

Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 9 October 2018
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Committee Rooms C, D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden
SM4 5DX

AGENDA

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

Councillors:

Sally Kenny (Chair)
Edward Gretton (Vice-Chair)
Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE
Omar Bush
Edward Foley
Natasha Irons
Mark Kenny
Hayley Ormrod
Dennis Pearce
Eleanor Stringer

Substitute Members:

Adam Bush
Pauline Cowper
Joan Henry
James Holmes
Dickie Wilkinson

Co-opted Representatives

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.

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Agenda Item 3

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

27 JUNE 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.30 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Sally Kenny (in the Chair), Edward Gretton, Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE, Omar Bush, Edward Foley, Natasha Irons, Mark Kenny, Hayley Ormrod, Dennis Pearce and Eleanor Stringer

Co-opted Members Emma Lemon

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Kelly Braund, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah (Cabinet Member for Education), Mark Gwynne (Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance, Children, Schools and Families), Dawn Jolley (Head of Commercial Services), Jane McSherry (Assistant Director of Education), Keith Shipman (Head of Education Inclusion), Rachael Wardell (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department), Sara Williams (Programme Manager, futureMerton) and Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Colin Powell, Director of Education for the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and a statutory co-opted member of the Panel.

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.

There were no matters arising.

4 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education, provided members with an overview of her priorities highlighting the following:

- Raising standards: all of Merton's secondary schools are judged good or outstanding. This is the same for most of Merton's primary schools. However, there are some that are judged to require improvement. These are the main focus. The aim is to raise standards. They are being supported and challenged by the school improvement team;
- Harris Merton: this will open in September 2018 on the temporary site in Whatley Avenue. This year, Merton received an additional 200 applications for secondary school places from within the borough demonstrating the need for this new

secondary school. In fact, it is already full with a waiting list. As a result, building of the new, permanent school site on High Path is now a priority;

- Progress of children with additional needs: whilst Merton is ranked first according to the Progress 8 measure (the progress made between the start of secondary school and the end of Key Stage 4), not all Merton's students are making the grade. There will be a focus on the progress of those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs);
- Cricket Green: following the successful expansion of Perseid, Cricket Green is undergoing a similar expansion to provide additional special school places. This is a priority because of the growth in the number of students with special educational needs;
- Fair access: making sure that all children in Merton have fair access to the borough's schools including those are new arrivals to the borough or country. This is crucial in ensuring equality of life chances;
- Smart Centre: this provision is for those that have been excluded from school. It offers support for reintegration and is of crucial importance to helping young people get their lives back on track;
- Recruitment and retention of heads: working to support the recruitment and retention of heads. Merton has the advantage of good schools. Currently, exploring a range of ways and means to encourage heads to stay; and
- All schools to have a full governing body: keen to make sure that Merton's schools all have a full complement of governors but that these also provide the specific skills needed for effective school governance. Whilst the range of skills needed by governing boards can sometimes make it harder to recruit, these skills are important.

In response to member questions, Cllr Cooper-Marbiah and officers clarified:

- (Rachael Wardell, Director, Children, Schools & Families) Significant changes to GCSEs mean it is difficult to provide any comparison of achievement year-on-year. In effect, a new baseline is being established;
- (Rachael Wardell) Will go away and explore the difficulties being experienced with school maintenance contracts (fulfilled by Sodexo). Examples provided included toilet rolls running out, meaning school toilets have to be shut and an alarm going off at Rutlish for over a year. A member expressed concern regarding the additional pressure this is putting on headteachers. The Director committed to report back to the Panel.

Cllr Braund, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, provided members with an overview of her priorities highlighting the following:

- Mitigating financial strains: need to continue to scrutinise the budget to ensure ongoing delivery of a user focused and first class/high quality service that puts children and families first;
- Ofsted outcomes: whilst the outcome of last year's combined inspection was good with outstanding features, need to focus on areas that are not outstanding and look at the timescales for achieving outstanding in all. Will continue to support and challenge areas where an outstanding judgement was achieved as it is important not to be complacent;

- Transition into adulthood: keen to ensure any unnecessary barriers that are encountered during the transition to adulthood are removed. For example, that there is commonality in the language used by services for children and adults so that there is progression and continuity. This is to prevent young people feeling like they are accessing a completely new service when they make the transition to adult services;
- Autism strategy: this has just been launched and endorsed by the Health & Wellbeing Board. It reflects the growth in children and adults in Merton who are autistic. Ensuring its delivery including redesigning the diagnostic pathway and making it accessible to parents, those with autism and other stakeholders is key; and
- Strategic framework for Diabetes: again, this has just been launched and endorsed by the Health & Wellbeing Board. Keen to focus on the education of residents. Additionally, to provide support for those with Type 1 and encourage those with Type 2 to use exercise and other lifestyle choices to achieve better management.

