

# Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 1 February 2018  
Time: 7.15 pm  
Venue: Committee rooms C, D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden  
SM4 5DX

## AGENDA

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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:

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

### Substitute Members:

Brenda Fraser  
Sally Kenny  
Adam Bush  
Peter Southgate  
Jill West

### Co-opted Representatives

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

### 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

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at [www.merton.gov.uk/committee](http://www.merton.gov.uk/committee).

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

17 JANUARY 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Dennis Pearce (in the Chair), Linda Taylor OBE, Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE, Mike Brunt, Pauline Cowper, Charlie Chirico, Edward Foley, Joan Henry, James Holmes and Brenda Fraser

Co-opted Member Helen Forbes

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate, Mark Allison (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance), Katy Neep (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Caroline Cooper-Marbiah (Cabinet Member for Education), Paul Angeli (Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Hilina Asress (Senior Public Health Principal), Julia Groom, Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Yvette Stanley (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department), Sara Williams (Programme Manager, futureMerton) and Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer), Alison Roberts, Deputy Director of Commissioning, MCCG and Christa Blankenberg, CAMHS Project Manager, MCCG

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Colin Powell and Cllr Neil (with Cllr Fraser substituting for the latter).

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

### **Matters arising**

The following items were raised by members, on which clarification was provided by officers subsequent to the meeting:

#### **1. Lettings of Merton Hall under the management of Elim Church**

Officers have had written correspondence with Elim Church representatives regarding their lettings and this was provided in Appendix 6 of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel call-in report dated 10 January 2018. In summary, Elim confirmed in writing that it will be offering the church site to the local community for groups and individuals to hire when it is available. Current activities that will move with Elim's current premises to Merton Hall include use by other church

groups, Slimming World (Thursday), Sun Group (Counselling Group), Pilates (Monday), Mums and Tots (Monday), Foodbank (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday) and Youth group (Friday). With regard to the specific question of use by the LGBT+ community which has been the main concern raised, Elim confirmed there would be no restriction on these groups accessing services, meetings, clubs etc. However, as with any organisation they would consider bookings of their premises on a case by case basis and would take bookings that did not conflict with the Constitution of their charity. This is provided in the conditions of hire form which was also provided to the council.

## 2. **Wimbledon Harris nodal points**

As stated in the 8 November 2017 CYP Overview and Scrutiny Panel report the admissions priority for 2018 entry is based on 'nodal points' - distance from Merton Abbey Primary School (33%), Colliers Wood Station (33%) and Haydons Road Station (33%). This will also apply for 2019 entry. The next time for any change will be next year for September 2020 entry. This is because all admissions authorities of open schools are required to consult annually on any change to their admissions policy by the end of January in the preceding year (so end of January 2019 for September 2020 entry). This is to allow sufficient time for any appeals to the School's Adjudicator and policies to then be finalised for the autumn when the applications process opens for the following year.

## 4 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education, provided members with an update, highlighting the following:

- **Ofsted inspections**: a number of schools have now received the outcome of their Ofsted inspections. Sherwood, St Marks, St John's Fisher and Abbotsbury have all retained their good judgements. Cricket Green has retained its outstanding judgement. Ricards has moved from good to outstanding and Gorringer Park from requires improvement to good. As a result, all of the secondary schools supported by the Council are good or outstanding and 91% of all the Council supported schools are good or outstanding. This means 93% of pupils are at good or outstanding schools in Merton. The school improvement team is working with those schools where education requires improvement;
- **Secondary school applications**: an additional 268 applications have been received this year compared to last for secondary school places. Of these 209 are from Merton residents and 255 list one of Merton's schools as their first choice. This matches the predictions made by officers. The increased demand will be met by the development of Harris Wimbledon; and
- **Harris Wimbledon**: work is currently ongoing with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Harris Federation to ensure the temporary school at Whatley Avenue is ready to be opened in September 2018. However, the focus is also on building the new school on the permanent site in High Path. One obstacle has been overcome with the completion of the call-in process on the Cabinet's decision to award the contract for the development of Merton Hall. The additional obstacles of the application to Historic England to list Merton Hall, the application to have it recognised as an Asset of Community Value and the Judicial Review

are all being dealt with as the new school is very much needed as demonstrated by this year's secondary school application numbers.

In response to member questions, the following clarification was provided:

- The application for a Judicial Review with regard to Merton Hall has been brought by a resident and relates to the planning consent received to redevelop Merton Hall for use by the Elim Church. Yvette Stanley, Director for Children, Schools and Families stated that she would brief members as soon as it is possible to make more information available. (As provided: the Claimant withdrew their Judicial Review. This followed the Decision of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport not to add Merton Hall to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.);
- The school improvement team works with all the Merton family of schools but increases engagement with those that require improvement. This involves both support and challenge focused around the issues highlighted by Ofsted and the action detailed in the Ofsted action plan. This has been shown to work through the example of Gorringe Park which has recently moved from requires improvement to good; and
- Merton is on par with the rest of England and just behind the rest of London with regard to Ofsted judgements for its schools. The difference with the rest of London reflects the split between inner and outer London schools and the additional funding received by inner London schools.

Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, provided members with an update, highlighting the following:

- **Care leaver housing:** welcomed that this had been subject to a cross Panel conversation but noted there is more work to do especially as the duty on the Council is increasing and over-crowding is becoming more of an issue. Highlighted to the link to the *Think Family* policy, work on which is being accelerated as a result of these changing conditions;
- **Knife crime:** highlighted that 20% of knife crime incidents in London have a connection to Merton even though these occur outside the borough. Highlighted the need to work with adolescents and the importance of contextualised safeguarding;
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs):** these continue to be a focus. Feedback from families about this process is good but they take time which is causing pressure on resources; and
- **Local Government Chronical awards:** celebrated that the Children, Schools and Families Department is one of five shortlisted for an award from the Local Government Chronical. Regardless of the outcome, this is a successful achievement in its own right.

## 5 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (Agenda Item 5)

### **Childhood obesity**

Hilina Asrress, Senior Public Health Principal, provided an introduction:

- 34.7% (2016/17) of Merton's children are currently judged to be overweight in Year 6 which means this figure has been reduced below the Health and Wellbeing target, is on par with England and better than London;
- However, there remains a ten percentage point difference between childhood obesity levels in the east and the west of the borough. The target is to reduce this to a 9.2% difference through targeted activity in the east of the borough;
- Further work continues in reducing childhood obesity overall as currently there are an estimated 4,500 children who are either overweight or obese equating to around 150 primary classes. The Child Healthy Weight Action Plan seeks to achieve this through communication and engagement, tackling the food environment, increased physical activity and health promoting physical environments and working with children in early years and schools; and
- Priorities for 2018 include reducing sugar intake (signing up to the Local Authority Declaration on Sugar reduction), better use of parks and playgrounds to increase physical activity, working to make Merton more baby friendly to increase breastfeeding rates and the introduction of the Merton Mile to encourage daily physical activity (including marking out a mile in parks to encourage activity as a family taking the Daily Mile in schools out into the community). Partnership working with key stakeholders including the voluntary and community sector is supporting the delivery of these priorities.

In response to member questions, it was further clarified:

- The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) focuses on Reception and Year 6. We know that there is a significant increase in obesity rates between Reception and Year 6 therefore many interventions are targeted at younger children. Intervention work also tends to be focused on younger children because this is when the greatest affect on long term health and well-being habits can be achieved;
- In addition to the initiatives identified within the paper to address the obesity gap, practical activities are being provided in the east of the borough such as a health and well-being awareness raising day where information on physical activity, opportunities to be active and nutritional information were provided. To support this, the Child Healthy Weight Action Plan will be refreshed in due course taking into account achievements as well a resident feedback from the Merton Great Weight Debate;
- The target for reducing the gap between the east and west of the borough (from 10% to 9.2%) does represent a significant ambition because it's predicated on the gap increasing to around 13% if no action is taken. Also the longer term target is to reduce the gap to 8% by 2020;
- The figure for the rate of childhood obesity in Merton is robust because it is calculated based on the NCMP that occurs in Reception and Year 6 and involves around 95% of children being measured. There are some schools in the east of the borough where 50% of the Year 6 cohort are either overweight or obese; and
- Whilst some children may have medical conditions causing them to be overweight/obese, they will still be included in the data given in the NCMP as this is a population level analysis.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

Alison Roberts, Deputy Director of Commissioning and Christa Blankenberg, CAMHS Project Manager, both from the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (MCCG), provided an introduction:

- Waiting times for a tier 3 CAMHS referral are within the eight week target and are reducing further;
- There is still pressure on waiting times for the neurodevelopment assessment service mainly due to increasing referrals for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments. Waiting times are reducing and currently only 7% of referrals are waiting over 12 weeks in Merton. Across south west London, the six clinical commissioning groups are working together to review the service and have in 17/18 invested to reduce waiting times. The aim is to commission together, to benefit from efficiencies and develop a standardised service across all participating boroughs to ensure accessibility to appropriate services;
- The psychiatric service for those with eating disorders is receiving increased funding and is meeting its targets;
- Work is ongoing to increase access to self harm interventions. This deals with around 140 young people annually. It is hoped that a pilot project will lead to a longer term procurement; and
- There is also focus on services for those with anxiety and depression, work force development and training, maintaining a local mental health network for workers, training school staff to recognise and respond to pupil mental health issues, and developing a support offer for families with an ASD diagnosis.

In response to member questions, it was further clarified:

- The CCG representatives acknowledged the request from members for waiting times to be reduced further. Highlighted that targets are set nationally but that the objective is always to achieve under these times; also stressed that the CAMHS Single Point of Access aims to triage and assess all children and young people within two weeks of referral.
- Whilst it isn't possible to comment on the experience residents may have had several years ago, the additional investment into services aims to continue to improve waiting times;
- The pilot project looking at a counselling service for young people with depression and anxiety who do not meet thresholds for specialist CAMHS services is to be extended to June 2018 and it is hoped will provide the basis for commissioning a longer term service;
- The seven school pilot projects mentioned in the report are fairly small scale, giving one off funding to improve the offer provided. Learning from the projects will be shared across schools;
- The CCG representatives will share data on user satisfaction with services, this data is routinely collected and reviewed; and
- There has been a rise in diagnosis of ASD reflecting an increased awareness, a population increase and better guidance being available.

Given lack of time, the meeting agreed that the update item on the autism strategy will be taken when the consultation is complete and school readiness will be covered in the schools annual report which will come to the Panel in March 2018.

## 6 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2018-2022 (Agenda Item 6)

Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, provided an update on the business plan for 2018 – 2022. This includes changes made since the business plan was presented in late 2017. For example, there is allowance made for a two year pay award which would increase pay by 2.7% in 2018/19 and 2.8% in 2019/20. However, it is unclear how this will proceed with the outcome of an employers meeting and the Unite response to the proposal awaited.

Additionally, there has been an increase in the Council Tax base which was more than expected. Merton has signed-up to the business rate pilot for London proposed for 2018/19. Under the pilot, responsibilities previously funded by the Revenue Support Grant will be expected to be met by business rates.

Funding received from the New Homes bonus is lower than expected and there has been a further slippage on the capital programme budget of around £12m which is largely accounted for by the schedule of works for the leisure centre development and the timetable for the property company.

In response to member questions, it was further clarified:

- It is difficult for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (CSF) to make cuts to services without potentially impacting on vulnerable children and young people, given this is where the majority of the spend happens, with the resulting focus therefore on efficiency;
- It is clear that at least initially, the business rate pilot will not be sufficient to cover all of the funding provided by the Revenue Support Grant (estimated at £5m compared to £2.4m from the business rate pilot). However, it is thought that funding from the business rate pilot will grow over time, until revaluation and rebasing;
- The use of agency workers by CSF Department has reduced from around 40% two – three years ago, down to 20%. This reflects some maternity and long term sick leave but is also generated by the ongoing need to ensure safe caseloads amongst social workers. Currently there are 32 vacant posts within the Department with 10 of these already under offer;
- Within the Department those on long term sick leave number around half a dozen with 8.3 sick days on average taken by employees every year. These figures are monitored monthly at the Departmental Management Team meetings;
- Merton running its own agency for temporary staff has recently been explored as an alternative option to renewing the Council's employment agency contract. It was found this was unlikely to be a cost effective option or attractive offer for agency workers. Also no other London Borough is using this approach. It was therefore decided not pursue this option; and
- All but four of Merton's schools are currently buying back services but this year, anticipated income growth from service buy back is not as aspirational as in

previous years. This is the first year schools will be operating under the new funding model and there is a need to understand how this will impact on their purchasing of services.

## 7 SAVINGS PROPOSALS CONSULTATION PACK (Agenda Item 7)

Yvette Stanley, Director for Children, Schools and Families (CSF), introduced the deferred and replacement savings. The data review and potential centralisation is happening but is taking longer than planned due to the need to fully embed the new MOSAIC system and define future departmental needs. The review of the CSF staffing structure is happening and has been implemented in phases with the loss of an Assistant Director in April 2017 and further changes in administrative support happening in April this year. The Panel heard how savings will be made from the implementation of preventative services through the Social Impact Bond and the Family Drug and Alcohol Court. Evidence suggests that these approaches can reduce the chances of children staying in or returning to care from 60% to 40%.

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- Merton's involvement in the Family Drugs and Alcohol Court is just coming into effect so it is too early to say how this is working. It is hoped that this will also have an effect on the wider local economy beyond reducing the costs of children services. This will be achieved through successes such as better health outcomes, less engagement with the police and progression into work;
- It is not lawful to means test and charge for travel to school for students with special educational needs. This is a statutory duty on the council; and
- It would be possible for the Panel to consider having a more detailed review of the income generation of the CSF Department. This might be something to consider for the scrutiny work programme for the next municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** Councillor Holmes proposed a motion (seconded by Cllr Chirico): Recognising the excellent progress already made by the Children, Schools and Families Department in revenue generation, officers should explore additional opportunities for revenue generation in the same way as they are exploring opportunities for cost savings. Four Councillors voted for the motion, one against and five abstained meaning the motion was carried.

## 8 DEPARTMENT UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- **Foster carers**: whilst Merton has been relatively successful in recruiting foster carers, a number are retiring and there have been some resignations. Officers are therefore taking a very detailed approach to recruitment of foster carers. Merton is working as part of a local consortium to increase carer numbers with a specific focus on increasing capacity for the foster care of young people/adolescents; and
- **Special Educational Need (SEN) school expansion**: the expansion in SEN provision reflects a changing profile of needs which would have been impossible

to have predicted 20 years ago as this has resulted from significant medical advances. The Children, Schools and Families Department has worked to reduce the need for SEN residential care and is now working to do the same for day care in the independent sector which is cost prohibitive and to benefit children and young people with care closer to home.

9 ACTION PLAN: CARE LEAVER ACCOMMODATION REFERENCE (Agenda Item 9)

Paul Angeli, Assistant Director for Social Care and Youth Inclusion, thanked the Panel for its interest in care leaver accommodation and the workshop jointly hosted with the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2017. This has helped move things forward. A HMO (house of multiple occupation) has now been established and six young people are now taking advantage of the *Staying Put* policy.

In response to member questions, it was confirmed that the effect of the *Staying Put* policy does mean that some foster carers are not available for other placements whilst young people remain with them. However, it is thought that these arrangements are each likely to last for around a year to 18 months after which foster carers will again be available for new placements.

10 ACTION PLAN: VULNERABLE COHORTS INTO EMPLOYMENT TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda Item 10)

Sara Williams, Economy Manager, futureMerton, provided members with an overview of the progress made to date on the recommendations. Several have been met (recommendations 1 and 3) whilst others are still work in progress.

In response to member questions, it was agreed that the officer will explore further why it's not possible to ensure through standard contract terms that contractors and service providers offer apprenticeships for Merton residents. It was agreed that the recommendations would be further reviewed by the Panel in six months time.

It was explained that more information is being made available on apprenticeships and other training opportunities through a dedicated webpage that is currently being designed as part of the Young Merton offer. It was also clarified that the *Economic Wellbeing Group* is a forum for local training providers to share information and offer signposting.

11 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 11)

Members were informed that performance monitoring updates will again be provided once the data becomes available following the implementation of the new Mosaic information management system by the Children, Schools and Families Department. This is in progress and it is hoped that at least some initial data will be available at the next meeting (1 February 2018).

Panel members agreed that they should write collectively to the Borough Commander to express their concern that no senior member of the local force is able to attend the next meeting at which the Merton Safeguarding Children Board annual report will be the substantive item.

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## **Contribution from Councillor Neep, Cabinet Member for Children's Services Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 1 February 2018**

The things that are providing challenge to the department and that are areas I am working on and watching are:

1. **Change of leadership and managing the interim** - As we all know Yvette is moving on in a few weeks which will mean that there will be period without a DCS and also of course will be a period of significant change for the department. I will be working with Jane and Paul and Ged to ensure this is managed effectively and that the whole department feels confident in the process that we have in place whilst we wait for the position to be filled.
2. **Police changes** - There have been significant changes in the way that the police are organised and a number of senior leaders that we had in the borough have now moved on. Merton will be part of a four borough arrangement with Wandsworth, Kingston and Richmond and there will be one Borough Commander who covers all four. We have been fortunate to date that the Borough Commander has taken an active role at the MSCB and other important boards and conferences for the department. With four boroughs to now serve it may be less likely that we have representation as this level going forward.

The new configuration also sees Safeguarding, Gangs, Youth Crime and DV separated out into four different reports and areas. Historically these would of been looked at in the round and by one or two lead officers. Again we have concerns that we will not be able to access the right representation at both statutory and partner meetings.

I am writing to the head of MOPAC to seek assurances and we will work to build relationships with the new structure leads in order to ensure that Merton remains a key priority.

3. **SEND support:** As we see an increase in the number of young people who need support around SEND we are also seeing an increase in the number of personalized Education, Health and Care plans that are being delivered. This is of course completely the right thing and indeed families, young people and social workers are feeding back that this personalized approach is working well for the family which is great.

My concern is to ensure that we have the services within borough that our young people can then access. As well as the interplay of balancing these needs between health and education and how we ensure that this support is fairly and appropriately divided. I look forward to the feedback on the Autism Strategy that will be out for consultation shortly.

### **Finally please promote:**

We are always looking for more foster carers so that we can provide support to our young people locally and not through private foster agencies. It would be great if you could promote becoming a foster carer in your newsletters, at forums and through your networks.

If you want more information on fostering a young person you can call: 0800 073 0874 or 020 8545 4070 or email [fostering@merton.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@merton.gov.uk). We hold regular fostering information events at Morden Baptist Church, where people can find out more about fostering with Merton, meet the team as well as experienced foster carers, who will answer any questions that people may have.

**Committee:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018

Wards: All wards

**Subject:** Merton Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016-17

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

Lead member: Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children Services

Contact officer: Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

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**Recommendations:**

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

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The report provides members of the panel with an overview of performance of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board for the year 2016-17 as contained within the annual report.

## **2 DETAILS**

2.1 The report, contained as Appendix 1, presents an annual update on what is going well, the key challenges and the actions that we will take to address these challenges. The vision of the MSCB is that the Board works to ensure that *Everyone in Merton does Everything they can to ensure that Every Child is Safe, Supported and Successful*. This annual report is an evaluation of our progress towards achieving this aim as well as an assessment of the overall impact of the Board especially with regards to our three key priorities.

2.2 This report presents activity and performance data from 2016-17 and identifies the priorities for the year ahead:

- **Think Family** – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents** – adolescence is a time of significant change for all young people.
- **Early Help** – To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

2.3 These three priorities for the MSCB are underpinned by the cross-cutting theme of tackling **Neglect**.

2.4 The report also presents the review of the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-being Model, following its introduction in 2013. The updated model better reflects the Board's "Think Family" priority.

**3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 No specific implications from this report.

**4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No specific implications from this report.

**5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 No specific implications from this report

**6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 No specific implications from this report.

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

8.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board 2016/17

**9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None

Annual report of the  
**Merton Safeguarding Children Board**  
**2016/17**



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## 1.0 Chair's Introduction

2016-2017 has been a busy and challenging year for Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) yet the Board has continued to rise to meet these challenges. Over the course of this year the Board has worked with the Children's Trust, partners and stakeholders to review the Merton Child and Young Person Well-Being Model. We have also recommitted to and extended the Board's three key priorities.

We are pleased to say that the Board remains on a journey of continuous improvement that seeks to place children, the families and the practitioners who support them at the very heart of what we do. The vision of the MSCB is that the Board works to ensure that *Everyone in Merton does Everything they can to ensure that Every Child is Safe, Supported and Successful*. This annual report is an evaluation of our progress towards achieving this aim as well as an assessment of the overall impact of the Board especially with regards to our three key priorities.

The MSCB, like other LSCBs, operates in the context of shrinking resources and expanding expectations and commitments. We have worked hard with partners to prioritise where limited resources can be targeted in order to have the maximum impact on the quality of safeguarding across the system. In October 2015, the MSCB commissioned a Serious Case Review (SCR), following an incident in which a young person who was known to Merton services, experienced significant harm as a result of being attacked by a parent with a mental health condition. This review has been completed, the report was published in February 2017 and we report in detail on the learning coming out of this SCR in Section 8.5.1. The MSCB is committed to learning the lessons from this SCR.

The Board also took the decision to commission a Learning and Improvement Review (LiR) into a case of long-term neglect. This case did not meet the statutory threshold for a SCR; however, the Board considered that there was significant learning for the multi-agency safeguarding system in this case. We report in detail on the outcomes of the LiR in Section 8.5.2

The Board, in common with all LSCBs, faces the challenge for all partners of delivering high quality services within the context of increasing demand and reduced resources. However, this report demonstrates how much can be achieved when we work together, both as individual agencies and in partnership with each other. This report shows that the Board is having a more robust and rigorous focus on quality assurance is now embedded and is continuing to improve the way that the young and children are protected and their well-being is promoted.

The Board's strengths are identified as:

- The MSCB is a mature partnership that is open to learning and challenge
- Senior representation and engagement from agencies
- A relentless focus on working together to keep children safe
- A strong performance focus including the annual QA process
- Annual conference and comprehensive training programme
- An improved connection between the Board and frontline practitioners which has and will continue to improve; this includes the Board's responsiveness to and influence on multi-agency frontline practice
- The Board has clear priorities and the work programme has been aligned to support their delivery.

Our agreed areas of focus during 2016-2017 included:

### 1. Think Family – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes.

The MSCB wants to ensure that our partnerships enable the most vulnerable families to be supported; that vulnerable parents are supported to care for their children and children are in turn supported to thrive and achieve their potential. Evidence from local and national research tells

us that our most vulnerable parents/families are those who:

- Experience poor mental health,
- Struggle with substance misuse,
- Are affected by domestic abuse,
- Parents with learning difficulties that may affect their ability to respond to the changing needs of their children.

### 2. Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents – adolescence is a time of significant change for all young people.

We know that, for some young people, adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability. We are determined to support adolescents who are at risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Children who go missing from home/school/care
- Children and young people who are at risk of radicalisation and violent extremism,
- Young people who harm other children and young people
- Children at risk of serious youth violence and gangs
- Self-harm and poor mental health parasuicide.

### 3. Early Help – To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

Merton has had a long-established child and young people Well Being Model which we last reviewed in 2013. With changes in local providers and agencies and with changing levels of resources available we need to ensure our Model continues to be fit for purpose. We report in detail on the review of the model in Section 3 of this report.

The questions that the Board is continuously seeking to answer are:

- Is there evidence that the right standards, policies, guidance, procedures, protocols are in place?
- Is there good evidence that these are being implemented and applied consistently?
- What impact/difference does this make in keeping Merton children and young people safe from harm and ensuring that their well-being is supported?

This report shows how the work we are doing as the MSCB seeks to answer these questions.

Shortly after the end of the financial year 2016/17 and before the publication of this report the LA were inspected under Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework and the MSCB was reviewed alongside the inspection.

A copy of Ofsted's report, findings and judgments is appended to this report as an external evaluation of the Board's work over the period 2016/17 and into 2017/8.

In relation to the Board's work, members of the Board are proud and pleased with Ofsted's "Outstanding" finding and their judgment that our "Working Together" as agencies on children's safeguarding and protection is "Good".

These findings, whilst welcome, do not reduce our ambitions or our shared commitment to continuous improvement so that "every child is Safe, supported and successful".

Finally I would like to thank all of the MSCB partner agencies for their hard work and continued commitment to making a difference for Merton's children, young people and their families.

**Keith Makin**  
MSCB Chair  
July 2017

## 2.0

### Progress of MSCB Business Plan 2016-17

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the Board took the decision to extend the three key priorities from 2016-2017 to run from 2016-2019; as such, we are half way through a four-year programme. This section is a progress update regarding what has been achieved so far as well as an indication regarding the work to be done in relation to the Business Plan.

#### 2.1 Think Family – Supporting families with particular vulnerabilities

**2.1.1 For the Board to continue to be assured that there are robust and effective strategies, procedures, protocols in place in relation to safeguarding children in cases where parental mental health is a significant factor.**

Children's Social Care and South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust have worked together around adult mental health and substance misuse. A Think Family Coordinator has been appointed, as a result of this work. Part of the role of the Think Family Coordinator is to ensure that Think Family is embedded across children's and adult services. This work includes the review of the Mental Health Protocol to ensure that there is clear agreement between adult mental health services and Children's Social Care and that children are safeguarded in cases where parental mental health is a factor.

**2.1.2 To continue Work With the VAWG Board to review and refresh the Domestic Abuse (DA) Protocol to increase professional awareness and capacity to effectively intervene in cases of domestic abuse.**

The MSCB has worked closely with the VAWG Board on a range of initiatives to ensure that the VAWG strategy is implemented across the MSCB partnership a detailed account of this work is included in section 7 of this report which outlines the key achievements of the VAWG Board in 2016-2017. A task and finish group has been established to develop a Domestic Abuse Protocol. This group will meet in the autumn of 2017 and present a protocol for approval by the Board in early 2018.

**2.1.3 The Board will review its guidance to professionals regarding parental substance misuse.**

The review of the MSCB Guidance on parental substance misuse is in progress part of the work of the Think Family Coordinator and the Policy Sub-Group. It is expected that a suite of Think Family Protocols, including parental substance misuse, will be presented to the Board for approval by the 31st March 2018.

**2.1.4 Merton Safeguarding Children Board, (MSCB), is committed to reducing the incidence of childhood neglect within the borough. This is a key priority for the Board.**

The Board undertook a baseline multi-agency audit of neglect cases in 2015-2016. A follow-up audit of neglect cases will take place in early autumn 2017. The Board has refreshed its Neglect Strategy and a multi-agency briefing pack has been made available to practitioners and their managers. In 2016-2017 we saw an increase of nearly 10% in neglect cases which indicates that professional recognition and identification of neglect is improving across the safeguarding system.

**2.1.5 The MSCB is assured that the multi-agency Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Strategy is being implemented and young people at risk of FGM are being identified and supported.**

The Board has refreshed its Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and provided a range of briefings and multi-agency training sessions on FGM. The Board has also prepared an FGM leaflet which has been made available to parents and professionals both online and in print. The Board also provides 'red alert' briefings to Merton schools around Easter and Summer holidays, which have been identified as key risk periods for FGM due to the length of the holiday period.

**2.1.6 To ensure that children and young people continue to be protected from radicalisation and violent extremism.**

The Board has refreshed its guidance for professional working with children and young people who are vulnerable to the messages of



radicalisation and violent extremism. Merton has a thriving multi-cultural and multi-faith community. The guidance on preventing radicalisation and violent extremism is not aimed at any particular faith, cultural or political group. We recognise that extremism takes many forms including far right extremists, left wing extremist groups, extremist animal rights groups as well as other terrorist groups. The Board's Promote Protect Young People Strategic (PPYPS) Sub-Group works with Safer Merton to ensure that there is strong grip and clear oversight of all prevent cases involving young people.

**2.1.7 For the Board to continue to seek assurance regarding the quality of frontline practice through themed multi-agency audits.**

The Board has undertaken a range of themed multi-agency audits. During 2016-2017 the Board undertook multi-agency audits on the following themes:

- Children with Disabilities and Learning Needs
- Child Sexual Abuse Cases and Threshold Decisions where Sexual Abuse is a Factor
- Domestic Violence (this audit took the form of a live learning event involving multi-agency practitioners and managers in two domestic violence cases).

The learning from each of these audits is discussed at a meeting of the Board's Quality Assurance Sub-Group; from these discussions a view is taken regarding the quality and effectiveness of multi-agency practice. In each audit we ask each auditor to review the following:

- How well have agencies worked to engage difficult parents?
- How do agencies provide challenge and support to parents with learning difficulties?
- How are we challenging parents around substance misuse?
- How is the team around the child keeping the focus on the needs of the child and not allowing the needs of the parents to detract from this task?
- What is the quality of care planning?
- Were there any gaps or delays in case work and if so what impact did this have on our work with this family?

The findings of each audit are then gathered into a key learning report which makes recommendations regarding improving the quality of multi-agency practice. These are then shared with the strategic leads in each agency; who then shares the learning with team managers and frontline practitioners. The MSCB also



## 2.2 Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents

### 2.2.1 Strategic oversight of CSE

The Board works to ensure that there is robust grip and conspicuous oversight of all young people at risk of CSE and to improve the identification and support of young people who are victims of CSE. The Board's work in relation to CSE is covered in detail under Section 4.3 in this report.

### 2.2.2 Contextual Safeguarding and Young people at risk from gang and serious youth violence.

Through the work of PPYPs, the Board maintains an oversight of gangs and serious youth violence. As part of this work the Board has partnered with

The London Borough of Merton is part an innovation partnership with the London Borough of Hackney working on the issue of Contextual Safeguarding. This is an exciting new project, funded by the Department for Education Innovation Fund, which will run for two years. Through this project Hackney will be working closely with the contextual safeguarding network throughout the project to share learning with network members. For members of the Contextual Safeguarding network, the project will provide excellent learning and insight into contextual safeguarding in practice for practitioners and local authorities across the country.

*Contextual safeguarding promotes the idea that young people's behaviours, levels of vulnerability and levels of resilience are all informed by the social/public, as well as private, contexts in which young people spend their time. Drawing upon research into adolescent development, it recognises that as children grow they spend increasing amounts of time socialising with peers, at school and in public environments independently of parental/ carer supervision. When spending time in these extra-familial contexts young people may be exposed to healthy norms which promote pro-social relationships or they may encounter harmful norms that are conducive*

provides a range of briefings which highlights the themes and key learning coming out of multi-agency audits. Learning from audits is also shared with the Learning and Development Sub-Group and is used to inform the MSCB's training and continued professional development offer.

### 2.1.8 To explore the use and application of Signs of Safety and Signs of well-being across partner agencies as part of the review of the Merton Well-Being Model.

The Signs of Safety approach is being embedded in Children's Social Care with partners in Community Health and Early Years Services being trained in the approach. In order to establish clear governance arrangements for the multi-agency roll out of the approach a task and finish group has been set up in order to agree the terms of reference, governance arrangements and a project plan for the multi-agency implementation of the approach across the safeguarding partnership. It is expected that the work of the task and finish group will be completed in March 2018.

*to abusive and exploitative relationships. As a result local responses need to identify, assess, and intervene in all of the social environments where the abuse and exploitation of young people occurs - in essence to take a 'contextual' approach to safeguarding.<sup>1</sup>*

The Contextual Safeguarding approach recognises that there are a number of share categories of adolescent risk and/or harm including:

- Children and young people going missing from home, school and care
- Radicalisation
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Gangs
- Serious youth violence
- Online risks including grooming for sexual, financial or other forms of exploitation.

### 2.2.3 Listening to Children and Young People

Hearing the voice and reflecting the views of young people is a core value of the MSCB. The Board continues to seek to ensure that young people's voices and experiences are heard and reflected in its work. A detailed account of the work related to listening to, reflecting and acting upon young people's voice and views is provided in section 10 of this report.

## 2.3 Ensuring the Effectiveness Early Help

### 2.3.1 Finalise the review of the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well Being Model. An overview of the Board's actions as part of this review is provided in detail under section 3 of this report.

### 2.3.2 The Board will oversee the implementation of our MASH Action Plan.

The MASH Action Plan is overseen by the MASH Strategic Board which report to the MSCB. The MASH Action Plan is being implemented and we are beginning to see improvements in service delivery and partner engagement as a result of these changes.

### 2.3.3 The Board will oversee the review of the service offer in early help.

The review of the early help service offer was part of the wider review of the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well Being Model. Early help is provided at different levels of our longstanding Merton Child and Young Person Well-Being Model developed with our Safeguarding Board and Children's Trust partners.

In Merton we use the C4EO definition of Early Help:

*Intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle emerging problems for children, young people and families...early help can take place early in a child's life or early in the development of a problem...effective early help prevents escalation of need and reduces severity of problems...early help can be provided to individual families, particular vulnerable groups or whole populations (C4EO 2012).<sup>2</sup>*

This approach aims to enable and empower families, reducing an escalation of need. Merton's Children's Trust Partnership delivers, commissions and brokers early help services through the voluntary sector, schools, Public Health, Merton CCG, Safer Merton, the council and other key partners.

<sup>1</sup> What is Contextual Safeguarding, Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2017, <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>

<sup>2</sup> Early intervention and prevention in the context of integrated services: evidence from C4EO and Narrowing the Gap reviews, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO 2012)

Merton's Early Years early help offer includes strong local partnerships between community health and early year's services. Our early years sector include 100% good and outstanding Children's Centres and 97% good and outstanding Private Voluntary and Independent nurseries. Our community health services were recommissioned in 2016 strengthening the universal service offer and services for more vulnerable children and young people. Our transformative approach delivered changes in Early Years including reconfiguring the Children's Centres offer and the co-location of Community Health services staff into children's centres to enable better collaborative working. We have targeted the take-up of Children's Centre services to families from deprived areas in the borough and have reviewed our under 5s work between health and children's centres to secure better safeguarding, health and wider outcomes for under-fives, including redesigning pathways and specialist health provision and to fund perinatal adult mental health direct work. 100% of all children who are receipt of free 2 year old funding are placed in good or outstanding provision. Common And Shared Assessment work undertaken in our Early Years Supporting Families Service and Children

Centres is overseen by a qualified Social Work Team Manager, bringing additional value and risk management to pre safeguarding threshold casework. Both early year's settings and Schools have been supported with a Safeguarding guidance and audit tool which is in good use across all primary and secondary schools.

#### 2.3.4 The MSCB's Escalation Protocol

The Board has approved an escalation protocol so that all professionals within the multi-agency system have a clear framework for resolving professional differences in a timely way so that children are effectively safeguarded.

## 3.0

### Early Help: The Review of the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-being Model

The Merton Child and Young Person Well-being Model (MCYWBM) has been in place since 2013. The Model is own by the Children's Trust and the MSCB Partnerships. There have been a number of demographic, financial and organisational changes over the last 4 years that meant that a review of the model was timely and necessary.

The key challenges include:

- Demographic growth and changes in Merton's local population
- Organisational changes in agencies such as the Metropolitan Police Service and changes in Health services
- Increasing numbers of Free Schools and Academies
- Increasing demand on local services in the context of contracting budgets.

The drivers for the review of the model include the need to maximise the opportunities to increase understanding between partners, this includes a shared understanding of our varying statutory responsibilities and thresholds for intervention; also, the need to provide better tools and shared approaches for improving the capacity of practitioners to engage in effective interventions with families. It is also essential that we are able to work together to make the very best use of our collective resources to deliver our continuous improvement agenda, including our highest ambitions for our children, the families and the services and practitioners who support them.

The MCYWBM task and finish group met three times. The task and finish group consisted of a broad range of services including:

- Adult Mental Health
- Adult Social Care
- Central London Community Health Care
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Children's Social Care Education
- Children's Services Commissioning
- Early Years
- Education (Primary, Secondary and Special Schools)
- Merton Clinical Commissioning Group
- Merton Children's Trust
- Merton MASH and First Response
- Merton Public Health
- Merton Safeguarding Children Board
- Merton Youth Inclusion
- Safer Merton
- The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Borough Command
- The MPS Child Abuse Investigation Team
- Voluntary Organisations (including Merton Voluntary Service Council)





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One of the key themes highlighted throughout these meetings were the increasing demand and pressure on local services. For example in MASH and First Response Teams, there were:

- 5662 initial contacts in Merton
- 1507 referrals (27% of initial contacts)
- 1311 assessments (87% of referrals)
- Resulting in 204 new Child Protection Plans and
- 128 new episodes of care.

Another theme was demographic changes in the local population. For example, it was reported that 8% of the child population, that is, children and young people under 18 population in Merton (approximately 47,499 young people) have had an initial contact made about them. Merton has an East West divide in terms of the indices of deprivation and 5 super output areas. The child population (pupils in Merton Schools) is approximately 67% BAME; this is higher than Merton's adult population and national averages. The top 3 non-English languages spoke in Merton are Tamil, Polish and Urdu.

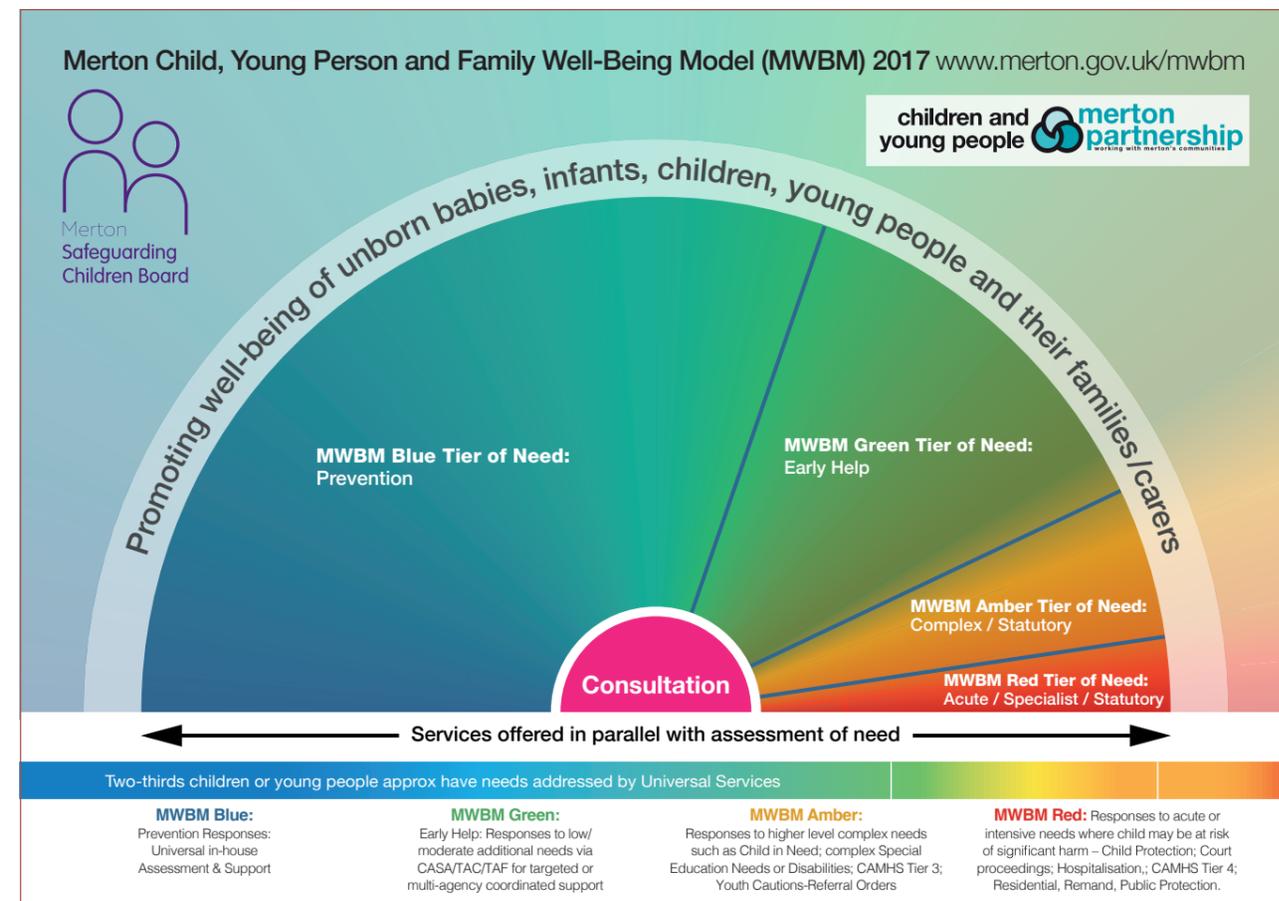
It was noted that Children's Social Care works with 800 children from 400 families. There are 350 Child in Need cases (100 of these are children with disabilities whose situations are mostly fixed; 50 of these cases are children with no recourse to public funds). 100 families have a Child Protection Plan. Children's Social Care's capacity means that they can work with 66 families at a given time. It was noted Transforming Families works with 60 families - however, funding for this service is being reduced by the government. This highlights the fact that Merton's social care system is relatively small as a multi-agency safeguarding partnership we need to improve access to early help and intervention so that levels of need and concerns regarding children's welfare do not escalate.

The MCYWBM task and finish group highlighted the need to reaffirm the following core values of the Children's Trust and the MSCB, which underpin our work. These reaffirmed values are outlined as follows:

- Keeping children and young person at the heart of our work
- Equality, equity, inclusion and valuing diversity - judged on our impact on the most vulnerable
- Local accountability and partnership
- Making a difference - quality assurance and continuous improvement
- Promoting a learning culture
- Promoting a culture that values children and young people.

The MCYWBM task and finish group also revised the visual representation of the Model.

The task and finish group also recommended that the Children's Trust and the MSCB approved Merton's Social Work Practice Model (see Appendix 2) and that Signs of Safety is extended beyond Children's Social Care. It was also proposed that the name of the Model be changed from the Merton Child and Young Person Well-Being Model, to the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-being Model to reflect the need for all agencies and services to 'think family' in accordance with the Board's Think Family priority.



