision of sufficient and suitable school places for children and young people 0-19yrs
- Statutory assessment of children's Special Educational Needs and the provision of suitable education for those with special/complex needs
- Improving school standards and pupil attainment in Merton Community schools and providing educational leadership to the wider school community

- Co-ordinating school admissions; ensuring school attendance including court action; quality assuring home education, commissioning alternative education
- Safeguarding and protecting children at risk of significant harm
- Providing support to children in need and their families
- Providing support services to children with disabilities and their families
- Looking after children and young people through compulsory & voluntary means
- Achieving permanency for Looked After Children through adoption, fostering or special guardianship
- Provision of leaving care services for young people who have been looked after
- Intervention with and supervision of youth offenders and prevention of offending
- Enabling the provision of positive activities for young people and a suitable local youth work offer

Overview of CSF Department Services

2.2 CSF Department is led by the Director of Children's Services, a statutory appointment, and 3 Assistant Directors who manage operational and strategic services. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the functions of each Division:

2.3 Education Division

- School Improvement including primary and secondary school improvement; continuous professional development of school staff; educational psychology; sensory impairment; schools ICT support; school governor support service; Virtual School for looked after children and care leavers
- Education inclusion including education welfare; virtual behaviour service; language and learning; speech and language; alternative education; youth services; young people's participation
- Early years and children's centres services including children's centres development; family information service; child care quality, standards and provider support; Portage; 0-5yrs Supporting Families Team
- Integrated service for Children with Disabilities and SEN including statutory assessment; social work service; parent partnership; shortbreaks service (including Brightwell Children's Home)

2.4 Social Care and Youth Inclusion

- Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH); First Response Team; 5-16yrs Vulnerable Children's Team; Bond Road Family Centre

- Social Work Intervention including core safeguarding and care planning social work teams undertaking casework with children at risk, children in need and children looked after; court processes
- Permanency, Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers services including fostering support team; adoption team; 14+ settled LAC and care leavers team
- Family and adolescent services including Transforming Families team; Youth Offending Service; My Futures Team
- Quality Assurance and Practice Development including quality assurance of casework; management of Independent Reviewing Officers; professional support to Merton Safeguarding Children Board; professional learning and development

2.5 Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

- Commissioning and Partnerships including CSF commissioning team; joint commissioning strategy for Children’s Trust; partnership development with local community and voluntary sector
- Access to Resources service including LAC/SEN placements procurement; 16+ accommodation; fostering recruitment and assessment; LAC contact service
- Contracts and School Organisation including schools PFI contract; schools catering and cleaning contracts; Service Level Agreements with schools; services for young people and families contracts;
- School admissions; school places planning; capital strategy and programme management
- Policy, Planning and Performance including strategic and operational planning; research and information; performance information and management reporting; continuous improvement co-ordination; policy tracking and cascade; Children’s Trust induction and communications

Budget and Staffing

2.6 The 2016 -17 revenue budget for the Department and current staffing levels are as follows:

Division	Net LA Budget	Headcount - FTE
Education	£10.776 million	269.0
Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion	£13.174 million	207.6
Commissioning Strategy and Performance	£9.302 million	45.6
Other Services*	£16.929 million	6.2
Totals	£50.181 million	528.4

* Note: Other Services include senior management; asylum seeker costs; schools related expenditure including PFI unitary charge; schools depreciation; schools pension and redundancy costs

* Note: Excludes Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant of £172.781 million

2.7 As part of the council's overall medium term financial strategy, CSF Department is required to deliver significant savings in the current and future years:

Year	Saving Target
2016-17	£2.191 million
2017-18	£1.161 million
2018-19	£1.853 million
2019-20	£0.187 million
Total	£5.392 million

2.8 Savings up to and including the current year have already been agreed by the council and included in budget figures. Proposals from the department to meet future years' savings targets will be published in the autumn budget setting round and reported to CYP Scrutiny panel.

2.9 In addition to the revenue budget, the Department also manages a significant capital budget, largely for the provision of additional school places to meet the council's sufficiency duty. In recent years, the growth in demand for school places has meant that CSF Department has been a major recipient of council capital funding and this is likely to remain the case for a number of years to come. Capital budgets in the council's medium term financial strategy for increasing primary and secondary school places, including for children with SEN are:

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Primary Expansion	4,027,230	0	0	0
Secondary Expansion	8,031,730	11,530,050	9,389,950	6,200,000
SEN	1,169,540	3,844,360	3,650,000	1,000,000
Other	1,490,170	754,450	650,000	755,000
Total CSF	14,718,670	16,128,860	13,689,950	7,955,000

2.10 The above figures will be reviewed within the budget setting process in autumn 2016.

Partnerships

2.11 The work of CSF Department is focused on improving outcomes for children and their families in Merton. In nearly all areas of our work strong collaboration with other agencies is necessary to deliver services which are well co-ordinated and/or integrated - research over many years, supported by public policy, has demonstrated the positive impact on outcomes from multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches.

2.12 CSF Department has had a strong track record over recent years, marked by successive inspection findings, for building strong partnerships with key agencies including schools; other council departments; NHS Trusts and

- Public Health; the police service and the local community and voluntary sector.
- 2.13 At a strategic level, ongoing partnership development and accountability is promoted via statutory multi-agency governance groups including Merton's Safeguarding Children Board and Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board. These groups, and Merton's Children's Trust Board, undertake strategic planning and commissioning of local services and multi-agency performance management.
- 2.14 At an operational level, strong local multi-agency partnership practice is seen across many areas of children's services including in the implementation of integrated procedures for the safeguarding of children in the borough; multi-agency delivery of early years services; integrated services for children with SEN and disabilities and in youth offending services.
- 2.15 A significant number of support services for children and their families and youth services have historically been commissioned from the local community and voluntary sector, although savings taken in 2016-17 have reduced the number and range of these services.
- 2.16 Partners in Merton's Children's Trust have for many years agreed that the production of a multi-agency Children and Young People's Plan enables joint priorities to be set and agencies to be held to account for their contributions. Officers and partner agencies refreshed the CYPP during late 2015 and the new plan for 2016-19 was published in January 2016.

Public Policy Issues

- 2.17 In May 2015, the Queen's Speech outlined the legislative programme for the new parliament and contained a number of Bills which will have an impact on the delivery of children's services:
- 2.18 A Children and Social Work Bill is currently going through the parliamentary process. Key elements of the Bill include measures to speed up the adoption process; a requirement for councils to establish and communicate a 'local offer' for care leavers; a requirement that councils offer all care leavers personal advisors; a duty on councils to promote the educational achievement of children who have been adopted; the intention to establish a new regulatory framework around the social work profession including a focus on training and professional standards.
- 2.19 The Education for All Bill intends to provide powers to convert under-performing schools into academies. The Bill signals the current government's ambition for all schools to be academies but it will not provide compulsion other than in the case of those schools which are under-performing. The Bill will transfer responsibility for school improvement from councils to Headteachers, although councils may continue to offer school improvement services. Measures in the Bill will strengthen the responsibility placed on schools for assisting excluded children. The Bill also signals the establishment of a new national formula for funding schools.
- 2.20 The Prison and Courts Reform Bill contains measures to establish 'reform' prisons, including for young offenders, which will have a greater emphasis on training, rehabilitation and education. The Bill will also provide for the

- modernisation of courts and tribunals, with the aim of reducing unnecessary delays.
- 2.21 The department will need to track the progress of these Bills over the coming months to enable detailed planning to address the implications and requirements of the new legislation.
- 2.22 In addition to new legislation, a number of other public policy measures will have implications for the department's work:
- 2.23 The inspection and regulation of children's services, including those provided by councils, partner agencies, schools and early years settings, continues to be a key focus for central government and regulators including Ofsted and CQC. The inspection regime comes with increasingly harder tests and higher expectations. A wider range of services – for example SEN services; thematic issues such as responses to child sexual exploitation; children missing from home, care or education – are also now subject to in depth inspection. While higher expectations are to be welcomed, the increasingly taxing regulatory framework demands constant 'inspection readiness' of council and partner agencies' services and significant demands on organisational capacity.
- 2.24 The government's position on dealing with failing children's services is continuing to develop, whereby responsibility for the delivery of these services may be taken away from councils and transferred under new arrangements - for example contracting with successful councils or the establishment of Trust arrangements. New models have already been seen in various parts of the country.
- 2.25 Government is also progressing with plans for regionalising and outsourcing specific children's services functions, including in adoption and youth justice. For example, Merton officers are currently engaged with DfE and other London councils in respect of the regionalisation of some adoption functions including marketing, adopter assessment and post adoption support. These areas of work could be delivered by private or voluntary organisations or through 'lead authority' arrangements on a contracted basis. Officers are also tracking developments in youth justice with the possibility of sub-regional arrangements for functions including court assessment work and supervision of young offenders.

Transformation

- 2.26 The significant budget reductions affecting the council since 2010 have been a major challenge. The council is responding to this challenge through its 'transformation' programme designed to re-engineer organisational structures and models of service delivery. Each department has been required to produce and implement Target Operating Models (TOMs) to inform transformation. Increasingly, the work on TOMs has been expected to provide the 'road map' for the shape of future services and also the reassurance that savings targets can be met.
- 2.27 CSF Department's overall approach to service transformation has been to focus on our statutory duties and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services to achieve the best value possible for the investment in

children's services received. The department has strengthened its approach to commissioning, external and internal performance management and quality assurance and has already undertaken major reorganisation in early years, youth services and children's social care services. Some of the key elements of our transformation to date have included:

- Establishing a number of shared/hosted services with other local authorities including for school admissions; school improvement and school governor services (although some of these arrangements are now under review with the other local authorities involved, largely because of further savings or transformation programmes in those other authorities).
- Transforming universal youth services in Merton through implementing a partnership commissioning model and securing funding from external sources to replace council funding lost through savings.
- Establishing a new Commissioning team and Access to Resources service to improve commissioning practice and the procurement of expensive placements and packages of care.
- Re-commissioning early intervention and preventive services and establishing 'enhanced' level casework teams to sharpen the targeting of such services and maximise their impact.
- Re-organising social care and youth inclusion services to improve assessment, planning and quality assurance in casework and to improve children's and families' experience of social work practice.
- Establishing a locality model for the Department's children's centres enabling efficiencies to be made through sharing of resources and expertise and making more efficient use of infrastructure.
- Implementing the corporate flexible working agenda and vacating costly outposted service accommodation enabling both savings and closer co-operation across specific CSF services.