5 BRIEFING: EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS (Agenda Item 5)

Jane McSherry, Assistant Director for Education, introduced the item:

- The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has taken a lead over the last year on scrutinising the progress being made with the transfer to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs);
- These were introduced by Government in 2014, replacing statements of educational need. They reflect a change to a more holistic approach to the support provided to those with additional needs and an extension of the age range of application so that this now goes from 0 to 25 years. Additionally, they are co-produced in partnership with parents and children/young people themselves;
- Following the introduction of EHCPs, all existing statements of educational need also had to be transferred. Merton took the decision to do this properly and co-produce the transfer of all the existing 1,023 statements. This was a big process that had to be done in parallel to meeting requests for new EHCPs and be fulfilled by the deadline of the end of March 2018. This has now been achieved for all but 15. All these children/young people are within a tier 4 mental health facility or out of the country therefore making them inaccessible;
- Government introduced a deadline of 20 weeks between the initial request for an EHCP being accepted and production of the resulting plan. Over the last year, the Department has not been where it has wanted to be in terms of meeting this deadline. However, there has been a significant improvement in performance now the transfer of statements to EHCPs has been completed. As a result, 52% are completed within the 20 week target. Of the remaining 48%, 70% are completed within 26 weeks; and
- Highlighted that the department has been dealing with a significant increase in requests for EHCPs. In addition, that there have been very few cases of mediation or tribunal required as part of the EHCP process. This demonstrates that parents are happy. Ensuring that parents are engaged in the EHCP process has to be balanced with need to meet the 20 week deadline.

In response to member questions, Jane McSherry clarified:

- There is no additional funding being provided to meet the increased number of EHCPs. This is a budget challenge for the dedicated schools grant. This is also being affected not just by a growth in numbers but an increase in the complexity of needs and the fact that children/young people with a whole range of conditions have a better prognosis and therefore need support for longer. Specifically on transport costs, parents are being encouraged to have personal budgets, as these are more cost effective. However, parents can be resistant to taking on the additional responsibility. The Department is therefore providing them with support to ease the transition. In other cases, travel training is being provided to young people and pick-up points established to reduce costs. Merton's special schools are in the process of being expanded. This is already complete at Perseid and is in progress at Cricket Green. This achieves the objective of keeping young people close to home (cutting travel costs) but also reduces the need to use more expensive provision in the independent sector;
- Prior to EHCPs being finalised, children will be within mainstream provision, on SEN support with the school budget covering an additional costs. The Department is working with schools to speed up assessments to reduce this burden on school budgets as much as possible;
- Monthly data on performance against the 20 week target for the production of new EHCPs has been provided to scrutiny and is publicly available as part of the agenda for previous Panel meetings;
- Merton's performance on the need for medication and tribunal cases is good with use in Merton much lower than other boroughs. This will be helped by Merton having lots of good and outstanding schools; and
- Customer satisfaction/user feedback on the EHCP process is captured at a number of points. Firstly through case officer feedback and the parent/carer forum. Additionally, the Department is just about to complete a formal consultation on the experience of parents/carers involved in the EHCP process.

RESOLVED: for the consultation on the experience of parents/carers involved in the EHCP process to be shared with the Panel.

6 TASK GROUP REVIEW: USER VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda Item 6)

The Panel discussed the options available to ensure it hears the views of children and young people to inform its scrutiny of services. Rachael Wardell also suggested that it might be possible to get young people themselves directly involved in the scrutiny process. Jane McSherry suggests other methods might be used such as videoing feedback from children and young people. It was highlighted that the Department collects user voice/feedback by a variety of methods. This can be shared with the Panel.

The Panel was in general agreement that it would like to be informed in its scrutiny by the voice of children and young people. It was thought it would be most helpful to

have a designated member of the Panel responsible for considering how this might happen at each meeting.

RESOLVED: At the next meeting, to consider the role of a designated lead for the voice of children and young people.