# 4.0 Local context and need of the childhood population for Merton<sup>3</sup>

## 4.1 Merton the place

Merton has a total population of 200,543 including 47,499 children and young people aged 0-18 (Census 2011) between 2012 and 2016 the 0-18 population increased by 4%. This growth is predicted to increase by between 4% and 6% by 2020, based respectively on the GLA population projections for its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and its alternative Trend forecasts, which take additional factors into account. Within the whole CYP population increase, there are variations for different age groups, between 2011 and 2020 we can estimate the population of (based on SHLAA 2015):

- Primary school children aged between 5 and 10 will have increased by 20%
- Secondary school aged children aged 11 to 15 will have increased by 13%.

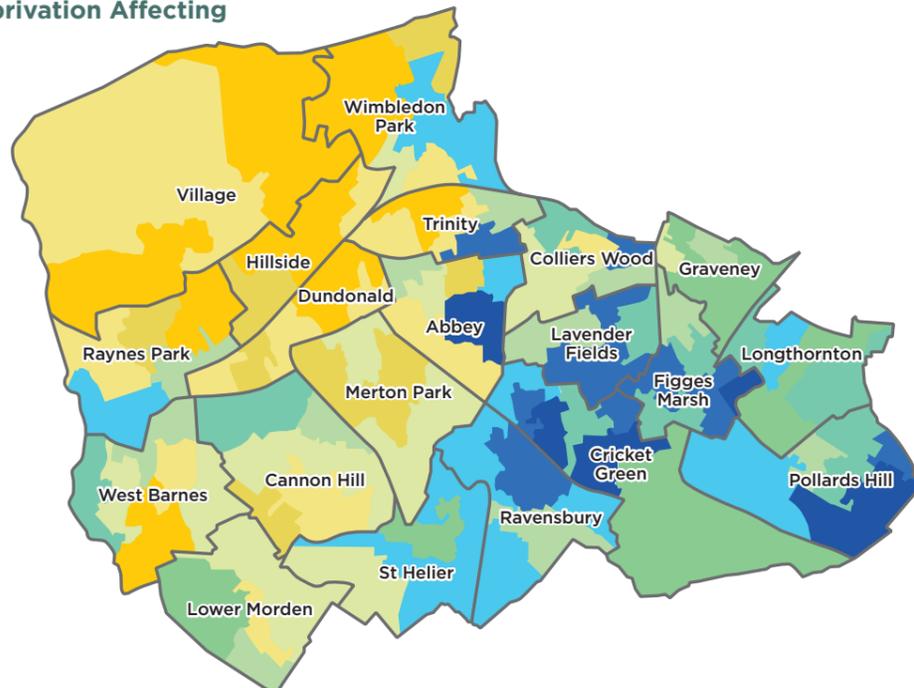
is approximated at 3178 by 2020. This increase in births, together with other demographic factors such as migration of families into the borough, has already created the need for more school places, put pressure on early years and pre-school services, children's social care and early intervention.

Predominantly suburban in character, Merton is divided into 20 wards and has three main town centres; Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. There are a number of pockets of deprivation within the borough mainly in the eastern wards and some smaller pockets in the central wards (Mitcham and Morden towns). These wards have multiple deprivations, with high scores on income deprivation, unemployment and limited educational attainment. Five of Merton's 20 wards are amongst the 30% most deprived areas across England for children. This means 37% of Merton school pupils are living in an area of deprivation (30% most deprived, IDACI 2015). Since 2010 we have seen an increase of 32% of children who are eligible for free school meals (2010, 2881 FSM children, 2016, 3817 FSM children).

Historically there was a 40% net increase in births from 2,535 in 2002 to a peak of 3507 in 2012 and

**Table 1: Merton Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2015**

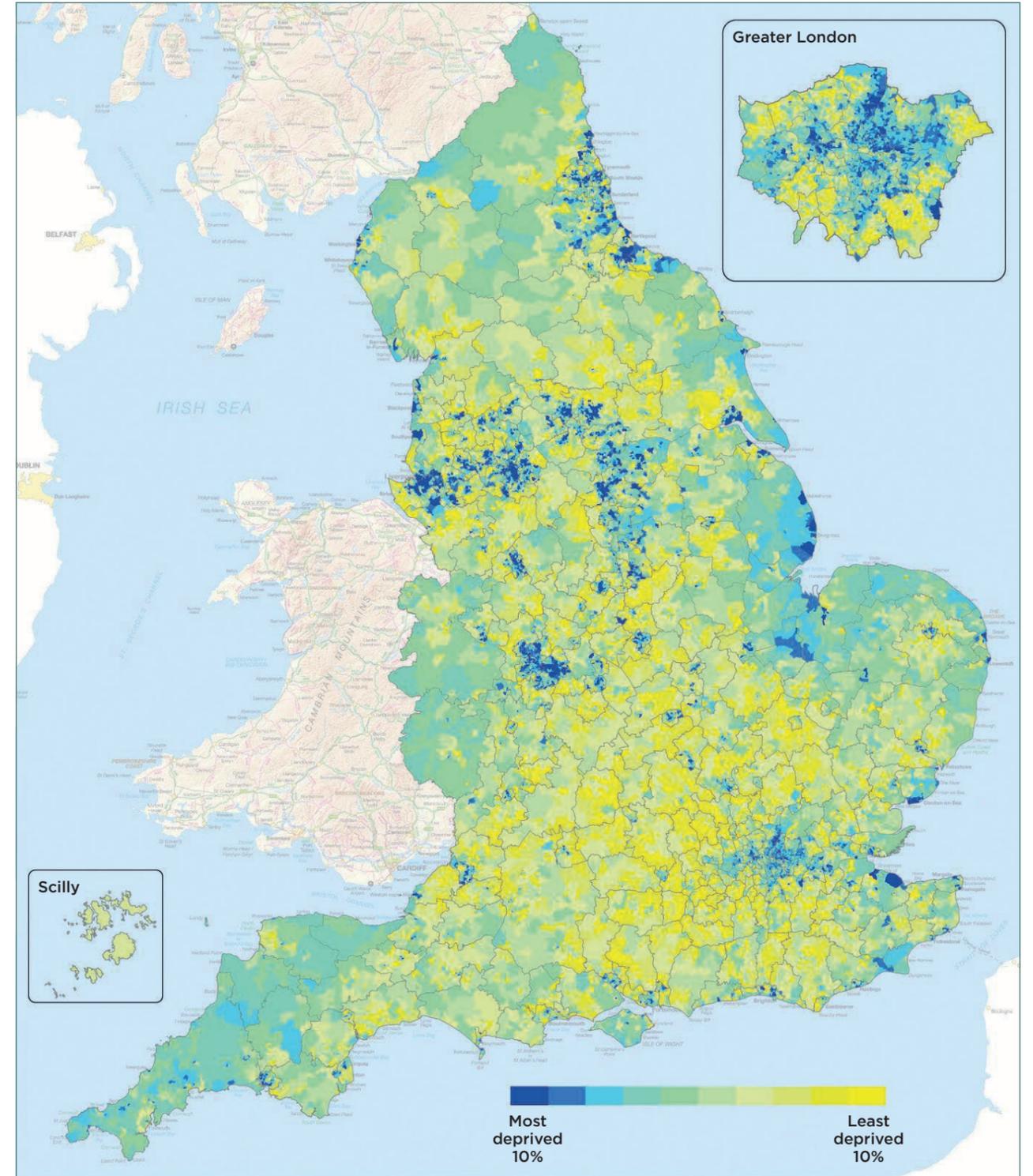
- Most deprived 10%
- 10% to 20%
- 20% to 30%
- 30% to 40%
- 40% to 50%
- 50% to 60%
- 60% to 70%
- 70% to 80%
- 80% to 90%
- Least deprived 10%



<sup>3</sup> Statistical information regarding the demographic profile of the Borough is based on the 2011 Census.

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## UK Indices of Deprivation



Thirty five per cent of Merton's total population is Black, Asian or Minority ethnic (BAME), this is expected to increase further to 39% by 2017. Pupils in Merton schools are more diverse still, with 67% from BAME communities, 44% with a first language which is not English, speaking over 120 languages (2016). The most prominent first languages for primary pupils apart from English are Tamil 7%, Polish 7% and Urdu 6%.

The SEND Resident population has increased by 16% between 2012 and 2016 (1078 CYP in 2016). The number of pupils attending Merton mainstream (inc. Academies) and Special Schools with a Statement of SEN or EHC Plan has also increased significantly over the last four years. This cohort is growing at a faster rate than the Merton School Population, with a 14 percentage point increase over the last five years. The number of Merton pupils with a Statement of SEN or EHCP has grown over the last five years at a faster rate than London, Statistical Neighbours and National. As at January 2016 there were 1148 pupils attending Merton Schools with a Statement of SEN or EHCP.

**4.2 Merton's Children in Need, Children with a Protection Plan and those Looked After**

**4.2.1 Children In Need**

Our published DfE CIN census data shows an increase in the rate per 10,000 as at 31 March (2015-16) compared to our trend and statistical neighbours. This data has been subsequently reviewed and updated, in fact Merton's Children in Need (CIN) rate per 10,000 (2015-2016,



333.3) remains in line with 2014-15 (338.3), and statistical neighbours (336.91), the London average (355.3) and the National average (337.7). See Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Increases in CIN rate between 2011 and 2016**

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	SN 2015-16	London 2015-16	National 2015-16
Rate per 10,000	371.3	336.8	355.1	338.3	333.3 R	336.91	355.3	337.7

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**4.2.2 Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan**

**Rate of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan**

The rate of Children subject of a child protection plan on the 31 March 2016 (29.9) was unusually low, compared to Merton's trend and against the benchmark of SN (36.20), London average (36.20) and national average (43.1). This was due to a number of large families with multiple siblings on child protection plans being deregistered days before the national Child In Need census was taken. Merton's average CP rate per 10,000 is 40 with approximately 160-180 child subject of a plan at any one time. See Tables 3 and 4 below.

**Children Subject to a plan for the second or subsequent time**

In the past 5 year to 2016, locally, regionally and nationally the numbers of children subject to a plan for the second or subsequent time have been steadily increasing. In Merton as at the end of 2015/16, 46 children or 22.5% of children became subject of a child protection plan for a

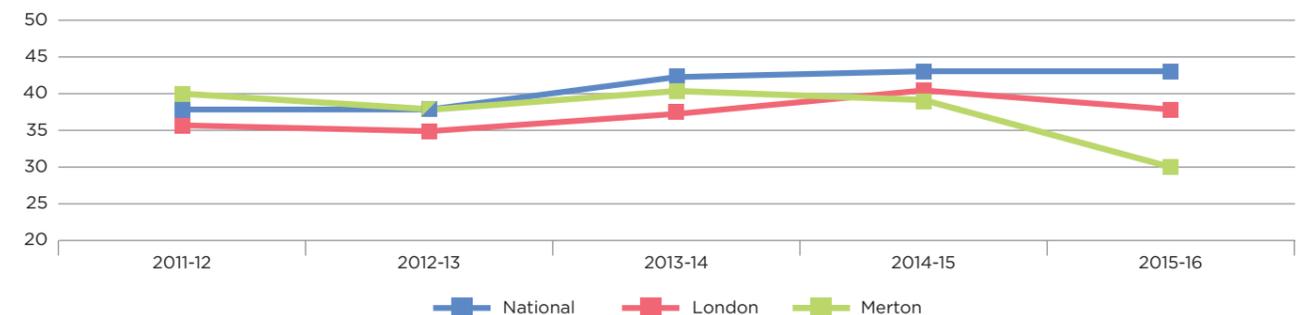
second or subsequent time. Whilst both national and London outturns have similarly increased gradually in preceding years, Merton's 2015-16 outturn is noticeably higher than SN average (16.2%), national average (17.9%) and London (14%) average (2015/16).

During 2015/16 Children Social Care completed an extensive review of all cases where child protection plans had been initiated for a second or subsequent time, a number of recommendations were agreed to deliver improvements through 2016/17. Actions included strengthening the quality of CP planning through focused training with CP 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. The impact of this improvement work as evidenced in the 31 March 2017 outturn at which point 13% of children were subject of a second or subsequent CP plan, drawing the authority back in line with the London average. See Table 5 overleaf.

**Table 3: Rate of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan**

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	SN 2015-16	London 2015-16	National 2015-16
Rate per 10,000	39.8	37.9	40.3	38.8	29.9	36.20	37.9	43.1

**Table 4: Children subject to a child protection plan**



**Table 5: Children Subject to a plan for the second or subsequent time**

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	SN 2015-16	London 2015-16	National 2015-16
Number	15	17	24	37	46	49.10	1250	11,350
Percentage	7.8%	10.6%	11.3%	16.4%	22.5%	16.2%	14.0%	17.9%

**Children subject of a plan lasting for 2 or more years (children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan)**

Nationally 3.8% (2015/16) of children were subject of a child protection plan lasting two years or more, in Merton this was 5.9% (2015/16) relating to 14 children, which is a 40% increase from the previous year 2014-15. See Table 6 below.

**4.2.3 Looked After Children**

At 31 March 2016, the looked after children rate per 10,000 of the population aged under 18 was 35.00. This is in line with the rate of 34.00 obtained in 2014 and 2015. Similarly both London and national averages held a steady course at 51.0 and 60.0 respectively. Overall, Merton's rate is lower than both national and London averages.

**Table 6: Children subject of a plan lasting for 2 or more years (children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan)**

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	SN 2015-16	London 2015-16	National 2015-16
Number	6	7	10	14	13.29	400	2410
Percentage	3.5%	3.6%	4.3%	5.9%	4.4%	4.3%	3.8%

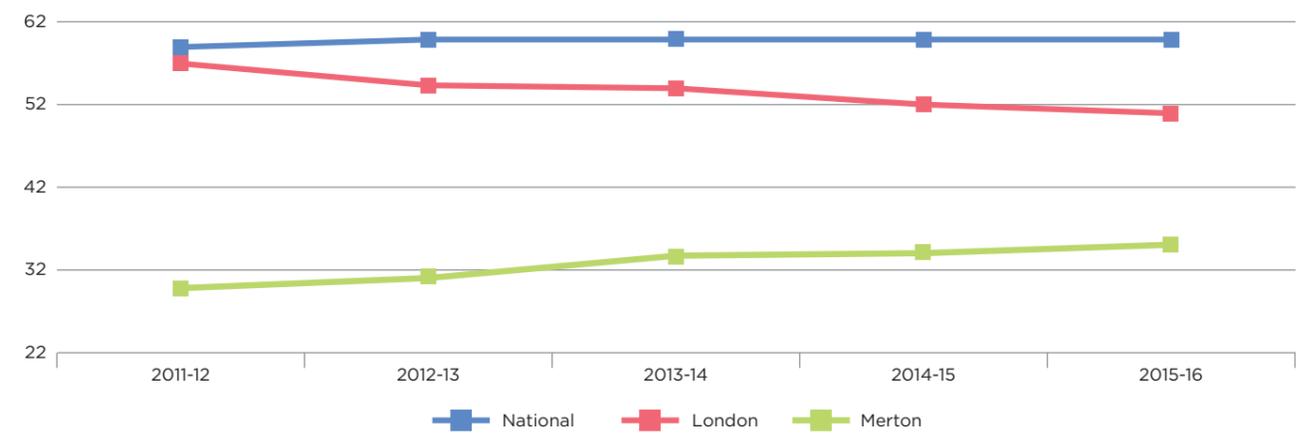


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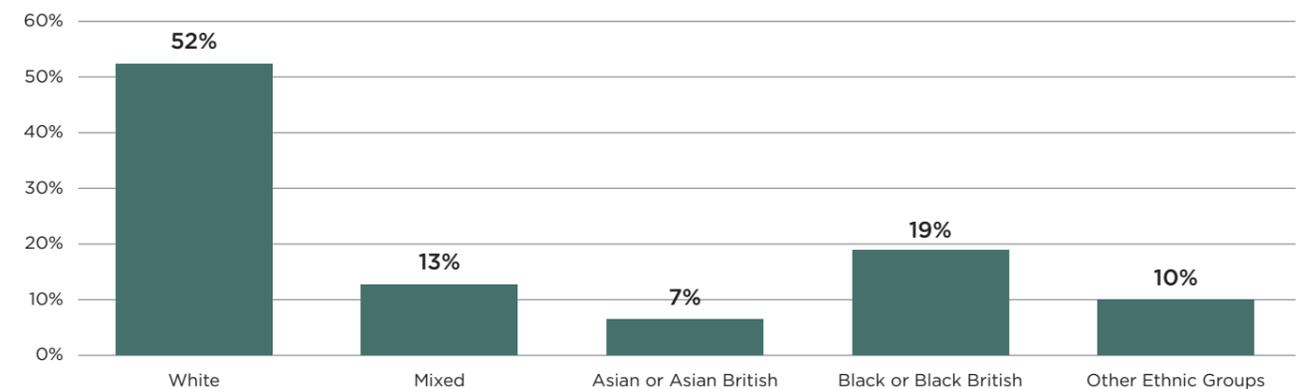
**Table 7: Looked After Children In Merton**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Merton	30.00	31.00	34.00	34.00	35.00
London	57.00	54.00	54.00	52.00	51.00
National	59.0	60.0	60.0	60.0	60.0

**Table 8: Looked after children by 10,000 population**



**Table 9: Ethnic Group of Looked After Children**



It is noteworthy that although the rate per 10,000 has remained stable, due to increase in overall population, the actual number of children entering care in Merton has continued to rise year on year thus placing extra pressure on services and caseloads. There were 130 looked

after children in Merton in 2012 this increased to 165 in 2016, an increase of 27%. Some this growth can also be attributed to on average 20-25 UASC entering care in Merton each year. See Tables 7, 8 and 9 above.

**Looked After Children with Stability in their placement**

As at 31st March 2016, 68% of Children who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, were living in the same placement for at least 2 years. This is an improvement on the 54% outturn in 2015 and places Merton on par with national averages. See Table 10 below.

As a result of this increased focus and additional resource we have seen some improvement in respect of outcomes for young people in this area.

We were in touch with 89% of our young people during 2015/16. See Table 11 below.

66% of our care leavers are in education, employment or training (2015/16) this is a significant improvement on 2014/15, 45% and can be attributed to actions delivered against our Care Leavers Strategy, placing us well above the national average of 49%. See Table 12 opposite.

96% of care leavers (aged 19, 20, 21) were living in 'suitable accommodation' in 2015/16 this is a significant improvement on 2013/14 (66%) and better than the national average 81% (2014/15). See Table 13 opposite.

**Table 10: Percentage of Looked After Children with Stability in their placement**

	2011-12 (31st March)	2012-13 (31st March)	2013-14 (31st March)	2014-15 (31st March)	2015-16 (31st March)
Merton	68%	64%	55%	54%	68%
National	68%	67%	67%	67%	68%

Source: SSDA 903  
 Note: The percentage of Children Looked After aged under 16 at 31st March who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement last for at least 2 years.

**Table 11: Care Leavers in Touch**

	2014-15		2015-16	
	Number	%	Number	%
Merton				
Yes	72	77%	132	89%
No	9	10%	3	2%
Service No Longer Required	7	8%	3	2%
Young Person Refuses Contact	3	3%	7	5%
Young Person Returned Home	2	2%	3	2%

Source: SSDA 903

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**Table 12: Percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training**

	2012 (31st March)	2013 (31st March)	2014 (31st March)	2015 (31st March)	2016 (31st March)
Merton	70.6%	60.0%	47.0%	45%	66%
SN	64.3%	67.8%	55.15%	52.2%	50.10%
National	58%	58%	45%	48%	49%

Source: SSDA 903  
 Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2012-2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 - 2016 include Care Leavers of all ages.

**Table 13: Percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation**

	2012 (31st March)	2013 (31st March)	2014 (31st March)	2015 (31st March)	2016 (31st March)
Merton	88%	85%	66%	76%	96%
SN	89.86%	89.30%	85.33%	83.20%	81.10%
National	88%	88%	78%	81%	83%

Source: SSDA 903  
 Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2012-2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 - 2016 include Care Leavers of all ages.

**4.3 Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation**

From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 40 young people were presented to the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel. The majority of the children discussed at the MASE are aged 13 to 16, during 2016-2017; these are further broken down as follows:

- 96% were female
- 62% were from Black Asian or Minority Ethnic Background (BAME)
- 39% of these who had a MASE referral also had a Missing episode, however this is only a small proportion of all those who go missing from home or care
- The majority of children known to the MASE live in our most deprived wards Pollards Hill, Figges March, Ravensbury and St Helier

- As at 31st March 2017 40 children were Open to the MASE
- 25% were LAC (10 young people)
- 20% were care leavers (8 young people) and
- 10% were CP (4 young people)
- The majority of CSE cases are open to the MASE panel for a year.

Merton's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) strategy was re-launched in 2013 and refreshed in 2015 and 2017 supported by intelligence from our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and peer review on CSE. Our Strategy provides clear and practical guidance for social workers and other practitioners dealing with cases where there is suspected and confirmed child/young person sexual exploitation.

Merton's management oversight of children who are at risk/subject of sexual exploitation, children missing from home or care and children missing education is maintained at three multi agency panels where information is shared and triangulated. Officers join up the 'risk dots' between these panels.

- Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE)
- Missing from Home or Care Panel (Multi agency representation)
- Children Missing Education Panel (Multi agency representation).

Strategic thematic issues are identified by officers and during audits. These are discussed and challenged at a senior management level and at the Promote and Protect Young People (PYPP), thematic subgroup of the MSCB and at the executive group of the MSCB in Merton referred to as the Business Implementation Group (BIG).

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#### 4.3.1 Summary Activity to address CSE in 2016 and 2017:

- Refreshed and re-launched strategy, protocol and tools in March 2015 and refreshed in 2017
- Increased identification of young people at risk, including more males, referred to and discussed at MASE
- Learned from our London CSE peer reviews and developed a JSNA CSE chapter: refreshed our CSE strategy, guidance and support tools
- Improving connectivity between CSE and Children Missing from Home, Care or Education; strengthened data, tracking & triangulation and appointing a CSE operational lead
- Appointed CSE Operational Lead to support the CSE Strategic Lead in autumn 2016
- Delivered CSE champions in Secondary Schools and within Health agencies
- Undertaken extensive awareness raising including: CSE awareness weeks, targeted events for Foster Carers and ongoing

development for Primary and Secondary schools including training to Heads/ Designated teachers and health champions

- Strengthened MSCB PPYP links to children missing from home, care and education
- Audited cases to inform our CSE improvement agenda and reviewed and strengthened dataset
- Continued work with Redthread in St Georges Hospital in relation to young people who have presented with injuries from knife/gunshots and CSE/Sexual injuries. New screening process in place between local Sexual Health GUM clinics and Social Care
- MOPAC funded Young Women and Girls Worker in place – with complex caseload of very vulnerable young women
- Development of Gangs and CSE victims mapping which includes cross-border activity
- Completed refreshed CSE self-evaluation in the context of Ofsted guidance on the 'deep dive' theme for targeted local authority inspections
- Ongoing commitment to Schools Police Officers with a proactive prevention programme and key link role
- Reviewed CSE partnership arrangements
- Maintained commissioned service
- Extended cross borough liaison locally in London and ensuring specific liaison with authorities in whose areas Merton LAC are placed
- Participating in new developments – a 'child house'.

#### 4.3.2 CSE and Looked After Children

There is a strong grip on the issue of looked after children and CSE. Seventeen looked after children were identified as being at risk of CSE. The Promote and Protect Young People Strategic Sub-Group (PPYPS) has strategic oversight of CSE and looked after children and reviews multi-agency performance of this issue at each meeting. In addition to this looked after children

who are at risk of CSE are reviewed at each MASE meeting. Ten looked after young people were identified as being at risk of CSE.

#### 4.3.3 CSE and Out of Borough LAC Cases

We have placed young people away from the borough because of our concerns about LAC. For some young people placements away from their home community are a key part of the care plan as a result of anti-social behaviour and or risk taking behaviours. For some the needs of the young people are such that they require specialist placements which are not available in Merton or surrounding boroughs. For all children being placed outside of the borough the DCS is required to sign off agreement for the placement. Care plans for these children and young people are reviewed to ensure that where possible young people are supported to return to their home community at the earliest opportunity. During 2016-2017 there were 165 looked after children who were placed out of borough who were identified as being at risk of CSE.

#### 4.4 Children Missing from Home and School

On average 400 to 500 episodes of missing from home or care are reported each year in Merton. This equates to between 60 and 80 unique children in each quarter with some seasonal episode increases around school holidays. The majority of the children who go missing are aged 14 to 17, male and White British. A large number of missing episodes reported in Merton relate to children looked after by other Local Authorities, but are placed in Merton. A small proportion of those who go missing from home are known to be at risk of child sexual exploitation or are known to be missing education, however almost half of those who go missing from care are known to be subject of these other vulnerabilities.

#### Actions to Address Children Missing From Home and Care

- Ongoing strengthening of 'Multi Agency Missing from Care and Home Panel' supported by a 'Missing dataset' which identifies other vulnerabilities including CSE and CME
- 'Weekly Missing Meeting' established in April 2016 and embedded in response to a need to strengthen multi agency operational working to ensure that children receive timely support from appropriate services including a return home interview
- Policies and procedures are in place to deliver a well-coordinated response to children who are reported as missing from home or care (Refreshed April 2016)
- Ongoing utility of Police Missing Person Co-ordinators analysis of repeat locations and individuals for MBC meetings
- Two thematic audits of children aged 11 to 14 who were reported as missing completed (November 2013 and March 2015) provided baseline intelligence and reassurance of the quality of assessments
- Independent organisation (Jigsaw4U) commissioned to work as part of a wider interagency team to provide practical and emotional support and prevent/reduce episodes of going missing. Jigsaw4U also provide 'return home interviews'
- With regards to children/young people known to Children's Social Care, case management of CIN/CP CYP missing from home is improving and recording and case management of Looked after Children missing or absent has improved over the last 12 to 18 months
- All in-house foster carers have received 'missing and absent' procedure training
- 'Children Missing' policies and procedures are checked as part of the placement commissioning process. Agency foster carers and residential placements are required to report missing episodes in a timely way to the Council and Police and are required to support the Council to implement safety plans.

### Children Missing Education(CME)

On average 130 to 150 Off Roll children and young people are discussed at the CME Panel each year academic year. During 2015/16 the off roll CME are summarised as follows:

- The majority were children and young people in years 7 to 10
- 55% were male
- Only 5% were subject of a SEN Statement or EHCP
- 5% were Merton LAC, none were subject of a child protection plan and
- 3% were subject of a Child in Need Plan
- 96% of all CME Off roll cases during 2015/16 were actioned and closed by the panel within three months.

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CME policies and procedures, comply with the revised Statutory Guidance (January 2015). Merton's Education Welfare Service (EWS) promote and enforce regular and punctual school attendance. EWS support schools, parents and students to ensure that a child of compulsory school age has access to education and attends school regularly and punctually or receives a suitable education other than at school as well as ensuring that risks are well understood and minimised.

CME Multi-agency panel reviews all children who are missing education and tracks actions to return them to full time education, this panel meets monthly.

All referrals to the MASH are screened by an education officer to check if they are known to be missing education, this intelligence factors into MASH RAG rating. Briefings are provided to primary and secondary school head teachers on safeguarding risks associated with absence from school and are reinforced in termly designated teachers' events.

### Action Taken To Address Children Missing from School

- Strengthened the partnership approach of the multi-disciplinary Hard to Place and CME Panels
- Implemented a Chronic Absence Project in response to an SCR finding with a focus on pupils with chronic absence pre-transition to secondary school. Undertook a post implementation impact review to take forward the learning
- Maintained our strong performance with low levels of NEET and achieved significant reduction of numbers of young people in the "Not Known" category
- CME/PA protocols between Education and Social Care services strengthened with regular reporting to CSF Continuous Improvement Board
- Briefings provided to Primary and Secondary School head teachers on safeguarding risks associated with absence from school and reinforced as appropriate in termly designated teachers' events
- Specific guidance provided to schools on forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child trafficking and Prevent
- Continued to improve school attendance and maintained our strong focus on preventing permanent exclusions
- Developed schools and early year's settings safeguarding audit tool and guidance
- Adopted a vigilant approach to the quality of alternative education provision in the borough and the identification and notification of unregistered schools
- Strengthened Education Welfare Service focus on the home education process where families opt to educate children other than at school (EOTAS). Action is taken by the authority in relation to unregistered schools, we are activity monitoring and liaising with Ofsted where necessary
- Ongoing commitment to Schools Police Officers with a proactive prevention programme and key link role

- Rolled out changes in relation to Pupil Registration Regulations 2016 regarding on and off rolling
- Further developed the CME panel dataset and intelligence analysis
- Consolidated school partnerships and further developed the Merton Education Partnership, used forums to highlight Safeguarding. Developed schools and early years Safeguarding audit tool and guidance (In early years all funded support and targeted support settings).

### 4.5 Prevent

The Board has refreshed its guidance for professional working with children and young people who are vulnerable to the messages of radicalisation and violent extremism. The Board's Policy Sub-Group works with Safer Merton to ensure that there is strong grip and

clear oversight of all prevent cases involving young people. The MSCB has worked hard, along with Safer and Stronger, to achieved strong engagement with the 'Prevent' agenda involving key partners including police, schools, early years settings and with faith, voluntary sector and wider communities.

### 4.6 Female Genital Mutilation

The Board has refreshed its Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and provided a range of briefings and multi-agency training sessions on FGM. The Board has also prepared an FGM leaflet that has been made available to parents and professionals both online and in print. The Board also provides 'red alert' briefings to Merton schools around Easter and Summer holidays, which have been identified as key risk periods for FGM due to the length of the holiday period. There have been two cases where FGM has been identified as a risk factor.



## 5.0 Statutory and Legislative Context

Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is the Local Safeguarding Children Board for Merton. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a range of roles and statutory functions.

Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board for their area and specifies the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that the Secretary of State may prescribe in regulations that should be represented on LSCBs.

Children Act 2004 Section 14 sets out the objectives of LSCBs, which are:

- (a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- (b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

The LSCB is not an operational body and has no direct responsibility for the provision of services to children, families or adults. Its responsibilities are strategic planning, co-ordination, advisory, policy, guidance, setting of standards and monitoring. It can commission multi-agency training but is not required to do so.

The delivery of services to children, families and adults is the responsibility of the commissioning and provider agencies, the **Partners**, not the LSCB itself.

Regulation 5 of the **Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006** sets out LSCB duties as:

- 5.1 (a) developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures in relation to:
- (i) the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention;
  - (ii) training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
  - (iii) recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
  - (iv) investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
  - (v) safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
- 5.1 (b) communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so;
- 5.1 (c) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve
- 5.1 (d) participating in the planning of services for children



Regulation 5 (2) relates to the LSCB Serious Case Reviews function and regulation 6 relates to the LSCB Child Death functions.

Regulation 5 (3) offers that an LSCB may also engage in any other activity that facilitates, or is conducive to, the achievement of its objectives.

These duties are further clarified in the statutory guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, 2015, Chapter 3* (WT 2015)

LSCB duties are specified in WT 2015, Chapters 3, 4 and 5, with a responsibility to have oversight of single agency and multi-agency safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare (under Children Act 2004, section 11, see the footnote on page 33) as set out in WT chapters 1 and 2.

The Children and Social Care Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. The Act will abolish LSCBs, replacing them with Safeguarding Partnerships, and the 2004 legislative framework. It is expected that a revised Working Together to Safeguard Children and statutory regulations will be provided in late 2017 or early 2018.

## 6.0

### MSCB Inter-relationships and Influence with other Key Partners

The Board has a rolling 24-month Business Plan, to be refreshed each March for the business year starting each April. The update of the MSCB Business Plan for 2017-2019, agreed by the Board in June 2016, is attached as Appendix 1. The Business Plan outlines the Board's priorities for 2017-2019 and was agreed by the Board at its annual Away Day in March 2017. Priority items can be added within the year.

The MSCB meets three times per year in half-day business meetings; and in a Business Planning Away Day once per year, in March. The Business Implementation Group of the Board meets four times per year. The progress of the actions agreed in the Business Plan is reviewed at each meeting. Each Sub Group has an agreed Work Plan and each Sub Group reports to the MSCB at each Board meeting.

Membership<sup>4</sup> of the Board includes the following statutory partners:

- The Metropolitan Police Service, Borough Commander
- The National Probation Service and London Community Rehabilitation Companies
- The Youth Offending Team
- NHS England and Merton Clinical Commissioning Groups including representation from commissioned Health Services
- CAFCASS.

Membership of the Board also includes:

- Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion
- Assistant Director of Education
- The Director of Public Health, Merton
- Representation from the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Adult Social Care
- Representatives from Housing, including Housing Associations.

There is also strong partnership and influence between the MSCB and the following strategic partnerships and their Sub-Groups:

- The Health and Well-Being Board
- The Corporate Parenting Board
- The Children's Trust
- The Safer and Stronger Partnership.

<sup>4</sup> The structure and membership of the Board is included in this report as Appendices 4 and 5.



## 7.0

### MSCB Sub-Groups

The work of the MSCB is delivered and overseen through each of its Sub-Groups.

#### 7.1 Quality Assurance Sub-Group

The purpose of the Quality Assurance (QA) Sub-Group is to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected by overseeing the quality of single and multi-agency work carried out in partnership across the children and young people sector.

The QA Sub-Group undertook the following activities in 2016-2017:

- Completed 3 themed multi agency audits. The themes for each multi-agency audit are as follows:
  - Children With Disabilities May 2017
  - Child Sexual Abuse and Threshold Decisions in Child Sexual Abuse Case October 2017
  - Live Learning Practice Audit on the Theme of Domestic Abuse January 2017
- Reviewed the MSCB's Multi-agency Performance Dataset
- Monitored learning from SCRs, LiRs, and the Action Plans coming out of the Child B SCR and the Baby C LiR
- Disseminated learning from multi-agency audits
- Maintained an overview of multi-agency escalations to the Board.

#### 7.2 Promote and Protect Young People Sub-Group

The Promote and Protect Young People (PPYP) Sub-Group met 8 times in 2016-2017. The purpose of the PPYP is to take overall lead responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted; *concentrating on extra-familial abuse* where there is *risk of abuse outside the family*. PPYP is responsible for policies relating to issues like CSE, children

missing from home, care or education, child on child abuse, other forms of exploitation (such as radicalization), e-safety, trafficking, abuse by those in a position of trust or in institutions - including faith organisations and community organisations; and policies and procedures in relation to allegations against those in a position of trust (Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) referrals).

In 2016-2017 PPYP undertook the following pieces of work on behalf of the Board:

- Reviewed and updated *Guidance for Professionals Working with Children and Young People who May Be Vulnerable to the Messages of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*
- Oversaw the work the MASE Panel and Persons of Concern Panel
- Maintained strategic oversight of Children Missing from home, school and care
- Oversaw the Merton Adolescent Review
- Reviewed and updated the MSCB's *CSE Protocol* for approval by the Board
- Reviewed and updated the MSCB's *CSE Strategy* for approval by the Board
- Monitored and ensured the implementation of the CSE Action Plan
- Ensured the delivery of the CSE Awareness Events across the Borough
- Revised and Updated the MSCB's Missing Panel Terms of Reference for approval by the Board
- Reviewed and updated the MSCB's *Online Safety Strategy* for approval by the Board
- Prepared the MSCB's *Harmful Sexual Behaviour Protocol* for approval by the Board.

#### 7.3 Learning and Development Sub Group

The purpose of the Learning and Development Sub-Group is to take the overall lead responsibility, on behalf of the MSCB, to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place so that the multi-agency workforce is up to date in knowledge and

skills for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The Learning and Development Sub-Group also plans and delivers the Joint MSCB/CSC/CSF Multi-Agency Annual Conference for practitioners and managers. The aim of the conference is to increase awareness developments in safeguarding and to engage in dialogue with frontline practice. We also aim, where possible, to involve children and young people.

**7.3.1 MSCB Joint Conference With Children’s Social Care and Children’s Schools and Families Department**

The MSCB and CSF Joint Conference, *Behind Closed Doors: Working the Complexities of Domestic Abuse* included over 140 attendees from a range of multi-agency backgrounds, including health, that is, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Central London Community Health Care, Public Health, education, youth inclusion, children’s social care, safeguarding adults, mental health, probation, the metropolitan Police Service, and voluntary organisations.

The event featured a Keynote Address from Jo Keogh MBE. Jo has been committed to supporting the victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse for over 15 years. She was awarded an MBE in 2013 and the Commissioners Commendation for the Domestic Abuse Achievement awards in 2014. Jo’s address focused on coercive control and the need for services to be sensitive to the experiences of victims who should be recognised as survivors. Jo’s presentation came alive with the contribution of Victoria, who is a survivor of domestic abuse. Victoria bravely shared her story with the conference and explained the need to balance compassion with a robust approach to working with both victims and perpetrators. She highlighted the need to build trust, and for practitioners to understand the level of control exerted by perpetrators and the level of fear and trauma experienced by survivors and to be professionally curious and ask the difficult questions.

The conference also featured six workshops by professionals and services which work with families in the Merton area:

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- Working with Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) High Risk Victims and Response
- Children’s Social Care Impact of DV on Family Life
- Working with Perpetrators, Building Better Relationships
- Housing for Women - Life in the Refuge
- Domestic Violence and Mental Health - Supporting Victims on their journey
- Domestic Violence and Health Outcomes - Impact of DV on Health.

Some of the comments from the conference state that:

- “Merton is doing some excellent work in tackling DV issues and in recognising people’s lived experienced and improving services’ responses through training and development”
- “Thanks for an excellent day”
- “Excellent Conference - ...powerful account by Victoria...”
- “Powerful... Emotional”

The Conference was concluded with a Dramatic presentation by AlterEgo Creative Solutions. The drama, entitled *Behind Closed Doors*, helped practitioners to understand:

- The complexities of Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control & Stalking
- The Warning Signs/Risk Factors
- Why victims may not tell anyone, may not wish to prosecute, may retract statements, may justify what is happening to them, may not even see themselves as victims in the first place and may fight against any intervention
- The importance of effective Risk Assessment
- How to sign-post to relevant services.

**7.3.2 MSCB Training**

The table below gives a quick overview of the number of planned and run training events from April 2016 to March 2017.

The tables overleaf indicate attendance per course and per agency.

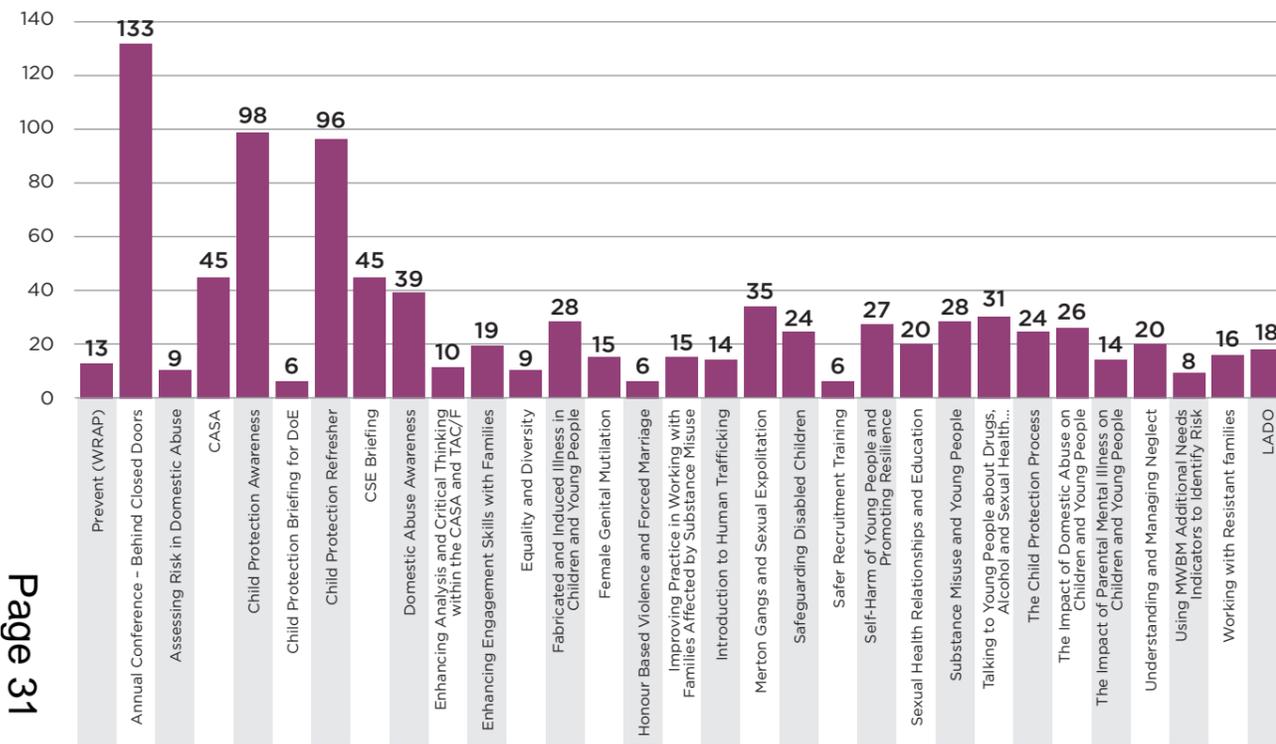
The MSCB has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training including multi-agency training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As part of this responsibility the MSCB offers a comprehensive programme of multi-agency training.

The MSCB’s Learning and Development Strategy outlines the MSCB’s approach to Multi-agency Learning and Professional Development.