2.28 In the year ahead and medium term, further transformation will be required to meet outstanding savings targets and ensure fitness for purpose to deliver children's services overall and address emerging public policy changes. Key elements of this work are contained in the department's refreshed Target Operating Model (TOM) and include:

- Reorganising the department into two Divisions, making savings in senior management and Head of Service levels and reviewing management portfolios going forward.
- Reviewing the department's data and intelligence and business support functions to address savings targets set.
- Making better use of ICT to support business needs and also to promote improved integration of CSF services. Following procurement of a new ICT system (Mosaic) to replace the existing Carefirst system, the department has been preparing for the system's 'go-live' date which has been delayed into 2016-17.

- Driving further economies and efficiencies through progressing the joint commissioning agenda in particular with Public Health and Clinical Commissioning Group partners and through exploring new forms of outcome based commissioning currently being promoted across the public sector.
- Undertaking a more strategic review of the department's property portfolio, agreeing the strategic direction for key sites, enabling income targets to be achieved and identifying buildings which could be vacated to support asset release for the council.

Service Specific Challenges

2.29 In addition to the department-wide changes noted above, there are a number of key service specific challenges which need to be addressed to support the further transformation of the department and children's services in the coming years:

- Reviewing with partner agencies Merton's Child Wellbeing Model, MASH and pathways into early help services. This work, in simple terms, will review the effectiveness to date of our 'whole system' approach to identifying the 'right' children who require a safeguarding response and those whose needs can be met through the delivery of typically more affordable 'early help' services.
- Maintaining our focus on effective recruitment and retention of social work staff – permanent social workers are a key foundation stone both for delivering high quality interventions and for enabling reduction in use of expensive temporary staff obtained through agencies.
- Extending implementation of evidence-based practice tools such as 'Signs of Safety' in order to increase the impact and, therefore, the cost effectiveness of our interventions with children and families.
- Developing a bespoke strategy for work with adolescents with a focus on prevention and integration of service responses. This group of young people are over-represented in our 'looked after' population and are often receiving multiple services. More effective interventions at an earlier stage will reduce pressures on key departmental budgets.
- As some adoption and youth justice functions are regionalised, the department will need to accommodate the residual local authority functions and understand the impact of any funding changes resulting from regionalisation within our overall budget planning.
- School improvement activity will need to be focused on further developing school to school support while targeting local authority support to those schools at risk of being judged by Ofsted as under-performing. The role and function of the Merton Education Partnership will be reviewed in this context.
- More broadly, in view of anticipated major reduction in the local authority's Education Support Grant, the department's school improvement and other 'traded' services will need to position themselves more strongly as services attractive to schools.

- The department's SENDIS services, with the CCG and community health provider, will need to maintain momentum in implementing EHC planning for children and in further developing the 'local offer' for children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.
- Having concentrated to date on the provision of additional school places in our primary and secondary sectors, the department's focus in 2016-17 will be to develop and implement solutions for the additional SEN places required over the next few years.
- The department is implementing fee increases for directly provided childcare places in 2016-17 and will develop proposals during the year for possible rationalisation of this provision. Additionally, the service will need to ensure full-cost recovery of charges associated with the co-location of health provider staff in our children's centres.
- Further work is ongoing in respect of identifying and securing alternative funding streams for youth services to promote the sustainability of local direct access youth provision in the borough.

2.30 As part of the department's continuous improvement agenda, we will continue to review key service strategies including:

- timeliness of court proceedings and permanency for children looked after;
- overall sufficiency of placements, placement stability and use of out of borough placements for our LAC and care leavers;
- our response to missing children and those missing education;
- our work on the child sexual exploitation; violence against women and girls and Prevent agendas;
- the implementation of EHC planning in SENDIS and the transfer of 'obsolete' SEN statements;
- the work of school improvement services with the small number of schools rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement.

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. This report outlines priorities and challenges for the department in 2016-17 and beyond.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The public policy developments and service challenges outlined in this report are occurring in the context of significant budget pressures within the department and current uncertainty in respect of key national funding streams. The department is facing ongoing budget pressures in the areas of

asylum seeking children/families with no recourse to public funds; LAC placements; SEN Transport and spending on agency staff, particularly social workers. Government has signalled significant reduction in councils' Education Support and Youth Justice Grants. These, along with savings outlined in paragraph 2.7, make delivering services to budget extremely challenging for the department.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There is a statutory framework around all services delivered by the department and the challenge for the council is to ensure that children's services provided or commissioned by the department meet both statutory responsibilities and local and national expectations.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Services provided by the department are designed to promote human rights, equity, narrowing gaps in outcomes and good relationships across Merton's communities.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Specific implications have been noted in the main body of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report

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

- 11.1 N/A

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. N/A

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 29 June 2016

Agenda item:

Wards: All wards

Subject: Performance monitoring 2015/16 (March 2016)

Lead officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, Children Schools and Families

Lead member(s): Councillor Katy Neep; Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah.

Forward Plan reference number: n/a

Contact officer: Naheed Chaudhry, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance.

Recommendations: That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel;

- A. Note the current level of performance as at the end 2015/16 (appendix 1)
 - B. Consider reviewing the Scrutiny Panel dataset for 2016/17
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To provide the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel with a regular update on the performance of the Children, Schools and Families Department and key partners.
- 1.2. Data provided in appendix one is as at the end of March 2016 and as such the end of year outturn. Members are invited to consider reviewing the dataset for 2016/17.

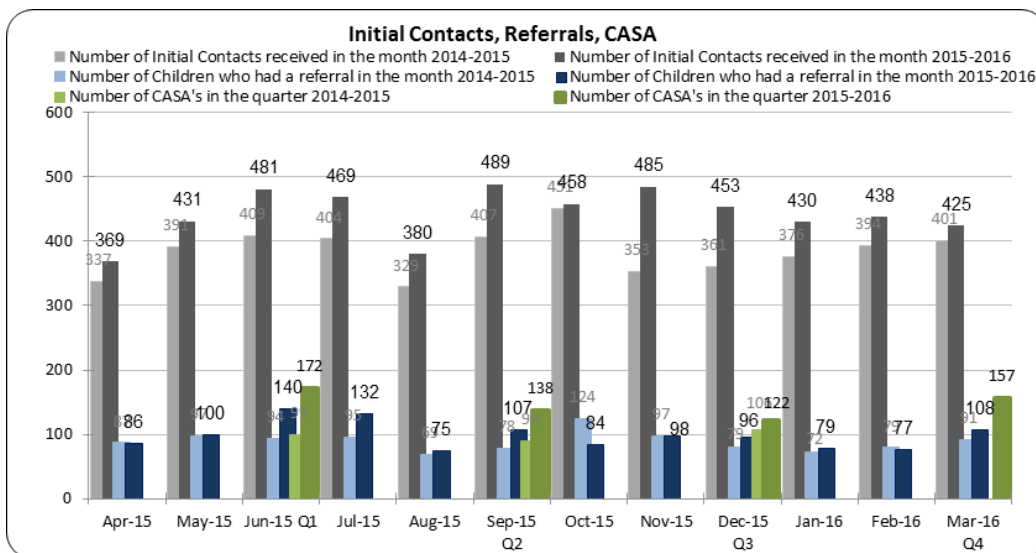
2. DETAILS

- 2.1. At a Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting in June 2007 it was agreed that the Children Schools and Families Department would submit a regular performance report on a range of key performance indicators.
- 2.2. This performance monitoring report acts as a 'health check' for the Panel and as such is over and above the more detailed performance reports scheduled to the Panel which relate to specific areas of activities such as the annual Schools Standards report, Corporate Parenting Report, MSCB annual report etc.
- 2.3. This performance index is periodically reviewed and revised by Members, most recently in April 2015. In line with good performance monitoring practice Members may wish to review this dataset for the new municipal year. Officers could facilitate a workshop to review and agree a revised dataset for Scrutiny Member monitoring during 2016/17.
- 2.4. Members have also requested that Officers raise any additional KPIs on which there may be additional management oversight at any given point in the year. As this is an end of year report, Officers have provided additional commentary on particularly good end of year outturns as well as management comments on exception for all Red indicators. Appendix one presents the performance dataset for 2015/16.

2.5. **March 2016 Performance commentary**

2.6. **Assessments**

2.7. On average Merton receives 440 initial contacts a month, one in four of these contacts lead to a referral of which only 4% result in no further action and the remainder require either a statutory Single Assessment or Section 47 enquiry. The number of repeat referrals remains low (13.3%), suggesting that appropriate services are provided at the point of our first intervention.



2.8. **Indicator 2: Percentage of Single assessments completed in the statutory 45 days – Green.**

2.9. 93% of Single Assessments undertaken were completed within the 45 day statutory requirements. Performance improvements have been delivered through sustained performance management over the past two years, this outturn is a 10% improvement on 2013/14, 81%. Merton's 2015/16 performance is better than the National 82% and London 80% benchmarks. The focus for the coming year will be to engage services as soon as practicable rather than waiting until the assessment has been completed.

2.10. **Indicator 3: Percentage of new Education, Health and Care plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale – Red.**

2.11. 50% of new requests for EHC plans were completed within 20 weeks, this is broadly inline with the national benchmark 55% (Jan 2016). During the year we have seen an increase in requests for new EHC plans, we received 237 requests between April 2015 to March 2016 of which we agreed 177 with 5 pending a decision on whether to undertake an assessment. We are continuing to embed the new statutory process.