7 TASK GROUP REVIEW: EMPLOYMENT OF VULNERABLE COHORTS RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda Item 7)

Sara Williams, futureMerton, introduced the item. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel originally set-up a task group to look at the housing, health, education and employment of care leavers or those with additional learning needs. However, this was refocused to look solely at the employment of these groups. The task group's report and recommendations were presented to the Panel for review in January 2018. This resulted in a request from the Panel to review them further after six months. The task group's recommendations mainly focus on the role of Merton as an employer. Whilst the council has links with local businesses and employers, the main way in which it can influence the employment prospects of the target groups is through its own role as an employer.

Progress against each recommendation was then considered in turn with members being given the opportunity to ask questions:

- Recommendation 1: focused on better communications. This has largely been achieved through activities such as improved information online and the working of the Economic Wellbeing Group. The latter is well-supported and successfully allowing information to be shared by key partners. Additionally, Merton's HR team has been liaising with social and key workers.
- Recommendation 2: the Workforce Strategy Board now has a focus on both traineeships and work experience opportunities. Dawn Jolley, Head of Commercial Services, explained how working with Merton's contractors and suppliers to provide both traineeships and work experience is being built into a social value toolkit. This will be used as part of the commissioning process for contracts. This will take a little longer to finalise than planned but is being optimised following consultation with other boroughs. The toolkit will allow commissioners to evaluate bids received with ease and provide a framework that will mean using contractors to provide these opportunities will not be legally challenged. In response to member questions, it was clarified:
 - (Keith Shipman, Social Inclusion Manager) These opportunities are having a positive impact. With small cohorts of target young people, opportunities can be specifically matched to the needs/skills of the young person;
 - (Keith Shipman) Members and officers started to develop their thinking on using Merton's role as an employer and its reach through contractors at the same time;
 - (Melissa Stewart, Commissioning Manager) Section 106 funding is being used to support those at risk or categorised as not in employment, education or training to provide opportunities over the summer when risks can increase;

- (Melissa Stewart) One case study is of two young men known to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) for their risk of gang involvement. Both were offered initial opportunities by Veolia, now supplying waste, recycling and street cleaning services across the borough through the South London Waste Partnership. Following these initial opportunities both have remained with Veolia. One is now on a three-year apprenticeship for which Veolia lowered the application bar. The other has been offered a post and is training as a mechanic. This post has been specifically configured for him as it is understood an apprenticeship opportunity isn't suitable; and
- (Dawn Jolley) It is important to recognise the complexities of making these arrangements work. Whilst provision of an opportunity for a vulnerable young person can be a quick win, there are other complexities that need to be addressed to ensure the employer is happy with arrangements. In addition, it is important to ensure that putting these opportunities in place is not lost as part of the tendering process.
- Recommendation 3: improved attendance at the Economic Wellbeing Group has largely been met. In response to a member question, it was clarified that this had previously been a struggle. However, attendance at this forum is a key way for groups across the council and the borough to work together to make employment opportunities available to the target groups and others. The example of the Merton Employment Team that supports vulnerable adults into employment was given. This team is now attending the Economic Wellbeing Group leading to lots of additional opportunities for its client group.
- Recommendation 4: in terms of demonstrating its commitment to the employment of the target groups, a new strategy is being produced by the Council. Corum has been commissioned to survey and consult both Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Corum is an independent consultancy that has been specifically commissioned to undertake the work. This is specific and time limited.
- Recommendation 5: this has largely been covered above although it was again noted that the Workforce Strategy Board now has a focus on both traineeships and work experience opportunities.
- Recommendation 6: consideration of how to work with Merton's contractors and suppliers has largely covered above.
- Recommendation 7: it was highlighted that whilst data has been supplied in the agenda pack, this is generic for all apprenticeships as opposed to being specifically for the target groups.

RESOLVED: Panel members resolved the following:

- Noted how impressed they are with the opportunities being provided for vulnerable young people in Merton and the success these are having;
- A further report back is to be provided to the Panel in six months time;
- Expressed their interest in receiving information on the work currently being undertaken by Corum with Looked After Children and Care Leavers and seeing the resulting strategy; and
- Data should be provided to the Panel in six months time including the number of apprenticeships by Directorate fulfilled by those within the target groups. Of these how many have started, stayed and left should be stated. Members requested

that an appropriate representative from the HR team attend the meeting to explain these statistics.

Lastly, Melissa Stewart stressed to members that she is very interested in hearing from them if they have any connections with local employers that might be explored to provide employment opportunities for these target groups.