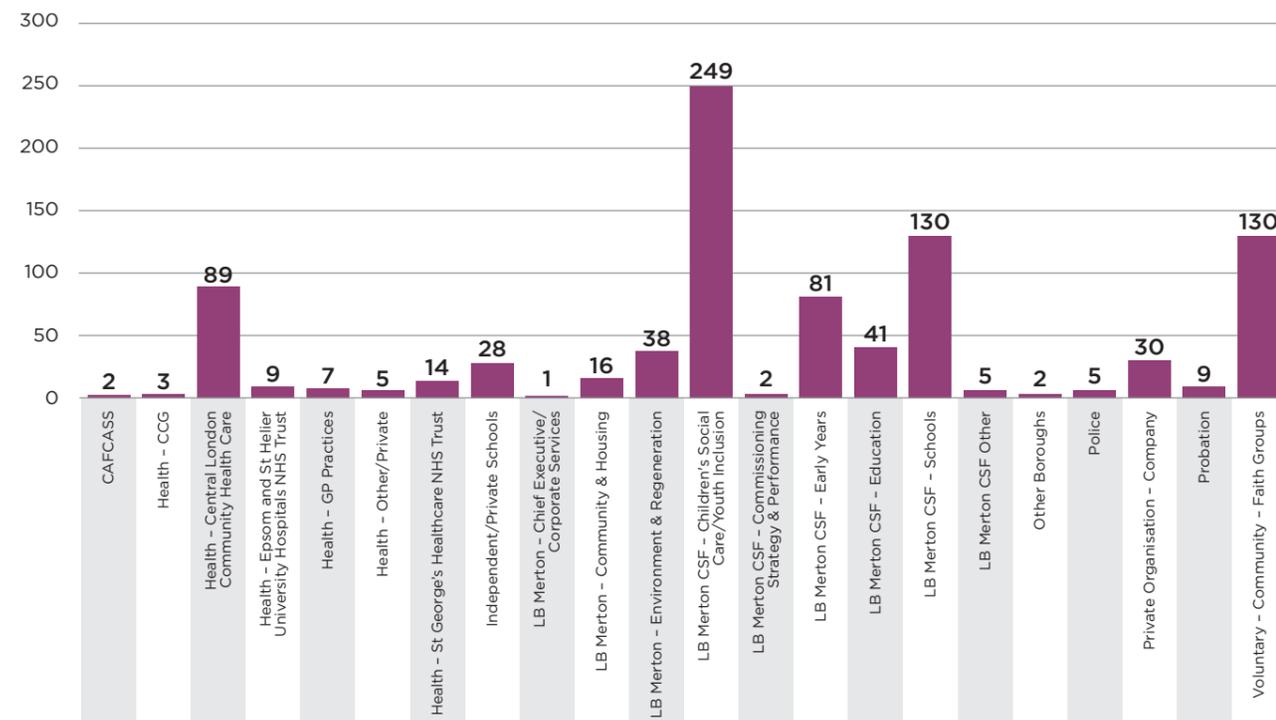
**Table 11: MSCB Training for 2016-2017**

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Planned events	6	7	13	6	0	10	8	11	3	7	7	9	87
Added events							1	2		1	1	1	6
Cancelled events	4	2	5	0	0	0	2	4	1	1	0	4	23
Actual events	2	5	8	6	0	10	7	9	2	7	8	5	69
Booked	28	59	93	77	0	200	121	144	20	107	113	185	1147
<b>Actual number of attendees</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>993</b>

**Attendance per Course 2016-17**



**Attendance per Agency 2016-17**



The provision of learning and development will be based on:

- Lessons from serious case reviews, learning and improvement reviews, management reviews
- Learning needs identified as part of multi-agency audits
- The MSCB key priorities as outlined in the MSCB business plan and other requirements as arising during the course of the year
- It will also link to requirements from other Boards (e.g. Safeguarding Adult Board, the Health and Well-Being Board etc.) and where appropriate share with other Safeguarding Boards and agencies so as to avoid duplication with single agency programmes and maximise the use of resources and shared expertise
- System wide Developments in multi agency safeguarding practice, for example, the Merton Social Work Practice Model, including the multi agency implementation of Signs of Safety and the review of the Merton Child and Family Well-being Model)
- Multi-agency training needs identified as part of reviews and/or inspections.

The MSCB's programme is one of the most comprehensive multi-agency safeguarding training programmes in London, offering a wide range of training opportunities for multi-agency safeguarding practitioners.

The Learning and Development Sub-Group reviewed the figures from 2015-2016 and as a result the Sub-Group took the decision to refresh the programme and training offer. The current training programme is aligned to the Board's key priorities and reflects the learning coming out of our SCR and LiR as well as learning emerging from analysis of SCRs nationally.

We are working closely with partners in Children's Social Care (CSC) to ensure that there is consistency and minimal overlap between the MSCB training offer and the CSC programmes.

**7.3.3 E-Learning**

Merton SCB renewed their membership with Virtual College in September 2016 and paid £8,000 for their e-Learning package and self-registration system, allowing learners and institutions to create their own e-Learning account.

In October 2016, Merton SCB upgraded their membership with Virtual College and upgraded to unlimited licences to the Total Training Package, paying an additional £8,000. The membership dates run from 30/09/2016 to 29/09/2017.

**7.4. Policy Sub-Group**

The Policy Sub-Group is focused on policies and procedures and the purpose of the Policy Sub-Group is to take overall lead responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency guidance, policies, protocols and procedures to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted. The Policy Sub Group also has lead responsibility for policies in relation to *safeguarding children from harm and neglect within their families or substitute families*. This includes core early intervention and child protection procedures and looked after children procedures; private fostering; the Sub-Group also leads on specialist areas such as parental mental ill-health, parental alcohol and substance abuse, and parental disabilities; FGM, cultural-based abuse and so-called 'honour' violence.

In 2016-2017 the Policy Sub-Group drafted or refreshed the following policies/strategies/protocols for approval by the Board

- The FGM Strategy
- The Neglect Strategy
- The Bruising in Pre-mobile Babies Protocol
- The Multi-Agency Escalation Protocol.

### 7.5 Merton Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

In January 2017, the Merton CDOP took the decision to disaggregate from the London Borough of Sutton. Merton CDOP established local arrangements to respond to and review child deaths in Merton; these include:

- A review of all child deaths (under 18 years, excluding those babies who are stillborn) in the LSCB area undertaken by a panel (Para 5.8 – 5.9); and
- A rapid response by a group of key professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child (Para 5.12-5.20).

neonatal unit. Three babies died in the delivery suite and one died in paediatric intensive care, three of eight babies were under 23 weeks gestation. Mental health concerns were identified with three families and one set of parents were consanguineous. In all eight cases no recommendations were made by the Panel.

No cases reviewed this year have been classified as Sudden Unexpected Death in an infant for Merton.

There were 14 deaths classified as “expected” reviewed in this period, all of which were considered to have “no modifiable factors”. In 1 case, the parents are consanguineous and declined genetic testing antenatally. There were 3 sets of twins. One sibling survived of IVF Twins. Eight children had life limiting conditions. No recommendation was made in any of these cases.

### 7.6 Youth Crime Executive Board (YCEB)

The Youth Crime and Prevention Executive Board (YCPEB) is chaired by the Director of Children’s, Schools and Families Services and the vice chair is the Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Police (Merton). The YCPEB is the governance structure for Merton in relation to the work of the Youth Justice Team (the local Youth Offending Team), including the Youth Justice Annual Plan, performance and Quality Assurance. It also oversees the partnership response to Serious Youth Violence, Gangs and Troubled Families (known locally as Transforming Families) (TF). Membership includes Children’s Schools and Families (CSF): Children’s Social Care (CSC); Youth Justice; LAC, Education Inclusion, Police, Probation and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The YCPEB reports to the MSCB. The Safer and Stronger Partnership reviews the performance of the partnership, the Youth Justice Team as well as wider youth crime issues.

The YCPEB’s key priorities over the past year have involved maintaining and monitoring the strong performance of the YJT, particularly in relation to the Youth Justice Board’s three key performance indicators of reducing first time entrants to the Youth Justice system, sustaining low numbers of young people who are sentenced to custody and

reducing the number and rate of young people who reoffend. The YCPEB priorities have also been in regard to delivering the TF programme and reducing the serious youth violence and gang activity in the borough.

The Youth Justice and Transforming Families Teams are placed within the Family and Adolescent Service, which is a strand within Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion that delivers a range of government prescribed and legislated functions to children at risk of harm, children in care, care leavers and young offenders, as well as wider services for families. A number of the interventions are targeted with the aim of providing an intervention before problems escalate within a family or that of a young person. This involves working closely with schools, academies, the Police and the Education Welfare Service. This work has included contributing to the CSF Equalities Action plan and actions are now in place to ensure that young people from deprived wards in the borough are supported. An example of this work is the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) Phipps Bridge (ward) work, which is focused on reaching and supporting young men from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and White working class backgrounds

YCPEB oversees Merton’s response to new legislation, the Inspection regime, its local crime reduction & prevention initiatives, monitor issues concerning risk and safeguarding and ensure staff & resourcing levels are in place to maintain performance and effectiveness within the delivery of the youth crime and prevention services. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the YCPEB monitors the delivery of any improvement plans following inspections or audits. In 2016 an audit was completed on 20 cases by Cordis Bright, who have previously audited the team. This was in light of anticipated changes to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) framework for inspection of Youth Offending Teams and following implementation by the YJT of the Youth Justice Board’s new assessment framework, AssetPlus, in March 2016. The audit evidenced an improvement since their last visit in August 2013 and the subsequent SQS in October 2013. They examined 8 YROs and 11 Referral Orders. They presented

the results separately as the results were different for each cohort. All YROs had sufficient risk management and effective oversight by managers and improvements were identified in regard to home visits and in a number of areas for Referral Orders. An Action Plan was developed and is reviewed by the YCPEB. Cordis Bright also recommended the Trauma Recovery Model to support the team’s proactive approach with young people but to have a structure for responding to more complex / chaotic cases and increase the use of outreach and home visits.

The Youth Justice Board’s annual National Standards audit was completed with most standards met or met with some improvements required. The YCPEB has endorsed recommendations, and will seek a partnership response from Service Managers for Youth Justice, Emergency Duty and Access to Resources Teams to create a plan for how LA responsibilities for a ‘PACE bed’ can be met, within the remit of practicable and fully supervised care, supported by transport. Training for EDT and frontline social workers will support awareness of responsibilities during different stages of young people’s involvement in the criminal justice system.

The YCPEB remains committed to the core value of ensuring the voice of the child (VOC) and that this is captured and acted upon. The Youth Justice Annual Plan includes an Action Plan developed and reviewed by a youth board consisting of young people currently or previously on orders with the team. The latest youth board reported positively on the improvements to the recommendations, which are shared in team meetings. The Online Viewpoint Questionnaire was a requirement of HMIP and has now ceased. The last report from Viewpoint showed favourable satisfaction of service delivery. An ‘exit questionnaire’ as been developed by the team to capture the views of young people as they end their orders and the results will continue to be reported to the YCPEB and Youth Justice Plan reviews.

The YCPEB continues to have a focus on the Ending Serious Youth Violence agenda and this year Merton was involved in a Local Assessment

In all, 36 cases were reviewed and completed by the CDOP during the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. 15 Cases were from Merton and 21 cases from Sutton. From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, there were 28 child deaths reported to the Sutton and Merton CDOP. 16 deaths were of children resident in Sutton and 12 in Merton.

In 2015-16 there were no out of borough deaths of Sutton or Merton children.

There were four CDOP meetings held in 2015-2016 and 36 cases reviewed in total, as per the breakdown in Table 2 below. The number in brackets beside the number of cases reviewed indicates in which year the child died: (13) for a child death from 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014 (14) for a child death from 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015, and (15) for a child death that was reviewed in April 2015- to March 2016 year.

There were 9 unexpected deaths in Sutton and Merton in the 2015-2016 CDOP year. Nine rapid response meetings were held. Where a rapid response meeting was held, 1 case was referred to Merton Safeguarding Children’s Board for consideration as a learning review. The case currently awaits the Coroner’s Inquest and review.

There were 8 neonatal deaths reviewed in this period. Of these none had modifiable factors identified. Half of these children died on the

Process, delivered by the Institute of Community Safety. The recommendations from this report have been presented to both YCPEB and Safer and Stronger. The priorities will be to consider senior leadership oversight and collaboration in regard to the local profile and mapping of gangs, violence and exploitation. This will include oversight of the increase in County Lines drug dealing and a pilot project funded by the Home Office to engage young people through offering alternative pathways and access to legitimate income through apprenticeships. The YCPEB has also endorsed the combining of the Youth Offending Management Panel (YOMP) with the Gangs Multi-Agency Panel (GMAP) to ensure a streamlined multi-agency oversight, which will also reduce duplication of complex cases previously discussed at both panels. Reports from YOM-GMAP and case examples are to be represented to YCPEB to allow senior strategic oversight.

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 IOPAC funding for the gangs, restorative justice and CSE workers has been retained, this is now monitored by the Safer Merton manager, which has seen an increase in joined up working between the relevant services and Safer Merton and this joint working approach will continue to be fostered through networking events, representation at relevant panels and responding to the LAP review.

The Youth Justice Team has worked with the MSCB on a Harmful Sexual Behaviour Protocol, which aims to improve a multiagency response to young people who are involved in inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour with appropriate assessment routes. The YCPEB and the MSCB QA Sub-Group were sighted on and approved the actions from a Critical Learning Report in regard to a critical incident involving a Rape charge, which includes the commissioning of a consultancy service to support workers on a regular basis in regard to their engagement and supervision of young people involved in harmful sexual behaviour (whether on court orders or under safeguarding processes). The Assessment Intervention and Moving on (AIM) tool will continue to be utilised to support screening and assessment. Other assessment frameworks are also being considered through the commissioning and training programme.

Merton CSF also focuses on the Child Sexual Exploitation agenda especially with regards to reducing the vulnerability of children and young people. This is done through the work of the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel and the Persons of Concern Panel (POC). These panels report to the Promote and Protect MSCB Sub-Group. The YCPEB also has oversight of this significant work and the Youth Justice Team Manager ensures representation from the YJT is maintained at all panels and groups. The cross-over of the serious youth violence and CSE agendas will increase next year with the YJT Manager being the lead for 'Contextual Safeguarding' agenda and having management responsibility for the CSE Lead.

### 7.7 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Sub-Group

The MSCB is committed to addressing the violence against women and girls. The VAWG Sub-Group is Chaired by the Director of Children, Schools and Families and the Vice-Chair is from the Borough Police. The strategic aims outline four priority areas in tackling VAWG and domestic abuse, which are:

1. Providing accessible, evidence-based, holistic support to people who have experienced or are at risk of VAWG
2. Implementing effective systems and interventions for working with perpetrators.
3. Fostering an integrated and coordinated approach to tackling VAWG.
4. In order to deliver the four strategic aims this action plan is split into to four priority themes;

**1. Coordination:** to develop a coordinated multi-agency approach by ensuring that the response to VAWG is shared by all stakeholders, embedded into service plans and coordinated effectively.

**2. Prevention:** to change attitudes and prevent violence by raising awareness through campaigns; safeguarding and educating children and young people; early identification, intervention and training.

**3. Provision:** to improve provision and specialist support services which are essential in enabling people to end violence in their lives and recover from the damaging effects of abuse by providing a range of services to meet the needs of victims and survivors; practical and emotional support, emergency and acute services; access to legal advice and support, refuge and safe accommodation.

**4. Protection:** to provide effective response to perpetrators outside of and within the criminal justice system through effective investigation; prosecution; victim support and protection; perpetrator interventions.

### Key achievement highlights for 2016-2017

The Merton VAWG board oversaw a range of work during 2016-17. As the work of the four year strategy was overseen and year one outcomes delivered we discharged the following:

- The London Borough of Merton is now a fully accredited partner in a national campaign to tackle Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Work has been completed with Merton becoming the second London borough to adopt the UK Says NO MORE campaign. Merton is the biggest supporter of this work and now has an employee as one of their faces for their national 2017-18 campaign
- Merton was also the first London Borough to adopt the "Ask Angela" campaign which works to address sexual violence within the night time economy. Based on our work this campaign has now been adopted by the Metropolitan Police who are now rolling this out across the city
- The Safer Merton Partnership to launch our revised VAWG mission statement
- Work completed with the introduction of a four year strategy developed and signed off in conjunction with partners
- The Safer Merton Partnership to work with victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) and encourage reporting of incidents to achieve our ambition of increasing victims' access to services year on year

■ Work undertaken through the campaigns resulted in some increases in reports for quarters 1-3 however reporting in quarter 4 reduced. The reduction may coincide with there being no sustained promotion during these months to undertake a full DVA profile for the borough.

Alongside this we successfully delivered work around:

- Merton's Police achieve 40% SD rate for Violence with Injury (Domestic Abuse) the second best in the MPS
- More Domestic Violence Protection Orders are being applied for and granted
- Police MARAC referrals are up significantly
- Operation Dauntless approach with higher risk suspects is now routine
- All repeat cases are reviewed regularly by the Police
- MARAC learning days have been carried out and the most recent MARAC self-assessment provided some positive results
- Presentation provided at the annual MSCB conference which was focused on DVA
- Delivered a full programme of activities for the 16 Days of Activism 2016.

As we move forward through 2017-18 we will continue to build on this work by:

- Recruiting a VAWG co-ordinator to ensure that all nine strands of VAWG are fully developed and embedded across the partnership
- Completing an overview profile of all VAWG strands in Merton and updating the DVA profile
- Discharging our year two priorities from the VAWG strategy and developing the detail around our year three ambitions
- Continue to build on our successes of the NO MORE and Ask Angela campaigns to further improve reporting rates within the borough

- Commission a new DVA service for 2018-20201 to ensure that Merton can meet the needs of our DVA victims moving forward
- Develop and deliver an improved programme of events during the 16 Days of Activism campaign 2017, deliver a robust programme of events for NO MORE week 2018 and ensure that the VAWG partnership acknowledge all international, national and/or local days around VAWG.

### 7.8 MASH Strategic Board

The purpose of the MASH Strategic Board (MSB) is outlined as follows:

- To provide assurance to the MASH Leadership Group
- To review the performance of MASH against individual agency Performance Framework and MASH Performance Framework
- To Review the function of the hub
- To identify future development/changes for the hub.

The MSB meets each month and membership of the Board includes:

- Merton Adult Services
- Merton Borough Police
- Merton CSF: Children's Social Care, Education & Early Years
- Merton CCG: Commissioner of community health services
- Merton Housing Services.

The MSB is accountable to the MSCB. An annual report will be submitted and presented to the MSCB and the MASH Group by the Chair who shall brings to the attention of the Board and the MASH Leadership Group issues relating to performance, the future direction of the MASH, operations, issues, blockages etc.

### 7.9 Structure and Effectiveness of the MSCB

In 2014-2015 the Board undertook a review of its structure and constitution. The focus of this review was to streamline the work of the Board for increased effectiveness (see appendix 3). These changes were embedded in 2015-2016 and there is evidence that these changes beginning to pay dividends in terms of the Board's increased effectiveness and impact.

The Board has 100% compliance with its section 11 process for statutory agencies. This was supported by a rigorous Peer Review and Challenge process to which challenged each agency to demonstrate their effectiveness in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children locally.

The MSCB has clear thresholds which are clearly understood throughout the safeguarding system. This is known locally as the Merton Well-Being Model and Common And Shared Assessment).

The MSCB has a robust Multi-Agency Training programme which works to ensure that the multi-agency children's workforce has access to high quality, multi-agency training. This programme is evaluated as being very good by the members of staff attending courses.

The Board is assured by partner agencies regarding their recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children as part of our Section 11 process. There are arrangements in place for the LADO and there has been a significant increase in LADO referrals and consultation in 2015-2016. The Board also receives the private fostering annual report in January each year.

The Board works in cooperation with neighboring children's services including peer review; joint services with Sutton, contributing to SCRs and learning (Croydon, Wandsworth, Kingston and Sutton)

The Board communicates with persons and bodies including schools, parents, educational settings, temples, churches, Mosques, other voluntary organisations, health providers and a range of other statutory and voluntary services by telephone, online, in person, through conferences, events, briefings etc. regarding safeguarding. The Board elicits feedback on its communications to ensure that this is effective.

The Board also quality assures the quality of safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare, through the monitoring of key performance data; multi-agency, single agency audits ensuring that the learning from audits and other quality assurance activity is cascaded across the children's safeguarding system.

The Board contributes to the planning of services for children in highlighting priorities for service delivery and service design. For example, the Board's Annual Business Plan is informed by the Joint Needs Strategic Assessment

Since the last inspection (January 2012), the MSCB has:

- 7 serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted by the MSCB
- completed two SCRs (the Tia Sharpe SCR and the Child B SCR)
- The MSCB have completed 3 learning and improvement reviews (Child J, Baby PP and Baby C).

### 7.10 MSCB Budget

The MSCB has an agreed budget and all agencies contribute. Its income for 2016/17 was £248,470. The MSCB Budget for 2016-2017 is detailed as follows:

Brought forward from 2014-2015	£18,642
<b>Income for 2015-2016</b>	
<b>Agency Contributions</b>	
CAFCASS	£550
London CRC	£1,000
London Probation Service	£1,000
London Borough of Merton	£142,030
Merton CCG	£55,000
Metropolitan Police	£5,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£204,580</b>
London Borough of Merton Baseline supplement <sup>5</sup>	£43,890
<b>Total</b>	<b>£248,470</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Staffing	£144,170
Premises	£2000
Supplies and Services	£100,460
Transport	£1,840
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£248,470</b>
Brought forward from 2016-2017	£0.00

<sup>5</sup> In 2016-2017, the MSCB Expenditure exceeded income from Agency contributions; LB Merton therefore supplemented the MSCB Budget.

## 8.0 Sub-Group Task and Finish Group Summary Reports/Effectiveness

### 8.1 Harmful Sexual Behaviour Task and Finish Group

The PPYPS Sub-Group commissioned a task and finish group to develop a multi-agency protocol to address the issue of harmful sexual behaviour. The task and finish group included representation from:

- Children's Social Care
- Health
- The Police
- The Youth Justice Team
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Practitioners with the Youth Justice Team
- Education

The task and finish group also consulted with schools and young people. The Harmful Sexual Behaviour was developed in accordance with the relevant chapters in the *London Child Protection Procedures*<sup>6</sup>, drawing upon the following local and national guidance:

- *Merton Safeguarding Children Board's Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2017*
- *Merton Safeguarding Children Board's Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol 2017*
- *Harmful Sexual Behaviour Among Young People*, Guideline September 2016 (National Institute for Health and Care)
- Hackett, S, Holmes, D and Branigan, P (2016) *Operational Framework for Children and Young People Displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours*, London, NSPCC
- AIM2 Model of Initial Assessment (G-Map, 2012).

The Harmful Sexual Behaviour Protocol was recommended to PPYPS and was presented to the Board for Approval in June 2017.

### 8.2 CSE Protocol and CSE Strategy Task and Finish Group

The PPYPS also commissioned a task and finish group to revise Merton's CSE Protocol and our CSE Strategy. The task and finish group included the CSE Lead Practitioner, representation from the Police, Health (including Merton CCG), Children's Social Care, Education, Commissioners

#### 8.2.1 The CSE Protocol

The CSE Protocol has been reviewed to ensure that it is in line with the London Child Protection Procedures Chapter 7 in light of the Merton context. The revised protocol highlights peer on peer abuse and makes reference to contextual CSE and harm in a range of public environments/ contexts. The protocol has added additional clarity regarding interventions at each level of need. As a result, we have outlined our approach in the following:

- Cases that are pre-threshold in early help and that require enhanced support
- CIN Cases
- CP Cases
- LAC Cases

Throughout the protocol we have highlighted the role of the CSE Lead to provide consultations to professionals on all cases relating to CSE. The revised CSE Protocol was approved by the Board in March 2017.

#### 8.2.2 The CSE Strategy

The CSE Strategy was last updated in January 2015. Since that time the Board has reviewed its CSE protocol, the DfE has also refined its definition of CSE, the London Child Protection Procedures have been updated, and there is also a growing body of evidence and practice development around contextual safeguarding. The Strategy sets out the MSCB's response to CSE.

The statutory definition of CSE has been updated. The strategy makes the link between CSE, Harmful Sexual Behaviour and other shared categories of harm/exploitation including missing; Harmful Sexual Behaviour, teenage relationship abuse, serious youth violence, CSE and radicalisation (see pages 5-7). The CSE Strategy was approved by the Board in May 2017.

The strategy also highlights the significance of contextual safeguard drawing on the work of Carlene Firmin (2013 and 2016). Information regarding the local context has been updated. Related to this is a new section on working with children and young people affected by CSE drawing on the work of University of Bedfordshire, the International Centre for Researching CSE, Violence and Trafficking and Research In Practice (2017).

### 8.3 Online Safety Strategy Task and Finish Group

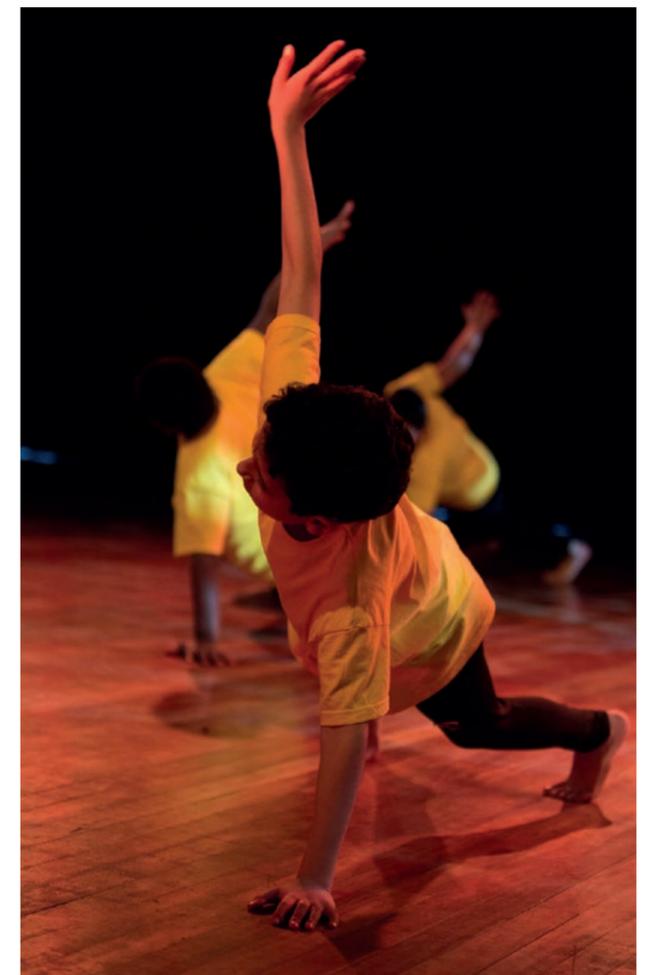
The Policy Sub-Group commissioned a task and finish group to revise and update the MSCB's Online Safety Strategy. We were grateful for the support and expertise of Derek Crabtree, the Schools ICT Support Manager who worked on drafting the strategy. The task and finish group included representatives from the Police, Health, Children's Social Care, Education, Voluntary Organisations. The aim of this strategy is to provide guidance and inform frontline practitioners to:

- Guide children, young people and others to the best sources of information and support and not duplicate the great range of advice and resources already available
- Help organisations to develop their own solutions, and incorporate the principles and priorities in this strategy into those
- Identify those young people potentially vulnerable
- Make sure that risk is assessed and managed effectively
- Make sure that young people understand their own risks in using online services.

The strategy covers the following aspects of online safety:

- Inappropriate content
- Cyber-bullying, including sexual bullying
- Online Grooming
- Youth Produced Sexual Images
- Online Reputation
- Privacy
- Self-Harm
- Online Pornography
- Radicalisation

The Strategy was approved by the Board in June 2017.



<sup>6</sup> The London Child Protection Procedures, 5th Edition: Chapter 7. Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation (Part B3 Safeguarding Children Practice Guidance); Chapter 8. Organised and Complex Abuse (Part A: Core Procedures). In cases where there is more than one victim and/or perpetrator Chapter 8 must be followed; Chapter 10 Safeguarding Sexually Active Children (Part B3 Safeguarding Children Practice Guidance) Chapter 15 Children Harming Others (Part B3 Safeguarding Children Practice Guidance).

#### 8.4 Bruising In Non-Independently Mobile Infants and Children Task and Finish Group

The Policy Sub-Group commissioned a task and finish group to prepare a protocol on Bruising In Non-Independently Mobile Infants and Children. The task and finish group met and prepared guidance designed to support professionals' practice in the assessment and management of bruising in non-independently mobile infants (usually less than 6 months old). The aims of the guidance are to:

- Outline pathways in Merton for the referral and assessment of bruising in non-independently mobile infants and children
- Ensure that all partners are responding to bruising in non-independently mobile infants and children in a consistent way
- Support practitioners to effectively respond to concerns about non-accidental injury in non-independently mobile infants and children.

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The guidance is part of MSCB's implementation of recommendation 5 of the Baby C Learning and Improvement Review. The guidance was approved by the Board in June 2017.

#### 8.5 Learning and Improvement Reviews (LiR) and Serious Case Reviews (SCR)

##### 8.5.1 Learning from the Child B SCR

In 2015-2016 the Board commissioned a Serious Case Review, known locally as the Child B Serious Case Review (SCR). In September 2015, B (age 16) was seriously assaulted by her Mother during the night while B was asleep. The sustained attack resulted in significant damage, requiring surgery. B's Mother had a long history of mental illness, including in-patient and community based mental health services.

Child B was seriously harmed by her Mother who had an on-going history of poor mental ill-health; at times, she was well and, at times, she deteriorated rapidly. The work shows the need to understand parental mental health, alcohol, and possible domestic violence and their impact on young people. These are not new themes

in serious case reviews. This review helped the Board to identify the work that needs to be done locally to ensure that practitioners recognise and understand this 'trigger' trio.<sup>7</sup>

The Key Lessons from the SCR are outlined as follows:

- **Embedding Think Family in Assessments and Work with Families.** Work with children and families needs to take into account the family dynamics of family history, relationships, different belief systems, or culture. Practitioners need to be equipped and supported through training and supervision to understand the possible significance of the cultural and religious dynamics.
- **Understanding the needs of Young Carers.** The needs of Young carers need to be recognised, understood and attended to by the whole multi-agency system. This requires appropriate joint assessments
- **The use of written agreements.** There is a need for clarity regarding the use of written agreements. This includes ensuring that the use of such agreements follows the London Child Protection Procedures and best practice guidance.
- **Leadership and Quality Assurance of multi-agency meetings and processes.** Step-down from child protection the children in need processes need to be well planned and carefully managed from a multi-agency perspective. This includes clarity about who should be involved, what the goals were and timing of meetings.

The report of this was published in February 2017 and is available on the MSCB website.<sup>8</sup> The recommendations coming out of the SCR are included in this report as Appendix 1.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'Trigger Trio' is used in Merton to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www2.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/serious\\_case\\_reviews.htm](https://www2.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/serious_case_reviews.htm)

The Board has an action plan in place to ensure that the recommendations coming out of this SCR are implemented. In addition to this, the Board has provided a range of briefings to over 120 multi-agency members of staff; to Designated Safeguarding Leads across the primary and secondary school sector, including academies; the Board has also briefed colleagues in the private and voluntary sector to ensure that messages about effective multi-agency working are communicated. The Board is in the process of reviewing its Young Carers' Strategy and a Mental Health Protocol.

##### 8.5.2 Learning from Baby C Learning and Improvement Review

This was a case which was escalated to the Board by the Named Nurse for the Community Health Provider. The concerns included neglect (including physical neglect and failure to attend medical appointments), parental mental health, parental learning difficulties, and parental substance misuse.

The Board met in November 2015 to consider if the threshold for a SCR was met or if there was a need to commission another type of learning review. At that meeting it was agreed that the criteria for a serious case review were not met however, this case would provide an opportunity for a Learning and Improvement Review.

This Review has demonstrated the importance of recognising the indicators and impact of chronic neglect on children. The need for professionals to view a home environment from the child's perspective cannot be overemphasised. This case has highlighted the importance of the need for professionals to take account of the childhood experiences of a parent with mental health concerns and the impact of such experiences on the safeguarding risk to children. Such information needs to be shared with other agencies working with the family.



The key learning coming out of the review is summarised as follows:

- **The need to understand Neglect:** The signs and indicators of chronic neglect need to be recognised and acted upon by multi-agency professionals. Neglect remains the theme running across each of the Board's three key priorities. The Board has reviewed and updated its Neglect Strategy and will be conducting an audit of neglect cases in early autumn 2017. We are also developing a neglect toolkit which will assist practitioners in identifying and assessing cases of neglect.
- **Physical Abuse:** Unexplained physical injuries in children should trigger child protection procedures; especially when there are conflicting accounts given by the child, the parents. There also needs to be clear guidance regarding the significance of bruising in pre-mobile or non-mobile children and what to do in cases of unexplained injuries. As part of the learning coming out of this review the Board has approved multi-agency guidance on bruising in pre-mobile and non-ambulant children.
- **Child Sexual Abuse:** Disclosures of sexual abuse need to be acted upon and investigated as fully investigated as possible. In order establish a baseline of the quality of safeguarding practice in relation to child sexual abuse; the Quality Assurance Sub-Group undertook a multi-agency audit of child sexual abuse. As a part of this audit partners reviewed two child protection cases and 12 threshold cases that did not result in a child protection plan. The findings of this audit were shared with partners and practitioners.
- **Safeguarding Adults:** The report found that the vulnerability of parents to exploitation by other adults needs to be recognised by practitioners; this includes recognition that adults with additional needs, as well as their children, can be at risk of abuse and exploitation. These factors need to be considered holistically by those agencies working with families. Supporting vulnerable adults is part of the Board's Think Family priority and a Think

Family Coordinator has been appointed to assist partners in embedding the think family approach across adults and children's services.

- **Childhood Experiences of Parents:** We know from research that the childhood history of neglect, abuse and poor mental health can have an adverse impact on parental capacity and the ability of parents to provide good enough care to children. It is essential that assessments take into account the childhood experience of parents and the impact of adverse childhood experience on parents' ability to provide good enough care for children.
- **Thresholds and Monitoring:** The review highlighted the need that all plans to monitor cases should have:
  - a. a named lead professional;
  - b. a clear support plan outlining which services will be providing support and expected outcomes;
  - c. such plans should also state how cases will be escalated where improvements have not been made or sustained, and
  - d. Plans should have clear timescales and review periods.
- **The Impact of the Home Environment on a Child's Life:** the need to view a home environment from the child's perspective is crucial to professional understanding of a child's experience. The Board is addressing this finding as part of its work on the issue of neglect.

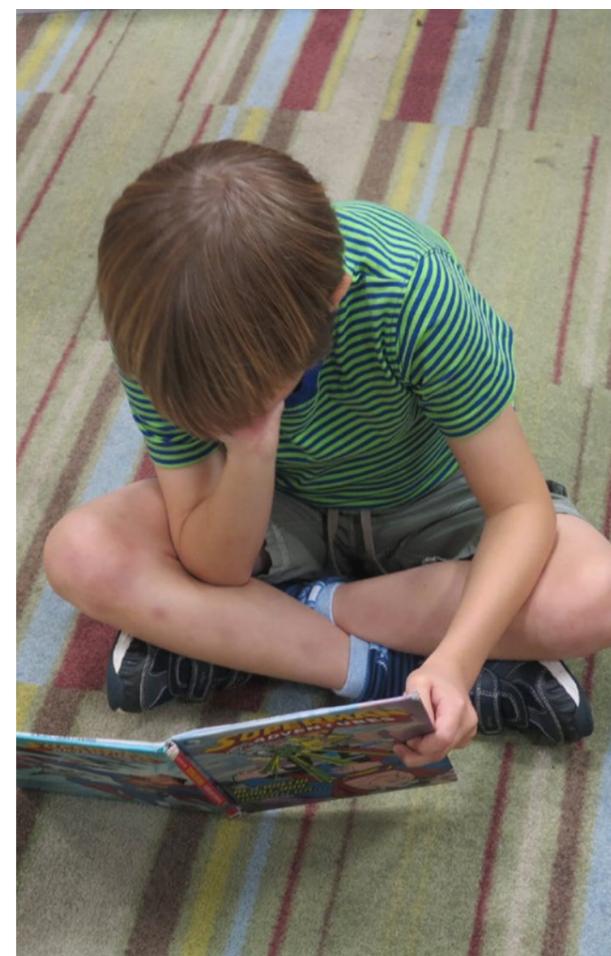
The Board has an action plan in place to ensure that the recommendations coming out of this Baby C LiR are implemented. In addition to this, the Board has provided a range of briefings to over 120 multi-agency members of staff; to Designated Safeguarding Leads across the primary and secondary school sector, including academies; the Board has also briefed colleagues in the private and voluntary section to ensure that messages about effective multi-agency working are communicated. As a result of this LiR the Board has refreshed its Neglect Strategy, approved a protocol for *Bruising In Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-ambulant Children*.

## 9.0 Agency Effectiveness in Safeguarding – reports for each key agency drawing on Section 11 and QA and Challenge Meetings

### 9.1 Section 11

The Board holds partners to account through its Section 11 Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge Process. The Board also receives annual reports from the Children's Trust, the VAWG Group and Public Health.<sup>9</sup>

At the Business Implementation Meeting held on 2nd February 2016 it was agreed that the Section 11 process for 2015-2016 would involve a review and update of each agency's Section 11 Self-Audit for 2014-2015. A Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge meeting would be considered for the new health provider for Community Health Services (Central London Community Health Care; which started in Merton in April 2016) and those agencies where there are specific issues identified in their Section 11 self-audit return.



The Board agreed to use the Pan-London Section 11 Audit Tool, developed by the London Safeguarding Children Board. The audit tool allows each agency or organisation to assess the quality of its safeguarding practice against eight agreed safeguarding standards providing supporting evidence where appropriate. These standards are as follows:

**STANDARD 1** – Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare

**STANDARD 2** – There is a clear statement of the agency's responsibility towards children and this is available to all staff

**STANDARD 3** – There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare

**STANDARD 4** – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children & families

**STANDARD 5** – There is effective training on safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children & families

**STANDARD 6** – Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place

**STANDARD 7** – There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard & promote the welfare of children

**STANDARD 8** – There is effective Information Sharing

<sup>9</sup> Evidence includes minutes of Board Meetings, the notes of the Section 11 Challenge Meetings, Section 11 Returns, QA Minutes, notes of multi-agency audits, the Board's Business Plan.

**Agency Returns**

The MSCB has received completed returns from the following agencies:

1. CAFCASS
2. Carer Support Merton
3. LBM Adult Social Care
4. LBM CSF Children's Social Care
5. LBM Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioned Services
6. LBM Early Years, Childcare and Children's Centre Services
7. LBM Education Inclusion
8. LBM Public Health
9. Housing Needs
10. LBM Safer Merton
11. LBM Youth Justice
12. London CRC Probation
13. Metropolitan Police Service (Borough and CAIT) Safeguarding Report (Service Wide)
14. Metropolitan Police Service Safeguarding Report (SOECA Service Wide)
15. Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC)
16. NHS Central London Community Health Care
17. NHS Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust
18. NHS Merton CCG
19. NHS South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust (CAMHs)
20. NHS St George's Hospital (Section 11 Report)
21. National Probation Service (a regional, pan-London return)
22. London Ambulance Service (annual report addressing safeguarding children)

Overall, the Section 11 returns provide the Board with good assurance regarding the quality of safeguarding practice across the MSCB multi-agency partnership.

The section 11 self-audit returns received provide the Board with good assurance regarding the quality of safeguarding practice across the MSCB partnership. Where agencies assessed that standards were met there were, in most cases, action plans, with clear timescales and named persons to address this.

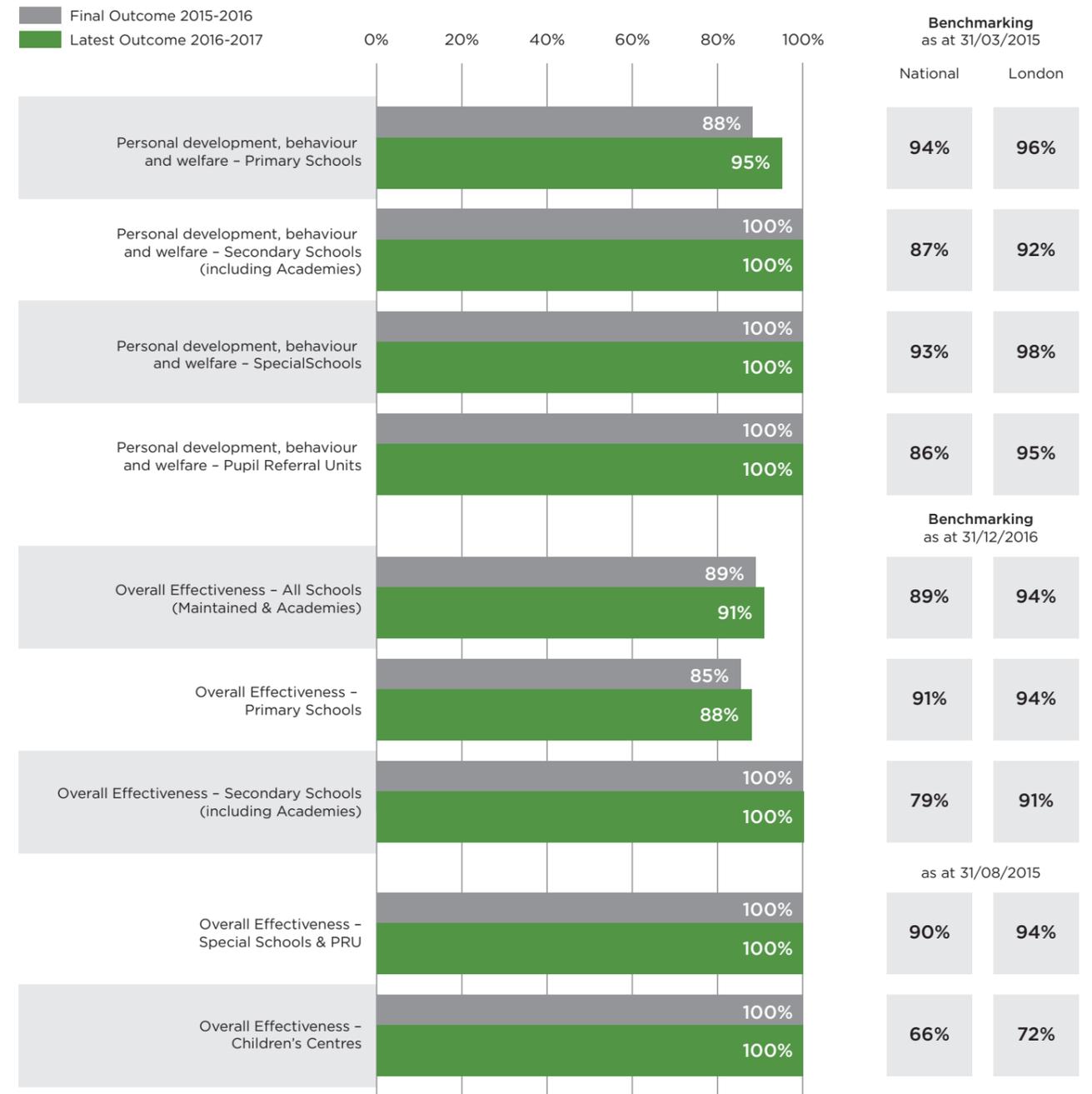
National or regional services (such as, CAFCASS and Probation) submitted more 'global' self-assessments were asked to ensure that there is an addendum which gives assurance for Merton.