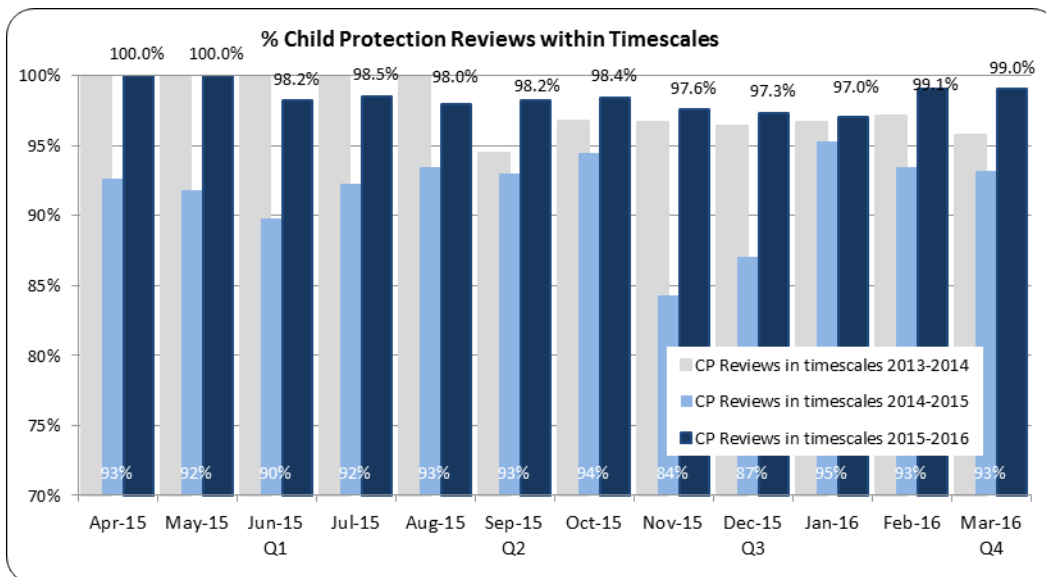
2.12. Alongside new requests we have transferred SEN statements to EHC plans as per the requirements of the Children and Families Act, of these transfers 74% were completed within 20 weeks. We have 817 transfers remaining before March 2018. Merton (18% transferred) is performing in line with the national benchmark (18%) and better than London (14%, January 2016) this places Merton 7th fastest in London to transfer SEN statements to EHC plans.

2.13. The SEN reform grant has been confirmed for 2016/17, we will use this to retain additional capacity to the SEN team. We are reviewing our internal processes to improve timeframes and increase the administrative support to the SEN Team. We are working with other Local Authorities to review best practice and to support the reconfiguration of the SEN staffing team's role and function.

2.14. **Child Protection**

2.15. There has been a reduction in the number of children subject to Child Protection plans during the year; this is attributed to the ending of plans for large sibling groups and for some child protection plans that have been open for more than 18 months. Management is continuing to monitor this reduction.

2.16. **Indicator 9: Percentage of child protection reviews completed in time – Green.** It is pleasing to report that 99% of all child protection reviews were completed on time. This is an improvement on last year 93% and better than both National 96% and London 96% benchmarks.



2.17. **Indicator 11: Percentage of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time – Red.**

2.18. 24% of children were subject to second or subsequent child protection plan as at the end of March 2016, this equates to 49 of 204 children.

2.19. This outturn is higher than the national benchmark of 16% (March 2015). During 2015/16 we completed an extensive review of all the cases where child protection plans had been initiated for a second or subsequent time and have agreed a number of recommended actions to deliver improvements through 2016/17. Actions include: strengthening the quality of Child Protection planning through focused training with Child Protection Chairs and social workers in Signs of Safety; more effective safety planning particularly in relation to domestic violence; strengthened processes for consultation and review where children have previously been subject to a plan.

2.20. **Looked After Children**

2.21. The number of looked after children has remained stable throughout the past year. This reflects a cohort of children and young people who have a plan for long term care, and a further more fluid cohort of children (generally in the 0-5 age group) who are moving on to alternative permanent arrangements away from care either through reunification to their parents or through an alternative permanent care route (eg adoption).

2.22. Placement stability has been an on-going area of focus for us, and it is reassuring to see evidence of improvement for those in care for 2.5 years+. The data does however show that we still have a number of children who are failing to achieve stability in care with 19 children and young people having 3 or more placement moves, of these 4 children are young children whose final move was into a permanent placement (not in care). Of the remaining 15 children 5 are young

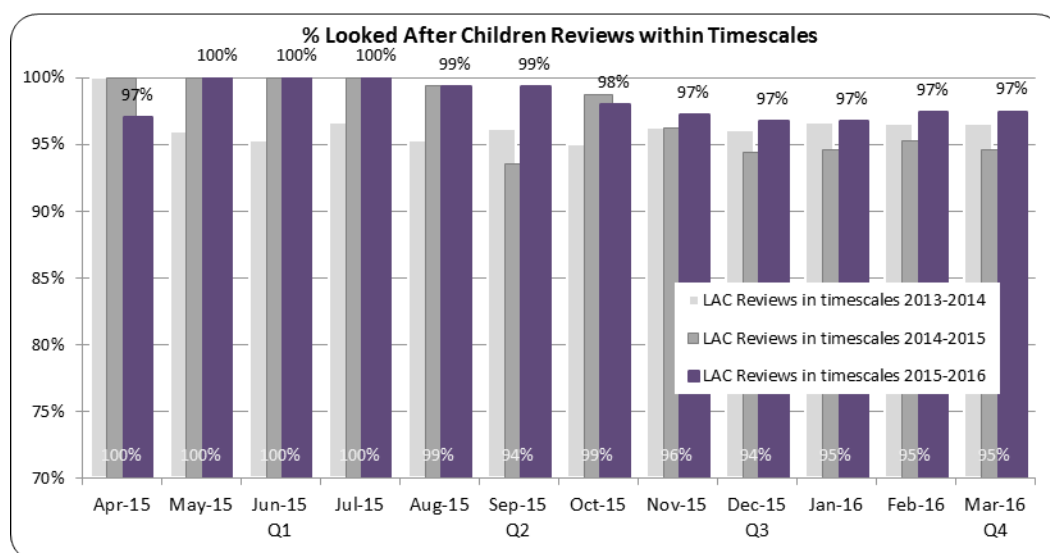
people presenting challenging behaviours which are resulting in placement disruption and a further 5 young people in this cohort are either at risk or have previously been at risk of CSE and have a number of missing episodes (a factor in instability for several of these children has been time limited placements in specialist out of borough placements).

2.23. **Indicator 15: Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against the national target of 26 weeks - Green**

2.24. There continues to be significant improvements in the timeliness of care proceedings being completed. CAFCASS published data as at the end of March 2016 – 30 weeks YTD, this is in line with the national average of 30 weeks and an improvement from March 2015 average of 42 weeks.

2.25. **Indicator 16: Percentage of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales – Red.**

2.26. We continue to be ambitious in setting our Children in Care review target expectation of 100% timeliness. During 2015/16 97% of all Children in Care cases were reviewed on time, this equates to 154 of 158 cases. Senior managers review all cases which fall outside timescales to establish the reasons why and where necessary take follow up action with staff. Our performance remains above the national benchmark 95% (2014/15).



2.27. **Indicator 21: Number of in-house foster carers recruited – Red.**

2.28. We set a stretch target to recruit 20 foster cares during the year, we have delivered 13 approvals in 2015/16, 9 of these being from our target group of carers for teenagers.

2.29. We had a further 11 in the assessment process at the end of Quarter 4. Some of these did not come to approval in 2015/16 due to delays in Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) checks being returned. We have continued to work to improve timescale for assessment of foster carers, improving from 6 months to 5 in the last year. We are also undertaking 3 assessments of supported lodgings carers to increase our pool of available placements for young people aged 16/17.

2.30. **Indicator 20: Percentage of Looked After Children placed with agency foster carers – Green**

2.31. Only 37% of LAC were placed with agency foster carers, this demonstrates a year on year improvement (2013/14, 50%, 2014/15, 41%) and is better than the national benchmark 39%. Although we have recruited fewer new foster carers than our ambitious target our year on year successful recruitment strategy is contributing to this good performance.

2.32. **Children’s Centres and Schools**

2.33. **Indicator 23: Percentage of all Children Centre Ofsted inspection ‘overall effectiveness’ outcomes which are good or outstanding – Green**

2.34. 100% of all Children’s Centres are graded good or outstanding; this has been sustained for the third year running. Merton’s performance is better than the national (66%) and London (72%) benchmark.

2.35. **Indicator 25: Percentage of School Ofsted inspection ‘overall effectiveness’ outcomes which are good or outstanding – Green**

2.36. 91% of Merton Schools are graded good or outstanding; this is an improvement on last year (85%) and is better than the national (84%) and London (88%) benchmark.

2.37. **Indicator 29 and 30: Percentage of Reception year surplus places. Percentage of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places including Academies - Red**

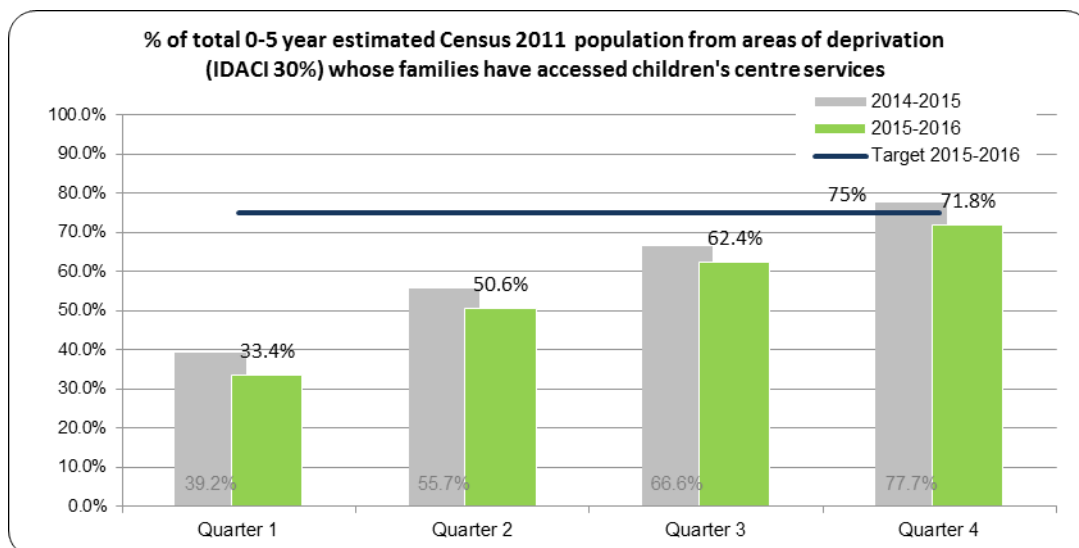
2.38. We set challenging targets which we have very nearly met for both reception and Year 7 surplus places, both outturns are well within the old Audit commission recommended level of surplus places of between 5% and 10%.