8 DEPARTMENT UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- (Rachael Wardell) Information will be provided to members following the meeting regarding the costs of using the Whatley Avenue building as a temporary site for Harris Wimbledon;
- (Jane McSherry) The Whatley Avenue site will only be used temporarily until the High Path permanent site is available. There will be no split site provision; once the High Path site is open, Whatley Avenue will be closed and returned to the stock of buildings held by Merton Council and managed by the Environment & Regeneration Department;
- (Rachael Wardell) Information will be provided to members following the meeting on the views of the 5% of families who weren't positive about outcomes having been improved as a result of engaging with children's centres;
- (Rachael Wardell) Both St Marks and Raynes Park secondary schools have places available for the forthcoming academic year (2018/2019). However, cumulatively these do not exceed the number of applications and places secured at Harris Wimbledon. Without the new school, a good number of applications would have needed to have been fulfilled out of the borough. St Marks is an improving school and received more applications this year than it did in the last academic year;
- (Rachael Wardell) Concerned about the current lack of data on Children's Services resulting from the implementation of the new Mosaic system. Noted that this is the longest time for which she has not had access to data. It is hoped that this will be forthcoming by the middle of July. The process of providing data for returns to Government is being used to provide the Department with some confidence. This situation is being addressed through support from the provider company and improved report writing capacity in-house. However, once data starts to become available again, the Department will need to ensure that this is correct in the system. It is increasingly likely that the longer the system is not being used the greater the disincentive to input to the system. As a result, it is likely that when the system is first run, performance will have deteriorated. It is important that all users understand the importance of updating; and
- (Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning & Performance) Returns that are happening now are helping with understanding of what information is missing from Mosaic. As a result, work is underway to help users understand where data has to be inputted. Training will also be provided from September to October including for super-users who will support the training of other officers.

Resolved: Members resolved that they should be notified by the Director of the Children Schools & Families Department should the Mosaic system not be online and working effectively by mid-July 2018 as outlined at the meeting.

9 SETTING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/2019 (Agenda Item 9)

RESOLVED: Members resolved:

- To agree the work programme as outlined in the meeting agenda (pages 22 – 23);
- In addition, to take a report from the Governor Support Team looking at school volunteers in Merton;
- To look at school admissions in Merton. The scrutiny officer to consider how best this can be done;
- To take a report from the scrutiny officer looking at what other councils have done to provide support for parents;
- To undertake a task group focused on children, mental health and what can be done to support prevention/resilience. Cllrs Irons, Akyigyina and Gretton all volunteered to take part in the task group;
- Cllrs Stringer and Ormord were selected as performance monitoring leads for the Panel; and
- Cllr Bush was selected by the Panel as its budget scrutiny lead.

Cllr Stringer noted an error with the note of the topic suggestion workshop (04/06/18). She was present at this although she is not included on the list of attendees.

10 CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES GLOSSARY (Agenda Item 10)

Noted for information with thanks. Members were encouraged by the Chair to retain this and refer to it throughout the year when reading the agenda for meetings. This will be updated and reissued at the start of the next municipal year.

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Regional Adoption Agency

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services

Contact officer: Paul Angeli, Assistant Director - Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion

Recommendations:

Members of the panel to discuss recommendations which will go to cabinet, as set out below:

- A. Agree that Merton enter into regional adoption arrangements as part of Adopt London South.
- B. Agree that if appropriate to deliver the RAA staff and finances are transferred or seconded to Southwark who will be hosting Adopt London South on behalf of ten South London boroughs, noting that Merton will be host authority for the South West spoke.
- C. Agree that Merton's Director of Children, Schools and Families is vested with delegated authority to make more detailed decisions around the implementation of this proposal including signing off the inter-authority agreement between Merton and Southwark.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the business case for Merton entering regional adoption arrangements with nine other local authorities in South London as part of Adopt London South. The Department for Education has instructed all local authorities in England to enter into regionalised adoption arrangements by 2020. This report sets out the proposed approach to regionalisation for Merton and seeks formal agreement to begin implementing the new arrangements. The full business case will be available in the autumn.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 It is proposed that a new Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is created through combining the adoption services for the ten South London Boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond, Southwark, and Sutton. These agencies wish to build on the

success of their existing services to improve performance in meeting the needs of those children who require permanence through adoption by bringing together the best practice from each authority within the RAA. This proposal forms part of an overarching project to develop four RAAs across London.