Schools were not asked specifically to complete a section 11 audit in this round. A safeguarding systems audit for each school had been undertaken in the autumn term 2016 and reported to the MSCB in January 2017.

It was agreed that the Peer Challenge was helpful and that it was valuable to involve a Lay Member, where possible. The involvement of Commissioners was also seen as helpful as it enabled the Chair and the Director of Children, Schools and Families to challenge commissioned services regarding improving the quality of their safeguarding practice.

**9.1.1 Schools**

**Ofsted inspection outcomes rated Good or Outstanding**



## 9.2 Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department

CSF department completed section 11 audits for CSC; Early Years; the Youth Service, Education Inclusion and the FAS (including Youth Justice).

The CSF has evolved our structures to deliver to larger numbers of children and young people and meet the challenges of a range of initiatives. We have increased our number of social workers, provided reasonable caseloads and continue to focus on reducing agency rates. We will maintain our sharp focus on this going forward.

There has been a very challenging recruitment and retention context nationally, in London and particularly for SW London. Despite these challenges Merton has appointed over 50 permanent social workers since January 2015. Merton has endeavoured to maintain good quality of recruits and despite the challenges have rejected a number of candidates post references over the same period.

There is recruitment and retention action plan in place and Merton will continue to maintain our focus generally but will also focus on specific hotspot recruitment areas such as: Children with Disabilities, MASH, Quality Assurance (QA). We now have a strong pipeline of student social workers including Frontline colleagues and a sufficient flow of ASYEs. We will continue to maintain our strong focus on this work.

Our professional development activity and strengthened approach to QA, combined with active performance management, are increasingly enabling the challenge and support for improving practice. We want to ensure that all practitioners are supported and work to the highest levels of competence in line with our ambitions and expectations; we both invest in the development of our workers and tackle underperformance. Our developing use of "Signs of Safety" and motivational interviewing techniques are providing useful tools for working with families and adolescents as well as enabling active discussion with regard to pedagogy and practice. This work will need to be sustained going forward.

The implementation of the major changes arising from the Children and Families Act 2014 relating to education, health and care planning for children with SEN and disabilities remain on-going. With strong engagement of partners from the NHS, community organisations sectors and parents/carers, we have established an integrated Education Health and Care service and published our Local Offer. We are now focusing on embedding new procedures and ways of collaborative working which will support more integrated planning and more effective working with this group of children, young people and their families.

To deliver our shared ambitions we will continue to provide leadership and governance through our MSCB partnership identifying and addressing our priorities for improvement. To support us in this we will utilise our anticipated new casework system to further develop our use of data both for identifying underperformance at a case, team or service level as well as for the development, commissioning and prioritisation of services. We will use our continuous improvement agenda to deliver sustained improvements where issues are identified and to maintain our ambitions for all our services to be good or better.

CSF started 2016-2017 with a more stable workforce and the expectation to accelerate the pace of improvement and will also be looking to implement improvements from a recent external review of our MASH as well as plans to review our Children and Young Persons Well-Being Model, the step up, step down process and the continuum of specialist, enhanced and wider services for children and families in line with the emerging MSCB priorities 2016-2017.

### 9.3 Acute Trusts

Merton does not have an acute trust located in the Borough however there is an effective relationship with acute trusts in the neighbouring boroughs of Sutton, Wandsworth, Croydon, Lambeth and Kingston

### 9.3.1 SW London & St George's Mental Health Trust

South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust completed Section 11 Self-audit; this was undertaken at a time of considerable organisational change due to a major transformation programme.

### 9.3.2 Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

The Trust and the service provider completed a Section 11 Self-audit and attended Quality Assurance Challenge meetings, which gave the Board assurance that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

### 9.3.3 NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The Merton CCG has completed a Section 11 Self-audit and has attended Quality Assurance and Challenge meetings which gave the Board assurance that the CCG is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under Section 11 of the children Act 2004.

### 9.3.4 St George's Hospital NHS Trust

The Trust completed a safeguarding survey as part of their Section 11 submission to the Board. The Trust also provided a range of supplementary evidence which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

### 9.3.5 Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust

The Trust was awarded the community health care contract from the first of April 2016. The trust completed their Section 11 submission to the Board for 2016. The Trust also provided supplementary evidence which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

### 9.3.5 Public Health

The Director of Public Health sits on the Board and is a strong partner. The Director of Children, Schools and Families is also a member of the Health and Well-being Board. The JSNA also informs the priorities of the Board's Bi-Annual Business Plan. Public Health completed a Section 11 Self-audit that gave the Board assurance that the Public Health is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

### 9.4 Community and Housing Dept. - London Borough of Merton

Community and Housing Department completed Section 11 Audits for Public Health, Adult Social Care and Housing and participated in the Quality Assurance Challenge Meetings. Representatives of the Housing Needs team and the Safeguarding Manager of Circle Anglia, Merton's largest housing provider attends meeting of the Board

### 9.5 Corporate Service - HR - London Borough of Merton

A section 11 audit of the council's safer recruitment and employment practices was undertaken. The council has also re-issued advice to schools in the period covering revisions to the vetting and barring arrangements and on the new DfE guidance on disqualification by association. In addition to this, the Board provides safeguarding training to all new members of staff as part of the Corporate Induction process.

### 9.6 Metropolitan Police/Probation/Cafcass

Regional Section 11 returns have been completed by all three organisations. The Metropolitan Police have completed returns for the Borough Command and CAIT. The Police have included local information and analysis. The Borough Command and CAIT are strong partners in the work of the Board and its Sub-Groups.

## 10.0 Views of Children and Young People and the Community

### 10.1. The Help Keep Us Safe Research Project with the London South Bank University

Merton's Local Safeguarding Children's Board and London South Bank University commissioned a research project into hearing young people's concerns about their safety and well-being. It aimed to gather the views of children and young people in Merton about their safeguarding concerns.

The research was conducted in two parts: Part 1 consisted of a survey of one hundred and forty eight young people in the general population who attend secondary schools in the area. Part two consisted of semi-structured interviews with ten young people who were the subject of a child protection plan.

The most commonly cited source of fear was gangs or groups of young people. Four of ten participants (42%) said that they were afraid of gangs or groups of young people sometimes, often or very often. The second most cited source of fear was bullying. One quarter (25%) said that they were afraid of bullying sometimes, often or very often.

Ranked in third place was a range of risks that were rated at a similar level (between 8% to 13%). These can be categorised into several clusters.

- Online victimisation.
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Physical harm.
- Risks related to their own behaviour.

One of the strongest themes was that young people saw other young people as the greatest source of threat. By contrast, a strong majority stated that they 'never' or 'rarely' felt afraid of adults, whether this was in relation to being hurt (approximately 90%) or being forced to do things sexually (89%). The PPYPS Sub-Group is overseeing the Board's response to this research.

### 10.2 Merton's Children's Trust User Voice Strategy

Merton's Children's Trust User Voice Strategy implements one of the core ambitions of Merton's Children's Trust and the MSCB namely,

demonstrating that the views and ambitions of children and young people have informed and improved our service offer.

The strategy is also part of the Children's Trust's implementation of key legislation, policy and guidance: The Children Act 1989 and 2004 recognises children as citizens with the right to be heard and requires that when working with children in need, their wishes and feelings should be ascertained and used to inform making decisions. The Children and Families Act 2014 section 19 requires that children, young people and families should be involved in decision making at every level of the system. And, Working Together 2015 states that one of the key principles for effective safeguarding arrangements in a local area is to take a child centred approach: 'for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children'.

Merton's Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19 identifies priority areas of work to close gaps and improve outcomes for Merton's most vulnerable groups. This year, we can report on user voice activity which has involved each of the vulnerable cohorts including: those in need of early help; children in need of help and protection; looked after children and care leavers; children with special educational needs and disabilities; those at risk of disengaging from school and beyond; and those at risk of offending.

This year we have ensured that children and young people's views are central to decisions about their care. A very high proportion of visits (94%) and reviews (100%) for children subject to a child protection plan, and reviews (99%) for those who are looked after have been conducted within timescales with 90% CYP participation at LAC reviews.

In order to ensure that the views of children, with all levels of ability, and their families inform the CP process social workers have been trained in the child/ family centred Signs of Safety approach, and have also been trained in gathering the views, wishes and feelings of children with disabilities/ communication difficulties. In addition we have continued to support children and young people

to participate in CP Conferences either by attending, or through an independent advocate.

Ninety per cent of LAC participated in their LAC review either through attendance, completion of consultation papers, or through an advocate.

### Providing opportunities for children and young people to influence key decision makers

Through a range of forums and groups including the Children in Care Council, Merton Youth Parliament, Young inspectors, the Your Shout Group for learning disabled young people and school councils, Merton's young people's voices have informed and impacted on a broad range of issues which affect young people's lives including:

- review and refresh of licensing policy in town centres
- feedback to Transport for London on the accessible transport for disabled people
- the new 'Child House' support model for those affected by sexual abuse
- LAC placements and Care leavers accommodation
- school reviews and improvement plans
- Youth Generator funding for young people's activities
- Merton's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Strategy (CAMHS)
- the Anti-Bullying Operational Group refreshed action plan
- support for young LGBT people
- and recruitment to senior positions in schools and children's services.

Merton's service user forums and target cohorts have been supported to feedback on the quality of our offer to them, and to effect positive improvements to our service provision. Notable examples include:

Children in need of help and protection – user views on the experience of our Social Work Intervention service is used to inform quarterly improvement plans for the service. Views of a number of children, who have used the

commissioned service for missing children, have been used to inform recommendations for the Police service and the Home Office as featured in the HMIC report Missing Children: who cares? Feedback from users of our Contact Service has informed recommendations for improvements to the service including improved information about and scheduling of contact, and increased options for contact arrangements with older teenagers.

Feedback from parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) shows that our Information and Advice Support Service for SEND is invaluable for helping families through the EHCP process and preventing tribunals. Young people were consulted and contributed to the 'look and feel' of the refreshed Family Services Directory which includes Merton's 'Local Offer'.

### Other vulnerable cohorts of Young People

- As a result of feedback from young people in the Youth Justice System, in their sessions with young people, workers have increased their focus on the needs of the young person, identifying the skills they need and signposting to local projects that can help build these skills
- Feedback from the forum for young people who are supported by the Education, Training and Employment team highlights that staff have an increased understanding that user views are key to ensuring that assessments and plans are as comprehensive as possible
- In response to feedback from parents involved in the Transforming Families programme practitioners are now revisiting the 'family plan' at more regular intervals so that families are fully aware of targets and expectations
- LGBTQI+ young people attended a meeting of the Board in order to highlight issues affecting them. Young people highlighted the need for a person centred approach and the importance of listening to LGBTQI+ young people with regard to the use of personal pronouns and in understanding gender non-conformity and the need for non-binary understanding of sex and gender.

## 11.0 Conclusions and Priorities for 2016–18 Business Years

The Board is on a journey of continuous improvement; seeking to sharpen our focus and streamline our processes so that we are increasingly able to fulfil our statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare.

Our partnership is mature and robust and is characterised by respectful challenge and accountability. The Sub-Groups are purposeful and targeted on delivering on the Board's agreed priorities. The Board's Performance Dataset allows the Board to analyse trends and identify risk or gaps as well as prioritise areas for development.

At the Board's Annual Away Day it was agreed that the Board would focus on fewer priorities whilst continuing to deliver on a range of key 'Business as Usual' safeguarding issues. In agreeing the Board's priorities for 2016-2018, there was a robust discussion with presentations from partner agencies on their agency's strategic priorities. Members of the Board then agreed the Board's agreed priorities for 2016-2018 be extended and deepened to for the period 2017-2019.

### 1. Think Family – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes. Signs of vulnerability include

The MSCB wants to ensure that our partnerships continue enable the most vulnerable families to be supported; so vulnerable parents are supported to care for their children and children are in turn supported to thrive and achieve their potential. Evidence from local and national research tells us that our most vulnerable parents/families are those who:

- Experience poor mental health
- Struggle with substance misuse
- Are affected by domestic abuse
- Parents with learning difficulties or learning disabilities that may affect their ability to respond to the changing needs of their children.



The evidence nationally and locally also shows that vulnerable families are best supported when there is effective joint working between adult and children facing services. When professionals understand the underlying causes of issues like neglect and other form of abuse and offer effective support early before these problems get worse.

### 2. Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents – adolescence is a time of significant change for all young people.

We know that, for some young people, adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability. We are determined to support adolescents who are at risk of

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Children who go missing from home/school/care
- Children and young people who are at risk radicalisation and violent extremism
- Children at risk of serious youth violence and gangs
- Self-harm and poor mental health
- Young people at risk of suicide.

### 3. Early Help – To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

Merton has had a long-established child and young people Well Being Model which we last reviewed in 2013. With changes in local providers and agencies and with changing levels of resources available we need to ensure our Model continues to be fit for purpose. The evidence shows that timely and purposeful help or intervention at all stages of a child or young person's journey is the most effective way improving impact and outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. As part of our review we will:

- Take forward the learning from our recent MASH review
- Consider the interface between our MASH and EH arrangements
- Review our service offer at all levels of the Model and Engage partners in discussion on thresholds, Step-Up Step Down processes and the tools to support early help assessment CASA and intervention (Signs of Safety/signs of well being)
- Review our partnership quality assurance of Early Help

This Business Plan contains the MSCB priority actions. The on-going work of the MSCB and its Sub-Groups and Task Groups continues alongside it and will be incorporated into the Sub-Groups' annual work plans and reporting cycle to the MSCB.

The MSCB continues to work to drive improvements in the quality of safeguarding practice in Merton. The partnership remains strong and is well positioned to meet the challenges ahead.



## Appendix 1a

### Recommendations from the Child B Serious Case Review

**Recommendation 1:** The MSCB and its Partner Agencies should review how the principles of the holistic Think Child, Think Parents, Think Family approach are operating in Merton and how they are embedded in commissioning and leadership of front-line practice and its management, with joint-working and understanding of mental ill-health and parenting.

**Recommendation 2:** The MSCB should recommend to the Children's Trust that it should review the Merton Young Carers' Strategy and draw up a clear multi-agency Young Carers' Protocol, for all sectors, to clarify the nature and arrangements for Young Carer's Assessments, following the duties set out in The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015.

**Recommendation 3:** The MSCB and its Partner Agencies should review their processes for ensuring staff awareness in analysing family history and dynamics, including the understanding of how culture and belief systems impact on their understanding and (risk) assessments of mental health and parenting. This should include staff awareness of listening to family members.

**Recommendation 4:** Children's Social Care should review the competency of staff responsible for drafting written agreements and the detailed Child Protection Plans, in the light of relevant research, guidance and case law; to ensure that such staff and their supervisors are well-equipped to negotiate and draw up realistic and achievable agreements, based on thorough risk assessments.

**Recommendation 5:** Children's Social Care and the SW London Mental Health Trust should seek to ensure that the staff (and their immediate line-managers) who have responsibility for chairing multi-agency meetings, particularly Core Groups, Child in Need and Care Programme Arrangements meetings are competent in the facilitation of meetings and have an understanding of the holistic Think Family approach and the principles set out in the London Child Protection Procedures for Core Groups London Child Protection Procedures, Part B, section 9.

**Recommendation 6:** The MSCB Policy Sub Group should review guidance on 'step down' from child protection or child in need thresholds to ensure that it covers a review of the relevant case history, including the original risk and any other risks subsequently identified, not only recent progress; and an assessment of risk or need in the longer term, including the risk of relapse and contingency plans - including the recognition of potential breakdown or non-compliance; or future significant changes in the family composition.

**Recommendation 7:** The MSCB Policy Sub Group should review guidance on 'step down' from child protection or child in need thresholds to ensure that it covers a review of the relevant case history, including the original risk and any other risks subsequently identified, not only recent progress; and an assessment of risk or need in the longer term, including the risk of relapse and contingency plans - including the recognition of potential breakdown or non-compliance; or future significant changes in the family composition.

## Appendix 1b

### Recommendations from the Baby LiR

**Recommendation 1:** MSCB to give consideration to reviewing and refreshing its Neglect Strategy in the light of the learning coming out of this review.

**Recommendation 2:** MSCB to seek assurance regarding the level of professional awareness of the Neglect Strategy and its implications for practice in cases of neglect.

**Recommendation 3:** MSCB to seek assurance from all partner agencies that the following are embedded in practice and underpinned by policy:

- Practitioners working with families, young people and children access regular safeguarding supervision from a trained safeguarding supervisor
- Safeguarding supervision includes case management, professional learning and development and promotes reflective practice
- Chronologies are maintained and reviewed as part of clinical practice and at supervision.

**Recommendation 4:** MSCB to give consideration to undertaking an audit of 'physical abuse' with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the picture of physical abuse in Merton. The remit of the work to be children in Merton identified as having experienced physical abuse, those who are at risk of physical abuse and those children where the risk of physical abuse is 'masked' by other concerns.

**Recommendation 5:** MSCB through the policy subgroup to oversee the development of a multi-agency protocol for bruising in pre-mobile babies and children.

**Recommendation 6:** MSCB to seek assurance from all partner agencies that the importance of listening and taking seriously any disclosure of abuse by a child is embedded in practice and underpinned by policy.

**Recommendation 7:** MSCB and MSAB to work together promote closer partnerships between agencies on both a strategic and operational level.

**Recommendation 8:** MSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies that practitioners working with families, children and young people are trained and supported to recognise the signs and indicators that an adult is vulnerable, fully understand the need to share information with adult services and, where required make a referral to adult social care.

**Recommendation 9:** MSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies that practitioners, in addition to internal agency safeguarding supervision, have access to specialist advice and support in managing cases where there are complex issues, such as parental learning difficulties, mental health and ADHD.

**Recommendation 10:** MSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies that where an adult is known have mental health issues or learning disabilities and is a parent, the impact on their parenting role and risk to children is considered as part of any assessment undertaken and this is shared with other professionals working involved with the family.

**Recommendation 11:** MSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies that practitioners working with adults who are known to have mental health issues or learning disabilities, and who are parents understand the potential risk to children, the need to share information with adult services and where required make a referral to Children's Social Care.

**Recommendation 12:** MSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies that:

- The MSCB Escalation Procedure has been cascaded to staff and is accessible
- Escalation is included as part of each agency safeguarding policy/procedure.

**Recommendation 13:** MSBC to reinforce to partner agencies that the sharing of information on a multi-agency basis is crucial, if children are to be safeguarded.

## Appendix 2 Merton Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan 2017-19

Progress of this Plan will be updated monthly & monitored at each MSCB Meeting.  
Approved by the Board 27th June 2017.

Objectives	Outcomes	Actions (who and what)	Resources			
			Who? (Governance/oversight)	When?		
<b>Priority 1: Think Family: An Effective, Seamless Approach to Supporting Children and Families</b>						
1.1	To embed the Think Family Approach across the multi-agency partnership	For a Think Family Co-ordinator to work across Children and Adult facing services	<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	PPYPS Sub-Group and BIG Paul Angeli & Gillian Moore	March 18
			To appoint a Think Family Coordinator For a Think Family Task and Finish Group to develop Multi Agency Protocols for approval	CSC and Southwest London and St George's Mental Health Trust		
Page 43		To deliver a suite of Think Family Multi Agency Protocols for Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Learning Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Domestic Abuse	Protocols should include a communication strategy, a learning and development plan for the workforce and an implementation plan	PPYPS and BIG CSC ASC Community Health CCG Public Health CSF Commissioners MSCB	Policy Sub-Group and BIG Think Family Coordinator Chris McCree	March 18
		To Launch the Think Family Protocols at the Joint CSF and MSCB Annual Conference	MSCB Joint Conference around 'Think Family' with reference to neglect and the trigger trio?	MSCB and CSC PD Team CT Think Family Coordinator	Learning and Development Sub-Group	March 18
		To embed Think Family into the broader culture of multi-agency working	Think Family Coordinator to lead on promoting effective Think Family Work	All partners The Leads from each agency	Policy Sub-Group	March 19

Objectives	Outcomes	Actions (who and what)	Resources			
			Who? (Governance/oversight)	When?		
<b>Priority 1: Think Family: An Effective, Seamless Approach to Supporting Children and Families</b>						
1.2	The MSCB is assured of the multi-agency awareness of neglect and its impact and the quality of frontline practice in cases of neglect	For the MSCB to undertake a re-audit of neglect To feedback key practice lessons from the audit To integrate these lessons into current training and practice development initiatives	<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	QA Sub-Group and BIG Head CSC & YI QA Chair Paul Angeli	March 18
		QA Sub-Group and MSCB partners to conduct a multi-agency audit of neglect cases To add Neglect to the Section 11 Self-audit	All relevant MSCB partners including Health (CCG, CLCH, acute trusts, Mental Health Trust), Education, Police, CSC, Voluntary Orgs			
		To have in place a range of approved practice tools to address the incidence of neglect	MSCB to adopt and promote a range of practice tools to address neglect	Carla Thomas CSC Health Police Education Early Years	Policy and Learning and Development Sub-Groups MSCB BSU	March 18
		For the Board to be assured that there is a clear link between the work on neglect including the trigger trio and Think Family	Multi-agency partners to demonstrate an understanding neglect as an effect, with the trigger trio, in many cases, being the cause	MSCB partners including, SAB Health (CCG, CLCH, acute trusts, Mental Health Trust), Public Health Education, Police, CSC, Voluntary Orgs	Policy and Quality Assurance Sub-Group Chair	March 18
1.3	The Board is seeking assurance regarding the quality of multi-agency practice in relation to Domestic Violence & Abuse	The Board has in place a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategy	A Task and Finish Group to Develop a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategy	VAWG CSC Health Police Voluntary Orgs	Policy Sub-Group with, MSCB Chair	March 19
		The Board has approved a range of assessment and practice tools to be used across the multi-agency partnership	To develop/adapt an appropriate child-centred tool for assessment in DVA cases	MSCB Trainer and MSCB Partners	CSC & YI	March 19
		The Board has assurance that the strategy is being implemented across the multi-agency partnership		All Agencies	Policy Sub-Group with, MSCB Chair	March 19

Objectives	Outcomes	Actions (who and what)	Resources			
			Who? (Governance/oversight)	When?		
<b>Priority 2: Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents</b>						
2.1	To Maintain Strategic grip on CSE and related forms of harm including Missing from Home Education and Care	The Board has conspicuous oversight on the issue of CSE locally	<b>What</b> To review multi-agency responses to CSE	<b>Who</b> CSE Lead CSC and YI MASE, SD NC	PPYPS	On-going
		To develop a strategic response to Harmful Sexual Behaviour; with a communication strategy and implementation plan	To develop guidance for professionals, parents and young people	Harmful Sexual Behaviour Task and Finish Group  To include CSC, YJT, CCG, Police, Education, SD NC	PPYPS	July 17
		To review and refresh the MSCB Online Safety Strategy, with a communication strategy and implementation plan	To develop guidance for professionals, parents and young people	MSCB Manager and Schools ICT Support Manager, DC/ MSCB BSU	PPYPS Chair	July 17
		To communicate clearly to practitioners and parents the parenting support available local for parent of children ages 10-15	To increase community awareness and access to support	Family Information Service, Bond Road MSCB	PPYPS	October 17
		To maintain a strategic grip on children missing from home, education and care	For PPYP to receive and Annual report on the work regarding missing children	CSC (including LAC, MASH,) Education Commissioned services NM NC	PPYPS	June 17
		To ensure that there is increased awareness of the range of risks faced by adolescents	Explore the feasibility of an audit of contextual safeguarding to review the intersections between CSE, HSB, radicalisation, SYV and gangs	MSCB and partners	PPYPS supported by Learning Development and QA Sub-Group	March 19
		For the Board to maintain conspicuous oversight of multi-agency performance in relation to children missing home education/ school and care	To review the MSCB Performance Dataset to include data vulnerable adolescents including CSC/CME/Missing	Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	PPYPS Head of R & I	June 17

Objectives	Outcomes	Actions (who and what)	Resources			
			Who? (Governance/oversight)	When?		
<b>Priority 2: Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents</b>						
2.2	To Maintain Strategic grip on self-harm, para-suicide and adolescent mental health	To ensure oversight self-harm, para-suicide and adolescent mental health	<b>What</b> CAMHs and commissioned services to report on their work with young people  For acute trusts to report on YP in Emergency Departments presenting with self harm	<b>Who</b> CAMHs Commissioned services St George's NHS Trust Named Nurse Epsom and St Helier Named Nurse	PPYPS Director of Public Health	March 18
2.3	To ensure that the Board has a strategic multi-agency response to high-risk, high concern adolescents (i.e. old LAC young people, young people who repeatedly go missing, those a risk of CSE, young people known to Criminal Justice System)	Maintain and strengthen oversight of missing young people in Merton	To continue to improve practice around children and young people missing from home/ school/care	CSC & YI YJT CSE Lead FAS Commissioned Services Police	PPYPS RE (YOT) CSE Lead	March 18
2.4	For the Board to develop a range of responses to adolescent risk through the adopting a Contextual approach to safeguarding	To work with partners in the London Borough of Hackney and the University of Bedfordshire as part of the Innovation Project	To undertake an audit of contextual safeguarding  To pilot a range of tools and approaches	MSCB Partners Led by CSC RE (YJT)	PPYPS	March 19

## Appendix 3

### London Borough of Merton Social Work Practice Model

Objectives	Outcomes	Actions (who and what)	Resources			
			Who? (Governance/oversight)	When?		
<b>Priority 3: Ensuring the Effectiveness of Early Help</b>						
3.1	Finalise the review of the Merton Child and Family Well Being Model	Threshold Document has been revised in accordance with the review of the Model	<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	Board via BIG	Sept 17
		To provide multi-agency guidance in relation to Step-up and Step Down	Update the Threshold document and clarify Step-Up and Step down processes	Head of Policy, Planning and Performance CSC HoS Task and Finish Group, CASA Manager Early Years CSC		
		CASA tools, protocols and training materials are updated	To review the current CASA tools and materials and align to the new model and the signs of safety	CASA Task and Finish led by CASA Manager	Board via BIG	Sept 17
		The reviewed Merton Child and Family Well Being Model is launched	To plan launch event and communication strategy	MSCB Business Unit and Children's Trust	Board via BIG	Sept 17
		Determine the Governance arrangements for the multi-agency implementation of the Signs of Safety	To prepare the terms of reference for Signs of Safety multi-agency roll out	CSC & Practice Leader Signs of Safety CLCH CCG Early Years FAS	Board via BIG	March 18
3.2	To ensure that the early help offer is clearly on the Family Services Directory	To ensure that Early Help provision is mapped and publicised across the partnership and community	Map Early Help Pathways and develop a communication strategy to ensure awareness	Led by Early Years Manager and the FSD Lead	Board via BIG	March 18

#### Merton Safeguarding Context

This section reviews trends and progress with safeguarding children with high levels of vulnerability. This includes children who need to be supported by a child protection plan and those who need to be in the care of the local authority to keep them safe.

#### Children in need population

There was a significant increase in open child in need episodes as at 31 March 2016, 1901 compared to 1544 (March 2015). The rate per 10,000 413 was also significantly higher than National 337, London 370 and Merton trend over last three years 336, 335, 338.

There was an increase across the board with our Statistical Neighbours recording an increase of 23.27 from a rate of 313.64 in 2015 to 336.91 in 2016.

The number of children in need episodes starting in the year has increased by 10.6% in Merton and by 1.9% in London whilst decreasing by 0.4% nationally from last year to 2015-16.

Episodes of need are lasting longer in Merton than nationally and in London. Of the episodes ending in the year 2015-16, 34% lasted a year or more compared to national 21.1% and London 20.6%.

'Abuse or neglect' is the most common primary need at first assessment in Merton with 47% of the children in need at the 31st March 2016. This is fractionally below London (48%) and under national proportions of 51%. Nationally and in Merton, 'Family dysfunction' is the second most common need, yet Merton (21%) exceeds London (13%) and national (17%) percentages.

In Merton, the gender gap of children in need has narrowed from 2015 figures of 54% male and 45% female to 2016 with 53% male 47% female. This is broadly reflective of national figures. Nationally there has been little movement in the gender proportions from 2015 to 2016 with 52.5% male and 45.5% female in 2015 to 52.7% male and 45.3% female in 2016.

#### Referrals

There was a small increase in referrals 1507 in 2015/16 from 1477 in 2014/15. Rate per 10,000 (328) remains in line with Merton's usual trend but lower than National (548) and London (477) benchmark.

Referrals sources, top referrer Police (31%) is in line with National (27%), London (26%) and Merton trends (32%). Referrer "other" (31%) outlier compared to National (7%), London (7%) and Merton 2014/15 (13%)

#### Single Assessments

The number of completed assessments in line with last year (1630 2015/16, compared to 1658 2014/15). Rate per 10,000 (354) remains in line with Merton's usual trend, lower than National (475) and London (442).

And of the completed single assessments, 92% were completed within 45 days, which is better than Merton's performance last year 90% and better than National (80%) and London (82%)

Domestic violence, which includes that aimed at children or other adults in the household, was the most common factor identified, flagged in 58.6% of episodes assessed in the year and with assessment factors recorded. This is higher than the 49.6% reported nationally and the 43.5% for London. However, this has dropped from the substantially higher 71.5% recorded in 2015.

This was followed by mental health which incorporates mental health of the child or other adults in the family/household at 38.2 % which is another significant drop from the 52.1% reported in 2015. This is also slightly higher than the 36.6% nationally and London's 29.4%

#### Section 47's

An increased numbers of Children subject to S47 enquires (719) compared to 648 2014/15. Increase and significant outlier in S47 rate per 10,000 (156) compared to Merton 2014/15 (142), National (137) and London (138)

There was a reduction in ICPC (217) compared to 267 2014/15. The rate per 10,000 (47) lower than Merton trend (58) and benchmark National (61), London (56).

Merton's ICPC 15 working day's timeliness (79%) better than National 75%, London 72% (2014/15) and Merton 73%.

### Child protection

138 children were subject to a child protection plan as at 31 March 2016, this is lower than trends for Merton (162, 182, and 177 for the last three years).

Rate per 10,000 as at the end of March (30) now an outlier against National 43 and London 41 (historically Merton's rate per 10,000 has not been lower than the benchmark). Could be attributed to fewer plans starting during the year (204) compared to 226 last year.

Where concerns are substantiated and the child judged to be at continuing risk of harm then an initial child protection conference should be convened within 15 working days. Merton convened 75.8% within the 15 days, this is higher than the 72.6% achieved in 2015. The 2016 outturn is below national (76.7%), yet above the London average (75.3%).

A higher proportion became the subject of a plan for the second or subsequent time. Our 2016 CPP 2nd or subsequent (23%), is higher than Merton 2014/15 16% trend and National 16% and London benchmark (13%)

Child Protection plans reviews within timescales came to 98%, this is an improvement on 91% 2014/15 and better than National 94% and London 96%.

Child seen in accordance with CP plan (visits), no longer a statutory census performance item.



## Appendix 4 Summary of Key Indicators

Indicators	Merton 2012-13	Merton 2013-14	Merton 2014-15	Merton 2015-16	National 2013-14	National 2014-15	National 2015-16
<b>Children In Need</b>							
Number of children starting an episode of need	1222	1407	1083	1198	427,700	403,400	401600
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	277.0	311.7	237.3	259.3	371.7	348.0	343.9
Number of children in need throughout the year	2373	2513	2517	2690	781,200	781,700	778980
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	537.9	556.7	551.5	582.1	678.9	674.4	667.1
Number of children ending an episode of need	887	910	973	789	384,100	390,800	384580
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	201.1	201.6	213.2	170.7	333.8	337.1	329.3
Number of children in need at 31 March	1486	1603	1544	1901	397,600	391,000	394400
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	336.8	355.1	338.3	411.4	345.6	337.3	337.7
<b>Referrals and assessments completed</b>							
Number of referrals	1372	1745	1477	1507	657,800	635,600	621,470
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	311.0	386.5	323.6	326.1	573.0	548.3	532.2
Number of Referrals which resulted in No Further Action	33	35	61	83	92,400	87,500	61,800
Percentage of Referrals which resulted in No Further Action	2.4	2.0	4.1	5.5	14.1	13.8	9.9
<b>Continuous Assessments (Single Assessment) completed (from 2013-2014)</b>							
Continuous Assessments (Single Assessment) completed		1,533	1658	1,630	175,300	550,800	571,640
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years		333.2	363.3	352.7	n/a	475.2	489.5
<b>Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences</b>							
Number of Children subject to s.47 enquiries which started during the year ending 31 March	493	593	648	719	142,500	160,200	172,290
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	111.7	131.4	142.0	155.6	123.8	138.2	147.5
Number of Children who were the subject of an initial child protection conference which started during the year ending 31 March	177	239	267	227	65,200	71,400	73,050
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	40.1	52.9	58.5	49.1	56.7	61.6	62.6

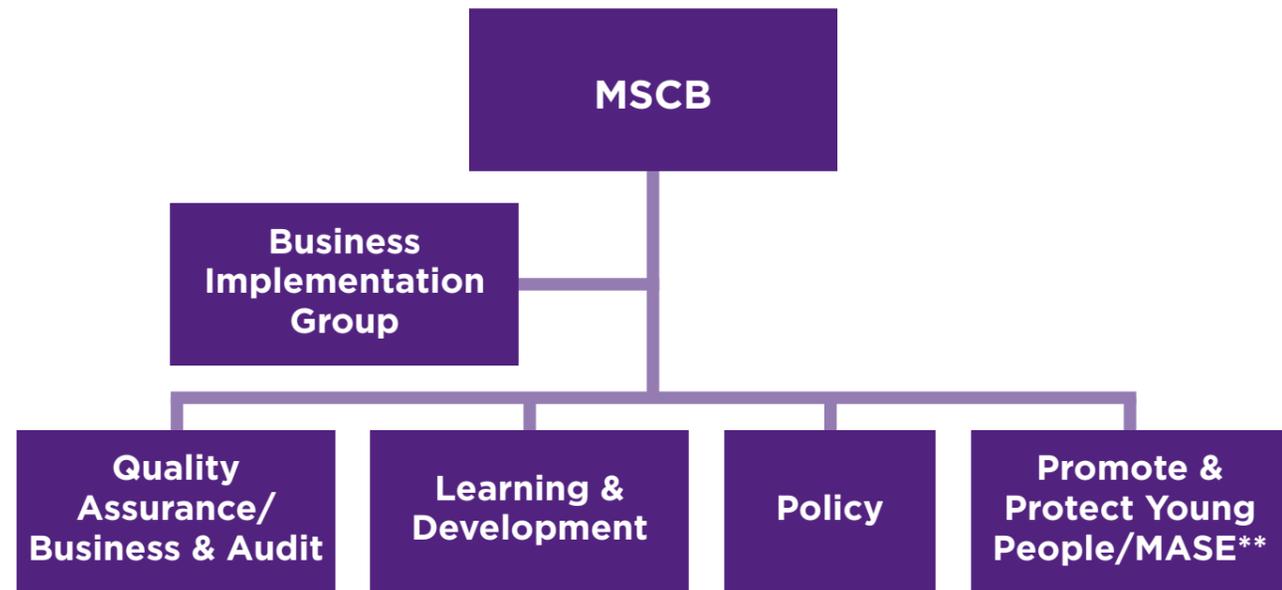
Number of children in need at 31 March and primary need at assessment						
	2015			2016		
	England	London	Merton	England	London	Merton
N1 - Abuse or neglect	49%	47%	40%	51%	48%	47%
N2 - Child's disability or illness	10%	10%	11%	10%	10%	9%
N3 - Parent's disability or illness	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%
N4 - Family in acute stress	9%	11%	14%	9%	10%	13%
N5 - Family dysfunction	18%	14%	24%	17%	13%	21%
N6 - Socially unacceptable behaviour	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%
N7 - Low income	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
N8 - Absent parenting	3%	6%	6%	3%	6%	5%
N9 - Cases other than children in need	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
N0 - Not stated	5%	4%	0%	4%	4%	0%

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Indicators	Merton 2011-12	Merton 2012-13	Merton 2013-14	Merton 2014-15	National 2012-13	National 2013-14	National 2015-16
<b>Children who were the subject of a child protection plan</b>							
Children who were the subject of a plan at the end of March	162	182	177	138	48,300	49,700	50,310
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	36.7	40.3	38.8	29.9	42.0	42.9	43.1
Children who became the subject of a plan throughout the year	160	212	226	204	59,800	62,200	63,310
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	36.3	47.0	49.5	44.1	52.0	53.7	54.2
Number who became the subject of a plan for the second or subsequent time	17	24	37	46	9,400	10,300	11,350
Percentage who became the subject of a plan for the second or subsequent time	10.6	11.3	16.4	22.5	15.8	16.6	17.9
Children who ceased the subject of a plan throughout the year	171	192	231	238	54,400	60,400	62,750
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	38.8	42.5	50.6	51.5	47.3	52.1	53.7
Number who were the subject of a plan for 2 or more years (who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan)	6	6	10	14	2,500	2,300	2,410
Percentage who were the subject of a plan for 2 or more years (who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan)	3.5	3.3	4.3	5.9	4.5	3.7	3.8
<b>Child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales</b>							
Children who were the subject of a plan at 31 March and who had been the subject of a plan for 3 or more months	121	141	116	88	33,100	34,600	34,580
Number reviewed within the required timescales	118	131	106	86	31,300	32,600	32,410
Percentage reviewed within timescales	97.5	92.9	91.4	97.7	94.6	94.0	93.7
Child Protection Plans throughout the year where the child was seen in accordance with the timescales specified within their plan by the lead social worker (DfE NOTE: Each local authority sets their own timescales, usually they are between two and six weeks, therefore where a local authority measures to a shorter timescale, it is more likely they will see fewer cases within their timescales.)		200	291	n/a	60,000	70,200	n/a
Percentage visited within timescale		53.5	71.3	n/a	58.4	63.7	n/a

## Appendix 5 MSCB Structure



MASE Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group

In addition there are Joint Sub-Groups with Sutton LSCB - namely:

### Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) and the Joint Human Resources Sub-Group

The MSCB will commission Task and Finish Groups as required.

The MSCB Chair may commission a Panel to undertake SCRs or LIRs.

### Reporting

Sub-Groups will routinely report to the MSCB on their work plans as follows; and where required by exception:

### Quality Assurance

- Multi-Agency data - quarterly in arrears
- Lessons from quality assurance at each MSCB meeting

### Learning and Development

- twice per year

### Policy

- twice per year

### Promote and Protect Young People

- twice per year
- Quality and aggregated lessons arising from case monitoring in Promote & Protect/MASE meetings will be reported via QA and to the MSCB

### HR Sub-Group

- once per year

### MASH Strategic Board

- meets monthly

### VAWG Board

- The Merton VAWG Strategic Board meets four times per year

### CDOP

- once per year, usually through the draft CDOP Annual Report

The Sub-Groups will work together to ensure that Policy Development and Learning and Development reflect lessons being learned through QA and PPYP.

## Appendix 6 Membership

Membership of MSCB has been agreed as follows:

**P Statutory Partner**

**S Statutory Sector Partner**

**C Co-opted**

**V Voting**

**PO Participant Observer**

**SA Statutory Advisor**

**A Advisor**

**B Board support**

Statutory Partners will nominate an agreed senior Agency Deputy who is able to speak and take decisions on their Agency's behalf.

Sector Partners will cover each other and do not require a deputy for their own agency.