2.39. With regards to percentage of reception year surplus places the outturn figure 6.2% is only 1.2% from the target and towards the bottom of the old Audit commission recommended level of surplus of between 5% and 10%.

2.40. With regards to percentage of Year 7 surplus places the outturn figure 5.5% is only 0.5% from the target, apart from one all schools were substantively full in Year 7.

2.41. **Indicator 24: Percentage of total 0-5 year estimated ACORN estimated population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services – Red**

2.42. 72% 0-5 year old children living in areas of deprivation have accessed Children’s Centres. As the population profiles of Merton changes contact becomes more challenging, this also impacts the number of children eligible for the 2 year funding for free provision, which is based primarily on low working income or low household income for families not working. We continue to use multi agency partnerships to raise awareness and identify suitable families.

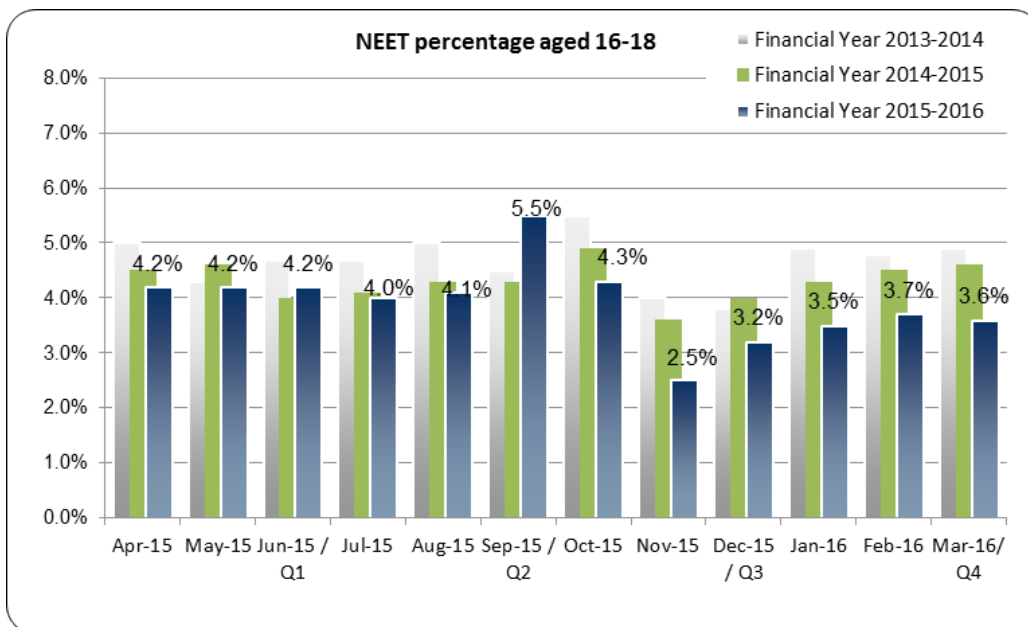


2.43. **Young People and Services**

2.44. There are no Red indicators to report under the Young People and Services theme.

2.45. **Indicator 32: Percentage of CYP (16-18 year olds) not in education, employment or straining (NEET) – Green**

2.46. The NEET figure for Merton stood at 3.6% at the end of March 2016, a 1% reduction compared to the same time last year (4.6%) and above the set target of 5%. This also represents a marked improvement compared to 2013/14 5.3%.



2.47. **Indicator 33: Percentage of CYP *(16-18 year olds) education, employment or training status “unknown”. – Green**

2.48. The percentage of Merton young people whose status was unknown at the end of March was 4.4%, which is the lowest in South West London and the 10th best in London.

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

Appendix 1: CYPP performance index 2015/16 (March 2016)

2. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

CSF Performance Management Framework <http://intranet/departments/csf-index/csf-performance.htm>

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Performance Index 2015/16



No.	Performance Indicators	Target 2015/16	Deviation	Polarity	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2015/16 performance											Notes		
					Merton 2013/14	Merton 2014/15	England 2014/15	London 2014/15		Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15 / Q1	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15 / Q2	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15 / Q3	Jan-16	Feb-16		Mar-16 / Q4	
Assessments																							
1	Number of Common and Shared Assessments undertaken (CASAs)	Not a target measure	n/a	High	707	443	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure				172			310				432		589	Quarterly (Time lag in collating CASAs from partner agencies) YTD
2	% of Single Assessments completed within the statutory 45 days	82% (National 2014/15)	2.5%	High	81%	91%	82%	80%	Green	93%	92%	93%	93%	94%	95%	94%	95%	93%	90%	93%	93%	Year to Date	
3	% of Education, Health and Care plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (new, including exceptions)	85%	2.5%	High	100% (Jan 2015)	58% (Jan 2016)	55% (Jan 2016)	64% (Jan 2016)	Red			87%			72%			60%			50%	Year to Date	
Child protection																							
4	Child Protection Plans rate per 10,000	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	39	42	43	41	Not a target measure	36	36	35	35	37	37	35	36	33	33	32	30	Monthly - as at the end of the month	
5	Number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	182	180	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	165	164	163	162	170	171	162	164	152	150	149	138	Monthly - as at the end of the month	
6	Number of family groups subject of Child protection plans	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	86	84	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	94	96	94	86	90	88	83	84	78	75	75	72	Monthly - as at the end of the month	
7	% of Children subject of a Child Protection Plan with an allocated Social Worker	100%	n/a	High	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Monthly - as at the end of the month	
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	95%	2.5%	High	93%	91%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			93%			91%			88%			100%	Quarterly	
9	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	96% (National 2013)	n/a	High	93%	93%	94%	96%	Green	100%	100%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	97%	97%	99%	99%	Year To Date (NI 67)	
10	Percentage of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a 4 weekly visit within timescales in the month - (reporting activities)*	Not a target measure	n/a	High	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	92%	90%	82%	87%	80%	79%	84%	87%	89%	92%	91%	94%	*Measure reviewed mid year to meet local managements needs (Dec 2015)	
11	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	13% (London 2014)	20%	Low	11%	17%	17%	14%	Red	22%	22%	21%	26%	24%	25%	26%	28%	26%	26%	24%	24%	Year To Date (NI 65)	
Looked After Children																							
12	Looked After Children rate per 10,000	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	33	34	60	52	Not a target measure	34	35	36	35	35	35	33	34	36	35	35	36	End of the month snapshot	
13	Number of Looked After Children	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	150	157	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	158	160	165	163	160	160	153	156	165	160	160	164	End of the month snapshot	
14	% of Looked After Children with an allocated Social Worker	100%	n/a	High	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Year to Date	
15	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	37 weeks	8%	Low	29	24	30	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			28 weeks			31 weeks			21 weeks			38 weeks (30 weeks YTD)	Quarterly	
16	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	100%	1%	High	97%	95%	Not published	Not published	Red	97%	100%	100%	100%	99%	99%	98%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%	Year To Date (NI 66)	
17	% of Looked After Children participating in their reviews in month	90%	2%	High	87%	66%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	84%	95%	86%	90%	88%	88%	91%	89%	88%	88%	90%	90%	Year to Date	
18	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - number of moves (3 moves or more in the year)	15%	n/a	Low	13%	14%	11%	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	1%	2%	3%	3%	4%	6%	5%	7%	10%	12%	13%	12%	Year To Date (NI 62)	
19	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - length of placement	68%	2%	High	58%	46%	67%	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	46%	55%	63%	63%	65%	66%	66%	70%	63%	64%	66%	68%	End of the month snapshot (NI 63)	
20	% of Looked After Children placed with agency foster carers	46%	12%	Low	50%	42%	39%	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			41%			38%			44%			37%	Quarterly	
21	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	20	10%	High	14	10	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red			4			7			10			13	Year to Date	
22	Number of Looked After Children who were adopted and agency Special Guardianship Orders granted	13	8%	High	15	16	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	2	4	4	5	6	9	11	11	12	13	13	13	Year to Date	

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No.	Performance Indicators	Target 2015/16	Deviation	Polarity	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2015/16 performance											Notes		
					Merton 2013/14	Merton 2014/15	England 2014/15	London 2014/15		Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15 / Q1	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15 / Q2	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15 / Q3	Jan-16	Feb-16		Mar-16 / Q4	
Childrens Centres and Schools																							
23	% outcome of all Children Centre Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	100%	0%	High	100%	100%	66%	72%	Green			100%				100%				100%	Year to Date. National and London Comparitors as at 31/08/2015.		
24	% of total 0-5 year estimated ACORN estimated population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services	75%	n/a	High	78%	78%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red			33%				51%				62%	Year to Date Cumulates (Target 19% per quarter)		
25	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	86%	2.5%	High	87%	85%	84%	88%	Green			85%				85%				89%	Year to Date. National and London Comparitors as at 31/08/2015.		
26	Number of Primary permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	0	n/a	Low	0 (Academic Year 2012-2013)	0 (Academic Year 2013-2014)	n/a	n/a	Green	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	August End of Acad. Yr. YTD (August data interim until November). September start of the new Acad. Yr.		
27	Number of Secondary permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	19	n/a	Low	12 (Academic Year 2012-2013)	7 (Academic Year 2013-2014)	n/a	n/a	Green	15	16	18	19	19	0	0	2	5	6	7	9	August End of Acad. Yr. YTD. September start of the new Acad. Yr.	
28	% of Secondary persistent absenteeism (15% absence)	5%	n/a	Low	5.8% (2013)	4.5% (2014)	5.4% (2015)	4.5% (2015)	Green												4.8%	Annual Measure 2.5 terms DfE Published SFR maintained and academies	
29	% of Reception year surplus places	5%	n/a	Low	3.8%	1.10%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red												6.2%	Annual measure	
30	% of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places inc. Academies	5%	n/a	Low	12.3%	11.32%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red												5.5%	Annual measure	
Young People and Services																							
31	Youth service participation rate	1,800	n/a	High	2032	3,234	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green												3695	Annual Measure	
32	% of CYP (16 - 18 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	5%	20%	Low	4.0%	4.3%	7% (2014)	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.0%	4.1%	5.5%	4.3%	2.5%	3.2%	3.5%	3.7%	3.6%	Monthly	
33	% of CYP (16 - 18 year olds) education, employment or training status 'not known'	Not a target measure	n/a	Low	9.8%	6.6%	9.0%	10.4%	Not a target measure	4.9%	5.0%	5.1%	4.7%	4.1%	27.8%	38.9%	16.7%	7.6%	4.8%	4.1%	3.6%	Monthly	
34	% of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system	1.10	n/a	Low	1.10	1.05	1.04 (2013)	1.10 (2013)	Green			0.50				0.45				0.48		0.88	Quarterly (NI 19)
35	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	80	5%	Low	88	60	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			9				21				38		61	Year to Date
36	TF: Number of Families engaged for year 1 of Expanded Programme	Not a target measure	n/a	High	185 TD	326/370 88%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Data not yet published			100				100				250		300	Quarterly
37	% of commissioned services for which quarterly monitoring was completed	100%	2%	High	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			100%				100%					100%	Quarterly (Time lag in collating from partner agencies)	