- 2.2 This report describes how establishing a single agency will allow the ten authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposed that the London Borough of Southwark will host the RAA, the cost of development to be funded by the Department for Education.
- 2.3 In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services setting a very clear direction that all local authorities' adoption services must be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 'Regionalising Adoption' paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance. Following the general election in June 2017, the Minister of State for Children and Families reaffirmed commitment to this policy. In March 2018, the DfE commenced the legislation that allows them to direct a local authority into a RAA if there is no progress being made.
- 2.4 The premise of regionalisation is to:
- Increase the number of children adopted
 - Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted
 - Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care
 - Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness.
- 2.5 The South London RAA will be known as Adopt London South (ALS) and will build upon the previous positive practice established within the two South London consortia – South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium (SLAPC) and South West Consortium which have acquired over the years good reputations for delivering effective services.
- 2.6 The rest of this report sets out the issues and detailed proposals for delivering Adopt London South.
- 2.7 The business case is founded on a number of key assumptions:
- There is one host for the south London RAA and it is proposed this is Southwark; however, it is expected that staff will be located across all ten LA sites, and that there is a host site for the South West in Merton.
 - There is one lead responsible officer and centrally located functions. Likely that senior management, performance, commissioning and back office will be located in Southwark.
 - Wherever possible practice and processes will be the same across all south London boroughs, however, there is a recognition of the scale of the South London RAA (and that it is bigger than all other RAAs in the country). There will, therefore, be tailoring and delivery based within two spokes which are

based on the existing consortia (Merton, Sutton, Kingston, Wandsworth and Richmond in the South West and Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham, Greenwich and Croydon in the South East).

- All agencies have the resources available to actively lead on and participate in agreed work streams and achieve the deliverables within agreed timescales set out in the plan;
- Adopt London South (ALS) will share case work responsibility for the child at the earliest possible point, at the discretion of each Agency Decision Maker but in most cases at the point of the Placement Order being granted;
- Staff affected will retain their existing Terms and Conditions, including pension rights, holiday entitlements and sick pay policies. If it applies, staff will be transferred to the host authority under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE);
- Any applicable redundancy costs will be underwritten by the currently employing LAs as this will not be funded by the DfE or the host; and
- Premises – ALS will be delivered from office bases in all ten locality areas. This will ensure: continuity of provision as far as possible; close working relationships with children’s social workers and easy access for local communities to a service within their community. A small number of workers undertaking central functions (mainly senior management and back office staff) will work from a central base in the Host authority Southwark, and some functions will be delivered from the South West site of Merton. To ensure the new ALS team is established with a cohesive and single culture it is expected that particularly in the early stages that staff will be based for team building events, conferences, team meetings at Southwark’s Tooley Street offices.

2.8 The Principles

2.9 The principles which the business case has followed were agreed by the Adopt London Executive Board which was delegated by the Association of London Directors of Children’s Services (ALDCS) to oversee the development of the four London Regional Adoption Agencies. These principles have been endorsed by the DfE:

- Local authorities involved in Adopt London and each of the four RAAs are committed to collaborating adoption arrangements so that the best interests of children and their adoptive families are secured and kept at the forefront of decision-making.
- Adopt London will provide an overarching framework for enabling effective coordination, coherence and partnership working across London.
- Adopt London authorities, and the four RAAs will make sure that there is consistency of approach in relation to key strategic and operational decisions, e.g. about whether staff are transferred under TUPE arrangements or seconded. Project teams in the four RAAs and RAA governance arrangements should reflect the ambition to promote such consistency of approach.
- We are committed to working effectively together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), making sure that their unique and important contribution is maximised and that VAAs are involved in the development of the RAAs and Adopt London.

- The focus of work over the next 18 months will be on establishing the four RAAs; in phase two, developmental work on the Adopt London hub will progress. We will use the Adopt London Executive Board to operate a virtual Hub in the coming period, with a view to exploring options for joint commissioning across London, maintaining common design principles for the spokes and exploring opportunities for further development of the Hub in phase 2.