## Contact Details

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12th Floor, Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden  
SM4 5DX

Tel: 020 8545 4866

Email: [mertonlscb@merton.gov.uk](mailto:mertonlscb@merton.gov.uk)

MSCB	
Independent Chair	Casting Vote
<b>P</b>	<b>Vice Chair to be drawn from the Statutory Members</b>
<b>P V</b>	Chief Officer, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>P V</b>	NHS England (London)
<b>P V</b>	Chief Nurse, Central London Community Healthcare Services
<b>P V</b>	Sutton & Merton Service Director, SW London & St George's MH Trust
<b>P V</b>	Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, SW London & St George's
<b>P V</b>	St George's Healthcare NHS Trust
<b>P V</b>	Borough Commander, Met Police
<b>P V</b>	DCI, Child Abuse Investigation Team, Met Police
<b>P V</b>	Assistant Chief Officer, London Probation
<b>P V</b>	Assistant Chief Officer The London Community Rehabilitation Company Limited
<b>S V</b>	Lay Members (Two)
<b>S V</b>	Voluntary Sector Agency (Two)
<b>P V</b>	Director, Children Schools & Families
<b>P V</b>	Head of CSC & YI, CSF
<b>P V</b>	Head of Education, CSF
<b>C V</b>	Director of Public Health Merton, Community & Housing
<b>C V</b>	Safeguarding Adults Manager, Community & Housing
<b>C V</b>	Housing Needs Manager, Community & Housing
<b>P V</b>	Senior Service Manager, CAF/CASS
<b>SV</b>	Head Teacher Primary School 'Rep of Governing Body of a Maintained School
<b>SV</b>	Special School
<b>SV</b>	Maintained secondary school
<b>SV</b>	Representative of the proprietor of a city technology college, a city college for technology or the arts, or an Academy
<b>SV</b>	Independent Sector School - vacant at Jan 2015
<b>CV</b>	CP Officer, Merton Priory Homes
<b>PO</b>	Merton Council Lead Member Children's Services <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>SA</b>	Designated Doctor for Child Protection, Merton CCG <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>SA</b>	Designated Nurse Safeguarding, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>SA</b>	Principal Social Worker <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>P V</b>	Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, SW London & St George's
<b>A</b>	Joint Head of HR Business Partnerships <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>A</b>	Service Manager, Policy, Planning and Performance <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>BS</b>	MSCB Board Development Manager <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>BS</b>	MSCB Administrator/s <b>Non-voting</b>
<b>A</b>	MSCB Training Officer <b>Non-voting</b>





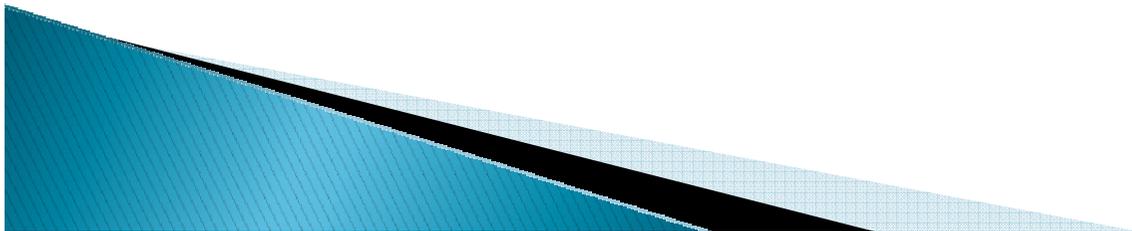
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# Think Family Merton

Chris McCree  
AMH Liaison Specialist  
[Chris.mccree@merton.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.mccree@merton.gov.uk)

# Think Family

- ▶ Why 'think family'?
- ▶ Introduction and background to the guide
- ▶ Local context
- ▶ Local implementation plan



# Why Think Family

An estimated one-third to two-thirds of children whose parents have mental health problems will experience difficulties themselves (ODPM '04)

Parental mental health is a significant factor for children entering the care system (ODP'04)

29% of young carers care for a parent with a mental health problem (Dearden & Becker'04)

Children who are the subject of Serious Case Reviews often have parents who experience mental health problems. (Biennial Analysis of SCRs DCSF '09)

1 in 3 adults will experience a mental health difficulty in their lifetime

2m Londoners will experience mental ill health this year

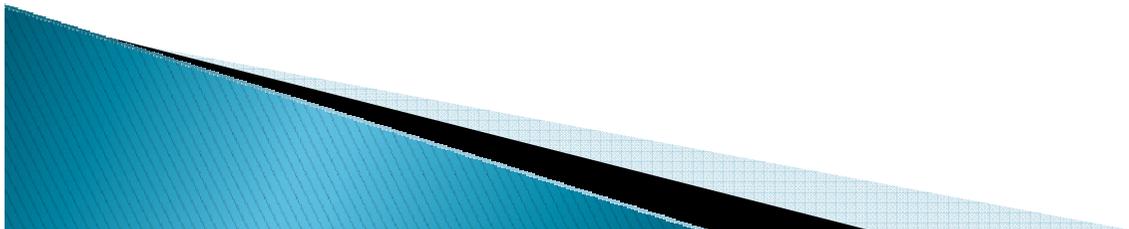
Half of all lifetime mental disorder starts by the age of 14 and 75% by the mid 20's.

Prevalence of maternal and paternal mental health problems

In 2016, the Royal College of Psychiatrists reported that approximately 68% of women and 57% of men with mental health problems are parents.

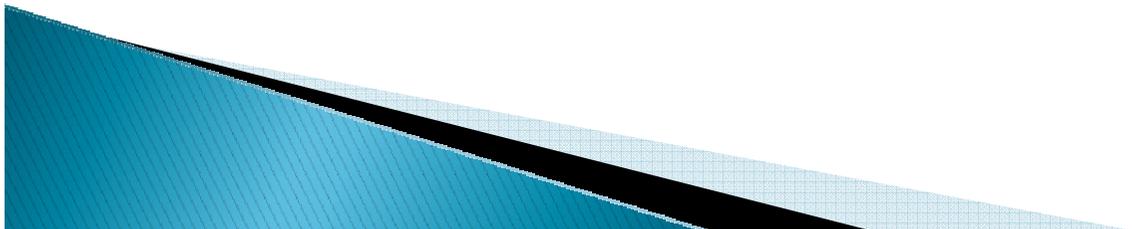
According to a Perinatal report published in 2015, the most common mental health problems experienced during pregnancy and after birth are anxiety, depression and PTSD.

Empirical work suggests that at least one quarter of adults admitted to UK adult acute inpatient settings are likely to have dependent children and that between 50–66% of people with severe mental illness may be living with children under the age of 18 .



# Barriers to 'thinking family'

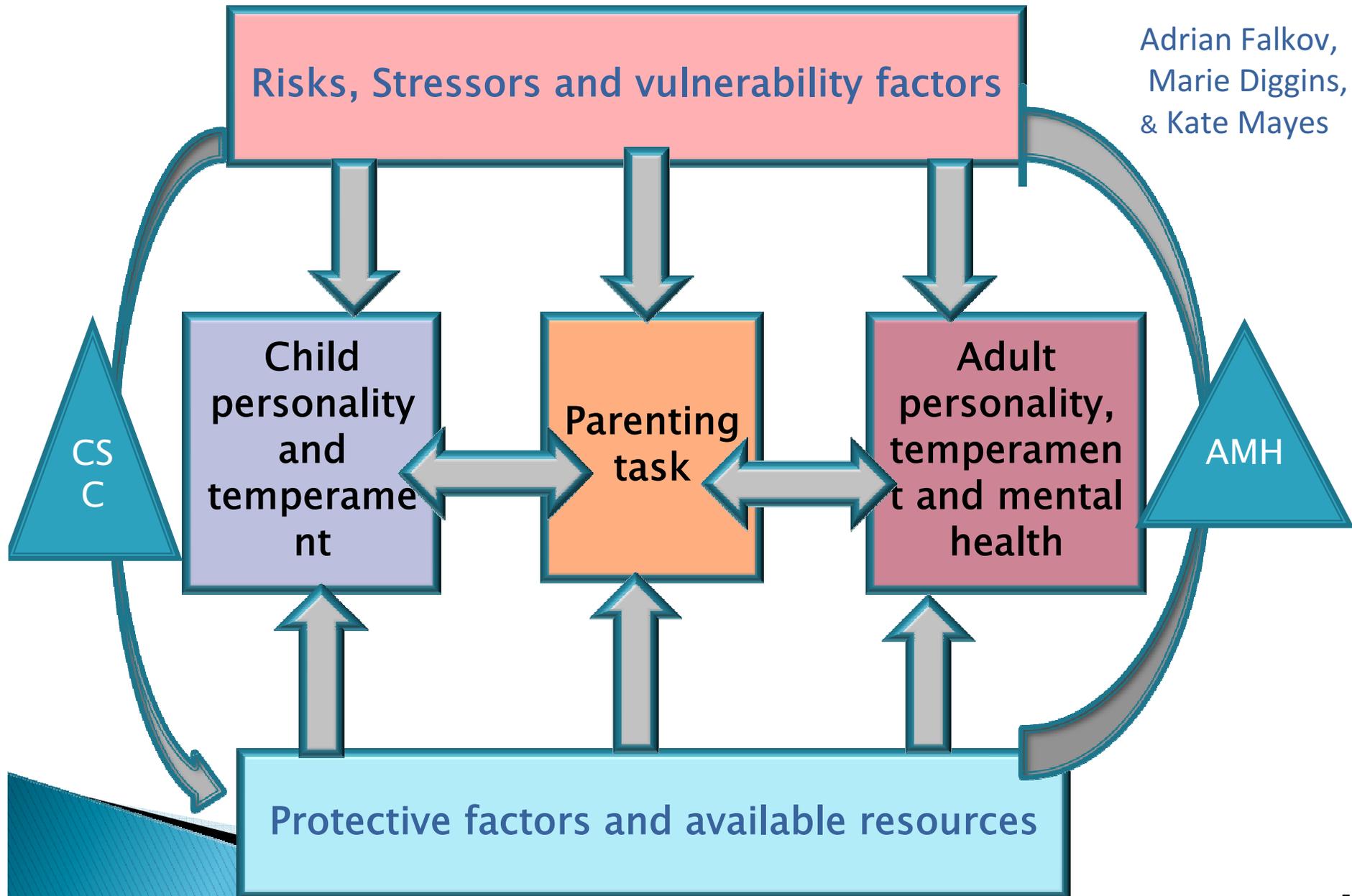
- Challenge of interagency working
- Fear and stigma
- Confidence and willingness to assess outside usual professional boundaries
- Information sharing
- Knowledge of services



# Family Model- WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Adrian Falkov,  
Marie Diggins,  
& Kate Mayes

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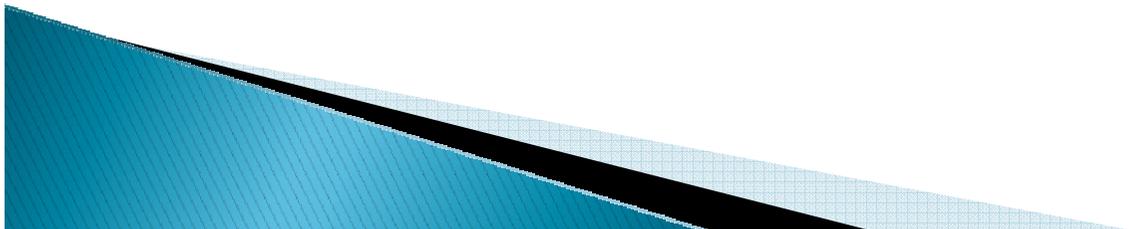
# Key messages

## **Develop services that:**

- ▶ Take a 'no wrong door' approach
- ▶ Look at the whole family and co-ordinate care
- ▶ Provide support that is tailored to need
- ▶ Build on family strengths
- ▶ Build services that embed a Think Family approach

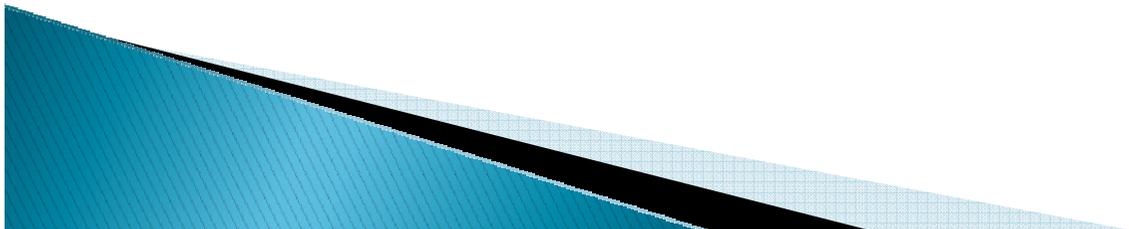
## **Plus**

- ▶ Signposting and improving access via communications strategy
- ▶ Workforce development
- ▶ Strategic approach – Development of a Think Family Strategy



# Local Implementation

- ▶ Borough Post- to lead with others the development and implementation of the Think Family work.
- ▶ Development of Multiagency Protocols to safeguard children whose parents/carers who experience mental health or substance misuse or disabilities
- ▶ Development of a Think Family strategy this should include all stakeholders and the involvement of parents, children and young people
- ▶ Workforce development- Review of Training and staff development- Increase understanding of parent mental health and its potential impact for children and young people roll out the Crossing Bridges Think Family training.
- ▶ Joint children and adults safeguarding conference
- ▶ Service Development- inc to consider Family Needs and family threshold for services
- ▶ Provision of advice and consultation in relation to parental mental
- ▶ Development of out come measures- what will look different in 2 years time
- ▶ Increased understanding of need through public health and CCG commissioners
- ▶ Assessment and Care Planning – involving children and young people in Care and crisis planning



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**Committee:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018

Wards: All wards

**Subject:** Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2016-17

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

Lead member: Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children Services

Contact officer: Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

---

**Recommendations:**

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

---

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The report provides members of the panel with an overview of how the role of corporate parent has been exercised in order to ensure all our young people reach their potential, develop into independent, self-confident adults and enjoy their place in society.

**2 DETAILS**

2.1 The report presents an annual update on what is going well, the key challenges and the actions that we will take to address these challenges. This report presents activity and performance data from 2016-17 and identifies the priorities for the year ahead.

- We continue to have a LAC population that has a high proportion of adolescent young people. The report sets out that whilst a high number of these are unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, factors such as housing and anti-social behaviour are also impacting.
- The improvement planning in place in our 14+ Team has seen a significant impact in outcomes for our care leavers in terms of ETE and housing. We are also in touch with a greater number of care leavers and are able to evidence the benefits of relationship based practice.
- Our fostering recruitment campaign has been successful, but we are still facing a challenge to recruit carers for our adolescent cohort.
- We have seen an improvement in children's participation in their reviews and the IRO Team is now working to embed a child centred model for LAC Reviews.
- Placement stability has seen significant improvement over the last year, and the development of the LAC Permanence Team has meant that our stable LAC now have the attention of a focused team who are working hard to develop relationships with children, carers and parents.
- Adoption performance continues to be a strength in terms of clear planning and management oversight of cases. As a result of embedded processes adoption placements are achieved in a timely manner.

- The CSC CAMH Team is now well embedded in the service and offering an excellent service to children, young people, carers and practitioners
- Good progress has been made to ensure that the voice of the child in care is heard, with the development of the LAC and Care Leaver Pledge, the Care Leavers Survey.

2.2 The report sets out the four priorities underway for 2017/18. Progress against these will be reported upon in next year's update. These priorities are:

- Develop the LAC and Care Leavers Strategies for 2018-21
- Enhancement of the Local Offer for Care Leavers
- Reinvigoration of Children in Care Council
- For children whose care plan is long term foster care, priority will be given to matching children with in house foster carers.

### **3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 No specific implications from this report

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 No specific implications from this report.

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

8.1 Appendix 1 - Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2016-2017

### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None



# **Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2016-2017**

## **London Borough of Merton**

### **Corporate Parenting Board December 2017**

Issue Date	Author	Date Of the Next Review	Lead officer
January 2018	Paul Angeli/Lynne Doyle	November 2018	Paul Angeli

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## Executive Summary

We are committed to ensuring all our looked after children and young people are given every opportunity to experience a safe, healthy and happy life in which they achieve their potential. We will make every effort to ensure they are able to grow up in a stable and supportive environment with a sense of belonging. We will make available the widest range of placements in order to support the individual needs of our looked after children and where they can feel cared for and cared about.

Our role as corporate parents is significant and far reaching and we will exercise this with commitment and accountability across all areas of the council and partnership. Through this we will consistently ensure all our young people reach their potential, develop into independent, self-confident adults and enjoy their place in society.

As a Corporate Parenting Panel we need to understand what we are doing well, what our areas of challenge are and the actions that we will take to address these challenges. This report presents activity and performance data from 2016-17 and identifies the priorities for the year ahead.

- We continue to have a LAC population that has a high proportion of adolescent young people. The report sets out that whilst a high number of these are unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, factors such as housing and anti-social behaviour are also impacting.
- The improvement planning in place in our 14+ Team has seen a significant impact in outcomes for our care leavers in terms of ETE and housing. We are also in touch with a greater number of care leavers and are able to evidence the benefits of relationship based practice.
- Our fostering recruitment campaign has been successful, but we are still facing a challenge to recruit carers for our adolescent cohort.
- We have seen an improvement in children's participation in their reviews and the IRO Team is now working to embed a child centred model for LAC Reviews.
- Placement stability has seen significant improvement over the last year, and the development of the LAC Permanence Team has meant that our stable LAC now have the attention of a focused team who are working hard to develop relationships with children, carers and parents.
- Adoption performance continues to be a strength in terms of clear planning and management oversight of cases. As a result of embedded processes adoption placements are achieved in a timely manner.
- The CSC CAMH Team is now well embedded in the service and offering an excellent service to children, young people, carers and practitioners
- Good progress has been made to ensure that the voice of the child in care is heard, with the development of the LAC and Care Leaver Pledge, the Care Leavers Survey.

## Priorities 2017-2018

Based on the analysis in this annual report and our broader understanding of our looked after children and care leavers we have identified the following actions as our priorities for the year ahead;

Action	Impact
Develop the LAC and Care Leavers Strategies for 2018-21	<p>To continue to secure timely permanence for children who become looked after.</p> <p>Where children need to remain looked after, their emotional well being will be a priority.</p> <p>To narrow the gap in outcomes between looked after and other children by supporting them with educational support, through the virtual school, to enable the children and young people to reach their full potential academically.</p> <p>High quality care, emotional support and relationships will be provided to Looked After Children and Care Leavers to allow them to feel in control of their lives and be able to overcome the barriers they may face, including learning independent and life skills to assist with their transition to leaving care and young adulthood.</p> <p>Leaving Care Services for Care Leavers are developed and resourced up to the age of 25.</p>
Enhancement of the Local Offer for Care Leavers	Young People are provided with local information that assist them in preparing for adulthood and independent living
Reinvigoration of Children in Care Council	<p>To provide a voice for children in care from specific age groups, including children with SEN and disabilities and children placed out of borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• under 11s;</li> <li>• 11 to 16;</li> <li>• 16 plus</li> <li>• Care Leavers</li> </ul>

	<p>Looked After Children and Care Leavers will monitor or implement the Pledge to bring together service users and providers, to influence decisions about services for children in care and to develop skills of the children and young people involved.</p>
<p>For children whose care plan is long term foster care, priority will be given to matching children with in house foster carers.</p>	<p>In House foster carers provide high quality placements that meet the assessed needs of children placed with them, in line with the Care Plan.</p> <p>Supervising Social Workers monitor the work of foster carers and provide appropriate and timely support and supervision.</p> <p>The Permanence team will work closely with the child, birth family and foster family throughout the child's journey through foster care.</p>

## **1. Context**

- 1.1 This report sets out an annual update on the corporate parenting arrangements in Merton: focusing on activity and performance during 2016-17. It advises members on key legislation and guidance alongside key performance indicators for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

## **2. The Legal Framework**

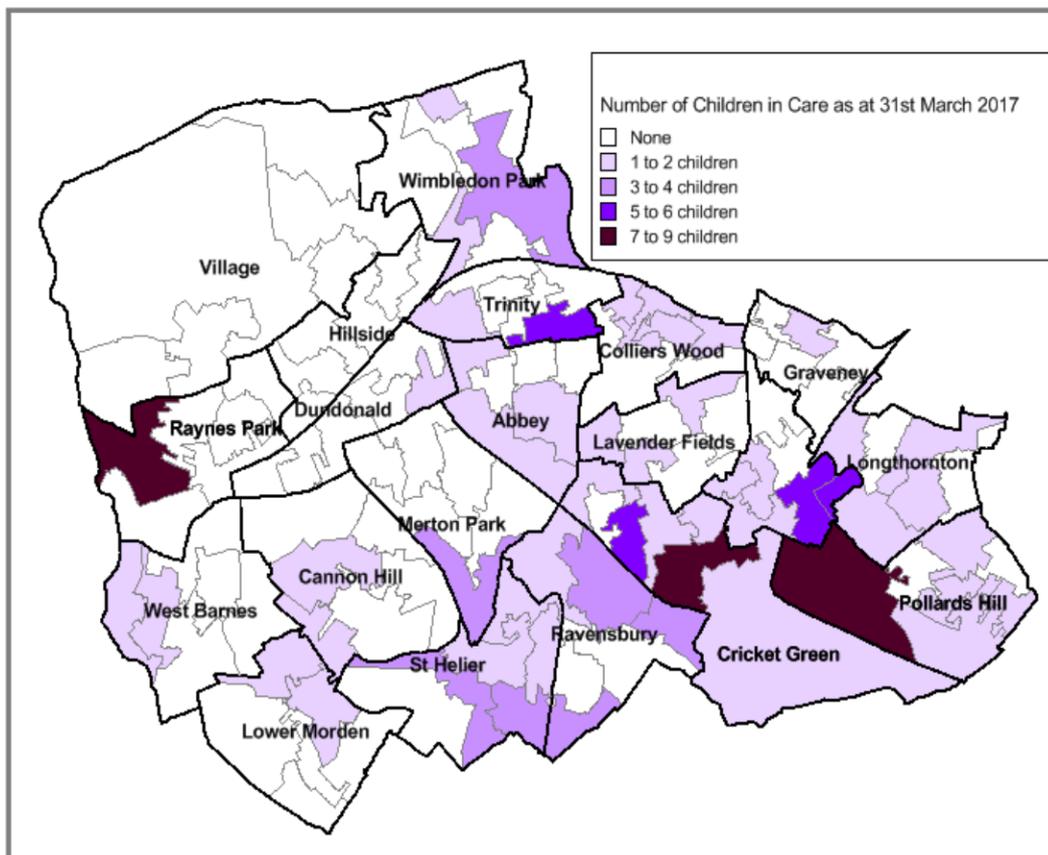
- 2.1 The Children Act 1989 and the Leaving Care Act 2000 place clear statutory duties upon the Council to protect children from suffering significant harm and to provide continued financial and transition support to care leavers aged up to 21 (or 25 if in full time education). Underpinning corporate parenting is a wide range of national policies, guidance, regulations and legislation, which are subject to change by High Court rulings, such as the Southwark ruling in 2009.
- 2.2 The revised care planning regulations and guidance, including The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers and the Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children March 2010, place increased emphasis on effective care planning with a focus on the child, and are designed to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement and case review for looked after children. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers.
- 2.3 In 2014 the Children and Families Act 2014 was introduced. The Act takes forward a commitment to improve services for vulnerable children. It reforms the systems for adoption, Looked after Children, family justice and special educational needs.
- 2.4 The Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (Revised May 2013) sets out expectations for local authorities in respect of planning and arranging suitable accommodation for the transition to independent living, including 'accommodation with former foster carers (Staying Put arrangements)'. The Staying Put legislation places a legal duty on local authorities to support every care leaver who wants to stay with their foster carers until their 21st birthday. The opportunity to 'stay put' should apply equally to young people that have been cared for by foster carers from the local authority or independent fostering services.
- 2.5 Effective corporate parenting requires knowledge and awareness of the needs of children and young people who are looked after and the services that they receive. This is a shared responsibility for the Council as a whole. The role of the corporate parent is:
  - a. To receive and consider accurate and timely management information reports on the numbers, characteristics and needs of looked after children and care leavers;

- b. To receive and consider reports demonstrating how effectively Merton is serving it's looked after population through the provision of services and targeted initiatives;
- c. To receive briefings on new national and local initiatives designed to improve children and young people's life chances;
- d. To gain knowledge of services based on direct involvement and opportunities to meet and gain the views of stakeholders, especially listening to the views of children and young people looked after and members of the Children in Care Council;
- e. To monitor and review progress on the delivery of the Pledge to children looked after and care leavers; and
- f. Ensure that decisive action is taken to address any shortcomings in the services provided to children and young people.

### **3. Merton Background**

- 3.1 Merton is an outer London borough situated in south west London, covering 14.7 square miles. Merton has a total population of 200,543 including 47,499 children and young people aged 0-19 (Census 2011). The number of 0-19 year olds is forecast to increase by 4,450 (9%) by 2018, within which we forecast a 30% increase of children aged 5 to 9 (3,390).
- 3.2 Predominantly suburban in character, Merton is divided into 20 wards and has three main town centres: Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. A characteristic of the borough is the difference between the more deprived east (Mitcham / Morden) and the more affluent west (Wimbledon). There are a number of pockets of deprivation within the borough mainly in the eastern wards and some smaller pockets in the central wards. These wards have multiple deprivation, with high scores on income deprivation, unemployment and limited educational attainment.
- 3.3 Fifty two per cent of Merton's total population is Black, Asian or Minority ethnic (BAME) this is expected to increase further to 57% by 2018. 63% of people 0-19 are from BAME communities. Pupils in Merton schools are more diverse still, with 68% from BAME communities, speaking over 120 languages (2017). The borough has concentrations of Urdu speaking communities: Sri Lankan; South African; and Polish residents.
- 3.4 Looked After Children (LAC) are those children and young people aged 0-18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority. The local authority has continuing legal and financial responsibilities to many of these children until they are 21 (or 25 if in full time education). This includes all unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and children with disabilities who are receiving more than 75 days of respite care per year.

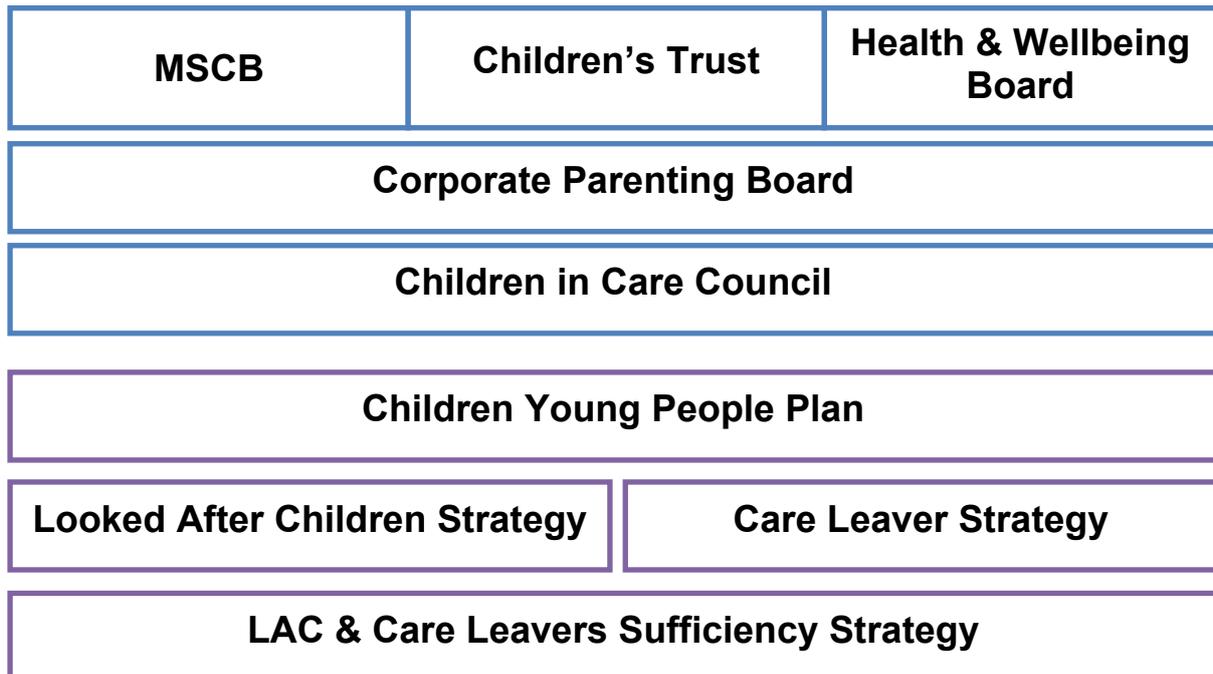
- 3.5 There are clear thresholds for admitting children into care and in all cases significant attempts should have been made to support the child or young person to remain with their family or within their community. In Merton an Edge of Care and Rehabilitation Panel ensures management oversight of care planning in the decision making to accommodate a child or rehabilitate them home.
- 3.6 As at 31 March 2017 there were 152 Looked After Children in Merton which represents a 6.7% decrease from 2016 (163 children). In England and Wales there were 72,670 looked after children as at March 2017, an increase of 3.2% from 2016 (70,440). In addition Merton has 151 young people aged 18-25 years accessing leaving care services, making Merton a corporate parent to over 303 vulnerable children and young people.
- 3.7 The local Family Poverty Needs Assessment shows that Merton is a relatively affluent borough, ranking as the fourth least deprived authority of London's 33 boroughs.
- 3.8 57% of the LAC population came from an area of deprivation (Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2015 bottom 30%), an increase of 3% from 2016. The majority of children looked after as at 31 March lived in wards, pre intervention, in the east and south of the borough.



Source: SSDA903

#### 4. Corporate Parenting – Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) reinforces the message that all outcomes for children looked after by the local authority. To ensure this council wide ownership Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Chief Executive London Borough Merton.
- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Board is comprised of senior managers and officers from education, health, housing, social care and elected members and is chaired by the Chief Executive London Borough Merton, ensuring a high level of scrutiny and cross directorate responsibility for delivery of our priorities.



- 4.3 The Board meets 6 times each year.
- 4.4 Over the past year the Board has considered reports on topics including:
- Educational progress of looked after children
  - Health outcomes of looked after children
  - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
  - Placement Stability
  - Voice of the child
  - LAC Sufficiency
  - CAMHS
  - Assessments of young people aged 16 & 17 years presenting as homeless
  - Trends in the care population

## 5. LAC and Care Leavers Pledge

### A pledge to children in care and care leavers in Merton

We promise to support you to:



#### Your health

- Ensure you are registered with a GP and Dentist.
- Provide advice, guidance and support on substance misuse, sexual health and mental health.
- Run courses on cooking health meals
- Make a financial contribution towards leisure activities.
- Explain to you about why you have a health assessment.

#### Your safety and support

- Maintain positive relationships with your family.
- Help you to understand your rights.
- Make safe choices and take reasonable risks in a safe and supportive environment.
- Prepare for meetings and accompany you when you ask.
- We will talk to you about the information we share about you.
- We will support you to identify the right placement.

#### Your voice

- Provide regular information on the advocacy service.
- Meet with me after meetings to discuss what has been agreed.
- We will come with you to appointments when you ask us to.
- Encourage you to give us feedback and when necessary to make a complaint.
- We will make you aware of your options and support you in making choices.

#### Your education and training

- Make sure that you have access to IT and other equipment to support your education and training.
- Celebrate your success.
- Provide an education pack to let you know about the Virtual School.
- Make sure that you get extra study support if you need it.
- Develop a post 18 PEP.
- More training and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Provide information on the financial support that you are entitled to.
- Access English and Maths tuition.

#### Your finances

- Make you aware of your financial entitlements as a child in care or care leaver.
- Provide advice and guidance in respect of benefits and budgeting.
- Help you to prepare to leave care and live independently.
- Access the best possible education and training.
- Help you develop life skills/work towards your goals.

#### Your rights

- We will support you to access good quality legal advice.
- We will support you to attend meetings with solicitors and the Home Office.
- We will provide information on the law and your rights.

[merton.gov.uk/lookedafter](http://merton.gov.uk/lookedafter)

## 6. Update on Priorities from 2016-2017

Action	Update	RAG
Development of a Care Leaver Hub	The Care Leaver Hub has yet to be developed. Currently on going work is taking place to source premises to establish this project.	
Development of a Care Leaver Forum	The Care Leaver Forum has yet to be developed	
Development of Participation for all ages	New opportunities for participation have been developed and are highlighted through the regular User Voice reports, this will be an ongoing theme in the Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2018 -2021.	
Development of a Placements Panel	Placement Panel has been developed and is attended and chaired by the Head of Services across the services. Placement Panel tracks placements to ensure that the placement is meeting the specific needs of the child or young person in placement.	
Signs of Safety Approach is incorporated into the work of the LAC Teams	<p>Social workers in the permanence team and 14 plus team have attended the Signs of Safety training and two of the 14 plus managers have attended the 5 day training and are Signs of Safety leads.</p> <p>Signs of Safety and Signs of Success underpins the work undertaken with Looked After Children and Care Leavers, it is incorporated into the every day practice and is used as a tool in supervision to assist the social worker in the care planning.</p>	

## 7. Corporate Parenting Performance Activity 2016-2017 (SSDA 903)

### Section 1: Looked After Children Cohort Overview (Numbers and Characteristics)

#### Numbers and rates of children looked after as at 31st March

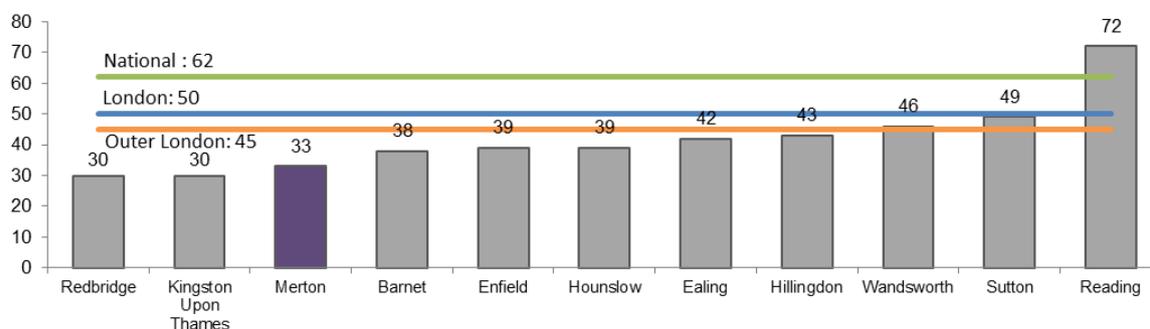
	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Number	Rate per 10,000								
Merton	139	31	150	34	156	34	163	35	152	33
London	10,080	54	10,110	54	9,980	52	9,860	51	9,910	50
National	68,060	60	68,810	60	69,480	60	70,440	60	72,670	62

England and London totals are rounded to the nearest 10.

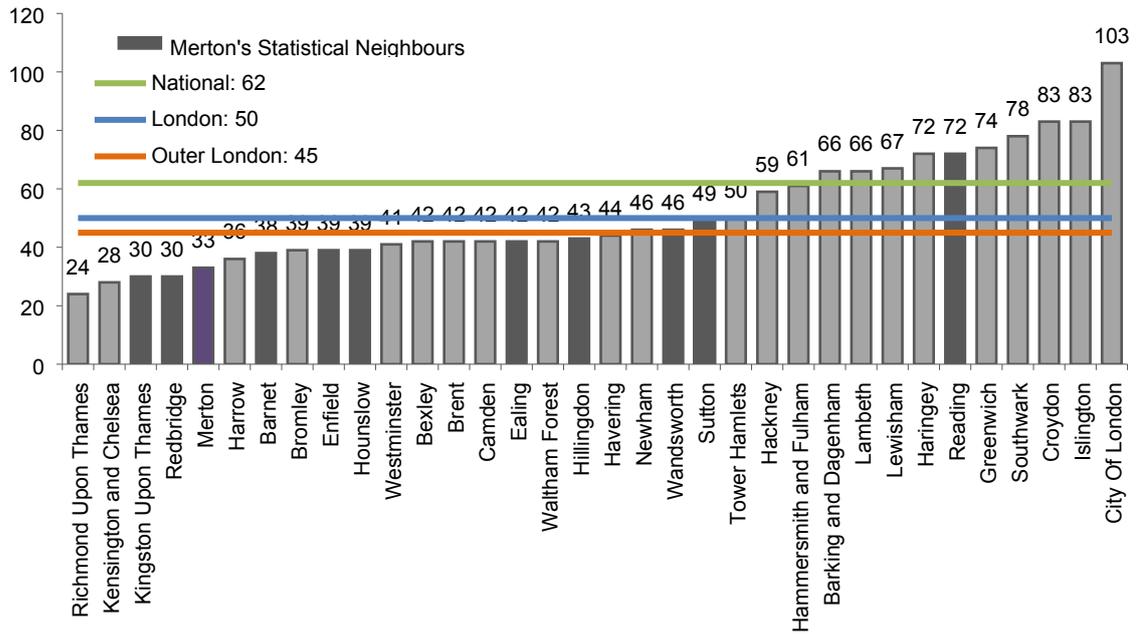
7.1 The number of looked after children has continued to rise nationally, with Merton seeing a decline in numbers at 31<sup>st</sup> March. There were 152 looked after children as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, a decrease of 6.7% compared to March 2016. Outer London has also seen a 2.2% decrease since March 2016.

7.2 In the year 2016-17 there were 106 new admissions into care (relating to 100 children). An 18% decrease on 2016. 57% of starters were still in care at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, and a large proportion of starters (35%) were aged 16 and over. This is double the national proportion of starters in this age range. Whilst Merton has seen a rise in its looked after child population in previous years and a decrease in 2017, the rates per 10,000 population remains stable and we continue to have one of the lowest LAC populations when compared to our statistical neighbours. Merton has the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest rate amongst its Statistical Neighbours. There are only seven (four in London) local authorities with a rate per 10,000 less than Merton.

#### Rate per 10,000 population of Children Looked After against Merton's Statistical Neighbours 2017

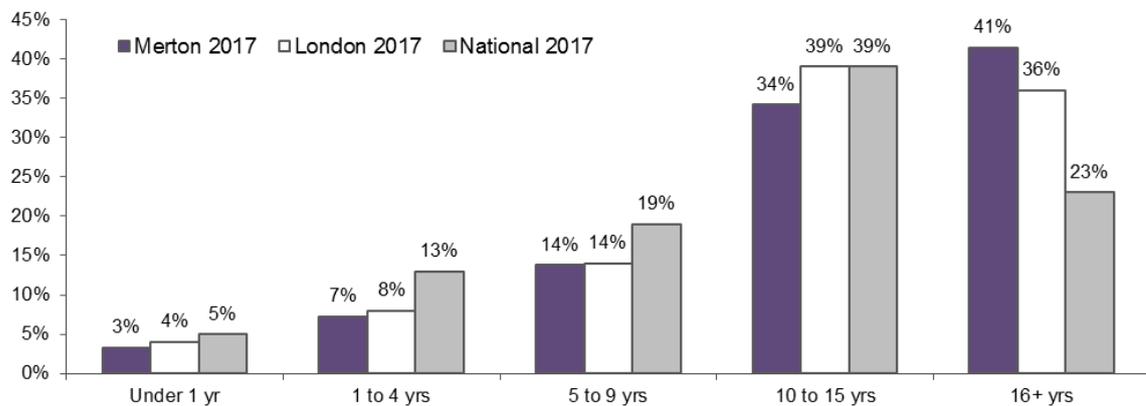


**Rate per 10,000 population of Children Looked After against Merton's Statistical Neighbours and all London Boroughs 2017**



7.3 As set out in the bi-monthly LAC Cohort Corporate Parenting Reports the age profile of children looked after in Merton differs from the national picture with Merton caring for a large number of older looked after children aged 16 and over. At 31 March 2017 41% of our looked after children were aged 16 and 17 compared to 23% nationally. The inverse trend is reflected in the 0 to 15 year olds.

**Percentage of children looked after as at 31st of March 2017 by age group compared to London 2017 and National 2017**



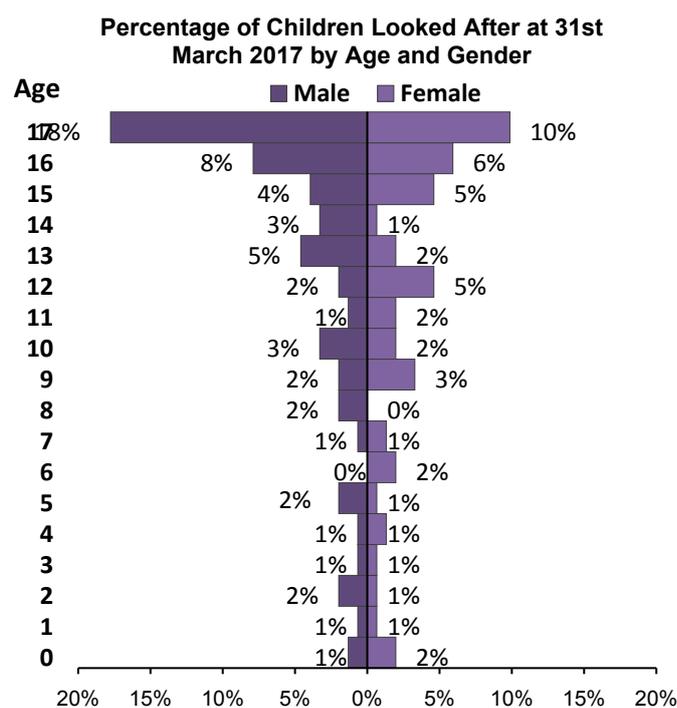
## Gender, Age and Ethnicity of Looked After Children

- 7.4 The table below shows the increase in the older population over the previous 5 years. Review of the local information shows that of the thirty-five 16 and 17 year olds accommodated in 2016-17, sixteen were accommodated due to their UASC status.

### Age of children looked after by year as at the year end 2017

Merton	Age (in years)																	
	<i>(number of Children Looked After, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March)</i>																	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
2013	7	6	5	2	4	4	2	2	7	5	5	6	2	8	9	16	25	24
2014	8	6	4	5	0	2	5	3	2	7	5	6	8	1	15	12	22	39
2015	6	3	5	4	3	0	3	6	4	4	10	7	5	10	10	18	26	32
2016	4	5	4	3	3	3	2	4	7	4	7	9	10	7	11	15	30	35
2017	5	2	4	2	3	4	3	3	3	8	8	5	10	10	6	13	21	42

Source: SSDA 903



	Gender	
	<i>(percentage of Children Looked After)</i>	
	Male	Female
Merton 2017	56%	44%
London 2017	59%	41%
National 2017	56%	44%

Overall, 56% of the LAC population is male and 44% female.