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Committee:	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date:	29 June 2016
Wards:	All
Subject:	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2016/17
Lead officer:	Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer
Lead member:	Cllr Dennis Pearce, Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Contact officer:	Annette Wiles: annette.wiles@merton.gov.uk , 020 8545 4035

Recommendations:

That members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i. Consider their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion (see draft in Appendix 1);
 - ii. Consider the methods by which the Panel would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
 - iii. Identify a Member to lead on performance monitoring on behalf of the Panel;
 - iv. Identify a Member to lead on budget scrutiny on behalf of the Panel;
 - v. Agree on an issue for scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the Task Group;
 - vi. Consider the appointment of co-opted members for the 2016/17 municipal year, to sit on the Panel and/or on the Task Group;
 - vii. Consider whether they wish to make visits to local sites; and
 - viii. Identify any training and support needs.
-

PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year.
- 1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:
 - a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
 - b) The roles and responsibilities of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
 - c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with Councillors and co-opted members, Council senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;
 - d) A summary of discussion by Councillors and co-opted Members at a topic selection workshop held on 24 May 2016; and
 - e) Support available to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine, develop and deliver its 2016/17 work programme.
2. **Determining the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme**

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has a specific role relating to children and young people. This includes education, children's social care, child protection and youth services which should automatically be built into their work programmes.
- 2.3 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.4 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2016/17, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the work programme.

Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

- 2.5 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
- **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the Council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
 - **Be ambitious** – The Panel should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the Council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.
 - **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Panel. For example Members may wish to question officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.
 - **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.6 There are a number of means by which the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Panel can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter ■ A variation of this model could be a one-day seminar-scrutiny of issues that, although important, do not merit setting up a 'task-and-finish' group
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Commission with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council ■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
The Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Panel may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report – either from the service department or from the Scrutiny Team – to give them more details
Meeting with service Officer/Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/Partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. ■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Panel needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Panel for discussion
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the Panel if s/he still has concerns.

2.7 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the Panel may choose to take some “information only” items outside of Panel meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

2.8 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:

- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;
- Provide support for scrutiny members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
- Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
- Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.

- 2.9 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to assess how it can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver its work programme for 2016/17.
- 2.10 The Panel is also invited to comment on any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Team will take the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's views on board in developing the support that is provided.

3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme

- 3.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference. It has the following remit:
- Children's social care, including child protection;
 - Education, including school standards, special educational needs, the extended schools programme; and the healthy schools initiative;
 - Youth services and youth engagement, including the Youth Parliament, young people 'Not in Education; Employment or Training' (NEET), and the Connexions Service;
 - Youth offending;
 - Children's Centres; and
 - The Children's Trust.
- 3.1.2. The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, Councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the Panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The councillors who attended a "topic selection" workshop on 24 May 2016 discussed these suggestions. Suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council's strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.
- 3.3 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of the Panel is set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Panel. The Panel is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.
- ### **4. Task group reviews**
- 4.1 The Panel is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group.

5. Co-option to the Panel membership

5.1 Scrutiny Panels can consider whether to appoint non-statutory (non-voting) co-optees to the membership, in order to add to the specific knowledge, expertise and understanding of key issues to aid the scrutiny function. Panels may also wish to consider whether it may be helpful to co-opt people from “seldom heard” groups.

6. Public involvement

6.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Panel.

6.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if “seldom heard” groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.

6.3 This engagement will help the Panel to understand the service user’s perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Panel/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.

6.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Panel to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Panel members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2016/17. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel is free to determine its work programme as it sees fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.

7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Panel’s work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:

- a. Members of the public have been approached using the following tools: articles in the local press, My Merton and Merton Together, request for suggestions from all Councillors and co-opted Members, letter to partner organisations and to a range of local voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
- b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings, via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey 2016, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team direct; and
- c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings.

9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.

11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.

- 13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.
- 14. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- 14.1 Appendix 1 – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2016/17
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel’s remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 25 May 2016
- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop on 25 May 2016
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None

Draft work programme 2016/17**Meeting date – 29 June 2016**

Item/Issue
Elected Member and department portfolio priorities: Cabinet Members for Children's Services (Cllr Katy Need), Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and the Director (plus other officers)
Performance monitoring (including agreeing a performance lead)
School provision (pre-decision scrutiny) – timing dependent
Task group update (routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts)
Agreeing the work programme

Meeting date – 11 October 2016

School provision
School admissions
Performance monitoring
Update report
Task group update (implementation of the recommendations of the online strategies task group)

Meeting date – 9 November 2016

Budget scrutiny round 1
Safeguarding (including focus on Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation and Radicalisation)
Performance monitoring
Update report

Meeting date - 11 January 2017 (scrutiny of the budget)

Scrutiny of the budget
Performance monitoring
Update report
Update on health and wellbeing strategies for children and families

Meeting date - 8 February 2017

Performance monitoring
Update report
Schools annual report (including focus on attainment and recruitment and retention of teachers)

Meeting date - March 2017¹

Performance monitoring
Update report
Corporate Parenting (including focus on those areas identified through the previous Corporate Parenting scrutiny workshop)

¹ There is a proposal to swap the date of this meeting with that of the Children and Young People Panel to optimise phasing.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2016/17 Background

Review of the CYP topic suggestions from the last municipal year (2015/16)

Topic suggestion	What happened
School runs and school travel plans	The Panel decided not to include this in the work programme.
Housing and health offer for care leavers and looked after children to prevent homelessness and unemployment	Mini task group formed. This has now been refocused onto routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts including Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
Recruitment of Foster Carers and other placements for Looked After Children	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a themed Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. Supported by an external expert.
Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting Report	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a themed Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. Supported by an external expert.
Safeguarding	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a panel meeting.
Transfer of public health functions to Local Authority and broader engagement of health in provision of services for children and young people	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a panel meeting.
School Leadership Succession Planning Task Group	The Action Plan to achieve the recommendations of the task group was further scrutinised by the CYP Panel allowing for the implementation of the task group's recommendations to be reviewed.
Educational attainment for disabled children and young people	Mini task group formed. This has been refocused onto routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts including Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This means the task group's focus on the educational attainment of disabled children and young people has not happened.
Transition between child and adult social care and health services	It was agreed to focus on this at the Corporate Parenting themed meeting but this wasn't picked-up.
Update reports provided by the CSF department (including the special needs	These were introduced and have been part of the agenda at every scrutiny Panel

travel budget, free school meals take-up and the impact on pupil premium, and the provision of school places.	meeting during 2015/2016. The workshop provides an opportunity to review if these are working successfully for Panel members and the Department.
Pre-decisions scrutiny	There were few if any opportunities in the Panel's work programme for the last municipal year to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.
Performance monitoring	It was agreed to have lead members for any performance indicators causing concern. However, it is unclear if this happened.

Policy overview

This is a broad subject. The following provides a quick digest of the key policy developments that affect the work of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Adoption:** the newly enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 allow for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements. The Government's recent white paper, [Adoption: a vision for change](#) outlines how the new regional adoption agencies will be achieved and the workforce developed with the overall aim of reducing the time children wait to be adopted.
- **Academisation:** the recent announcement has seen a watering down of the government's expectation that all schools will become academies by 2020, or to have an academy order in place to convert by 2022. This is a developing policy area.
- **Childcare:** a tax-free Childcare Scheme will be introduced from 2017.
- **Costing schools:** the Education and Adoption Bill will give the Department of Education (DFE) new powers to address failing and coasting schools. [Link](#)
- **Extending the school day:** extra funding will be provided to extend the school day in 25% of secondary schools, and £10m funding will be provided to 1,600 schools to expand Breakfast Clubs.
- **Funding for new schools:** the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and DFE have published a joint letter setting out opportunities for securing funding for both the expansion of existing schools and new schools to support housing growth. [Link](#)
- **National Funding Formula:** this will replace existing funding mechanisms for schools from 2017-18. An additional £500m additional core funding above that set out in the 2015 Spending Review will be allocated to support this accelerated timetable.
- **Education White Paper:** the Government has published an Education White Paper and a new strategy for the Department for Education. The White Paper includes proposals to change teaching qualifications and bring in a new accreditation system that includes class room performance and judgement of the Head Teacher. Also, it requires a more skills-led approach to recruiting school governors. [Link](#)

Annual Resident Survey:

The annual survey of Merton's residents did not take place in 2015 (because the contractor withdrew from delivering the Survey of Londoners package). It is currently unclear whether or not this will happen in 2016. However, until this occurs, the most recent resident survey results are from 2014 with the following potentially of greatest

interest to the Children and Young People Panel in prioritising the issues it wishes to scrutinise:

- Concern over the standard of education is ninth priority for the borough overall, but concern about this is significantly higher than average for those aged 34-49, and those with children;
- 12% of residents stressed concerns that not enough was being done for young people; and
- There has been an increase in satisfaction with nursery and primary education, both of which are ahead of the London average.

Topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2016/17

The following topics were suggested by residents, members and officers, for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for its 2016/17 work programme:

1. Attainment;
2. Corporate Parenting;
3. Health and wellbeing (with a specific focus on childhood obesity);
4. Ofsted;
5. Radicalisation;
6. Recruitment and retention of teachers;
7. Safeguarding (with a specific focus on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation);
8. School admission arrangements;
9. School provision;
10. School runs;
11. School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities; and
12. Transition between child and adult social care and health services.

1. TOPIC: Attainment

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by Panel members collectively at a Panel meeting and individually through the annual member survey. The Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department Management Team has also suggested the specific focus on attainment of children with Special Education Need and/or Disability (SEND) be picked-up.

Summary of the issue

Scrutinising the overall attainment of all children in Merton's schools as well as that of specific cohorts of children is a key part the Panel's annual work programme; the objective is to ensure that all Merton's children achieve a good level of attainment including specific cohorts. Merton's results are benchmarked against national averages and attainment in London both generally and that of close statistical neighbours. This is presented to the Panel in the Schools Standards Annual Report and through an update on the Schools Standards Committee, prepared and presented by the CSF Department.

During the last municipal year, (2015/16) the Schools Standards report highlighted improving attainment outcomes in Early Years, Year 1, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for the 2014/2015 academic year. However, there was a drop in attainment at Key Stage 4 and the attainment of key cohorts was highlighted as needing scrutiny focus; specifically, the attainment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) cohorts, Looked After Children and children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Additionally, it

was noted that at Key Stage 4, attainment remained the same if secondary schools outside of the Council's control (Academies) were removed from the analysis.

The School Standards Annual Report for the last municipal year is available [here](#) for reference. The Panel's comments on this are available in the meeting minutes available [here](#).

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel should continue to receive the Schools Standards Annual Report and an update on the Schools Standards Committee, making this the key theme of one Panel meeting during the municipal year. This provides the opportunity to review attainment generally but also provides the opportunity this year to focus down on those specific issues that have been highlighted. The Panel could request a detailed report from officers on the attainment of those cohorts that have been highlighted to understand activity that has happened over the past year and its impact (**performance monitoring**).

There is also scope within this meeting to seek the involvement of those directly working with those cohorts highlighted, to hear first hand about the issues and how action being taken is working. It would also be possible to invite a suitable representative of Merton's Academies to talk about how they are adding value to provision.

Logistics

It would be good to consider if the presentation of the Annual Schools Standards Report and the focus on attainment is happening at the right time of the year to best benefit officers. It is also suggested that this meeting is held at a Merton school, to give Panel members the opportunity to discuss attainment with the school's Senior Management Team. Alternatively, Merton's heads could be invited to attend the meeting.

Guidance

The Local Government Associations (LGA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny have provided [guidance](#) for members on how scrutiny can influence local education and support school leaders to improve results.

2. TOPIC: Corporate Parenting

Who suggested it?

Corporate Parenting is the most suggested topic for the Children and Young People's panel this year. No doubt this reflects the focus that has been placed on this topic by the Panel over the last municipal year (2015/16). This has supported Panel members to think strategically about which aspects of this statutory duty require scrutiny focus over the forthcoming year. As a result, various aspects of this agenda have been suggested for scrutiny focus collectively by Panel members at Panel meetings and individually through the annual member survey. A specific focus on unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) has also been suggested by the CSF Department Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The Council is Corporate Parent to all Looked After Children (LAC) within the borough and increasingly older Care Leavers reflecting the impact of the 'stay put' policy that supports Care Leavers to continue to receive support up until the age of 25 and possibly older. Our LAC population has increased from 96 (2006/7) to 157 (2014/15) and currently stands at 160 (January 2016). The reasons for this rise include increased national awareness of safeguarding, an increasing birth rate, the classification of young people on remand as

LAC and more generally demographic changes in Merton. The profile of Looked After Children in Merton is unusual at the older age range as this includes an increase in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers (32 during 2014/15). A significant proportion of the increase in LAC and Care Leavers is a result of UASC.

As Corporate Parent to these children, the Council is responsible for all aspects of their care including education, health and welfare, what they do in their leisure times, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

During the last municipal year, the Panel used a workshop format during a dedicated Panel meeting to look at Corporate Parenting. This allowed scrutiny time to be used more effectively, covering the Corporate Parenting topic in greater breadth and depth. An external expert was used to support the session and provide advice on how to scrutinise Corporate Parenting. Members valued this approach which supported them to define their priorities for the forthcoming year:

- The percentage of children in and leaving care that are NEET;
- Quoracy at child protection conferences (which is a safeguarding performance indicator);
- The changing profile of the LAC population in Merton and the needs for service provision to reflect these changes (with specific focus on ensuring the ethnic diversity of social workers to reflect the population characteristics of Looked After Children);
- The stability of placements;
- Retention of Merton's high quality LAC team;
- Increasing recruitment of foster carers that are resident in Merton (especially in the West of the borough) and those willing/able to care for adolescents;
- Ensuring the right mix of placements is provided including within a children's home in the borough;
- Supporting foster carers so they understand the vulnerability and complexity of the children they are looking after; and
- Looking in detail at the survey responses from children who identified themselves as dissatisfied.

Officers have also highlighted unaccompanied asylum seeker children for focus given they now account for a significant proportion of our increase in LAC and Care Leavers.

Scrutiny of Corporate Parenting will also need to reflect the new enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 that allow for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements.

The Corporate Parenting Report for the last municipal year is available [here](#) for reference.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel should continue to receive the annual Corporate Parenting Report and the Adoption and Fostering Inspection action plans prepared by the CSF Department to undertake performance monitoring and make this the key theme and focus of one Panel meeting during the municipal year. This provides the opportunity to scrutinise Corporate Parenting generally but also gives the opportunity to focus down on those specific issues that have been highlighted (**performance monitoring**). This could be supported by requesting the attendance of members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to answer member questions.

It should be noted that some aspects of this agenda might lend themselves to specific and more in-depth focus, particularly the issues that have already been highlighted by Panel members and the CSF Department Manager Team. This might be achieved through a **task group**.

Logistics

Given the importance of housing and for care leavers, it will be important to include key officers from the Community and Housing Department in this meeting. Also, given the number of care leavers in the NEET population, it could be beneficial to invite members of the Economic Wellbeing Board to attend. A focus on health matters for those in and leaving care could be supported by inviting the participation of local health partners.

Guidance

The Local Government Associations (LGA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny have provided [guidance](#) for members on scrutiny of Looked-After Children. [Guidance](#) is also becoming available specifically on the scrutiny of provision for unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

3. TOPIC: Health and wellbeing of children and young people

Who suggested it?

This topic has been suggested by several Panel members through the annual member survey both in its broadest application and specifically looking at children's obesity in primary schools. Additionally, health and wellbeing has been raised during Panel meetings; the focus on measuring the success of Merton's schools predominately through academic outcomes has been questioned.

Summary of the issue

The general focus on academic outcomes has led to a growing narrative around the health and wellbeing of children and young people, specifically how to ensure that this is adequately supported and measured. This also reflects growing awareness that the issues affecting children's health and wellbeing have changed. A [report](#) from the Health and Social Care Information Centre published in June 2015 highlighted the shift; smoking in pregnancy has decreased, a growing number of mothers now breastfeed, vaccinations rates remain relatively high and the number of 11 – 15 year olds reporting drugs use has decreased, but children's lives are more sedentary with a 10%+ drop since 2008 in the numbers getting the recommended amount of exercise, between a quarter and a third of children at primary schools now being overweight or obese, and the number of referrals to psychological therapies significant (and double for young women). These issues have been highlighted in Merton's second annual public health [report](#).

One of the greatest areas of concern is childhood obesity; "Being obese or overweight increases the risk of developing a range of serious diseases, including heart disease and cancers. The impact of obesity on the health of adults has long been established. In addition, rising levels of childhood obesity has consequences for the physical and mental health of children and young people in both the short and the longer term. Obesity is associated with the development of long-term health conditions, placing demands on social care services.... Being overweight or obese in childhood and adolescence has consequences for health in both the short term and longer term. Once established, obesity is notoriously difficult to treat, so prevention and early intervention are very important" (Public Health England, [The impact of obesity](#)).

In Merton priorities are set out in the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). This includes working in partnership to strengthen preventative strategies and to ensure early identification to better target services at those families that are in greatest need of support.

Key aspects of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy include:

- helping infants have the best start in life;
- supporting the personal, social and mental wellbeing of children and young people;
- promoting healthy weight in children and helping young people make healthy life choices.

Delivery is a changing picture. During this municipal year, it will be the first anniversary of the transfer of public health functions from the NHS to local authorities. A public health team has been established and a Director of Public Health appointed (Dagmar Zeuner). The council now works in partnership with Merton Clinical Commissioning Group which in turn works with local health practitioners including GPs and nurses.

During the transfer The Children's Trust has aimed to retain a sharp focus on improving children's health outcomes. Chaired by the Director for CSF, the Trust brings together commissioners and providers with representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group. This sits alongside the Health and Wellbeing Board, which the Director for CSF attends along with the Director of Public Health and the Lead Member for Children's Services.

Additionally, over the last year, The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has been subject to a transformation plan following a Health Needs Assessment and a Service Review. It is intended that this would be implemented by 2020. Merton has established a CAMH Partnership Board. Membership will include a range of local partners from the local Community and Voluntary Sector and schools.

How could scrutiny look at it?

This is a big agenda area which continues to be subject to considerable change. As such it lends itself to in-depth scrutiny which could be achieved through a themed meeting using a workshop approach to make the best use of the time available and drawing on the support of an external expert. It would be beneficial for the Panel to hear from the Directors of Public Health and CSF and the chair of the Health and Wellbeing board to look at how the key groups in Merton's structure are working together to meet local needs (**performance monitoring**).

It should be noted that some aspects of this agenda might lend themselves to specific and more in-depth focus. [Childhood obesity](#) is one topic that has already been highlighted by a Panel member. This might be achieved through a **task group**.

Logistics

It is also suggested that this meeting is held at a Merton Children's Centre, to give Panel members the opportunity to meet and discuss the issues highlighted with members of staff who are in the front line of delivery.