2.10 The scope and delivery model

- 2.11 The decision to pursue four RAAs in London was agreed by ALDCS, and endorsed by the DfE in May 2018. This report does not revisit that decision, but provides more detail for how the agreed delivery model will work in south London.
- 2.12 Whilst a number of options were considered early on including the creation of a new single entity to deliver adoption services across South London, the preferred option is to combine the ten London boroughs with one borough becoming the host authority. Creation of new single entities is time consuming and costly and not a preferred option elsewhere with RAAs already live.
- 2.13 Governance of the RAA will operate through a board comprising of senior representatives from all LAs with executive voting powers with non-executive advisory representation from Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), adopters and adoptees. The RAA will continue to be accountable to Corporate Parenting Boards and other Local Authority bodies.
- 2.14 The RAA will aim to provide a high-quality service to adopted children with improved outcomes; taking the best models of delivery from each of the nine services and considering the best level of geography on which to deliver (sub-regional, regional or pan-London). The RAA will also aim to provide savings through economies of scale.
- 2.15 It is important to note that each of the other London RAAs has between 5-7 local authorities, and no other RAA has gone before nationally which combines such a large number of Local Authorities. Therefore, ALS will be implemented as two spokes with the South West comprised of Sutton, Merton, Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston (with Merton acting as a spoke office) and the South East comprised of Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich, Lambeth and Croydon (with Southwark acting as both spoke office and overall hub).
- 2.16 The delivery model for the RAA addresses the five areas set out by the DfE as their minimum expectations of a Regional Adoption Agency:
1. A single line of authority with the ability to act as a single service and a head of service in place.
 2. Transfer of staff into the organisation.
 3. Inclusion of core adoption functions of recruitment and assessment of adopters, early permanence and family finding, and adoption support.
 4. Pooled funding from local authorities into the RAA.
 5. Pan-regional approach to matching i.e. one pool of children and adopters.

- 2.17 Adopt London South will work collaboratively with 3 other RAAs across London namely:
- Adopt London West – hosted by Ealing
 - Adopt London North – hosted by Islington
 - Adopt London East – hosted by Havering
- 2.18 Approximately 50-60 FTE LA staff, many of whom work part time, are expected to become part of the new organisation to deliver the following main services across South London:
- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters;
 - Permanence Planning – ensuring that children identified as requiring adoption achieve a placement;
 - Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption;
 - Adoption Support – to help all affected by adoption;

The table below sets out the RAA and LAs will work together, summarising roles and responsibilities for each:

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Support and advice to child care social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	✓
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	✓
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Agency Decision Maker for "Should be placed for Adoption" decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist potential families	✓	
Visit potential families	✓	✓
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		✓
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	✓	✓
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter	✓	✓
ADOPTION SUPPORT		
Assessment for adoption support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre and post Adoption Order		✓

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Adoption support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption/special guardianship training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Adoption counselling and training 	✓	
Financial support to adopters including adoption allowances		✓
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments	✓	
Inter-country adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

Milestones and implementation

- 2.19 It is proposed that following formal endorsement of the delivery model and budget at the ten cabinets and committees over the autumn and winter 2018 that the structure for the proposed Adopt London South RAA will be subject to formal consultation through winter and early spring 2019. Phased implementation will begin from the point that the decision is formally endorsed at cabinets and committees and run through until early summer 2019.
- 2.20 The first key implementation task will be to appoint the permanent leader of the RAA. A phased implementation is being pursued because the logistics of setting up Adopt London South are greater and more complex than any other RAA given that 10 boroughs are being brought together.
- 2.21 See the table below summarises the key milestones for delivery:

Stage 1: Mobilisation & on going Project Management	Stage 2: Vision & Design	Stage 3: Service Analysis- Measure and Understand (As is)	Stage 4: Service redesign workstream initiation (Future State)	Stage5: Monitoring, evaluation and benefits	Stage 6: Transition arrangements/shadow and testing phase	Stage7: Implementation
This stage ensures that there is an established rationale for integration whilst putting in place the building blocks for defining and scoping the change.	This stage involves working with senior stakeholder to understand and develop the vision for these integrated services and articulate the 'end state'.	The stage involves refining the scope of the project, identifying the cohort to work with and measuring the current situation (the 'as is') and understanding the level of change required to achieve the defined aims and objectives. This is important in providing a solid evidence base for the 'to be' model and developing options for the services and functions in scope.	This stage involves designing the 'to be' model, understanding and developing the options available in order to achieve the desired outcomes and identify the level of change required.	This stage reviews the initial benefit profiles and puts in place monitoring and evaluation measures for the testing and implementation phases	This stage involves working with operational teams to prototype and test out the agreed integration model/option and monitoring effectiveness of it. This stage allows for refinement to confirm the solution as correct/optimum before changes are mainstreamed.	Subject to the evaluation of stage 6, this stage involves fully implementing the new model and associated improvements
Deliverable: March - May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockdown scope • Set up PMO function • Project team in place • Project plan signed off • Workstreams developed and leads identified 	Deliverables: April - May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear design features & evaluation criteria • Agree key outcome measures and anticipates benefits • Articulate vision for the new service 	Deliverables: May - July <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of current position • Stakeholder engagement • HR analysis of workforce implications and options • Review benefit profiles • Complete current position statement • Identify opportunities for change and improvement 	Deliverables: July - November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service design model options • Legal appraisal of options and impacts • Agree support service functions • Completed Business Case • Sign off and permission to proceed • Complete transition and full implementation plan 	Deliverables: August - September <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on evaluation approach • Set performance measures/KPIs for new service • Review benefit profiles and produce realisation plan 	Deliverables: October- November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies/procedures, referral routes agreed • Functions & Structure agreed • Systems tested • Legal requirements for new entity in place • Future model governance and SLAs agreed 	Deliverables: November - April 19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation review process • Engagement and change management process • Fully implement the new model • Go live with new service