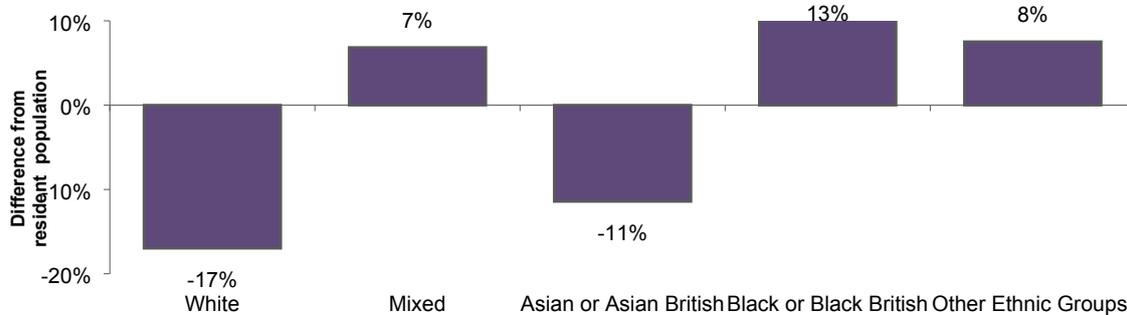
The breakdown of the gender / age data highlights the fact that our older LAC cohort is significantly over-represented by males (the majority of UASC and LASPO referrals received relate to males).

7.5 The age profile has continued to change over the past four years, with a plateau in the number and proportion of older children. 76% of children were aged 10 years and over in 2017 compared with 68% in 2013 (comparing with 62% and 56% nationally). There has been a reduction in the number and proportion of children aged 0-4 from 17% in 2013 to 11% in 2017 (comparing with 24% to 18% nationally).

- 7.6 The majority of children looked after in Merton are from a white background. This is a lower proportion than the general resident population (by 17%). There are fewer Asian or Asian British than the all persons Merton population. Children from Mixed ethnic backgrounds, Black or Black British heritage and 'Other Ethnic

Groups' are over-represented in our looked after child population and this is likely to reflect the increase in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

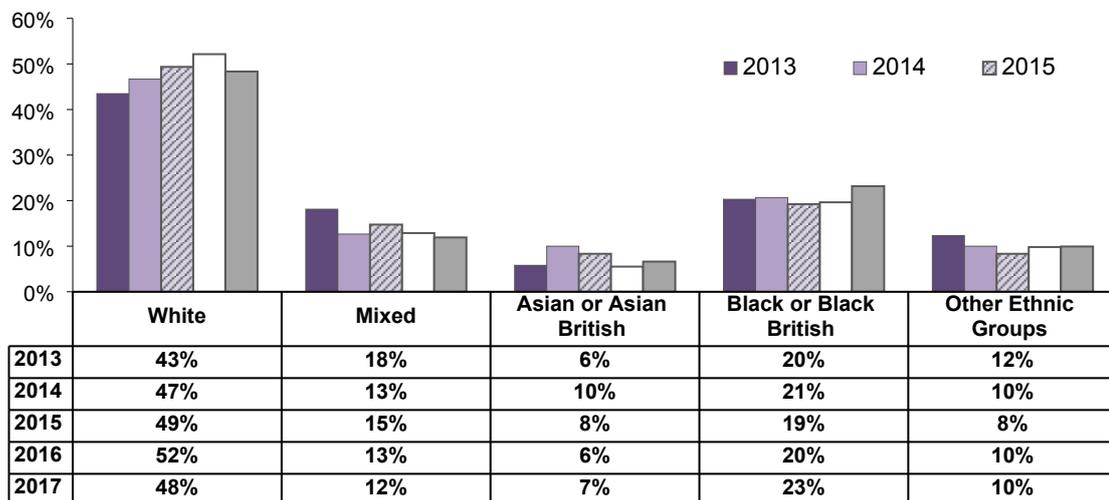
**Difference in Ethnic Group of Looked After Children as at 31st March 2017 from the Merton Resident Population 2011**



*Note: Other Ethnic Groups is a census defined category and represents a number of ethnic groups where ethnic heritage cannot be defined in the Asian, Black White or Mixed groups. The category includes Afghanistani, Arab, Chinese, Egyptian, Filipino, Iranian, Iraqi, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Latin / South / Central American, Lebanese, Malay, Moroccan, Polynesian, Thai, Vietnamese, or Yemeni.*

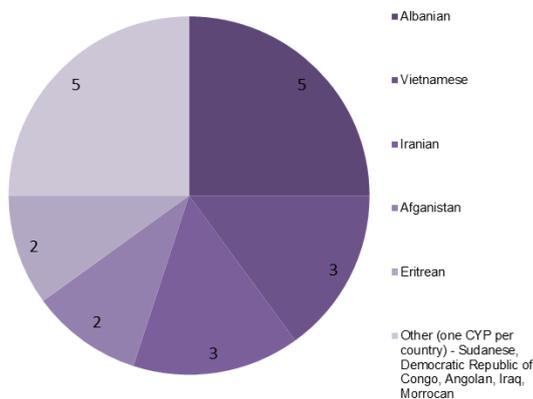
7.7 The trend data shows a change in the ethnic origin of our looked after children in 2017. Merton has however seen a decrease in the percentage of children in the 'Mixed' and 'White' categories and an increase in Black or Black British heritage groups.

**Percentage of Children Looked After by Ethnic Origin from 2013 to 2017**



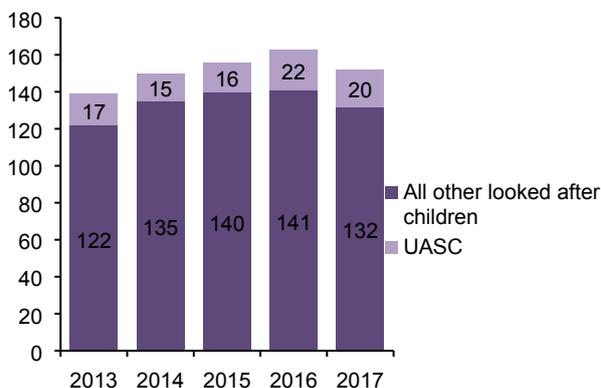
The graph on the left highlights the increase in LAC and UASC populations since 2013 and the decrease in numbers in 2017. In 2012

Nationality of UASC Population  
(as at 31st March 2017)



the UASC population was 6%, 12% in 2013 of the overall LAC cohort. In 2017 this has risen to 13%, which is greater than the national figure of 6%. Two thirds of all unaccompanied asylum seeking children are located in London and the South East.

The ethnicity section of this report demonstrates a large proportion of LAC in the category of 'Other Ethnic Groups', this reflects the number of UASC within the overall cohort.



2017 has shown UASC of increased nationality diversity, with ten nationalities in comparison to four nationalities in 2016.

### Number of Children who started to be Looked After during the year ending 31st March

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	92	114	107	122	100
% increase / decrease year on year	8%	24%	-6%	14%	-18%

Source: SSDA 903. Only the first occasion on which a child started to be looked after in the year is counted.

7.8 The number of children starting to be looked after in Merton has had fewer new starters in 2016-17, following an increase locally and nationally since 2013. This represents an 18% decrease in children starting care in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16. Whilst there are fewer children starting to be looked after, the 16-17 age group proportionally has a greater number of starters. 46% of the 16 and 17 year old children starting to be looked after were UASC.

## Age of Children who started to be Looked After during the year ending 31st March

Merton	Age (in years)																	
	<i>(number of children who started to be Looked After; ages on entering care)</i>																	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
2013	10	2	1	1	1	3	0	3	1	0	5	1	1	5	9	10	24	15
2014	13	5	5	3	4	1	3	5	3	1	3	4	2	7	9	7	22	17
2015	8	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	5	7	2	1	4	4	15	13	17	12
2016	11	3	5	1	6	3	4	3	2	5	4	2	7	4	7	11	19	25
2017	8	4	4	2	3	2	2	2	2	9	1	3	7	1	7	8	18	17

### Reason for being looked after

7.9 When a child becomes looked after their primary need is collected and the table below shows that the proportions of children in each group have remained fairly stable. The significant difference between our local and the national data is the absent parenting category which reflects the number of UASC.

Merton	Category of Need							
	Abuse or neglect	Child's disability	Parent's illness or disability	Family in acute stress	Family dysfunction	Socially unacceptable behaviour	Low income	Absent parenting
2013	37%	6%	6%	6%	23%	2%	0%	20%
2014	41%	5%	6%	7%	20%	3%	0%	17%
2015	42%	9%	4%	8%	19%	3%	0%	15%
2016	40%	9%	4%	10%	18%	2%	0%	17%
2017	43%	8%	3%	14%	15%	0%	0%	17%

### Legal status of looked after children

7.10 In 2016-17 we have seen an increase in the numbers and proportion of Looked After Children on a care order (20 children, 16%) and this is in line with the national trend, however we have a lower proportion of our looked after children subject to such orders than nationally (Merton data for 2017 was 58% of children on ICO's and Full Care Orders, National data was 69%). Inversely there has been a decrease in the proportion accommodated under section 20 agreements as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, although this is a higher proportion of children subject to such orders than National.

### Number of Children who ceased to be Looked After during the year ending 31st March

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	85	107	105	117	113
% increase / decrease year on year	-16%	26%	-2%	11%	-3%

Source: SSDA 903

7.11 The number of children who ceased to be looked after in 2016-17 has decreased by 3% when compared to 2016-17. 113 care episodes ceased during the year

ending 31 March 2017. The number of children who ceased to be looked after has increased for those aged 1 (8 children), 3 (4 children), 12 (6 children) and 17 (10 children).

7.12 The table below reflects the age related care pathways of the majority of the children and young people ceasing care. The greatest number of children leaving care are those reaching adulthood at age 18 who are moving into the care leaver cohort. For those aged 0-5 year's permanence is found outside of the care system either through reunification, placement with relatives or adoption. The age group most likely to remain in care is the 5-12 year cohort most of whom are subject to care orders and permanently matched with foster carers.

**Age of Children who ceased to be Looked After during the year ending 31st March\***

Merton	Age (in years)																		
	<i>(number of children who ceased to be Looked After; age on leaving care)</i>																		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
2013	3	1	4	1	2	1	0	4	1	1	2	1	1	4	1	1	9	5	2
2014	4	5	10	4	3	5	1	5	2	3	3	1	2	5	2	9	6	9	2
2015	3	5	8	1	5	0	4	1	2	3	2	2	1	2	7	7	2	8	4
2016	5	6	5	2	8	1	1	3	2	3	5	2	1	4	6	7	7	7	4
2017	2	8	5	4	3	0	2	2	3	4	3	2	6	4	3	7	7	10	3

\*by number of children not number of episodes

7.13 Children ceasing care to return home to live with parents/relatives has remained stable in 2017 (42%). Nationally a 27% of children ceasing care returned home, in London 30%. In 2017, 22% of Merton's looked after children moved to independent living, whilst an increase of 3% from 2016, a reduction of 32% on 2015; this nevertheless remains above the national of 15% and reflects the higher proportion of older young people in our LAC cohort.

### Reason for children leaving care\*

Merton	Reason for children leaving care*															
	Adoption (E11, E12)	Died (E2)	Care taken over by another LA in UK (E3)	Returned home to live with parents/relatives** (E4)	Return home to live with parents/relatives as part of the care planning process (E4A)	Return home to live with parents/relatives which was not part of the care planning process (E4B)	Left care to live with person with no parental responsibility (E13)	Residence Order (or from April 2014 a child arrangements order) Granted (E41)	Special Guardianship Order (E43, E44)	Moved to independent living (E5, E6)	Transferred to residential care funded by Adult Social Services (E7)	Sentenced to custody (E9)	Accommodation on remand ended (E14)	Age assessment determined child aged 18 or over (E15)	Child moved abroad (E16)	Care ceased for any other reason (E8)
2013	5	0	0	43			0	0	3	21	2	4	0	0	0	7
2014	10	0	1	52			0	3	4	27	0	3	0	0	0	7
2015	8	1	0		33	7	3	1	4	37	2	1	0	1	0	7
2016	11	0	0		40	6	4	2	2	22	1	2	1	0	2	24
2017	11	1	2		41	6	4	0	5	25	1	3	0	1	0	13

\* by number of children not number of episodes

\*\* from 2015 this reason for ceasing was replaced by E4A and E4B

### Staying Put (year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March)

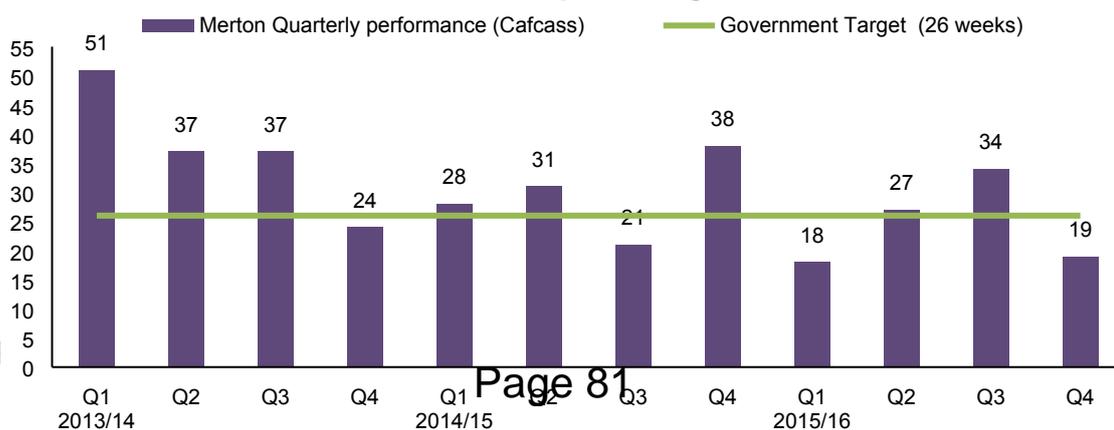
7.14 'Staying Put' relates to young people who have turned 18 and left care in the year ending the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, eligible for care leaver support and remaining with their former foster carers 3 months after their 18th birthday. In 2016-17, 4 young people entered into 'Staying Put' arrangements.

### Section 2: Care Processes

#### Timeliness of care proceedings when taking children into care

7.15 A revised Public Law Outline introduced in April 2014 set out streamlined case management procedures for dealing with public law children's cases. Under revised legislation care and supervision proceedings must be completed 'without delay and within twenty-six weeks'. This places an increased emphasis on pre-proceedings work and the quality of assessments.

26 week time limit for care proceedings - CAF/CASS data



7.16 As indicated in the above graph there continues to be progress made in improving the timeliness of Care Proceedings. Merton's average case duration for 2016-17 was 25 weeks compared to 2015-16 where the average case duration was 30 weeks. This is compared to the national average of 29 weeks and London wide average of 32 weeks.

7.17 Over the past two years, there has been a strong focus on Pre-Proceedings cases, which has contributed to reducing the overall duration of Care Proceedings cases. System improvements in the previous year and a review of all court related cases, combined with an increased focus on the interface between key teams and partners is helping to improve performance.

#### Looked After Children reviews

##### Percentage of Children Looked After as at 31st March reviewed on time

Merton	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Timely Reviews	95.9%	96.5%	95.8%	98.7%	97.2%

Source: SSDA 903

Notes: The DfE do not publish national comparisons for this indicator. The indicator only includes children who had been in care continuously for 4 weeks as at 31<sup>st</sup> March.

7.18 In order to ensure that LAC reviews are held in a timely manner we established a clear understanding of the practice standard and introduced an escalation process for all reviews going outside of timescales.

##### Percentage of reviews participated in during the year

Merton	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of reviews	328	407	450	446	413
No. of reviews participated in	303	356	391	430	411
% Participation	92.4%	87.5%	86.9%	96.4%	99.5%

Source: SSDA 903

Notes: The DfE do not publish national comparisons for this indicator. Excludes reviews with a participation method of 'Child aged under 4 at the time of the review'.

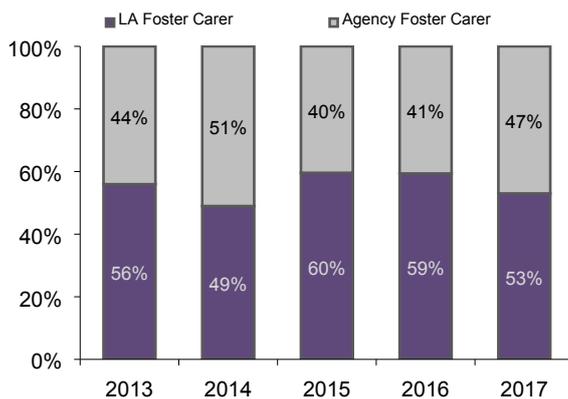
7.19 Participation in LAC reviews was identified as a priority area in 2015-16 due to the year on year decline in performance that had been noted. An improvement plan was put in place that focused on the following areas:

- Consultation with children and young people to get their views on participation in LAC reviews
- Affirming practice standards
- Training for practitioners working with non-verbal children
- Guidance on promoting participation
- Improved data quality

The success of this improvement plan and the on-going commitment from practitioners is evidenced in the improved performance data on 2016 for this year at 99.5%.

### Section 3: Placements

7.20 Children are looked after in a variety of settings; foster care, children’s homes, residential special schools, Youth Offending Institutes, and a small number are in hospital settings. At 31 March 2017, 71% of looked after children (108 children) were placed in foster care. This is below the national figure of 74%. 53% children were placed with in house foster carers; this is a decrease on the previous year. This continues to be an area of scrutiny for us due to the impact on budget, but also due the fact that agency placements are often outside of the borough. The most common use of agency placements is for adolescents, as a number of our in house carers are only approved to take foster children up to the age of 10 years. The Access to Resources Service is committed to targeted recruitment of teenage carers; however, there is a Pan London issue with many agencies and Local Authorities competing for a small number of carers.



#### Fostered\* Looked After Children as at 31st March 2017

\*Excludes children placed with family or friends

#### Placement Type for Looked After Children as at 31st March 2017

Merton	Placement Type							
	Foster Placement	Placed for Adoption	Placement with Parents	Other Placement in the Community	Secure Units, Children's Homes and Hostels	Other Residential Settings	Residential Schools	Other Placement
2013	89	5	5	8	22	8	1	1
2014	104	5	1	1	34	3	2	0
2015	108	7	2	0	34	3	2	0
2016	108	7	0	1	43	2	2	0
2017	108	5	3	0	32	2	2	0
London 2017	7,180	230	170	660	1,380	270	30	Suppressed

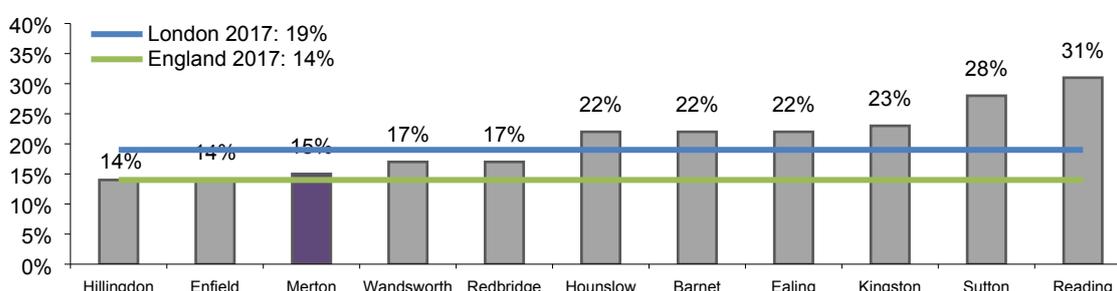
National 2017	53,420	2,520	4,370	3,090	7,890	1,080	130	160
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Source: SSSA903

Note: 'Secure units, children's homes and hostels' – Secure units, homes and hostels subject to Children's Homes regulations and homes and hostels not subject to Children's Homes regulations (this includes supported lodgings). 2013 only- 'Other Placement' includes children missing from their placement.

7.21 Merton has a greater proportion of children placed under the category 'secure units, children's homes and hostels' than nationally. A large proportion of this cohort are young people living in supported lodgings (44%) which are classified within this group.

**Percentage of Children Looked After as at 31st March placed outside the Local Authority boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live; Merton 2017 and Statistical Neighbours 2017**



7.22 15% of Merton's looked after children are placed outside the local authority boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live, compared to 14% nationally. Merton is 3<sup>rd</sup> amongst its 11 statistical neighbours. 81% of all new LAC placements made in 2016-17 were within a 10 mile radius of the child's home and 67% of all LAC placements were within a 5 mile radius. Merton has reduced the proportion of placements beyond each of these key distances since 2016.

7.23 For some young people placements away from their home community are a key part of the care plan as a result of anti-social behaviour/risk management. For some the needs of the young people are such that they require specialist placements which are not available in Merton or surrounding boroughs. For all children being placed outside of the borough the Head of Service and DCS is required to sign off agreement for the placement. Care plans for these children and young people are reviewed to ensure that where possible young people are supported to return to their home community at the earliest opportunity. A more detailed analysis of these placements will be available in Merton's 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation Statement for Looked After Children and Care Leavers' refresh autumn 2017.

**The percentage of Children Looked After at 31st March with three or more placements during the year ending 31st March**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	16%	17%	14%	10%	16%

National	11%	11%	11%	10%	Not available
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Source: SSDA 903

Note: Missing episodes are included in figures for 2013 to 2014. From 2016 if a child and their carer move to a new address this is no longer counted as a placement move. If a child is placed for adoption with their existing foster carer this is also not counted as a placement move.

7.24 16% of Merton looked after children in care as at 31<sup>st</sup> of March had three or more placement moves during 2016-17. This is a higher proportion as reported nationally and in the previous two years, but is in line with performance during 2013 and 2014.

7.25 71% of Merton's looked after children are in stable placements; the technical definition of stability is defined by the DfE as the percentage of children looked after as at 31<sup>st</sup> March aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years.

#### Percentage of Looked After Children with stability in their placement

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	64%	58%	40%	68%	71%
National	67%	67%	Not available	Not available	Not available

Source: SSDA 903

Note: The percentage of Children Looked After aged under 16 at 31<sup>st</sup> March who had been looked after continuously for at least 2½ yrs, who were living in the same placement for at least 2 yrs, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement last for at least 2 yrs

7.26 We have seen a significant improvement in placement stability over the past two years following the implementation of an improvement plan informed by the Placement Stability Analysis Report completed in April 2015. The improvement plan focused on the following areas:

- All requests for placement moves in the 14+ Team to be approved by the Head of Service
- Development of a Permanence Team to have case management responsibility for children on Care Orders
- The LAC CAMHS Team to be established
- Analysis of risk factors supports placement planning and results in early identification of placement instability

#### Children accommodated under an agreed series of short-term breaks

Short-term breaks, also referred to as respite care, must include at least one night away from home but cannot exceed 17 days of continuous care, or 75 days within a 12 month period.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of children	5	3	26	19	16
Number of episodes	21	34	673	483	349

7.27 Sixteen children were accommodated under an agreed series of short-term breaks during 2016-17, a decrease from 19 in 2015-16.

## Missing and absent from placement

	2015/16			2016/17		
	Number of children	% of all LAC	Number of episodes	Number of children	% of all LAC	Number of episodes
Children who were missing during the year	43	16%	102	46	18%	232
Children who were away from placement without authorisation during the year	17	6%	48	22	9%	41
Children who were 'missing' and / or 'away without authorisation' during the year	48	18%	150	50	19%	273

Source: SSDA 903

7.28 Following the update of the Children Missing from Care and Home Protocol and establishing a weekly multi agency missing meeting, there has been more timely sharing of information in respect of the children reported as missing from home and care. Strategy meetings are convened on children who go missing from care and there is embedded practice of escalation of cases to senior management. This all contributes to improved case management and learning to support an

7.29 Most missing incidents were short: 83% lasted two days or less (this is below the national figure of 89%); and 17% of missing episodes related to a period of less than 24 hours.

- 9 children were missing or absent from placement 10 or more times throughout the year and were accountable for 55% of all absences
- 16 children were missing or absent from placement more than 5 times throughout the year and were accountable for 73% of all absences.
- 38 children were missing or absent from placement more than once throughout the year and were accountable for 96% of all absence.

7.30 During the year, two young people were missing for extended periods (98 days+). Where young people are missing for extended periods we convene regular strategy meetings to ensure sharing of intelligence between professionals. Where appropriate, referrals are made to the national mechanisms due to concerns relating to trafficking.

### Missing and absent by age at start of period of absence

	Age at start of absence											
	Numbers						Percentages					
	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>All episodes</b>	2	12	10	36	111	102	1%	4%	4%	13%	41%	37%
<b>Missing</b>	2	12	9	33	87	89	1%	5%	4%	14%	38%	38%

<b>Absent</b>	0	0	1	3	24	13	0%	0%	2%	7%	59%	32%
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Source: SSDA 903

Additional information on our missing cohort is available in the Missing from Home and Care Annual Report 2016-17.

### Children at risk of CSE

7.31 For the year 2016-17 there were 18 children with a looked after children episode in the year whose cases were reviewed at the multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Meeting: all female. An additional five care leavers (all female) were discussed in 2016-17.

7.32 Five new CSE referrals were made in 2016-17 for children with a LAC episode in the year, where there were known or suspected concerns for sexual exploitation. Some of the key characteristics are set out below:

- The ethnicity of the young people was as follows: one White British; one Black African heritage; two Black Caribbean heritage and one other black background.
- At referral the ages of these young people were: one aged 15; two aged 16 and two aged 17.
- One of the young people had been made the subject of an interim care order and the remaining four were accommodated under Section 20.
- During 2016-17 these young people had multiple placements incorporating foster care, supported lodgings, Children's home, NHS placement, independent living and placed at home. Changes of placement were made as a planned part of the child's care plan and was a move to a placement that meets the child's assessed needs. One was at Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour and one the child has asked to move to another placement.
- Of the four LAC episodes that remained open at the 31<sup>st</sup> March, all placements were out of Merton in neighbouring boroughs.

7.33 In all the cases there was evidence of the involvement and support from the specialist services delivered by Jigsaw4U, Barnardo's, MOPAC and CAMHS; providing direct work and consultation to address concerns as young people were reported missing, through to detailed relationship based work to address self-esteem and risk awareness.

### Section 4: Permanency

7.34 The Government continues to monitor timeliness through review of quarterly and annual returns and the adoption scorecard process. The initial focus of the adoption scorecard is on local authorities and the adoption process for children. As a result of the increased scrutiny in the monitoring of cases, we have seen a steady improvement in the timeliness of the child's journey through to adoption.

7.35 In the year 2016-17, eleven looked after children were adopted and five were made subject of a Special Guardianship Order. Whilst children ceasing care

through this permanency route (14%) is below the national rate (30%), performance is good when considered against the age cohort of our looked after children.

**Number of Looked After Children Who Were Adopted or Made Subject of a Special Guardianship Order During the Year ending 31st March**

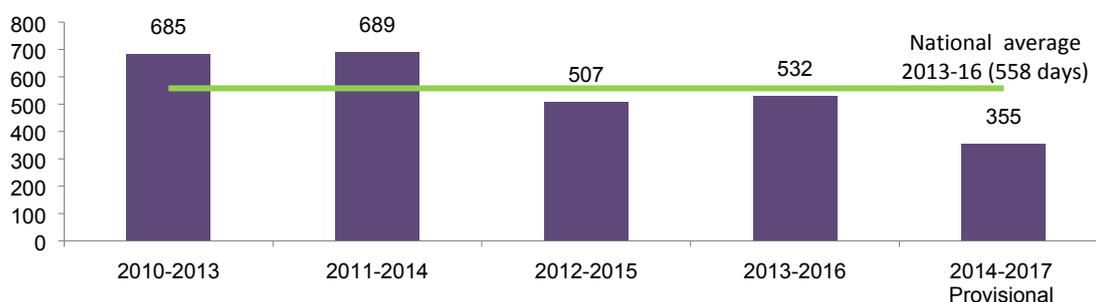
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Adoptions	5	10	8	11	11
Special Guardianship Orders	3	4	4	2	5
Merton Total	8	14	12	13	16

Source: Children in Care and Adoption Performance Tables and SSSA 903

7.36 For children who have been adopted, the projected three year rolling (2014-17) average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family is 355 days, which is lower than the 2013-16 national average of 558 days. Additional information on this cohort of children is available in the Adoption and Permanence 6 Monthly Reports.

**National adoption scorecard A1 indicator which presents the three year rolling average during which children enter and moving in with their permanent carers**

**A1: Average time (days) between entering care and moving in with adoptive family, for children who have been adopted - three year rolling average performance**



2016-17 data is provisional therefore the three year average for 2014-17 is estimated and not yet published.

7.37 Additional information on this cohort of children is available in the Adoption and Permanence 6 Monthly Reports.

**Section 5: Health**

7.38 Health outcomes in 2016-17 for dental checks and annual health assessments are above national average. Immunisations are slightly below national and this is likely to reflect the large proportion of unaccompanied asylum seeking children within the cohort.

7.39 The LAC Health Team is situated within the LAC Service and this supports communication between practitioners. The team regularly attend participation events and work hard to build relationships with our looked after children. Following the LAC Health JSNA additional capacity has been created in the team in recognition of the increase in LAC numbers in recent years.

7.40 The LAC Health Strategic Group meets on a bi-monthly basis. The purpose of this group is to understand and champion the health needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers in Merton and respond to the Merton Health Needs Assessment for Looked After Children. For 2017-18 there will be an increased focus on early flagging of LAC approaching their eighteenth birthday in order to ensure that their health passport is completed on time.

**Health Care of Children Looked After (LAC continuously for at least 12 months, ending 31 March)**

Merton	Looked After for at least 12 months	Children whose Immunisations were up-to-date	Children who had their Teeth Checked by a Dentist	Children who had their Annual Health Assessment
2013	84	90%	99%	83%
2014	83	95%	83%	95%
2015	87	86%	95%	94%
2016	94	81%	93%	91%
2017	94	82%	88%	96%
London 2017	6,380	82%	84%	92%
National 2017	49,750	84%	83%	89%

Source: SSDA903

7.41 Research shows that more than one in four children who have been in care has significant levels of maladjustment<sup>1</sup> (Buchanan and Ten Brinke, 1997), with over 67% of those in the care system and 96% in children’s homes having clinical level of psychiatric illness<sup>2</sup> (McCann, James, Wilson, and Dunn, 1996).

7.42 Emotional and behavioural health is determined by the average score of children looked after children for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was completed. The average score for 2017 was 14.6, which is higher than the national average of 14.1. A low average score is deemed ‘good’.

7.43 To promote practice improvement in the use of SDQ tools we have run training sessions for practitioners and agreed a process for the escalation of scores over 17.

<sup>1</sup> Buchanan, A. & Ten Brinke, J-A (1998) *Recovery from Emotional and Behavioural Problems*. NHS Executive, Anglia and Oxford. University of Oxford

<sup>2</sup> McCann, J., James, A., Wilson, S., & Dunn, G. (1996) Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in young people in the care system. *British Medical Journal* 313, 1529-30

## Emotional and Behavioural Health of Looked After Children

Statistical Neighbours	As at 31st March (Merton, Statistical Neighbours, London and National 2017)		
	Percentage of Eligible Children for whom an SDQ score was submitted	Average Score (a low average score represents the best)	Average Score Rank (1st=Lowest, 11th=Highest)
Barnet	70%	12.9	4th
Ealing	92%	12.7	3rd
Enfield	90%	13.9	6th
Hillingdon	94%	11.7	1st
Hounslow	100%	13.6	5th
Kingston Upon Thames	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Merton 2017</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>7th</b>
Reading	89%	17.2	10th
Redbridge	85%	12.3	2nd
Sutton	97%	15.0	8th
Wandsworth	80%	15.4	9th
London	84%	13.7	-
National	76%	14.1	-

Source: SSDA 903

Average Score of Children Looked After for whom a Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was completed.

- 7.44 The Merton CAMHS in Social Care provides an integrated mental health service within Children's Social Care, as part of the engagement, assessment, planning and interventions alongside Social Care professionals.
- 7.45 The Service works as part of a multi-agency response to improve the quality of life for children and young people who have a wide range of presenting social, psychological and mental health needs. The Service provides effective, evidence-based interventions as part of the clinical and social response to meeting the emotional and mental health needs of these vulnerable children and young people. The Service also assists and supports Social Workers to implement new approaches to their work.
- 7.46 Additionally, the service provides Reflective Practice to Social Workers and their managers, as well as consultation and training in a systemic approach to working.

### Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children by age group and gender

Merton	Age at 31 <sup>st</sup> March			Gender	
	4 - 9	10 - 15	16+	Male	Female
0-13 (normal)	9	16	16	20	21
14-16 (borderline cause for concern)	2	6	4	6	6

17+ (cause for concern)	5	14	8	20	7
No SDQ Score Submitted	0	1	10	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: SSDA 903

## Section 6: Offending

### Offending by children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31<sup>st</sup> March

Merton	Number of children looked after for at least 12 months and aged 10 or older at 31 March	Number and percentage convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year	
		Number	Percentage
2013	54	6	11%
2014	62	6	10%
2015	68	3	4%
2016	75	2	3%
2017	75	1	1%
London 2017	5,140	280	5%
National 2017	35,110	1,580	5%

Source: SSDA 903

7.47 Looked after children are nearly twice as likely to be cautioned for or convicted of an offence than their peers<sup>3</sup> and, although estimates vary, it is thought that nearly a third of children in custody have been looked after<sup>4</sup> at some point in their lives. It is therefore important that local strategies are in place to encourage positive behaviour amongst looked after children who may be at risk of offending and that measures to divert them from involvement with the youth justice system are clearly identified. Fostering services and children's homes should have an approach to care that manages children's behaviour and minimises any police involvement.

7.48 For all looked after child and care leavers where there is an identified risk of offending or re-offending, both the care / pathway plan and placement plan should include details about the support that will be provided to prevent this. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should ensure that care plans adequately address this aspect of the child's needs, and should raise a challenge where a young person's needs are not being adequately assessed, resulting in the possibility of their becoming, or continuing to be, involved in offending behaviour.

<sup>3</sup>Outcomes for looked after children by local authorities in England as at 31 March 2012

<sup>4</sup> HM Prisons Inspectorate thematic inspection of children and young people in custody

## Section 7: Education

7.49 For a complete picture of Education outcomes of Merton’s Looked After Children population please refer to ‘The Virtual School Annual Report’.

## Section 8: Care Leavers aged 19-21

7.50 Children’s Social Care has a range of duties and powers to provide after care advice and assistance to these young people, and to those who have been accommodated by other specified agencies. Good corporate parents will provide young people with help and support to access education, employment and training opportunities and to find accommodation suitable to their needs.

7.51 Merton has 123 care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 years old. This increase has a direct relationship with the increasing number profile of 16 and 17 year old looked after children in previous years.

7.52 In 2013-14 the DfE amended the cohort of Care Leavers considered in the SSD903 to include young people aged 20 and 21 (from the traditional care leavers aged 19), and this should be taken into account when considering the year on year comparator data.

### Numbers of care leavers

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
19-21 year olds	20	93	93	106	123

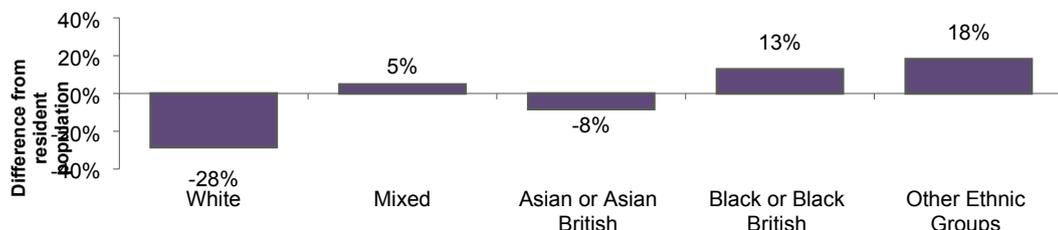
Source: SSDA 903

### Age and gender of Care Leavers

	Age (as at 31st March) <i>(percentage of Care Leavers)</i>			Gender <i>(percentage of Care Leavers)</i>	
	19	20	21	Male	Female
Merton 2017	36%	37%	28%	61%	39%
National 2017	35%	33%	32%	58%	42%

Source: SSDA 903

### Ethnic Group Difference of Care Leavers from the Merton Resident Population



Source: SSDA 903

Note: Other Ethnic Groups is a census defined category and represents a number of ethnic groups where ethnic heritage cannot be defined in the Asian, Black White or Mixed groups. The category includes Afghanistani, Arab, Egyptian, Filipino, Iranian, Iraqi, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Latin / South / Central American, Lebanese, Malay, Moroccan, Polynesian, Thai, Vietnamese, or Yemeni.

7.53 The DfE SSD903 return gathers ‘in touch’ information for all care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 years. For this return the definition is that there is ‘contact’ between the local authority and the young person eligible for care leaver support around 3 months before and one month after the young person’s birthday.

#### Care Leavers in Touch

Merton	Number	Percentage %	National
Yes	105	85%	87%
No	8	7%	8%
Service No Longer Required	7	6%	3%
Young Person Refuses Contact	0	0%	2%
Young Person Returned Home	3	2%	Not available

Source: SSDA 903

7.54 The legal framework for care leavers aims to make sure that they receive the right support and services in their transition to adulthood, including access to accommodation. General homelessness legislation also provides a safety net for young care leavers experiencing homelessness.

7.55 The legislation most relevant to care leavers' accommodation needs is the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which imposes accommodation duties on local authorities to support certain categories of looked-after children and care leavers.

7.56 Accommodation is to be regarded as suitable if it provides safe, secure and affordable provision for young people.

#### Percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	85%	66%	80%	91%	87%
London	82%	83%	83%	82%	79%
National	88%	77%	81%	83%	84%

Source: SSDA 903

Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 and 2015 include Care Leavers aged 19-21.

7.57 With an increased focus on improving outcomes for care leavers we have seen an improvement over the years 2014 to 2017 in this area of performance, above national and London. An aspect of this improvement relates to our improved ‘in touch’ performance which means that we have a better knowledge of where our young people are living. The LAC Sufficiency Statement is designed to enable a forward looking view of the accommodation needs for care leavers in the future, based on historic and known cohort information: this statement is refreshed on an annual basis. The improved performance also reflects the collaborative working arrangements between Children’s Social Care and Housing.

7.58 Housing and Children’s Social Care managers meet on a monthly basis to review placements for all 18+ care leavers to ensure the early identification of young people who are ready to be nominated for their own housing.

7.59 To ensure that young people are prepared to manage their own tenancy we run ‘Independent Living Skills Workshops’ in the following areas:

- My Bank
- Cooking
- DIY
- My Drive

7.60 The success of these workshops and the support offered to our young people is evidenced by the fact that there have been no tenancy disruptions in the past 2 years.

7.61 Merton has a high number of care leavers living in suitable accommodation (87%) compared to the national figure (84%). Of the six deemed to be living in unsuitable accommodation, five were serving custodial sentences and one was living with no fixed abode.

#### Accommodation by Type

Merton	Accommodation																
	No Accommodation recorded*	With parents or relatives	Community home or other form of residential care	Semi-independent, transitional accommodation	Supported lodgings	Gone abroad	Deported	Ordinary lodgings without formal support	Residence not known	No fixed abode / homeless	Foyers and similar accommodation with opportunities for EET	Independent living	Emergency accommodation	Bed and breakfast	In custody	Other accommodation	With former foster carers
2013	3	2	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
2014	27	1	1	5	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	2	4	0	5
2015	14	11	0	26	5	0	4	6	3	1	1	17	1	0	3	0	1
2016	7	9	4	42	2	0	5	2	5	1	0	20	0	0	2	5	2
2017	14	9	5	52	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	24	0	0	3	4	0

\* In line with DfE guidance, ‘No accommodation recorded’ includes care leavers who are not in touch or have refused contact, those who have died and those who have returned home.

#### Percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

The percentage of care leavers who were in education, employment or training

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Merton	60.0%	47.0%	44.1%	58.3%	60.0%
National	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	49.0%	49.6%

Source: SSDA 903

Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2011-2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 and 2015 include Care Leavers aged 19-21.

7.62 A good standard of education is a key driver towards achieving positive employment outcomes in adulthood. However, there remains a significant gap between the educational achievements of care leavers and their peers.

**Percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training: Merton Compared to National**

	19 year olds		20 year olds		21 year olds	
	Merton	National	Merton	National	Merton	National
In higher education i.e. studies beyond A level	5%	5%	12%	6%	6%	7%
In education other than higher education	43%	28%	21%	16%	9%	11%
In training or employment	16%	22%	30%	26%	36%	26%
Not in education, training or employment	30%	37%	28%	42%	27%	41%
Information not known	7%	7%	9%	10%	21%	14%

7.63 In the past year we have made further progress with our care leavers cohort engaged in education, however it is important to note that this relates to a broader cohort and further work is being undertaken to consider the performance of different age cohorts. This area continues as a priority focus for us as a significant impact outcome for our young people. A deeper analysis of this data identifies that 23% (10 young people) are NEET due to illness / disability and pregnancy / parenthood and it is likely that this has impacted in their capacity to take up an ETE opportunity.

7.64 The ETE worker, working as part of the Virtual School to support a targeted group of care leavers both on 1:1 and group work basis has supported performance in this area above national.

**8. Voice of the Child in Care**

8.1 With the appointment of a new Participation Manager during 2016-17, there has been a range of activities and increased support given to the Child in Care Council and developed a programme of activity delivered in 2016-17 and for future years. This has significantly improved the engagement of young people in their reviews and developing opportunities to ensure that young people's voices are heard throughout the work within Children, Schools and Families as reported to meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board through the User Voice reports.

8.2 Some key successes over the past year include:

**Children in Care Council**

8.3 The role of the Merton Child in Care Council is as follows:

- Provide a voice for the wider population of children looked after and care leavers
- Help to monitor and implement the Merton Pledge
- Bring together service users and senior managers to influence positive change
- Develop skills and confidence building

8.4 The Children in Care Council directly supports the Corporate Parenting Board to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of 'Corporate Parenting' in Merton.