Guidance

The Government (through Public Health England) has published a [framework](#) for improving young people's health and wellbeing that aims to support local areas in the delivery of their public health role for young people. It poses questions for councillors (page 16), health and wellbeing boards (page 17), commissioners (page 18), providers

(page 19) and education and learning settings (page 19). This is supported with [guidance](#) on developing a whole school and college approach.

4. TOPIC: Ofsted

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by members of the CSF Departmental Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The Council's arrangements for supporting [school improvement](#) and [children's services](#) are subject to inspection by Ofsted. This may happen during this municipal year and requires some contingency to be built into the work programme to allow this to be picked-up by the panel.

How scrutiny could look at it?

Ofsted inspections are no notice and therefore contingency time should be built into the work programme.

5. TOPIC: Radicalisation

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by the Muslim Women of Morden with a specific focus on the impact the 'Prevent' strategy is having on Muslim children's educational attainment, social and mental health.

Summary of the issue

Preventing Violent Extremism, now known as [Prevent](#) – has been a Government priority for over a decade. It is one of the four Ps that make up the Government's post 9/11 counter-terrorism strategy, known as Contest: Prepare for attacks, Protect the public, Pursue the attackers and Prevent their radicalisation in the first place.

Since summer 2015, schools and childcare providers have had a legal obligation to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. According to the Government's [guidance](#), the day-to-day responsibilities of teachers and nursery staff include being able to spot children who might be vulnerable to radicalisation, and intervening appropriately. This can include referral to the Government's anti-radicalisation programme, [Channel](#).

In 2015, 3,800 people in England and Wales were referred to Channel. This is more than twice the number in 2014, including 2,003 aged under 18 years. About two thirds of referrals, were for Islamist extremism (others referred include far-right extremists). Through a FOI request, the BBC has established that 415 children aged 10 and under and 1,424 aged 11 – 15 were referred to Channel between January 2012 and December 2015.

Whilst there are notable case studies where the Prevent strategy is described as being successful, it has also been much criticised. The National Union of Teachers has called on the strategy to be withdrawn stating, "There is evidence that some of the expectations driven by the Prevent agenda and Ministerial speeches are undermining the confidence of teachers and students to explore and discuss global issues". Others such as the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) emphasise that the safest lens through which to view this is that of safeguarding and as such this is something schools have been doing for years. It recommends that teachers continue to be alert but to not conduct surveillance. The strategy remains controversial with critics stating it is counter-productive and discriminates against Muslims and others highlight there is no clear way to measure its effectiveness.

Local authorities are part of the Prevent strategy. They are required to establish or make use of existing local multi-agency groups to agree risks and co-ordinate Prevent activity. Many local authorities use Community Safety Partnerships but other multi-agency forums may be appropriate. It is considered likely that links will need to be made to other statutory partnerships such as Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Safeguarding Adults Boards, Channel panels and Youth Offending Teams. It is recommended that local Prevent co-ordinators have access to senior local authority leadership to give advice and support. The strategy expects local multi-agency arrangements to be put in place to effectively monitor the impact of Prevent work. The Merton Safeguarding Children's Board has developed and published its own Prevent [guidance](#).

Prevent work, conducted through local authorities will often directly involve, as well as have an impact on, local communities meaning effective dialogue and coordination with community-based organisations will continue to be essential.

How could scrutiny look at it?

This is a difficult, sensitive and complex issue and one that requires a high degree of expertise. The Panel could subject the MSCB's guidance to scrutiny review. This would provide the opportunity to understand the support available to teachers and others in Merton's schools, how the relationships between partners are managed to achieve this support, the context in which this is set (safeguarding?) and how the on-going dialogue/engagement with local communities is managed and informs how Merton's schools are responding to the Prevent agenda. This would provide the opportunity to focus on the impact the 'Prevent' strategy. Whilst specific data isn't collected to understand the impact on attainment there are opportunities to understand whether or not Prevent is affecting relationships between pupils and teachers in Merton. This could be achieved as part of the themed meeting on safeguarding (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

This provides an ideal opportunity to engage with all segments of the local community to understand the impact of Prevent locally.

6. TOPIC: Recruitment and retention of teachers

Who suggested it?

This topic has been suggested by Jane White, the headteacher of Priory school. (All headteachers were written to as part of the call for topic suggestions). The increasing shortage of teachers and over-reliance on agency supply staff mainly from overseas was highlighted. (It is noted that this could be seen to apply to all key public sector workers including, for example, social workers.)

Summary of the issue

The National Audit Office published a report in February 2016 which has brought the issue of the availability of trained teachers into sharp focus. It has summarised: "Training a sufficient number of new teachers of the right quality is key to the success of all the money spent on England's schools. The Department, however, has missed its recruitment targets for the last four years and there are signs that teacher shortages are growing. Until the Department meets its targets and can show how its approach is improving trainee recruitment, quality and retention, we cannot conclude that the arrangements for training new teachers are value for money," Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 10 February 2016.

The key points from the NAO's report are:

- Recruitment targets for teacher training have been missed for the last four years;
- Between 2011 and 2014 the number of teachers leaving the profession increased by 11%, and the proportion of those who chose to leave the profession ahead of retirement increased from 64% to 75%;
- Overall the number of teachers has kept pace with changing pupil numbers, and the retention of newly qualified teachers has been stable. However, indicators suggest that teacher shortages are growing. The recorded rate of vacancies and temporarily filled positions doubled from 0.5% of the teaching workforce to 1.2% between 2011 and 2014;
- In secondary schools, more classes are being taught by teachers without a relevant post-A level qualification in their subject. The proportion of physics classes, for example, being taught by a teacher without such a qualification rose from 21% to 28% between 2010 and 2014;
- Secondary school teacher training places are proving particularly difficult to fill. It is not proving possible to recruit enough trainees in the majority of secondary subjects: 14 out of 17 secondary subjects had unfilled training places in 2015/16, compared with two subjects with unfilled places in 2010/11. In subjects with hard-to-fill places, providers are more likely to accept trainees with lower degree classifications;
- Whilst the routes by which trainees can achieved qualified status has increased, potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to help them decide where to train. Providers and schools told the NAO the plethora of training routes is confusing;
- Indicators of trainee and training quality are encouraging, but not enough to prove that training is raising the quality of teaching. The proportion of postgraduate trainee entrants with at least an upper second class degree increased from 63% in 2010/11 to 75% in 2015/16. While degree class is a reasonable indicator of subject knowledge, it is a less clear predictor of other aspects of teacher quality;
- There is a weak understanding of the extent of local teacher supply shortages and whether they are being locally resolved; and
- The NAO's research suggests problems in poorer areas, with some 54% of leaders in schools with large proportions of disadvantaged pupils saying attracting and keeping good teachers was a major problem compared with 33% of leaders in other schools.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel looked at succession planning in schools in 2014 through a task group but this was exclusively focused on headteacher recruitment and retention. (The Panel has continued to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from this task group through its meetings.) Currently, teacher recruitment and possible shortages doesn't appear to be an aspect of Merton's school provision that is being routinely monitored through scrutiny and therefore it is difficult to quantify the extent of this issue across all Merton's schools. However, the fact that this has been raised to the Panel by a headteacher from Merton school is indicative. The Panel could question the Director of CSF about the degree to which teacher recruitment is an issue in Merton's schools and how it is being addressed. It may be appropriate for the Panel to conduct its own survey of Merton schools to help quantify this issue. This topic could be examined as part of the schools standards meeting (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

Given the importance of housing to the recruitment of key public sector workers, it will be important to include key officers from the Community and Housing Department in this meeting.

7. TOPIC: Safeguarding

Who suggested it?

This is a standard item on the Panel's work programme each year. Additionally, the Children's Schools and Families Departmental Management Team has suggested the Panel could examine two aspects of safeguarding which are priorities: Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation.

Summary of the issue

Safeguarding children is one of the key functions of the CSF Department and its partner agencies. Regulators expect appropriate political engagement in and scrutiny of how effectively the council is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities.

The [Merton Safeguarding Children Board](#) (MSCB) is the multi-agency forum for agreeing how local child protection services are planned, delivered and monitored in the borough. Its role is to ensure the effectiveness of what member organisations do individually and together.

The Panel undertakes scrutiny of safeguarding during the year through the receipt of a series of reports including from the MSCB and on Looked After Children (minutes of the Panel's most recent discussion of safeguarding are available [here](#)). These outline the challenges for safeguarding in the context of rising demographics and the changes required to respond to local and national policy direction. During the next municipal year, this will include the new enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 allowing for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements.

The Panel also regularly monitors safeguarding and LAC indicators as part of its routine performance monitoring.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE): The Department for Education defines child sexual exploitation (CSE) as "a form of child abuse [which] involves children and young people receiving something—for example, accommodation, drugs, gifts, or affection—as a result of them performing sexual activities, or having others perform sexual activities on them". Underpinning this are "exploitative relationships characterised ...by fear, deception, coercion and violence."

In the year prior to September 2014, the Merton CSE service worked with 67 children between 11-17 years old. The majority were female, and ethnicity was broadly in line with the changing demographics in Merton, with just over 50% from a White/British or White background. In terms of age, 13% of those referred for possible CSE were under 13 years old, 54% 14-15 years old, and 33% 16-18. Risk factors included drug, alcohol and mental health issues; just under a third were Looked After, the majority of who were placed out of borough.

Following other cases, specifically in Rotherham, Councils, police forces and others have been subject to Government criticism, "It is unacceptable for councils, police forces or other public bodies to use severance agreements to cover up examples of under-performance or organisational failure", stated in the Government's [Tacking Child Sexual Exploitation](#) strategy.

This follows on from the [Jay](#) enquiry into the Rotherham cases. This made a number of recommendations relevant to Councils.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): this is child abuse and has been banned in the UK since 2003. Last year, the Government introduced a new law requiring professionals to report known cases of FGM in under-18s to the police. Activists and the police have been raising awareness about the risk of British school girls being flown out of the UK specifically for FGM over the summer.