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.22 Entering into these regional adoption arrangements through a Regional Adoption Agency hosted by Southwark is the only option being considered which meets the requirements of regionalisation as set out in the legislation.
- 2.23 There will be approximately 30 FTE social worker positions within Adopt London South, and approximately 50-60 FTE in total including management, administration, performance, commissioning, panel advisor and administration capacity. One third of the capacity in the new RAA will be focused on adoption in the South West (Sutton, Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond and Merton), as this is where one third of the adoption work happens. Funding from the South West also accounts for around one third of the RAA budget.
- 2.24 It is proposed that to ensure clarity and maintain and improve timeliness that specialist teams will operate in each of the spokes (a recruitment, assessment, family finding and matching team, and a post adoption team).

3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The budget for the RAA is being built through each of the 10 authorities considering the agreed scope and outcomes for the RAA and identifying the existing budget available to deliver these activities. LAs have ensured that sufficient resource is retained to deliver the activities which will remain the responsibility of the local authority.
- 3.2 A proportion of the funding provided will be used to cover hosting charges incurred by Southwark (for example HR, IT, legal, finance), the remainder will be used to resource Adopt London South. Data has been collected on boroughs' adoption allowances, including the proportion funded by ASF and the proportion funded by LAs. However, this is not included in the proposed base budget which

will be transferred to Southwark as it will be retained by the boroughs. However, expertise in securing ASF will sit within the RAA and the RAA will have a role in the future in reviewing the approach to allowances across 10 boroughs.

4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services proposing that all local authorities' adoption services be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 Regionalising Adoption paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance.
- 4.2 The government has reinforced their policy ambition through provisions in the Education and Adoption Act 2016. The Act also gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any, or all, of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by other local authorities named, or by another agency. Therefore if a local authority does not voluntarily enter into a regionalised arrangement then it can be directed to do so by the Secretary of State.
- 4.3 The new regional adoption arrangements will be governed by a board, and be subject to an inter-authority legal agreement which sets out the terms of the arrangement. This agreement will need to be signed between each member authority and Southwark prior to the formal go live of the new arrangements.
- 4.4 In resourcing the new RAA, if it applies staff will be subject to TUPE.

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: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Departmental Update Report October 2018

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

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 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 June 2018. It focusses on those aspects of particular relevance to the department and those where the Panel expressed an interest in receiving regular updates.

2 DETAILS

2.1 **Harris Academy Wimbledon** – The school opened as planned in Whatley Avenue SW20 in September 2018 and is fully subscribed. The building is suitable for two years before the permanent site in South Wimbledon will be required. The planning application for the permanent site is expected to be considered at the planning applications committee later in October.

2.2 **Cricket Green School** – Planning permission has been received and Cabinet has agreed to commence works to expand the school, with works expected to start early in October: the first phase is expected to be completed September 2019 to enable the much needed extra SEN places to be provided.

2.3 **School Ofsted Inspections** – Further inspections have been held in the following schools where the report is yet to be published: West Wimbledon Primary School on 12th September 2018 and Morden Primary on 18th September 2018. New reports have been published for Hollymount and Cranmer schools since the last meeting, with both achieving Good ratings. This means that our results remain as previously reported, so we continue to have:

- 100% of secondary schools being rated as “Good” or “Outstanding”
- 93% of all schools now rated as “Good” or better; and

- 95% of our pupils are educated in schools rated as “Good” or better.