8.5 The Child in Care Council generally meets at the Civic Centre on a monthly basis and there is an established core membership of 6 young people. This year in response to the feedback received from the care leaver survey we have held themed meetings on housing, health, e-safety and the Child in Care website. We extend the membership to themed meetings to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to participate. In 2015-16 we have also used the Child in Care Council meetings to consult on the following developments within the service:

- Participation in LAC Reviews
- Financial Provision for Care Leavers
- LAC and Care Leaver Pledge
- JSNA LAC Health Review

### **LAC Health Study as part of Health Needs Assessment**

8.6 The aim of this piece of work was to capture the voices of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the care of Merton about three key issues: young people's health care needs; accessing the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS); and how young people are supported through transitions.

8.7 The consultation undertaken with a number of Looked after Children and Care Leavers reported the following:

- Looked after Children, Care Leavers their parents and/or guardians are very much aware of who and where to go to if they need any support or advice to access any health care services, in relation to having their health care needs met. Findings from the responses were that there were no barriers to accessing services to meet their health needs. Many children and young people commented on going to either their social worker, family or friends for support and advice.
- Those placed out of the borough reported that they require more support and involvement to receive a more inclusive and participatory service, especially when they move between different areas for placements. The data collected from this study also shows that there is a need for greater consistency in making sure that children and young people in care, who are placed out of the area, have access to key services that support their health, education, well-being and development.

8.8 The overall needs assessment report made a number of recommendations relating to overall findings to be monitored by the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group and London Borough of Merton.

### **Celebrating Success Events**

8.9 We have held 2 Celebrating Success Events in the year 2015-16 for 5-12 and 13+ young people. Both events were well attended by children, young people and their carers. All children and young people were presented with certificates celebrating their individual achievements.

### **Bi-monthly drop-in sessions**

8.10 Since 2015 the 14 Plus Team has been running monthly sessions at a local coffee shop between 5-8pm for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking young people. These sessions alternate between social events and workshops attended and facilitated by different organisations. The sessions provide the opportunity for young people to meet other young people from different cultures and backgrounds who have had similar experiences. The purpose of the group is to allow them to experience a sense of belonging and familiarity and also to build social networks and a sense of being part of a community. These sessions strengthen the relationship between the young person and their social workers and helps built trust with the 14+ Team. The activities provide them with the opportunity to improve their independent living skills and English skills and gain insight from other organisations. These sessions have a good regular attendance of up to 15 young people.

### **Review of children and young people's participation in LAC Reviews**

8.11 The key messages being fed back from these consultations were that children and young people wanted to be able to choose the venue for their LAC review and for the meeting to be held at a time convenient to them. There was also a request for children and young people to be more involved in the planning for the meetings so that they were child centred and strengths focused.

8.12 The children and young people stated that:

- They often don't know who is coming to the review and would like to be more involved in agreeing who should attend.
- They wanted to meet the IRO prior to the LAC review meeting so that the ITO could get to know the young people rather than judge them on what they had read; 'we aren't always as we appear on paper'.
- They wanted more forward looking reviews; they felt that all too often the reviews focused on the past.

8.13 The IRO Team are now looking to adopt a good practice model which has been successfully piloted by the Participation Service in Sheffield. This model will

support children and young people to feel that they are at the centre of the review meeting and have a strong influence in the shaping of their care plan.

### Communication with children and young people

8.14 We currently commission an independent advocacy service from Jigsaw 4U to provide support to Looked After Children to ensure that their voice is heard and is central to decisions made about their care. We receive feedback from the advocacy service when there are specific issues or areas that need addressing.

#### Over all referrals Figures by Quarter

	April 17-June 17	July 17 - Sept 17	Oct 17 - Dec 17	Jan 17 - Mar 17	Total	Target for Year
Child Protection Referrals	23/actual work 19	22/actual work 12	19/actual work 10		64 referrals/actual work 41	45
LAC review referrals	8 actual work 8	11/ actual work 10	14/actual work 12		33 referrals actual work	45 33 referrals/actual work 30
Advocacy referrals	5/actual work 5	5/actual work 4	8/actual work 8		18 referral actual work 17	12
Total	36/actual work 31	38/actual work 26	41/actual work 30		115 referrals actual work 88	102

- There are currently 11 children who are receiving a regular Independent Visitors, the visits can include meetings at the young person's home or attending social events and outings.
- Quarterly Monitoring reports are provided by Jigsaw 4U and Quarterly Monitoring Meetings take place with Children's Services to discuss the quality of work undertaken by the project and to understand the themes and issues relevant to Children Looked After Children who are provided with the Jigsaw Service.

8.15 Where issues are raised by individual children the advocate will liaise with the relevant social work team to seek resolution.

**Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018**

Wards: All wards

**Subject: Departmental Update Report January 2018**

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

Lead member: Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children Services  
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

Contact officer: Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

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**Recommendations:**

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

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

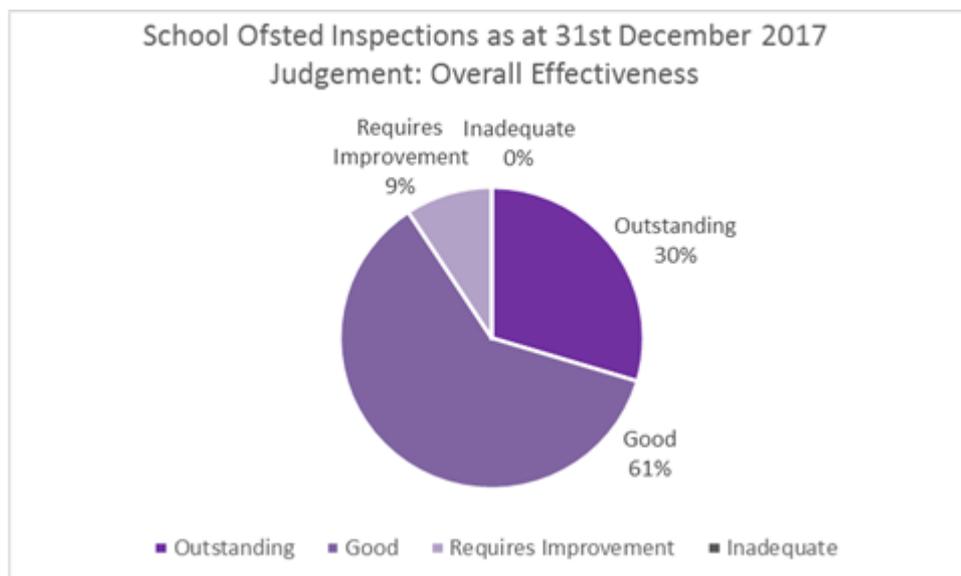
1.1 The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments not covered elsewhere on the agenda and affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in January 2018.

## **2 DETAILS**

2.1 **Harris Academy Wimbledon** – The two key risks around the ability to provide a clear site at High Path to build the new Harris Wimbledon School, which were outlined at the previous meeting, have passed. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has decided not to add Merton Hall to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and, following on from this, the Judicial Review claim has been withdrawn. This enables plans to proceed on building the new Harris Wimbledon School, and progress towards its opening for September 2018.

2.2 **School Ofsted Inspections** – Following implementation of the new inspection process for schools, there is now a delay and further inspection required before schools are able to move their ratings up or down. This means that performance of our schools is unlikely to change during the year as it has in previous years. This means that our results for the rest of the year should remain as:

- 100% of secondary schools being rated as “Good” or “Outstanding”
- 91% of all schools now rated as “Good” or better; and
- 93% of our pupils are educated in schools rated as “Good” or better.



- 2.3 **CAFCASS Section 31 Duration** – CAFCASS report on the duration and disposals for each Section 31 care and supervision applicant. Data recently published demonstrates that Merton has moved from worst performing in London, to best performing over the last 5 years with an average duration of 25 weeks for Quarter 2 2017/18 compared to 67 weeks during 2012/13. Over this period we have also managed to ensure that the number of proceedings is considerably lower than many councils with similar levels of deprivation.
- 2.4 **Adoption Scorecards 2014-17** – In March 2016, *Adoption: A Vision for Change* set out the Government’s strategy for adoption. The DfE is currently reviewing how they can make better use of data to drive high performance across the system and how the present Adoption Scorecards can be developed to ensure they provide meaningful data on performance in a regionalised system.
- 2.5 In the meantime, DfE will continue to publish scorecards in their current form with the indicators and thresholds remaining the same. Previously, thresholds have been raised incrementally over a four-year period until they reflected levels set out in statutory guidance: this level has now been reached, so the thresholds will remain the same. This means for 2014-17 the thresholds will continue to be set at 426 days (14 months) for the A1 indicator and 121 days (4 months) for the A2 indicator. Merton performance for the three-year rolling average remains better than the thresholds using the provisional figures currently available.
- 2.6 **Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)** – the Annual Report is included as a separate item for this meeting and preparation is underway for the joint conference in March continuing the Think Family: No Wrong Door approach, with a specific focus on parental mental health.
- 2.7 **Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)** – Working together with Croydon County Court, West London Family Court and the Inner London Family Court, the partnership will offer an alternative form of care proceedings for parents and children in those cases where substance misuse is a key factor in the decision to bring proceedings: known as the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC).

- 2.8 Referrals will be made by children's social care and will be agreed internally to ensure referrals meet the criteria for FDAC services. Work on mobilisation is near complete and the service is now live. Merton is leading, across nine boroughs and awarded the contract to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust who have been working with the Cross Borough Operational Group and the FDAC Board to mobilise. Contracts and Terms & Conditions are being finalised to ensure that the new service is up and running from January 2018.
- 2.9 **Social Impact Bond (SIB)** – The Pan-London Care Impact Partnership involving Merton, Tower Hamlets, Bexley, Newham and Sutton councils has been launched during January to deliver Multi-Systemic and Functional Family Therapy services for councils within the partnership, leveraging in financial resources using a (SIB). The aim of the programme is to keep vulnerable families together and prevent children from being taken into care.
- 2.10 The project is now live and referrals are being identified for this 3 year programme with tracking mechanisms identified to enable case progress to be monitored and evaluation of the overall benefits of the programme to be compiled across the partnership.

### **3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No specific implications from this report

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 No specific implications from this report.

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

- 8.1 None

### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None

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**Committee:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 1 February 2018

Wards: All

**Subject:** Implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools task group

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)

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## Recommendations:

- A. That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers and endorses the report arising from the scrutiny review of the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools, attached at Appendix 1; and
- B. That the Panel agrees to forward the review report to Cabinet for approval and implementation of the recommendations, by means of an action plan to be drawn up by officers working with the Cabinet Member(s) to be designated by Cabinet.

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## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To present the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools task group report to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for endorsement and to seek agreement to forward to Cabinet for its consideration.

## 2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has recognised the importance of the role schools play in their implementation of the *Prevent* duty to help keep children and young people from risk of radicalisation.
- 2.2. In commissioning the task group, the Panel's aspiration was to highlight, collate and share *Prevent* practice in Merton's schools as well as support the Merton community to work collectively to prevent radicalisation.
- 2.3. The report of the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools task group is attached at Appendix 1.

## 3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

## 4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. In carrying out its review, the task group questioned council officers, heads of service and directors as well as consulting with representatives from the

Merton community and making visits to schools to see how the Prevent duty is being implemented.

- 4.2. Appendix 1 of the task group's report lists the witnesses at each meeting.

## **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The task group was established by the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 1 February 2018 for the Panel's approval, with a view to presenting to Cabinet at its meeting on 26 March 2018.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this covering report. Any specific resource implications will be identified and presented to Cabinet prior to agreeing an action plan for implementing the report's recommendations.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. 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 engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to broadly benefit all sections of the local community.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

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

- 11.1. Appendix 1 – the implementation of the Prevent duty in Merton's school task group report

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1. None for the purposes of this report.

**DRAFT**

**London Borough of Merton**

**Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools**

**Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**February 2018**



*Pupils from Sherwood Primary visit the House of Commons*

**Task group membership**

Councillor Adam Bush  
Councillor Edward Foley  
Councillor James Holmes

Councillor Joan Henry (Chair)  
Councillor Kelly Braund  
Councillor Pauline Cowper  
Councillor Philip Jones

### **Scrutiny support**

Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer  
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### **Acknowledgements**

The task group would particularly like to thank the council officers and directors who shared their experiences and thoughts with us. In addition, we would like to thank all the schools that supported the work of the task group by hosting our visits and allowing us to understand better how the *Prevent* duty is being implemented in Merton's schools. We are also grateful to the community partners that participated in our work.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 1.

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## Forward



It has been a pleasure to lead this task group looking at the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools. The decision to form the task group was set against the background of the four terror attacks that happened between March and June 2017; we wanted to reassure ourselves that Merton's schools are successfully implementing the duty and doing everything possible to prevent our young people from becoming radicalised and doing so in a way that doesn't cause stigmatisation of individuals or communities.

We have found our visits to four of Merton's schools reassuring. Schools know the duty well, are comfortable with its implementation and are embedding this within their safeguarding practice as another way to keep children safe from harm. We were delighted to see some *Prevent* practice taking place within the classroom and how schools are using initiatives such as the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* programme to bring this to life for children. As a result, our recommendations are focused on continuing to improve this practice and to raise awareness of this amongst Merton's community groups.

I would like to thank the other members of the task group for all their hard work and time. Additionally, we are more than grateful to the officers who have supported our work and the community groups that got involved. Our particular thanks goes to those schools (Sherwood, Dundonald, Merton Park and Harris Merton), their staff and children, that hosted our visits. These were a high point of our work. It was both beneficial and rewarding to visit schools to talk to children about concepts such as diversity, tolerance and the British democratic process.

**Cllr Joan Henry**  
**Chair of the *Prevent* duty task group**

## List of the task group's recommendations

	<b>Responsible decision making body</b>
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> The scope of this task group has focused on the implementation of <i>Prevent</i> in Merton's schools. However, our work led us to understand that preventing radicalisation of Merton's young people requires the support of the whole community. We therefore would like to be sure that other organisations that interact with young people such as sports groups, youth groups, training providers and social landlords etc feel comfortable dealing with safeguarding referrals. We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel pick this up in its next work programme either through an item at a Panel meeting or through a further task and finish group.</p>	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Safer & Stronger Executive Board
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> We recommend the need to proactively work with the Merton community to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty. We recommend that the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities engage with local community groups to promote the good work being done in schools to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty in Merton and to explore ways in which community groups can support its delivery.</p>	Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u> The idea that schools provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and is not achieved through violence is powerful. We didn't have the opportunity to explore how Merton's schools may already be doing this. However, we recommend that it would be good to explore how through the agreed syllabus support can continue to be offered to schools in developing counter narratives.</p>	SACRE
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> Based on the four schools we visited we found that despite this being a new duty, imposing an additional workload, Merton's schools, supported by the local authority, are now delivering the <i>Prevent</i> duty which should be celebrated. As a task group we would like to take this opportunity to thank Merton's schools and officers for their work safeguarding the welfare of students including through their implementation of <i>Prevent</i>.</p>	The <i>Prevent</i> task group
<p><u>Recommendation 5</u> We recommend Merton's schools continue to share their <i>Prevent</i> practice and their growing expertise. This would</p>	Children, Schools and Families Department in partnership with school

<p>allow Merton's schools to develop additional opportunities to learn from each other as well as allowing schools to reach out into and build links with other communities which would support their implementation of <i>Prevent</i>. We recommend that the Children, Schools and Families Department explore ways to encourage and support the Merton family of schools to share their <i>Prevent</i> practice to learn from each other.</p>	<p>governing bodies and proprietors</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 6</u> Specifically, we recommend that the opportunity to utilise The UNICEF <i>Right's Respecting Schools</i> Programme to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty continues to be promoted to all Merton's primary schools. Information about how this is already being successfully used by some of Merton's schools should be provided. This would help more of Merton's schools receive their level 2 <i>Rights Respecting Schools</i> Award which requires schools to be outward facing and active in building community links. Thought should be given to identifying other programmes that promote rights and respect that could support the delivery of the <i>Prevent</i> duty in Merton's schools. We noted the work done by Stonewall with schools in promoting diversity and tolerance.</p>	<p>Children, Schools and Families Department in partnership with school governing bodies and proprietors</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 7</u> We recommend that the MASH continue to work with schools to understand their respective duties and information sharing requirements around the <i>Prevent</i> duty.</p>	<p>Children, Schools and Families Department</p>

## Report of the *Prevent* duty task group

### Purpose

1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has recognised the importance of the role schools play in their implementation of the *Prevent* duty to help keep children and young people from risk of radicalisation. Members were mindful of the four terror attacks that happened in just three months between the end of March and the end of June 2017, (Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park). In commissioning the task group their aspiration was to highlight, collate and share *Prevent* practice as well as support the Merton community to work collectively to prevent radicalisation.
2. In order for the review to be effective (and achieved in the time constraints imposed by the forthcoming local elections in May 2018), it was agreed that the task group would exclusively focus on the *Prevent* practice demonstrated by Merton's schools.
3. Additionally, it was agreed that if feasible, the task group would consider examples of innovative and successful practice in schools from outside the borough.
4. The terms of reference for the task group were agreed as follows:
  - a. To examine the full range of *Prevent* practice being delivered in Merton's schools including primary, secondary and special settings;
  - b. To identify practice that is effective and innovative as well as any specific challenges faced in delivering the duty and how these are addressed by schools;
  - c. To consider the support provided by borough Police and the wider Merton Safeguarding Children's Board partnership (which includes schools themselves);
  - d. To identify any additional support that school practitioners would welcome being provided by Merton's [Safer and Stronger Partnership](#);
  - e. To look at how schools work to safeguard their pupils from being stigmatised by the duty; and
  - f. To collate, celebrate and disseminate *Prevent* practice happening in Merton's schools to assist local practitioners and those outside of the borough.

### What the task group did

5. The work of the task group can be split into four main areas:
  - a. *Prevent* training;
  - b. Desk research;
  - c. Consultation with the local community; and
  - d. School visits.

#### *Prevent* training

6. The task group benefitted from presentations on the *Prevent* duty provided by Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer for the Council and Keith Shipman who supports the Merton family of schools in its implementation of the duty. Additionally, task

group members attended governor training on the *Prevent* duty. Cllr Henry, in her role as chair of the task group, also attended a GovNet conference on the role of education in tackling radicalisation.

7. We have learned that *Prevent* is the Government's strategy to respond to the challenge of extremism and seeks to prevent individuals being drawn into terrorism. It is just one part of *Contest*, the Government's broader counter-terrorism strategy.
8. The *Prevent* strategy responds to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat faced from those who promote it. The objective is to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support. *Prevent* is delivered in partnership with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed. Priority areas include education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities.
9. The terms extremism and radicalisations are precisely defined by the *Prevent* strategy;
  - a. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition of fundamental British values, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and
  - b. Radicalism is the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity.
10. The *Channel Programme* is a key element of the *Prevent* strategy and is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation; individuals at risk are identified, a multi-agency panel assess the nature and extent of the risk and then an appropriate support plan is developed based on individual needs. *Channel* is a voluntary process with interventions delivered by local partners and specialist agencies; it is about offering the individual support. It should also be noted that the panel may determine that there is no risk and that therefore no intervention is required.
11. The *Prevent* duty requires schools to 1) identify when pupils, their peers or their parents may be putting them at risk and to refer this through the agreed process (to the Merton Safeguarding Children Board and onto to the *Channel Programme*); 2) teach pupils *British Values* through the school ethos to help protect against radical narratives; and 3) take reasonable steps to ensure that the school building, staff and access to IT are all keeping pupils safe.
12. It was clarified that the *Prevent* duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.
13. Possible signs of radicalisation were highlighted as being absent from education, out of character changes in dress, behaviour and peer relationships, secretive behaviour, losing interest in friends and activities, showing sympathy for extremist causes, glorifying violence and possessing illegal or extremist literature.

**14. The scope of this task group has focused on the implementation of *Prevent* in Merton's schools. However, our work led us to understand that preventing radicalisation of Merton's young people requires the support of the whole community. We therefore would like to be sure that other organisations that interact with young people such as sports groups, youth groups, training providers and social landlords etc feel comfortable dealing with safeguarding referrals. We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel pick this up in its next work programme either through an item at a Panel meeting or through a further task and finish group (Recommendation 1).**

#### Prevent in Merton

15. In total 37 *Prevent* referrals were made between June 2015 to June 2017. This includes 28 in total from education (76% of all cases). Of these, 14 were from primary schools. All referrals were male with 26 cases aged 16 and under and ten cases aged over 16 (one case has no recorded date of birth). Of the ten aged over 16, one case involves someone in their 30s and the rest are aged 16-19. There have been four cases that have been referred to *Channel*. All are secondary school referrals.

16. Conducted recently, (the final report was published on 25 August 2017), Ofsted's combined inspection of Children's Services in Merton includes the following comments under the judgement of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board (which was judged outstanding):

17. *"The comprehensive range of high-quality, up-to-date policies and procedures are exemplary. These are regularly reviewed by the board and the business improvement group to ensure compliance and to ensure that policies are relevant. The board promotes a strong and transparent learning culture, setting high standards and drawing effectively on independent research. The promote and protect young people subgroup (PPYP) provides strategic and effective oversight of multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures regarding children at risk, including risk from sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.*

18. *"The board is actively engaged with the 'Prevent' duty on radicalisation, which includes a wide range of partners, including the police, schools and early years settings, and faith, voluntary groups and the wider communities. MSCB guidance on safeguarding children and young people from the harmful messages of violent extremism and terrorism has been reviewed to ensure its current relevance. The guidance is clear and informs partners of their safeguarding responsibilities. It incorporates helpful lists for recognising risk and links to referral pathways for the MASH and the Channel programme, which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The board has also consulted with a range of community groups, especially with regard to its strategy on female genital mutilation, which is reviewed appropriately through the policy subgroup.*

#### Desk research

19. The Government consulted on the *Prevent* guidance just after the duty came into effect (conducted in March 2015). Schools were included in the respondent groups. This can

be read in detail [here](#) with the following headlines provided on what support schools wanted at this time:

- a. Further clarity on the definitions of terms ‘extremism’ and ‘British values’;
- b. Integrating the *Prevent* duty into existing safeguarding mechanisms;
- c. The guidance to focus on working with faith groups and other community partners (to specifically bolster pupils’ theological resilience to troubling narratives);
- d. Further guidance on how to implement the objectives of the duty at a local level;
- e. Templates for risk assessments, action plans and flow charts;
- f. More training with guidance/clarity on who should receive this training and clear standards for training;
- g. Funding – to provide dedicated funds to deliver the *Prevent* duty;
- h. More clarity on what will be monitored in terms of the delivery of the duty and what mechanisms will be used to achieve this monitoring;
- i. More examples of good practice and sharing of good practice using different forums including online;
- j. The need to be careful about the weighting given to international terrorism against other forms of extremism, particularly Right Wing Extremism; and
- k. Linkages established to related policies or strategies. For example, equalities and community cohesion.

20. It is notable that community respondents to the same consultation made clear their concern that front line workers might not be sufficiently knowledgeable or well trained to distinguish between extremism on the one hand and usual religious practice on the other. It was suggested that faith as a potential positive influence should be covered in the provided training.

21. Additionally, we found that *Prevent* has faced public criticism. For example, some teachers in England have expressed concern about being required to report pupils who show signs of being drawn into extremism. It has been stated that there is worry about the possibility of stigmatising Muslim students ([here](#)).

22. This research helped inform us before we started to engage with community partners and visit schools in Merton.

#### Consultation with the Merton community

23. We wrote to all the members of the *Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities* and invited them to attend an evidence gathering session to share their views on *Prevent* and specifically how this is being delivered in the borough’s schools. Despite issuing this invite twice, only two organisations contacted us and attended the task group.

24. The Muslim Women of Merton: The Task Group heard from two members of the Muslim Women of Merton group, Yasmin Farooq and Fareeda Bader. Both work within the education sector, Yasmin as an inclusion mentor and parent coach/trainer and Fareeda as

a primary school teacher. However, both work outside of Merton and their professional knowledge is therefore not gained inside the borough.

25. They expressed concern about children with behavioural issues that are often vulnerable. There was also reference to children being stigmatised (it is assumed by the *Prevent* duty) and a lack of trust within the wide community/society.

26. Several suggestions were made to address these concerns. Yasmin and Fareeda called for:

- a. Community-based initiatives that support dialogue across communities, overcome disengagement and isolation and promote cohesion and peace. The example of the *Peace of Cake* initiative was cited; this is operating in Lewisham and a few other London Boroughs and offers simply social occasions to bring people together to help overcome resentments and allow communities that haven't previously met to get to know each other. Subsequently, we learned that this initiative has been employed in Merton with the Baitul Futuh Mosque. A similar event, entitled '*Diversi-tea*,' was also delivered by the Merton Islamic Community Centre that brought together people of faith and no faith;
- b. Provision of parenting training that is culturally appropriate for parents from the Muslim community. Parents need support especially where their children are vulnerable but this needs to be culturally appropriate in order to be effective. The example of [Approachable Parenting](#) was given. This is a parent training initiative that is described as, "guiding Muslim families to better parenting"; and
- c. Opportunities for safe and secure outlets for children and young people outside of school that are provided in such a way that children from a Muslim background are able to participate. The example of the *Muslimah* initiative was provided; this was a youth club in Merton for Muslim girls and their friends with which their parents were happy for them to participate delivered by volunteers and supported by Merton Youth Service.

27. Task group members agreed to ask Yasim and Fareeda if they could survey the Merton Muslim community through their networks to find out if there are examples of schools in the borough that are acknowledged as:

- a. Undertaking activity to build community cohesion; and/or
- b. Providing out of school activities in such a way that offers safe and secure outlets for children and young people with which parents from the Muslim community feel comfortable.

28. Undertaking this survey wasn't feasible. However, the Muslim Women of Merton expressed their desire that more be done to explain *Prevent* and to work in partnership with community members to deliver the duty.

**29. We recommend the need to proactively work with the Merton community to deliver the *Prevent* duty. We recommend that the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities engage with local community groups to promote the good work being done in schools to deliver the *Prevent* duty in Merton and to explore ways in which community groups can support its delivery (Recommendation 2).**

30. Ray Skinner, Secretary and Trustee, Morden Park and Playing Fields Community Trust: presented the aspiration of the Morden Park and Play Fields Community Trust to use the former London playing fields site to provide sporting facilities and activities that promote community cohesion and mutual respect among different communities.
31. The aim is to bring the 65 acres of land given for the playing fields back into use for a range of sports through a community-led enterprise. It was highlighted that the trust deeds includes an explicit commitment to sporting activities being used to promote community cohesion.
32. Keith Shipman highlighted that community cohesion activity, part of the evidence of both groups, would in effect come before *Prevent* activity. This was a key part of the first iteration of the *Prevent* strategy; it was premised on the belief that community cohesion could be effective in preventing radicalisation. There remains a question about whether community integration would be effective in tackling the stigmatisation the Muslim community specifically feels as a result of *Prevent*.
33. We have concluded it is a good sign that so few community partners took up the opportunity to talk to us about *Prevent* in Merton's schools and may demonstrate that in Merton *Prevent* isn't seen as problematic or a significant issue for our community partners.
34. Dr Afzal Ashraf: we were fortunate to additionally meet with Dr Afzal Ashraf, who teaches at the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham and has expertise in terrorism and counter terrorism, religious extremism, counter narratives, global security and conflict. (He is also a resident in the neighbouring borough of Wandsworth.)
35. Whilst Dr Ashraf is not familiar with the *Prevent* duty in schools he did express some discomfort with the approach and is concerned it places an unfair burden on schools. He highlighted that young people often have genuine grievances with the world which they desire to change and that these grievances can be magnified by those that seek to radicalise them. He suggested the need for schools to provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and not through violence. Various historical examples were cited that could be studied to illustrate this counter narrative. For example, the abolition of slavery.
- 36. The idea that schools provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and is not achieved through violence is powerful. We didn't have the opportunity to explore how Merton's schools may already be doing this. However, we recommend that it would be good to explore how through the agreed syllabus support can continue to be offered to schools in developing counter narratives (Recommendation 3).**

#### School visits

37. We are fortunate to have been able to visit four of Merton's schools to look at their *Prevent* practice (three primary schools and one secondary). We are grateful to them for the time, information and advice that they provided to our work. We are reassured by our visits to

Merton's schools. We found that, contrary to the picture portrayed in the national media, Merton's schools are:

- a. Comfortable with the *Prevent* duty; they understand the referral process and are successfully delivering teaching on '*British Values*';
- b. Firmly embedding *Prevent* within other safeguarding practice. They clearly demonstrate that the duty is about protecting pupils from harm and not about criminalising behaviour. Risk of radicalisation is seen as being comparable to grooming that might lead to Child Sexual Exploitation;
- c. Adding additional emphasis to teaching that was already happening before the duty came into place. All stated that they have had to become more overt in their teaching of *British Values* to deliver the *Prevent* duty rather than having to change the curriculum; and
- d. Working with parents and carers as appropriate to safeguard pupils. This can involve anything from speaking directly with parents about a specific issue to providing generic information on safeguarding to holding events to engage parents or provide specific training for example on internet safety. All the schools we visited reported a good response from parents even if turn out at some events can be low.

### **Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham**

38. Task group members (Cllrs Braund, Henry, Holmes and Jones) were delighted to visit Sherwood Primary School in Mitcham (during mid November 2017). This is a two form entry primary school with nursery provision, located in the east of the borough close to Mitcham Common. Pupils are drawn from a wide and diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds with no dominant group. Sherwood had just received an Ofsted inspection (finishing earlier in the same week as the task group's visit) with the judgement awaited.
39. The visit was hosted by Executive Head, Tina Harvey. During the visit task group members attended assembly, met and talked to the members of the school council, enjoyed a tour of the school and met with Ms Philips, the head of religious education and Kam Matharu and Lucinda Varchione-Francis, the co-ordinators of the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* programme (which forms part of the school's approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).
40. During the visit, it was clearly demonstrated how the school is delivering the *Prevent* duty. This is strongly positioned as part of the school's robust safeguarding practice alongside support for issues such as online safety and anti-bullying. It is facilitated through the religious education curriculum, which is broad and encourages understanding and tolerance of those from other faiths, as well as the PSHE curriculum. It was emphasised that this approach starts in Early Years, and that the school is supported by parents and carers.
41. Sherwood uses both its school council and the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* Programme<sup>1</sup> to support the delivery of the *Prevent* duty and to promote respect for others

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF describes the *Rights Respecting Schools* Award as embedding the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in daily school life, giving children the best chance to lead happy and healthy lives and to be responsible active citizens. Having seen it in action in a number of schools encompassing a range of communities, we wonder if part of its success comes from it being based on the Universal Declaration making it

amongst pupils. The school recently gained the *Rights Respecting Schools* level 1 award. Task group members saw how the scheme is reinforced through the school day. For example, in assembly where there was a focus on Article 15 (*Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others*). Displays throughout the school showed the different articles. The school also uses opportunities such as *British Values Week* and *Democracy Week* as a means to focus on engendering tolerance and independence within the children.

42. Members of the school council were able to talk to the task group about the importance of democracy and valuing the views of others. They had recently visited the House of Commons with local MP Siobhain McDonagh in addition to visiting Cllr Marsie Skeet, the Mayor of Merton, at the Civic Centre building. It was noted that children were able to explain their rights in depth to Ofsted inspectors during their recent inspection. The school is currently working towards level 2 of the *Rights Respecting Schools Award*. This requires more community working and international links than level 1.
43. The school has not had any *Prevent* referrals and neither has it had any bullying or racist incidents to report. Tina Harvey confirmed that there is confidence in delivering the duty and that whilst the duty is challenging and has required changes in the curriculum and how it is delivery (making the focus on values more overt) the support received from the Council has been appropriate.
44. Task group members greatly enjoyed their visit and particularly value the time staff and pupils gave them to explain Sherwood's approach to the *Prevent* duty.

#### **Dundonald Primary School, Wimbledon**

45. Task Group members Cllrs Henry and Jones greatly enjoyed their visit to Dundonald Primary School in mid November 2017. This is a two-form entry primary located in Wimbledon. We are grateful to Headteacher Fiona Duffy and her deputy Katy Waters for supporting our visit.
46. The implementation of the *Prevent* duty is strongly positioned as part of the school's safeguarding practice. This starts with the school's ethos ("Our school community will provide a caring, safe and supportive environment where everyone is encouraged to be creative, challenged and happy in their work and play, and where UNICEF Rights are respected and valued by all") and is embedded throughout the school's work. The emphasis is very much on a whole child approach with a strong focus on the child's voice. Students are involved throughout the school reflecting the school's ethos and demonstrated through the school council, the annual bullying survey and initiatives such as the worry box accessible in every classroom. Even visitors to the school are reminded of their duties in helping safeguard children and every topic map includes a focus on how it will help deliver the *Prevent* duty.

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more effective among students and parents from a diverse range of backgrounds compared to an emphasis on 'British Values'.

47. Dundonald is another UNICEF *Rights Respecting School*. It holds level one and is working towards level 2. This is being delivered through a student-led steering group which is distinct from the school council. We were fortunate to see how the UNICEF universal rights are used and embedded through class practice by a visit to Year 4. Students were debating whether a character in the book they were reading should join a gang. We were delighted to hear eloquent arguments from both sides, with students demonstrating respect for the views of others with whom they disagreed. This emphasised the importance of listening to others and allowed students to put forward an argument against a view with which they disagreed. Like other classes, Year 4 had agreed their own class charter as a way of making the UN Charter relevant to each student. This involved a process where students were active in discussing and agreeing which aspects of the charter they wanted their class to focus on.
48. The school holds an international fortnight every two years which is used to promote the different cultures, languages and nationalities that comprise the school. This is used to emphasise how students are all different but equal, building respect, tolerance and understanding. It has also been a key way in which the school has managed to engage with its parent body, many of whom have seized this opportunity to showcase their own cultural background. This has helped breakdown barriers to participation which is to the benefit of safeguarding. The school has also provided parent workshops on subjects such as bullying and growth mindset and there is a parent forum which convenes every month.
49. The emphasis on different but equal was also reinforced by the school's recent participation in Odd Socks Day where children all wore differently decorated socks; all do the same job well but look very different.
50. Whilst our visit was quite brief, we saw an impressive variety ways the school is working to embed safeguarding practice and the *Prevent* duty.

### **Merton Park Primary School**

51. This is a one form entry primary school situated in the Merton Park ward. Councillors Braun, Cowper, Henry and Jones represented the task group during the visit that took place in late November 2017. We are grateful to Headteacher Kirsty Gooderick and Deputy Head Kate Parson for their time and for supporting our visit.
52. As with the other schools we visited, *Prevent* is firmly embedded as part of the school's safeguarding strategy. The biannual and September refresh of staff safeguarding training was emphasised. The schools' approach is to never assume that 'it can't happen here'. One way in which the school protects children is by monitoring attendance very closely.
53. The school emphasises the importance of pupil voice; class councils support the school council feeding back ideas to be addressed. Students are also given the opportunity to make decisions. For example, students select what charity the school will support each year. The religious education curriculum promotes respecting difference whilst students are encouraged to be independent through initiatives such as older students running clubs for their younger peers.

54. As another UNICEF *Rights Respecting School* (the school has already achieved the level 1 award), the charter underpins and is reinforced through the behaviour policy as well as individual class charters. Good behaviour is encouraged in circle time and in the Star of the Week assembly. The aspiration is to make the rights real and tangible for students.
55. This is further reinforced through the curriculum where students are encouraged to focus on critical thinking and learn about how others don't benefit from the same rights that they enjoy. For example, students have learned about Aborigines and how indigent children were forcibly removed from their families.
56. To achieve the *Rights Respecting School* level two award, which focuses more on the school's relationship with the local community and on students being global citizens, students are being encouraged to discuss what is happening in the news (Newsday Tuesday). During Anti-Bullying Week, the school participated in Odd Socks Day to emphasise the different but equal message.
57. We were delighted to do a tour of the school which was led by members of the school council. During this we visited the ICT suite and saw how students are supported to keep themselves safe online. This includes a smart code which all students know well and an on screen button which allows them to instantly report content that makes them worried.
58. The school reported that it feels no discomfort in delivering *Prevent* and as with other schools it has incorporated *Prevent* into the existing curriculum. There hasn't been any negative reaction from parents. It has only made one referral specifically for *Prevent* which it was judged didn't need to be progressed.

### **Harris Academy Merton**

59. This is a large mixed secondary school located in the Pollards Hill ward. We are grateful to Rachel Simpson, the SENCO and safeguarding lead (including *Prevent*), for the time she gave us and for supporting our visit which took place in early December 2017 and was conducted by Councillors Henry and Jones.
60. Again, it was demonstrated that implementation of the *Prevent* duty sits firmly within and as part of the school's safeguarding policy. It was explained, that as part of Harris, the Academy benefits from advice on safeguarding, including *Prevent*, from both the federation and colleagues in Merton Council. This includes access to staff training on *Prevent* (WRAP training). The federation has provided the school with a generic safeguarding policy which it has adapted to reflect its own needs and context. This is supported by a more detailed policy on *Prevent*. The school has a governor with designated responsibility for safeguarding including *Prevent*. Reviews are held twice a year with the designated governor.
61. Delivery of the *British Values* element of *Prevent* is achieved through the school ethos and the existing curriculum. This has been extensively mapped to the *British Values* content. For example, in year 7 students learn about medieval history and the early development of government and democracy and students in all years must focus on critical thinking about texts in English. Again it was emphasised that *Prevent* has not required big changes within school but rather it has been about emphasising and/or being more explicit. The

school is now training pupils so they are able to make appropriate safeguarding reports. It is mindful of the need to be even handed and ensure that the focus on extremism isn't just about Islamic fundamentalism but also looks at the risks of radicalisation by right wing extremism. Work with pupils has been supported by the St Giles Trust which has delivered workshops for pupils on safeguarding issues including *Prevent* and gangs (the cost implications of this though are significant for the school). In addition to the school council, students also act as peer mentors with the aspiration for students to be trained to become wellbeing ambassadors. This helps support good communication between students which is important to safeguarding.

62. Harris works directly with parents especially where there is a concern about a student. Additionally, the school provides training sessions on issues such as internet safety (through CEOP) which could be better attended. However, the relationship with parents and their reaction to safeguarding concerns is good.
63. One particular issue identified by the Academy regards safeguarding for children that are from outside of the borough. This can be more complicated for the school to report and the support offered isn't always as comprehensive as that provided by Merton. Whilst the Academy is clear that it is its responsibility to ensure it receives a response to any referral it makes, this can sometime be a lengthy process and it would be good for agencies to respond in a more timely manner. It was noted that the software now used by the school for tracking referrals is good and has helped managed this process.
64. We have been interested to note that our experience of *Prevent* in Merton's schools is supported by the recently published research report from the Aziz Foundation: What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England as a whole ([here](#)). This found that:
- a. Survey respondents had engaged with and accepted the idea of '*Prevent* as safeguarding';
  - b. The majority of interview and survey respondents expressed fairly high levels of confidence with regards implementing the duty;
  - c. The *Prevent* duty is perceived to have little changed the everyday practices of school staff;
  - d. Most respondents did not perceive the *Prevent* duty to have had a 'chilling effect' on discussion and debate; and
  - e. Few respondents questioned the legitimacy of the *Prevent* duty.
65. However, this report does raise the issue of workload burden and hidden costs which we encountered to a limited extent in our visits. Additionally, it cites concern amongst BME respondents that *Prevent* is making it more difficult to foster an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another. We didn't encounter this as an issue in our visits.
- 66. Based on the four schools we visited we found that despite this being a new duty, imposing an additional workload, Merton's schools, supported by the local authority, are now delivering the *Prevent* duty which should be celebrated. As a task group we would like to take this opportunity to thank Merton's schools and**

officers for their work safeguarding the welfare of students including through their implementation of *Prevent* (Recommendation 4).

67. We recommend Merton's schools continue to share their *Prevent* practice and their growing expertise. This would allow Merton's schools to develop additional opportunities to learn from each other as well as allowing schools to reach out into and build links with other communities which would support their implementation of *Prevent*. We recommend that the Children, Schools and Families Department explore ways to encourage and support the Merton family of schools to share their *Prevent* practice to learn from each other (Recommendation 5).
68. Specifically, we recommend that the opportunity to utilise The UNICEF *Right's Respecting Schools* Programme to deliver the *Prevent* duty continues to be promoted to all Merton's primary schools. Information about how this is already being successfully used by some of Merton's schools should be provided. This would help more of Merton's schools receive their level 2 *Rights Respecting Schools* Award which requires schools to be outward facing and active in building community links. Thought should be given to identifying other programmes that promote rights and respect that could support the delivery of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools. We noted the work done by Stonewall with schools in promoting diversity and tolerance (Recommendation 6).
69. We recommend that the MASH continue to work with schools to understand their respective duties and information sharing requirements around the *Prevent* duty (Recommendation 7).

#### What happens next?

70. This task group was established by the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 1 February 2018 for the Panel's approval.
71. Once approved by the Panel, it will go to Cabinet which will be asked to provide a formal response to the Panel within two months.
72. The Cabinet is asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support the implementation of any of the recommendations, then it is expected that a clearly stated reason will be provided for each.
73. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
74. A further report will be sought by the Panel six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

DRAFT

## **Appendix 1: witnesses at meetings**

- Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer
- Keith Shipman, Education Inclusion Manager
- Yasmin Farooq and Fareeda Bader, the Muslim Women of Merton
- Ray Skinner, Secretary and Trustee, Morden Park and Play Fields Community Trust
- Dr Afzal Ashraf, the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham
- Tina Harvey, Executive Head, Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham
- Kam Matharu and Lucinda Varchione-Francis, the co-ordinators of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme, Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham
- Fiona Duffy, Headteacher and Katie Walters, Deputy Head, Dundonald Primary School, Wimbledon
- Kirsty Gooderick, Headteacher and Kate Parsons, Deputy Head, Merton Park Primary School
- Rachel Simpson, the SENCO and safeguarding lead, Harris Academy Merton



London Borough of Merton

**Report and recommendations arising from  
the scrutiny task group review of the  
recruitment and retention of teachers in  
Merton**

**Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**January 2018**

### **Task group membership**

Councillor Peter Southgate (Chair)  
Councillor Agatha Akyigyina  
Councillor Joan Henry  
Councillor James Holmes  
Councillor Dennis Pearce  
Helen Forbes (Co-opted Member)

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### **Acknowledgements**

The task group would particularly like to thank the headteachers, newly qualified teachers and council officers who shared their experiences and thoughts with us.