It is not known how many girls are at risk of FGM. The NSPCC [estimates](#) this based on knowledge of FGM in other countries and has determined that 23,000 girls under 15 could be at risk of FGM in England and Wales. The latest data published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre highlighted that between April and September 2015, a case of FGM is reported in England every 109 minutes or 2,421 cases in total for this period.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is proposed that the panel receive annual reports on safeguarding children including from the Merton Safeguarding Children Board. Partner agencies could be invited/called to contribute/address issues raised by panel members in relation to this report including the board itself, health services and the police.

For both FGM and CSE, scrutiny can ensure Merton's strategy for prevention is being effective. Things to consider include whether professionals are getting sufficient training and support to be able to identify those at risk and know how to respond. MSCB has produced a [FGM policy](#) working with partner agencies from health, social care, education, police and the voluntary sector. For CSE, the Government's policy requires action from councils. The Panel could request reports on both from officers allowing the Panel to consider effectiveness in both areas as part of a themed meeting focusing on safeguarding (**performance monitoring**).

Guidance

To help Panel members, the Local Government Association has provided a practical [guide](#) for overview and scrutiny councillors on safeguarding children.

8. TOPIC: School admission arrangements

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by the Children's Schools and Families Department Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The [growth](#) in Merton's population has resulted in increasing demand for school places which is being addressed through new provision (see below) and changes to school admission arrangements.

During the last municipal year, the CSF department undertook a consultation of residents to gather views and feedback on admission arrangements for Merton's school. This data was being analysed at the end of the last municipal year. When this analysis is complete, it has been agreed it would be presented to the Panel.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could request a report from officers on the results of the consultation and the resulting decisions for school admission arrangements that are being recommended by the Department. This would afford the Panel an opportunity for **pre-decision scrutiny**.

9. TOPIC: School provision

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by Panel members collectively at a Panel meeting and individually through the annual member survey. The focus on this topic is caused by two key factors; 1) Merton's growing and changing population and 2) the Government's schools policy which aims to make all schools academies, removing them from Local Authority control.

Summary of the issue

As Merton's population continues to [grow](#), there is a consequential impact on demand for school places. This is being addressed through new school admission arrangements (see above) and provision of additional places. At the primary phase, additional places have already been provided with demand for increased secondary places now pressing.

Secondary place provision in Merton will be increased through a new school that is being commissioned by the [Education Funding Agency](#) (EFA) and provided by [Harris Academy](#). (The opening date for the new school is September 2017 but this may be delayed. Cabinet has already approved the expansion of Harris Academy Merton which will fulfil demand for increased secondary places prior to the opening of the new school.) Panel members have asked to have pre-decision scrutiny of the site for the new secondary school.

Additionally, Panel members have expressed a desire to have oversight of the implications of the Government's academisation policy as well as wanting to examine the perceived dependence on Harris as Merton's preferred Academy provider. Within this context, members have flagged their interest in exploring different forms of modern education delivery including what happens within classrooms, schools having single and split sites etc. There is also interest in exploring opportunities for the Council to develop commercial income streams from the delivery of consultancy (for example, the standards team providing paid for support to schools in other localities in both the state and school sectors).

How could scrutiny look at it?

The panel could request a report from officers reviewing expected population growth and detailing demand for increased provision and how this will be provided. It has already been suggested it would be possible to invite a suitable representative of Merton's Academies to talk about how they are adding value to provision (**performance monitoring**).

The Panel could set-up a **task group** to review the broader issues in terms of school provision looking at different delivery options and the benefit for educational outcomes as well as opportunities for commercialisation.

10. TOPIC: School Run and Travel Plans

Who suggested it?

Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage has again proposed that the adequacy of measures to address problems caused by the school run should be reviewed. They also

feel that school travel plans are poorly prepared, rarely implemented and need to be more robust.

Summary of the issue

The overall aim of School Travel Plans is to reduce car use for school journeys or keep it at low levels in schools expecting higher numbers of pupils over coming years. Active travel campaigns and [STAR](#) (School Travel Accredited and Recognised) accreditation are used to reduce car use and increase walking, cycling and using public transport. STAR is a strategic framework that encourages and rewards schools to adopt safer and active travel behaviour with three levels of award; sustainable, higher and outstanding. Participation in STAR is also an important building block towards achieving other accreditations and standards such as Healthy Schools, Eco-Schools and Sustainable Schools. Each school in Merton has a School Travel Plan Champion. They are responsible for producing their school's travel plan in conjunction with the borough's School Travel Plan Advisor (an officer from the Environment and Regeneration Department).

The aims of the service are to:

- Significantly reduce the number of car trips on journeys to and from schools;
- Remove the barriers, both perceived and actual, to walking, cycling and using public transport for school journeys;
- Increase the number of young people and adults choosing 'active travel' options over that of the car; and
- Increase understanding among whole school communities of the travel options that are available to them.

A School Travel Plan can result in:

- Less cars and congestion around the school site;
- Healthier and more active pupils, families and staff;
- Less pollution around the school;
- Safer walking and cycling routes around the school; and
- Improved school grounds with provision for bicycle storage.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could request a briefing report from the Schools Travel Plan Adviser on the number of school travel plans which are meeting STAR accreditation, operating effectively and how these are being enforced. It would be possible for the Panel to make recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet and schools on any improvements the Panel feels need to be made (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

It is worth noting that air quality and the consequential desire to reduce car travel is a topic suggestion for the Sustainable Communities Panel this year.

11. School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

Who suggested it?

Panel members have suggested this topic through the annual member survey.

Summary of the issue

Panel members have signalled their interest in exploring ways to reduce the cost of school travel for students with SEND and to look at ways of ensuring efficiency and greater value for money.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Commission is looking at this topic through its finance committee (in conjunction with similar services for adults). Any Panel members wishing to explore this further are welcome to attend the relevant Commission meeting(s).

12. TOPIC: Transition between child and adult social care and health services

Who suggested it?

Merton Centre for Independent Living proposed that the Panel look at how young people are supported in the transition from receipt of children's social care and health services to adult social care and health services.

Summary of the issue

The Merton Transition Team supports young people between 14 and 25 years of age with severe and complex needs and disabilities making the transition from childhood to adulthood. The team works directly with the young person and their family/carers to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are central in the planning of their future life as an adult. The Merton Transition Team will ensure that parents/carers are involved in every step of the process by sharing knowledge and information, enabling them, along with their child, to make informed decisions about their child's future. The service works closely with children's social care, health, voluntary organisations and adult social care, amongst others. Adult Social Services also has a strategy which seeks to change the way in which adult social care services are commissioned. This includes a focus on improving the transitions process between children's and adult services.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could review the processes in place for supporting young people in making the transition to other services by engaging with officers internally, external partners and consulting service users, with a view to making any recommendations it feels are appropriate to the relevant body/organisations. This might be done as part of the Panel's safeguarding agenda.

Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 24 May 2016

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Panel. The final decision on this will then be made by the Panel at its first meeting on 29 June 2016.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

Note of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel topic selection meeting on 24 May 2016

Attendees

Councillors: Agatha Akyingyina, Mike Brunt, Adam Bull, Edward Foley, Joan Henry, Katy Neep, Jerome Neil, Dennis Pearce (Chair), Marsie Skeete, Linda Taylor and Jill West
Officers: Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance) and Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies

None were received.

Attainment

AGREED to scrutinise attainment of children in the borough as part of the schools annual report. This will be presented to the Panel in February 2017. It was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel will fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for children's attainment through the scrutiny function.

Corporate Parenting

AGREED to scrutinise the Council's Corporate Parenting performance through 1) relevant performance measures featured in the performance reports provided at each meeting and 2) through a dedicated Panel meeting at which the annual Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting report is presented to the Panel (March 2017). It was noted that this will also focus on the performance of the Council's fostering service. Again, it was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for Corporate Parenting through the scrutiny function.

Health and wellbeing (with a specific focus on childhood obesity)

AGREED to focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people if time allows.

Ofsted

AGREED to allow enough time and flexibility in the work programme to accommodate any matters arising throughout the year including any resulting actions should an Ofsted inspection occur.

Radicalisation

AGREED to pick this up as part of the Panel's scrutiny of safeguarding of children and young people.

Recruitment and retention of teachers

AGREED to pick this up as part of the Panel's scrutiny of the schools annual report that will happen in February 2017.

Safeguarding (with a specific focus on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation)

AGREED to scrutinise the Council's safeguarding of children and young people as part of a dedicated and themed Panel meeting. This should include a focus on the items seen as high priority by the Department (Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation)

and Radicalisation as previously agreed. Again, it was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for safeguarding through the scrutiny function.

It was agreed that relevant external witnesses be invited to attend the themed meeting. Representatives from the police were specifically noted.

School admission arrangements

This was not specifically discussed at the workshop but has been noted in the minutes of previous Panel meetings as needing to return for consideration once the outcomes of the public consultation are known.

School provision

AGREED that this would be scrutinised by the Panel specifically in the context of the planned new secondary school. It was noted that Cabinet has requested the decision of where to site this new school be subject to pre-decision scrutiny. It is hoped this will happen at the June meeting but the timing is yet to be confirmed.

School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities

The intention for this to be picked-up by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission was noted but it was requested that this should return for consideration by the Panel if it is not progressed by the Commission. (NB: subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that this item will be progressed by the financial monitoring task group as part of the work of the Commission.)

Performance monitoring

AGREED to continue receiving the performance monitoring report. However, it was also agreed that it would be beneficial for the Panel to understand more about the issues that have been highlighted to Departments that have received poor judgements from Ofsted in addition to the outcomes of the Department's own self-evaluation. This would be used to judge if the right performance indicator measures are being reported/monitored. The Panel will select a lead member for performance monitoring.

Update report

The Panel noted the value they place on receiving the Director's update report and AGREED that this will continue.

Logistics

AGREED:

- For the chair and vice-chair to attend pre-meetings with officers prior to Panel meetings;
- For the key Cabinet Members and officers to attend the first meeting to provide insight on priorities for the next municipal year;
- For there to be continued use of the expert witnesses/workshop format; and
- To explore the possibility of holding Panel meetings off site in relevant venues to support members in gaining further insight.

Task group

No potential task group subject was identified at the workshop and what format this activity should take was discussed. It was suggested that the Panel might support a task group during the year if a topic arises lending itself to in-depth scrutiny. Paul Ballatt suggested this might be fulfilled through an in-depth workshop approach with external experts.