All contributors are listed in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report.

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### **Chair's foreword**

At the beginning of January, UCAS reported that applications for teacher training courses were down by one third on the previous year, threatening to make an already tight supply situation even worse in the future.

Merton schools are not immune from these pressures, and the decision to undertake a review of teacher recruitment and retention stems from concerns expressed to us by headteachers themselves.

What do we have going for us in Merton? The turnaround in the academic performance of our schools over the past 15 years is perhaps our biggest success story, and one that has been of enormous benefit to the life chances of our children. So we should celebrate that, and make sure newly qualified teachers know they will be gaining exceptional teaching experience if they start their careers in Merton.

As is often the case, we found that we have many benefits to offer teachers coming to Merton, but we don't always publicise them as well as we might. So several of our recommendations are to communicate what's already available more effectively – discounts on leisure facilities and health benefits, for example.

But we cannot ignore the prohibitive cost of housing in balancing the case for and against coming to teach in Merton. We take the view that home ownership is probably out of reach for anyone on a teacher's salary, and focussed our recommendations instead on the rental market, where teachers would be reliable tenants for both private and public landlords (including Merantun Development, Merton's own property company), justifying 3 – 5 year tenancy offers. More controversially, we make the case for subsidising rents in Merton properties where we wish to retain excellent teachers whom we might otherwise lose.

This review has packed in a lot of work in a short timeframe, interviewing witnesses and gathering evidence, in order to complete before council business is suspended for the local elections in May. Deadlines impose a useful discipline, but the burden has fallen squarely on Julia Regan, our hard working scrutiny officer who has turned this review around in record time. On behalf of all the members of the task group, I would like to record our grateful thanks to Julia.

**Councillor Peter Southgate**  
**Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

## **Executive Summary**

The task group was set up in order to investigate the difficulties that schools in Merton were experiencing with the recruitment and retention of teachers. The task group was also asked to consider how Merton Council and its partners could assist schools with the recruitment and retention of high quality staff.

The report is evidence based, drawing on and reflecting the wide range of written and oral evidence received. In particular, the task group has taken into account the experiences and views of local headteachers and newly qualified teachers. Task group members also spoke to council officers and received information about teacher recruitment and retention nationally.

The task group found that headteachers' experiences of recruitment and retention in Merton are similar to the national picture. Recruitment has been a particular challenge for headteachers, with the main barriers reported to be national issues (pay, status, workload) , lack of candidates and the cost of living in the local area. Retention is a lesser challenge, with a particular pinchpoint when teachers are about three years into their career and at a point when they no longer wish to continue living in short term rented or shared accommodation.

The task group noted that good school performance has a positive impact on both recruitment and retention and were therefore encouraged by evidence of sustained improvement in performance in Merton schools and the high proportion of schools that have been rated "good" or "outstanding" by Ofsted.

The task group found that the council already has appropriate systems and structures in place for teacher recruitment. It has made recommendations aimed at using these more effectively and promoting them more widely to headteachers.

Similarly, there is a range of benefits already on offer to teachers, so the task group has made recommendations to re-invigorate their promotion as well as encouraging governing bodies to organise activities that would promote staff health and wellbeing.

The cost of local accommodation was found to be a key factor affecting both recruitment and retention. The task group has made a number of recommendations that are intended to improve teachers' experience of the private rented sector, including the proposed introduction of an interest free loan to assist teachers with payment of rent deposits.

The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are listed in full overleaf.

## List of task group's recommendations

	Responsible decision making body
<b>Recommendation 1</b> (paragraph 25)	
We recommend that Cabinet should confirm that it is committed to continuing to celebrate the successes of Merton's schools in order to attract teachers of the highest quality and to promote local schools as the first preference for parents seeking an excellent education for their children.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 2</b> (paragraph 30)	
We recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider a more proactive and personalised approach to match applicants in the Eteach talent pool with specific school vacancies in order to increase its effectiveness.	School Effectiveness Partnership Board
<b>Recommendation 3</b> (paragraph 37)	
We recommend that, once the government has released details, the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider if the teacher apprenticeship scheme could be implemented in Merton.	School Effectiveness Partnership Board
<b>Recommendation 4</b> (paragraph 55)	
We recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should promote a wide range of recruitment routes to assist headteachers with advertising vacancies in their schools.	School Effectiveness Partnership Board
<b>Recommendation 5</b> (paragraph 66)	
We recommend that the provision of a flu vaccine to school staff should be included in a service level agreement so that headteachers can assess the costs and benefits of taking up this service.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 6</b> (paragraph 69)	
We recommend that Cabinet should encourage school governing bodies to organise activities in their school that would promote the general health and wellbeing of school staff. The council's Public Health team would be able to provide advice to governing bodies if required.	Cabinet

<b>Recommendation 7</b> (paragraph 72)	
We recommend that Cabinet publicise to school staff and explain how to take up the existing council staff discount on annual memberships at Canons Leisure Centre, Morden Park Pools and Wimbledon Leisure Centre.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 8</b> (paragraph 75)	
We recommend that all the benefits that are currently available to teachers and other school staff should be publicised to all school staff and clearly documented on all relevant webpages. This should include the interest free season ticket loan, purchase of a bicycle through the Cycle to Work Scheme (salary sacrifice) and nursery/childcare vouchers.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 9</b> (paragraph 82)	
We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to write to local housing associations to ask if they have any “hard to let” properties that could be made available to teachers at an affordable rent (including short term assured tenancies).	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 10</b> (paragraph 84)	
We further recommend that Cabinet consider whether the 3-5 year private rental tenancies that will be available through the Local Authority Property Company from 2019/20 could be offered to teachers in the first instance, thus offering teachers an element of financial security.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 11</b> (paragraph 87)	
We recommend that Cabinet should explore the business case for supporting the retention of excellent teachers in the borough by offering a small number of private rented properties through the Local Authority Property Company to such teachers at a reduced rent.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 12</b> (paragraph 89)	
We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to approach the Landlords Forum with a “good tenant offer” whereby the council would guarantee a supply of teachers as private tenants for a fixed number of years in return for a reduced rent.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 13</b> (paragraph 92)	
We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to provide school staff with a list of shared ownership schemes that might be suitable for teachers, whilst not recommending any scheme in particular.	Cabinet

<b>Recommendation 14</b> (paragraph 96)	
We recommend that Cabinet consider setting up a rent deposit scheme that would operate in a similar way to the existing season ticket loan. This would provide teachers with an interest free loan that would be paid back to the council in a set number of instalments.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 15</b> (paragraph 99)	
We recommend that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel should receive a briefing on the Mayor of London's London Living Rent initiative in order to identify potential benefits for Merton residents	Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
<b>Recommendation 16</b> (paragraph 103)	
We recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider how best to build on the effective programme of continuous professional development that is already being delivered. The Board could consider the role of local colleges and universities in further enhancing the options available, including through use of the Apprenticeship Levy.	School Effectiveness Partnership Board

## **Report of the Scrutiny Task Group Review of the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Merton**

### **Introduction**

#### *Purpose*

1. This issue was initially drawn to the attention of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel by the headteacher of the Priory School. The headteacher highlighted the difficulties that schools in Merton were experiencing with the recruitment and retention of teachers in particular but also other members of staff. She said that although there was evidence that this was not unique to Merton, she believed that there were measures that could be taken at a local level that would alleviate the situation.
2. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, mindful that this is a cross-cutting issue, particularly in relation to housing supply, referred the matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
3. The Commission, mindful of the relatively short timescale for this review, agreed to establish a task group with very focussed terms of reference:
  - To identify the issues that impact on the recruitment and retention of staff in Merton's schools;
  - To consider how Merton Council and its partners can assist schools with the recruitment and retention of high quality staff in Merton's schools.

#### *What the task group did*

4. The task group has had four formal meetings plus two discussions with primary and secondary school headteachers. It has received a presentation on the national picture and the local context plus a number of background policy documents.
5. The task group sent a questionnaire to headteachers about their experiences of recruitment and retention. Newly qualified teachers were surveyed to find out what had attracted them to Merton and what factors would influence whether they stayed or moved elsewhere in future. The task group also wrote to local teaching unions inviting them to submit their views.
6. Appendix 1 lists the written evidence received by the task group and Appendix 2 contains a list of witnesses at each meeting.
7. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full in the executive summary at the front of this document.

## The national picture

8. The State of Education Survey Report, 2016, found that 62% of headteachers nationally (76% for secondary schools) reported that recruitment and retention of teaching staff had been a difficult area to manage over the previous 12 months. The Survey found that recruitment and retention of teachers was reported to be the second highest concern for the next 12 months, after budget pressures.
9. The Survey found that 56% of heads in London schools stated they were facing a shortage of teachers compared to 37% nationally. Again the percentage was higher for secondary schools than for primary.
10. Headteachers reported that the biggest challenge they faced when recruiting teachers is the quality of applications (40%), followed by the low number of applications (21%). The demographics of the local area was less of a challenge (7%) as was school location (5%).
11. The main reason given for teachers leaving was to take up a job at another school. Workload pressures and retirement were also significant reasons for leaving. Relocation was cited as a factor by 31% of secondary heads and 24% primary heads; family reasons were cited by 7% secondary heads and 22% primary heads.
12. Governing bodies reported that they had taken a variety of steps to retain staff, including development opportunities, flexible working, non-monetary rewards or incentives and reduced paperwork or teaching hours.
13. The House of Commons Education Select Committee published a review report in February 2017 on the recruitment and retention of teachers. The Select Committee considered supply-side factors as well as workload and professional development. They called for evidence based policies to improve the supply and retention of high quality teachers and recommended that school leaders should carry out exit interviews to better understand staff turnover.
14. The Select Committee found that the government has failed to meet its recruitment targets and recommended that, whilst continuing to seek to recruit sufficient new teachers, the government should also place more emphasis on improving teacher retention as a cost effective way of addressing supply as well as strengthening the pool of teachers to draw on for leadership positions. A number of recommendations were aimed at improving continuous professional development. The review also urged the government and Ofsted to recognise their role in increasing workload, which has been cited as a factor for teachers leaving the profession.

## The local context

15. Merton primary and secondary headteachers reported to us that recruitment had been a difficult area to manage over the past 12 months. Retention was reported as slightly less difficult to manage than recruitment, particularly in primary schools
16. Headteachers reported that the key challenges and barriers to recruitment include national issues (pay, status, workload), lack of candidates and the cost of living in local area. Our discussion with secondary headteachers revealed the difficulties they experience in competing with Academy chains that can offer an enhanced salary and benefits package, new buildings, sixth forms and professional development programmes.
17. We noted that Merton schools have an advantage over neighbouring outer London boroughs of being able to pay the inner London weighting allowance (worth £2,000) to teachers.
18. The cost of accommodation was reported to be a key barrier for retention in both primary and secondary schools. Workload, salary and burnout were also cited as factors by primary heads. Secondary heads cited competition/poaching from other schools and the demands of the role.
19. We found that the pinch points for retention in both primary and secondary schools occur when teachers reach a point in their lives at which they wish to have more permanent accommodation arrangements and/or start a family. Often this will result in teachers moving away from the borough.
20. We heard that good school performance has a positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention. Merton, in having a high proportion of schools rated “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted, therefore should have an advantage in being able to attract good teachers to work in the borough. Conversely, when a school is rated as “requiring improvement”, this can be destabilising for the school and lead to a high turnover of staff.
21. We were also pleased to hear that Merton has benefitted from the retention of a number of excellent headteachers for many years.
22. The council’s Children Schools and Families Department has put in place a number of mechanisms to support school effectiveness and these also have an impact on recruitment and retention. Strategic oversight of recruitment to maintained schools in Merton is provided by the School Effectiveness Partnership Board. The Board’s predecessor commissioned the production of a website to encourage teachers to work in Merton. The Board is currently reviewing the content of the

website and focussing on ways to support schools with recruitment and retention.

23. We were delighted to hear that recent figures released by the Department for Education showed that Merton was joint top in the country (with Brent) for progress towards GCSE, made between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (Progress 8). We hope that this success will encourage teachers to work in Merton and parents to send their children to Merton schools.
24. We were pleased to hear that the Department for Education Progress 8 study findings have already been publicised and that the good reputation of schools has resulted in an increase in the number of parents who are choosing a Merton school as the first preference for their child.
25. **We recommend that Cabinet should confirm that it is committed to continuing to celebrate the successes of Merton's schools in order to attract teachers of the highest quality and to promote local schools as the first preference for parents seeking an excellent education for their children. (recommendation 1)**

## Task Group's Findings - Recruitment

### Recruitment routes and methods

26. A number of different recruitment routes are available to schools, as set out in the paragraphs below. Our discussion with headteachers revealed that they will often pursue several routes either simultaneously or consecutively in order to maximise the number and quality of applicants. Primary and secondary heads reported difficulties in attracting sufficient high quality applicants.
27. Eteach website  
Eteach works with over 7,500 schools and colleges and last year advertised more than 65,000 jobs to its 1.5 million registered candidates, who made 5 million job searches and 1 million site visits each month.
28. Merton has a service level agreement with Eteach. Each school that is registered with Eteach has a microsite on which its vacancies are advertised together with information about the school. Eteach also provides an NQT "talent pool" on which NQTs can log their CVs and that can be accessed by schools that are registered with Eteach
29. The council's bespoke website has an automatic link to direct applicants to the Eteach site:  
Council website <http://www.mertonteacherrecruitment.org.uk/>  
  
E teach home page <http://www.eteachgroup.com>  
  
Eteach microsite  
<https://www.eteach.com/microsite/contentpage.aspx?empno=3651&clusterid=735&pagetype=-10> (this is the Merton page that is accessed through link from the Merton website)
30. We understand that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board might have the scope to encourage a more proactive and personalised approach to be taken in matching applicants in the Eteach talent pool with specific school vacancies. We would like to encourage the Board to consider this and other measures that could be taken to increase the effectiveness of schools' use of Eteach.
31. **We therefore recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider a more proactive and personalised approach to match applicants in the Eteach talent pool with specific school vacancies in order to increase its effectiveness. (recommendation 2)**
32. Teach Wimbledon
33. Teach Wimbledon is a borough-wide consortium of 15 schools working in conjunction with the council and with Roehampton University to provide a direct route into teaching. It is open to applicants who have a 2:1 degree. Those who are successful at interview are allocated a host

school in which they work whilst also attending Roehampton University to study for a PGCE. Last year all 10 graduates from Teach Wimbledon subsequently got jobs in Merton schools (2 secondary and 8 primary).

34. SCITT
35. Another route in to teaching is school centred initial teacher training (SCITT) which has its own accreditation leading to a PGCE qualification – currently offered at Aragon Primary School. Open to all schools in the borough.
36. Apprenticeships
37. We understand that the new apprenticeship scheme could provide a route for newly qualified teachers but, to date, the scheme has been rather confusing, not well advertised and has a short timescale that has limited take-up. At present there are only two providers. The scheme has the potential to be very attractive to teachers as participants would be paid whilst studying and training.
38. **We recommend that, once the government has released details, the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider if the teacher apprenticeship scheme could be implemented in Merton.. (recommendation 3)**
39. Recruitment Agencies
40. Agencies actively recruit trainee teachers in colleges and encourage them to apply for teaching positions through the agency rather than direct to schools. The advantage to the applicant is that they only have to fill in one form in total rather than one per school.
41. Schools that don't recruit through an agency are therefore in competition with the agency to find the best teachers. Schools that do use an agency face considerable financial costs through the fee charged by the agency. We also heard that there is a lack of support from the agency post-placement.
42. We heard that these specialist recruitment agencies are a relatively new phenomenon and are having a particular impact on recruitment to secondary schools. The secondary headteachers told us that they would like local universities to encourage students to apply direct to schools and not through recruitment agencies.
43. We discussed whether it would be possible for Merton to set up its own recruitment agency with a single application form to encourage teachers to apply to Merton schools. On balance, our view is that a more effective use of ETeach as recommended above would be more cost effective for schools than contributing to the establishment and operation of a Merton recruitment agency.

44. Recruitment fairs
45. These are hosted by local universities and are a useful way to identify strong candidates and encourage them to apply for NQT jobs in Merton schools. We were advised that headteacher attendance at these fairs is particularly helpful, though we acknowledge that this requires a considerable time commitment from heads. We discussed whether it might be helpful for Merton to host a recruitment fair locally (as Croydon has done). This would have the advantage of enabling more headteachers to attend but the disadvantage that students might be less likely to travel to attend in Merton.
46. We were advised that recruitment agencies are increasingly advertising online and through social media as well as attending recruitment fairs.
47. Teaching placements and NQTs
48. Successful recruitment of excellent teachers is facilitated through the identification of promising teaching graduates as early as possible in the “supply chain”, particularly through well supported teaching placements so that they are more likely to subsequently apply for a job in a Merton school.
49. Merton schools have established good links with local colleges and universities, particularly Roehampton University. This has led to trainee teachers being sent on placements and schools have been able to encourage good ones to apply for permanent positions as newly qualified teachers (NQTs).
50. Merton generally employs around 100 NQTs each year. We emailed the current NQTs to find out what had attracted them to apply for a job in Merton and what would be likely to encourage them to stay.
51. Of the 35 NQTs who responded to our survey, 8 said that their PCGE placement in a Merton school had been a significant factor in choosing to stay in Merton. They had enjoyed the placement and wished to stay either in the same school or another school in Merton.
52. A number of the NQTs already lived in Merton or nearby and so were attracted by the convenience of the journey to work – views differed on what “nearby” constitutes, for some it was up to an hour’s journey and for others it was living in the vicinity of the school. Some of the NQTs cited the quality of the schools as a reason for working in Merton.

The council’s role in supporting recruitment of teachers

53. We were advised that the council already has appropriate systems and structures in place for teacher recruitment but there is scope to use these more effectively through addressing co-ordination and capacity issues. The School Effectiveness Partnership Board would be the most

appropriate way to progress this, hence recommendations 1 and 2 in the preceding sections.

54. We were told by headteachers that the “teaching in Merton” webpages jobs section of the council’s website was hard to find. However, the council’s website has been recently re-designed and when we looked at it we found that the dedicated webpage is now only two clicks from the council’s homepage, which makes it easy for potential applicants to find all the relevant information.
55. From our discussion with primary headteachers it was clear that some headteachers were not aware of all the potential recruitment routes that they could draw on. We understand that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board is compiling this information.
56. **We recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should promote a wide range of recruitment routes to assist headteachers with advertising vacancies in their schools. (recommendation 4)**

## Task Group Findings – the Merton Offer

57. Our discussions with headteachers found that they would appreciate some support from the council in promoting the benefits of working in Merton and providing employee benefits such as discounts in local shops, gyms and access to mental and physical wellbeing initiatives. Their view was that such an offer would help to attract newly qualified teachers to work in Merton.
58. We were informed by the Head of HR that a “Merton Offer” already exists that brings together a number of benefits available to Merton officers that are also available to teachers. These are set out below. We welcome these and have made recommendations to enhance some aspects of the offer as well as a recommendation to publicise the offer to existing school staff and potential applicants.
59. Kaarp Employee Discount Scheme
60. This provides Merton officers and school staff with discounts for a wide range of products and services (holidays, entertainment, health and fitness, motoring, travel, finance...).
61. Employee Assistance Programme
62. Merton’s Employee Assistance Programme enables staff to speak to someone in confidence about work or personal matters. Information sheets are available on a wide range of subjects that might impact on health or wellbeing at home or at work.
63. The service is available to staff in the 40 schools who have purchased the relevant service level agreement at a cost of around £4.50 per employee.
64. Flu vaccine
65. Frontline staff, including health and social care employees, are eligible for a free flu vaccine as part of the council’s contract with its occupational health provider.
66. Schools could purchase this service at a cost of around £7.50 per employee, thereby potentially reducing the level of sickness and making a saving on the cost of supply cover.
67. **We recommend that the provision of a flu vaccine to school staff should be included in a service level agreement so that headteachers can assess the costs and benefits of taking up this service. (recommendation 5)**
68. Merton Health Day
69. A twice yearly event for staff in the Civic Centre providing a mini health check and information from a wide range of health and wellbeing practitioners. These are well attended by staff and feedback has been very positive. We recognise the logistical constraints but would like to

see similar opportunities provided to staff in schools – these could be organised by governing bodies to address the particular needs and circumstances of staff within that school.

**70. We recommend that Cabinet should encourage school governing bodies to organise activities in their school that would promote the general health and wellbeing of school staff. The council's Public Health team would be able to provide advice to governing bodies if required. (recommendation 6)**

71. Leisure centres

72. Merton Council staff receive a discount on annual memberships at Canons Leisure Centre, Morden Park Pools and Wimbledon Leisure Centre. This discount is already available to staff working in Merton schools. However, feedback from headteachers indicates that school staff may not be aware of their eligibility for this discount.

**73. We recommend that Cabinet publicise to school staff and explain how to take up the existing council staff discount on annual memberships at Canons Leisure Centre, Morden Park Pools and Wimbledon Leisure Centre. (recommendation 7)**

74. Other

75. Teachers already have access to an interest free season ticket loan, purchase of a bicycle through the Cycle to Work Scheme (salary sacrifice) and nursery/childcare vouchers.

**76. We recommend that all the benefits that are currently available to teachers and other school staff should be publicised to all school staff and clearly documented on all relevant webpages. This should include the interest free season ticket loan, purchase of a bicycle through the Cycle to Work Scheme (salary sacrifice) and nursery/childcare vouchers. (recommendation 8)**

## Task Group Findings - Housing

77. Primary and secondary headteachers regard the cost of local accommodation as a key barrier to recruitment and retention. They have suggested that the council could help by:

- Providing support with finding accommodation for teachers at the start of their careers
- seeking affordable housing options for teachers
- promoting the benefits of working in Merton

78. During our discussion with headteachers, they stressed that newly qualified teachers typically houseshare for the first two to three years and then seek to move on to their own place. Headteachers asked whether it would be possible to offer a shared ownership scheme (or similar) to teachers who have worked in Merton for a minimum of three years in order to provide an incentive to stay.

79. When we asked the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) about what factors would determine whether they stayed in Merton, the cost of housing was by far the most significant factor for almost every respondent:

*“very hard to rent in Merton due to cost”*

*“buying a house is a bit of a far off fantasy that may or may not happen”*

80. Our discussion with the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy and the Head of Future Merton plus information about house prices locally have made it clear that purchasing property on the open market is out of the reach of most teachers working in Merton and this is particularly the case for those at the start of their careers.

81. We have therefore focussed our thoughts on measures that could be taken to improve teachers’ experience of the private rented sector. We understand that rental property is still relatively affordable in Merton compared to other parts of London but it is subject to greater demand than ever before.

82. We do recognise that there are other groups of key workers and vulnerable groups in Merton who would also benefit from access to truly affordable housing. These groups were not included in the remit of this task group review and we have therefore confined our recommendations to teachers. In responding to our recommendations, Cabinet will no doubt bear these competing demands in mind.

**83. We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to write to local housing associations to ask if they have any “hard to let” properties that could be made available to teachers at an affordable rent (including short term assured tenancies). (recommendation 9)**

84. We heard that the Local Authority Property Company had been established to develop new purpose built properties for private rent that would provide an income stream for the council. A proportion of these would be affordable and would be managed by a housing association.
85. **We further recommend that Cabinet consider whether the 3-5 year private rental tenancies that will be available through the Local Authority Property Company from 2019/20 could be offered to teachers in the first instance, thus offering teachers an element of financial security. (recommendation 10)**
86. We were informed that the Local Authority Property Company (LAPC) is a private company so would not be able to offer a discounted rent to teachers. The Company's business plan and decision making sits with the LAPC board and is not part of the council's usual decision making processes. If the council were to take a decision to offer discounted rents then profitability of the LAPC and income to the council would be reduced. If the Council sought to subsidise housing for teachers via the LAPC, Merton Council would have to cover the cost differential, not the LAPC.
87. We are not persuaded that it would be impossible for the council to provide discounted rent to teachers, although we do accept that this would be a political decision for Cabinet to consider whilst balancing the needs of other groups of key workers and the impact that a discounted rent would have on the revenue stream that would be generated for the council.
88. **We therefore recommend that Cabinet should explore the business case for supporting the retention of excellent teachers in the borough by offering a small number of private rented properties through the Local Authority Property Company to such teachers at a reduced rent. (recommendation 11)**
89. We discussed the feasibility of brokering a deal with private landlords to encourage them to rent to teachers at a reduced rent in return for a guarantee from the council that they would have a supply of teacher tenants for a fixed number of years, thus ensuring good tenants, a fixed income from the properties and no voids.
90. **We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to approach the Landlords Forum with a "good tenant offer" whereby the council would guarantee a supply of teachers as private tenants for a fixed number of years in return for a reduced rent. (recommendation 12)**
91. We also discussed the potential for teachers to take advantage of shared ownership schemes. One such option is Share to Buy which is

the official portal of FIRST STEPS, the Mayor of London's affordable home ownership scheme :

<https://www.shareto-buy.com>

92. Our view is that shared ownership can be an expensive option. However, we don't wish to preclude teachers from making informed choices and therefore recommend that information about such schemes is made available to them.
93. **We recommend that Cabinet should ask the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy to provide school staff with a list of shared ownership schemes that might be suitable for teachers, whilst not recommending any scheme in particular. (recommendation 13)**
94. We considered whether it might be feasible to build accommodation for teachers on school land, or to use school caretaker homes that were surplus to requirements. There are many obstacles to proceeding along these lines, not least safeguarding issues as well as regulations regarding changing the use of school playing fields. Also, if the housing was on council land it would be subject to right to buy and the council's other housing needs priorities and therefore not necessarily available for teachers. Any further consideration would require detailed work over a period of time.
95. Finally, we wondered about the feasibility of issuing a council-backed bond as an investment vehicle for local residents that could be used to provide loans for mortgage deposit for teachers who have worked for Merton for a certain number of years and who undertake to remain for a further given number of years.
96. The Director of Corporate Services suggested that it may be possible to set up a loan scheme for teachers who need financial support to meet the costs of a private rental deposit. This scheme could operate rather like the season ticket loan that is already available to council staff – this provides an interest free loan that is then repaid in ten equal instalments.
97. **We recommend that Cabinet consider setting up a rent deposit scheme that would operate in a similar way to the existing season ticket loan. This would provide teachers with an interest free loan that would be paid back to the council in a set number of instalments. (recommendation 14)**
98. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing drew our attention to the Mayor of London's work to develop a London Living Rent, badged as a new type of affordable housing for middle-income Londoners. The aim is to use monies from the Affordable Homes Funding to build housing that will be offered at a lower than market rate rent for tenancies of a minimum of three years. Tenants will be

supported to build up savings to buy a home either through shared ownership or outright purchase.

- 99. We recommend that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel should receive a briefing on the Mayor of London's London Living Rent initiative in order to identify potential benefits for Merton residents (recommendation 15)**

## **Task Group's Findings - Retention**

### Training and development

100. The newly qualified teachers who responded to our questionnaire overwhelmingly cited housing as the most important factor in their decision to leave or stay in Merton schools. Other factors were pay and promotion opportunities as well as opportunities for continuous professional development
101. We heard that Merton provides a lot of continued professional development opportunities for teachers, including school based, Merton-specific tailored training and through partnership arrangements with neighbouring boroughs (South London School Effectiveness Partnership) to provide training as well as offering free network meetings.
102. One constraint is that it is increasingly difficult for headteachers to release teachers from school to attend courses. Also, schools have limited funds for continued professional development. There is potential to augment budget through bids for specific funding for training – for example, some of the primary school clusters have employed someone to develop bids for the delivery of specific projects or curriculum activity. Similarly, the Mitcham Town primary school cluster has a longstanding offer for teachers to undertake a locally delivered MA programme in conjunction with a local university.
- 103. We recommend that the School Effectiveness Partnership Board should consider how best to build on the effective programme of continuous professional development that is already being delivered. The Board could consider the role of local colleges and universities in further enhancing the options available, including through use of the Apprenticeship Levy. (recommendation 16)**

### Succession planning

104. Responses from primary headteachers to our questionnaire indicated that a strategic approach to succession planning would be helpful in regard to the retention of excellent teachers. A particular area on which headteachers would like to see a focus is on mentoring and training for those who have completed the year following the NQT year.
105. We were assured that, further to the conclusion of the scrutiny task group that reviewed succession planning, the recommendations had been actively taken forward through a number of initiatives including a training programme for those aspiring to become headteachers (taken up by 42 deputy headteachers), targeted training for women and future leaders from black and minority ethnic backgrounds as well as specific discussions with individual schools.

## Concluding remarks

106. We are very grateful that so many headteachers and newly qualified teachers took the time to write and/or speak to us. Hearing their experiences and views first hand has been invaluable in helping us to understand the challenges and barriers that they face and to identify measures that may help to address these.
107. We found that good school performance has a positive impact on both recruitment and retention and were therefore encouraged by evidence of sustained improvement in performance in Merton schools and the high proportion of schools that have been rated “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted. We have recommended that Cabinet continue to celebrate these successes so that this will encourage high quality teachers to apply to work in Merton schools.
108. We found that recruitment has been a particular challenge for headteachers, with the main barriers reported to be national issues (pay, status, workload), lack of candidates and the cost of living in the local area. Retention is a lesser challenge, with a particular pinchpoint when teachers are about three years into their career and at a point when they no longer wish to continue living in short term rented or shared housing.
109. We found that the council already has appropriate systems and structures in place for teacher recruitment. However there is scope for using these more effectively and promoting them more widely to headteachers so that they are fully aware of all available recruitment routes. We have made recommendations to assist with this.
110. We were pleased to find that there is already a wide range of benefits on offer to teachers and have made recommendations to assist with the promotion of these to candidates, teachers and headteachers. We were impressed by information given to us regarding staff health days held in the Civic Centre and have therefore made a recommendation to encourage governing bodies to organise activities that would promote their staff health and wellbeing.
111. We were struck by the impact that the cost of housing locally has on the recruitment and retention of teachers. We have made a number of recommendations that are intended to improve teachers’ experience of the private rented sector, including the proposed introduction of an interest free loan to assist teachers with payment of rent deposits.
112. We are well aware that there are many other groups of key workers and vulnerable groups in Merton who are similarly affected. However, as these groups were not included in our remit, we have confined our recommendations to teachers. We understand that the council’s Cabinet will need to bear these competing demands, wider responsibilities and financial pressures in mind when considering their response to our recommendations.

### **What happens next?**

113. This task group was established by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 25 January 2018 for the Commission's approval.
114. The Commission will then send the report to the Council's Cabinet on 19 February 2018 for initial discussion.
115. Once Cabinet has received the task group report, it will be asked to provide a formal response to the Commission within two months.
116. The Cabinet will be asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support and implement some of the recommendations, then it is expected that clearly stated reasons will be provided for each.
117. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and that their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
118. A further report will be sought by the Commission six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: written evidence**

Recruitment and retention of teachers – the national picture – powerpoint presentation, Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education, 23 October 2017

Recruitment and retention of teachers, House of Commons Education Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2016-17

State of Education Survey Report 2016

Questionnaires received from 6 primary headteachers and 3 secondary headteachers in Merton

Questionnaires received from 35 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) working in Merton schools

### **Appendix 2: list of oral evidence**

Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education, 23 October, 13 November, 11 December 2017 and 4 January 2018

Ewan Morrison, School Improvement Adviser – Professional Development, 13 November 2017

Kim Brown, Head of Organisational Development and HR Strategy, 1 December 2017

Steve Langley, Head of Housing Needs and Strategy, 11 December 2017

Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, 11 December 2017

Yvette Stanley, Director of Children Schools and Families, 4 January 2018

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education, 4 January 2018

Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, 4 January 2018

Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing, 4 January 2018

Discussion with secondary school headteachers, Chaucer Centre, 21 November 2017, Councillors Agatha Akyigyina and Joan Henry

Discussion with primary school headteachers, Chaucer Centre, 28 November 2017, Councillors Agatha Akyigyina, Joan Henry and Peter Southgate

# Children and Young People Work Programme 2017/18



This table sets out the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2017/18; the items listed were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 24 July 2017. This work programme will be considered at every meeting of the Panel to enable it to respond to issues of concern and incorporate reviews or to comment on pre-decision items ahead of their consideration by Cabinet/Council.

The work programme table shows items on a meeting-by-meeting basis, identifying the issue under review, the nature of the scrutiny (pre-decision, policy development, issue specific, performance monitoring, partnership related) and the intended outcomes.

**Chair:** Cllr Dennis Pearce  
**Vice-chair:** Cllr Linda Taylor

## **Scrutiny Support**

For further information on the work programme of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel please contact: -  
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For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

Meeting date: 24 July 2017 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 14 July 2017*) **COMPLETE**

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance (TBC)</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Member for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah)	
<b>ECHP performance update</b>	The Panel will look at this performance measure within a wider context including growing demand, parental satisfaction, and the transfer of existing statements and the performance of other authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education</li> <li>Karla Finikin, Service Manager – SEN &amp; Disabilities Integrated Service</li> </ul>	
<b>Final report of the rapporteur scrutiny review of user voice</b>	Report on how looked after children and young people are able to expressed their wishes and feelings as well as participate in decisions that affect their lives.	Cllr Jerome Neil	
<b>Prevent task group – terms of reference</b>	To agree whether or not to proceed with a <i>Prevent</i> task group and accept the suggested terms of reference.	Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer	
<b>Performance monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring; and</li> <li>Selection of a Panel Member to act as a lead on performance monitoring.</li> </ul>	Naheed Chaudhry, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department update report</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last	Yvette Stanley, Director of Children,	

	scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Schools and Families	
<b>Children, schools and families glossary</b>	A glossary of acronyms commonly used within the remit of the Children, Schools and Families Department will be provided.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Agreeing the Panel's work programme</b>	To agree the Panel's work programme and consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a thematic approach to the work programme;</li> <li>• appointing topic leads;</li> <li>• getting the best from performance monitoring;</li> <li>• the Panel's use of task groups;</li> <li>• opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny; and</li> <li>• monitoring task group recommendations.</li> </ul>	Cllr Dennis Pearce, Panel chair, and Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer	

**Meeting date:** 10 October 2017 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 2 October 2017*) **COMPLETE**

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance (TBC)</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Katy Neep)	
<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department update report</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from	Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families	

	Panel members.		
<b>Ofsted inspection outcome</b>	Exact content and format to be determined once the Ofsted report is available (approx. 25 August 2017). This is likely to focus on areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted and take a workshop approach. This will allow members to focus on and become a champion of a specific aspect of the Ofsted report/action plan. It has been suggested that the workshop be supported with training provided by service heads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>• Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion</li> </ul>	Contribution from Kathy Bundred, Children's Improvement Adviser for the London Government Association
<b>Work programme</b>	To amend/agree the Panel's work programme and accommodate any new/additional pre-decision or other items that the Panel may wish to consider.		

**Meeting date:** 8 November 2017 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 31 October 2017*) **COMPLETE**

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance (TBC)</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Katy Neep)	
<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring. REPORT WITHDRAWN AS AGREED AT PREVIOUS MEETING.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children,	Yvette Stanley,	

<b>update report</b>	Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Director of Children, Schools and Families	
<b>Children, Schools and Families Budget/business planning (Round 1)</b>	<p>To enable the Panel to comment on the budget proposals and any new or revised savings as part of the first round of the process for agreeing the Council's budget and business plan.</p> <p>The current budget required cost savings to the CSF department. This agenda item also provides the opportunity to understand if this objective is being realised and what impact this is having in terms of service provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>• Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, will provide training before the January meeting giving a detailed guide to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. <u>All members are encouraged to attend.</u></li> <li>• <a href="#">Scrutiny of finance – Councillor workbook</a> (the Local Government Association).</li> </ul>
<b>Harris Wimbledon update</b>	To monitor progress of the delivery of the new school in line with the Panel's reference to Cabinet in June 2016: 1) ensuring the opening date for the new school is optimised to not destabilise existing Merton secondaries, 2) maximising the design to give pupils the same advantage enjoyed by children at other Merton secondaries, 3) supporting Merton Abbey Primary in agreeing shared use of the site, 4) protecting the financial interests of the borough during the development of the site, 5) sustaining the level of community rental space, and 6) ensuring the safety of pupils using the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>• (Possibly Chris Lee to discuss site clearance for permanent site)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite representative(s) of the Harris Academy Chain to update members directly on the development of the school and plans for its future</li> <li>• Visit Harris Merton, to see the expansion project and to hear from the provider of the new school first hand and in situ</li> <li>• <a href="#">Free schools: challenges and</a></li> </ul>

			<a href="#">opportunities for accountability</a> : Centre for Public Scrutiny
<b>Work programme</b>	To amend/agree the Panel's work programme and accommodate any new/additional pre-decision or other items that the Panel may wish to consider.		

**Meeting date:** 17 January 2018 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 9 January 2018) COMPLETE

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Katy Neep)	
<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring. DEPT NOT YET ABLE TO PROVIDE DATA FOR REVIEW.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department update report</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
<b>Children, Schools and Families Budget/business planning (Round 2)</b>	To enable the Panel to consider the Council's budget and business plan proposals. Additionally to forward any comments/recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to compile a scrutiny response on the Budget/Business Plan to Cabinet.  To include discussion of major projects identified in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>Caroline Holland, Director of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, will provide training before the January meeting giving a detailed guide to the</li> </ul>

	CSF draft service plans.	Corporate Services	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy. <u>All members are encouraged to attend.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Scrutiny of finance – Councillor workbook</a> (the Local Government Association).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and wellbeing strategies for children and families</b></p>	<p>In partnership with public health, look at strategies to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people including consideration of school travel plans. It has agreed that this will focus on childhood obesity and mental health strategies (including the developing autism strategy). <u>Members of the Healthier Communities and Older People Panel to be invited to attend.</u></p> <p>This item will also provide the opportunity to discuss the CHAMs and sexual health strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite relevant members of the CCG and mental health teams</li> <li>• Invite attendance by Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) to provide oversight of the commissioned services it provides</li> <li>• Visit the Children’s centre to see CLCH in action, to provide interaction with parents and see how child health and wellbeing services are being delivered</li> <li>• <a href="#">10 questions to ask if you’re scrutinising local immunisation services</a> (Centre for Public Scrutiny)</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Best start in life: promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people</u></a> (Local Government Association)</li> </ul>
<b>Routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts task group – executive response and action plan</b>	The task group's report has been accepted by Cabinet. This will be to receive an executive response to the task group's recommendations and an action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sara Williams, Programme Manager Economy, futureMerton</li> <li>• Kim Brown, Head of Organisational Development &amp; HR Strategy</li> </ul>	
<b>Work programme</b>	To amend/agree the Panel's work programme and accommodate any new/additional pre-decision or other items that the Panel may wish to consider.		

**Meeting date:** 1 February 2018 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 24 January 2018)

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Katy Neep)	

<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring. DEPT NOT YET ABLE TO PROVIDE DATA FOR REVIEW.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department update report</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
<b>Merton Safeguarding Children Board annual report</b>	An in-depth review of safeguarding for children and young people in Merton. This will focus on strengths, areas for review during the coming period and work with schools as well as areas which were agreed as priorities from last year including action to address knife crime, domestic abuse, mental health issues and substance misuse.	Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keith Makin, the Independent Chair of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board attending.</li> <li>• Invite Steven Wallace, Borough Commander</li> <li>• Invite a representative of the <i>Muslim Women in Morden</i></li> <li>• Invite a representative from the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs</li> <li>• Visit to Jigsaw4U, provider of Merton commissioned services including return home interviews for missing children.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Safeguarding Children – a practical guide for overview and scrutiny councillors</a> (Local Government</li> </ul>

			Association and the Centre for Public Scrutiny)
<b>Prevent task group draft final report</b>	As highlighted at its outset, the local elections in May 2018 mean this task group must report to Cabinet at its meeting on 26 March 2018. In order to comfortably meet this deadline, the draft final report of the task group should be presented to this meeting of the Panel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Henry, Task group chair</li> <li>• Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer</li> </ul>	
<b>Corporate parenting report</b>	To review the care provided to those children for which the Council is the corporate parent.s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul Angeli, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion</li> </ul>	
<b>Recruitment and retention task group final report</b>	This task group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission but its work is relevant to the Panel. Its final report will therefore be presented to the Panel for information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the task group that also sit on the Panel</li> </ul>	
<b>Work programme</b>	To amend/agree the Panel's work programme and accommodate any new/additional pre-decision or other items that the Panel may wish to consider.		

**Meeting date:** 14 March 2018 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 6 March 2018)

<b>Theme: setting the work programme</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcome</b>	<b>Responsible officer/Member topic lead</b>	<b>Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance</b>
<b>Cabinet Member priorities</b>	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-	

		Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Katy Neep)	
<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
<b>Department update report</b>	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
<b>Schools annual report</b>	<p>Members receive the detailed annual schools report giving them the opportunity to focus on attainment for all key stages as well as at foundation stage and for post 16.</p> <p>As a result of the presentation of the schools annual report during the last municipal year, members noted the need to retain their focus on the attainment and progress of children on SEN support as well as looked after children. Also, how to oversee the work of the school standards panel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>• Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite representatives of Merton heads' group</li> <li>• <a href="#">Back to School – Ways for scrutiny to influence local education and support school leaders to improve results</a> (Local Government Association and the Centre for Public Scrutiny)</li> </ul>
<b>Children's services update</b>	To include information on the self-evaluation and Ofsted action plan, LBGT+ strategies, Staying Put policy and the dept's response to the user voice report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families</li> <li>• Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's' Social Care and Youth Inclusion</li> </ul>	
<b>Topic suggestions 2017/2018</b>	To seek topic suggestions from the Panel to inform discussions about the 2018/19 work programme	Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer	