- 2.4 **Primary Phase Outcomes** – Pupil outcomes have improved at the end of KS2. The proportion reaching the expected standard in each of reading, writing and maths, at 68%, is a two percentage point increase on Merton’s performance in 2017, and maintains the four percentage point gap above the national average achieved in 2016 and 2017. Indicative progress scores are again strong, and it is hoped that when these are published formally in December that Merton will retain its strong standing nationally: in 2017 the Borough was ranked 10th for reading and maths progress.
- 2.5 In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and the end of KS1, the outcomes for Merton are all above the respective national averages except for writing at the expected standard at Key Stage 2, which is one percentage point below.
- 2.6 **KS4 outcomes** – It is estimated that 90% of exams in England this year were the new form of GCSEs; containing more difficult content, mostly marked on final exams rather than coursework, with grades expressed as 9 (the highest) to 1, instead of A* to G (grade 4 and above being broadly equivalent to a C and above). Despite the raised expectations Merton schools have again demonstrated strong results. 71% of Merton students achieved grades 9 – 4 in both English and Maths. This is once again well above the national average for 2017 of 59%. There were strong and improved outcomes in the English Baccalaureate or ‘EBacc’ (grade 4 or above in English, Maths, Science subjects, either History or Geography and a language) with 37% of Merton students achieving these grades, keeping Merton well above the national average of 22% last year.
- 2.7 **Post 16 outcomes** – Students and teachers in Merton maintained schools are celebrating another good set of sixth form results in A-levels. In a year which has seen more significant changes nationally, the proportion of A*-C grades achieved by Merton students was 78%, which is above the national percentage of 77%, and a good increase on the Borough’s performance last year. In 2017, students in England took new, more challenging exams in 13 subjects, with 11 more following this year. Applied Generals and Tech Level qualifications remain a popular choice for some sixth form students. These help students to develop the fundamental knowledge and practical skills that are valued in universities and the workplace. Just under a quarter of Merton students achieved success in these qualifications.
- 2.8 **Children’s Centres** – For the new financial year the service continues to prioritise the increased take up of 2-year-old funded places, to work with partners to increase referrals for targeted work with parents and young children and to increase our early help offer for families who have children with additional needs. A new parenting programme for parents of children aged 2 to the end of reception year who are on the autistic spectrum or have language delays and when parents are struggling to manage their child’s challenging behaviour. The programme, called Incredible Years Autistic Spectrum Disorder / language delay, was piloted in quarter 1. Ten families completed the 15-week programme, with seven families using the onsite childcare service provided, especially for this group of children and their siblings. Feedback from the pilot was very positive, and included:
- “This programme will change your outlook on parenting a child with special needs”
 - “I have learnt I am not alone and I can manage my child’s behaviour better”
 - “I have gained more confidence as a parent, improved the positive situations and learnt to manage the difficult situations more effectively”

- “Never question if you belong on this programme, because you will not regret it”.
- 2.9 As a result of the success of the pilot programme, the new service will be embedded into the core timetable and the second cohort of eleven families have started this terms programme.
- 2.10 There continues to be a focus on assertive outreach activities to ensure that services are promoted to families living within defined areas of the borough, with additional services set up in the summer holidays, with open garden activities run daily across three Children’s Centres located in areas of deprivation working with local families. Forty-five sessions took place, which had an overall attendance of 700 (with some families attending more than one session).
- 2.11 **Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)** – The MSCB is continuing work on designing the new partnership arrangements and in establishing an improved multi-agency dataset to ensure effective management of the partnership and contributions from the key agencies involved. These should be ready to be implemented from April 2019. A full update on MSCB progress and the annual report is being presented to the next meeting.
- 2.12 **Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)** – The partnership offers 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).
- 2.13 The FDAC service went live on the 1st January 2018 and we still have 3 referrals in the service, however all boroughs are on track to meet their minimum referral numbers. The provider is meeting all contractual obligations and are currently looking for premises in Croydon. Partnership operational meetings held on a quarterly basis, monitor management information and data: board meetings with judges are also planned to be held quarterly in line with Operational Group meeting.
- 2.14 **Social Impact Bond (SIB)** – Following launch of the project on 15th January, Merton now has 11 accepted referrals, which is above the numbers we should be at this stage of the year. This is excellent news and we are strongly predicting that we will reach above our minimum referral numbers of 16 per year. Amalgamation of the current Panel into an Edge of Care panel has been approved and is currently being mobilised by teams.
- 2.15 The official launch of the MST / FFT service took place on the 20th September with many London Boroughs attending. Due to the successful implementation of London Borough of Barking and Dagenham into the Partnership, we are using this launch event to raise the profile of the Partnership to attract further boroughs.
- 2.16 **Contextual Safeguarding** – the promote and Protect sub-group of the MSCB has commissioned a contextual safeguarding audit to consider the governance structures, protocols and processes in relation to harm experienced by adolescents, often outside the family home and involving peer-on-peer abuse (sexual harm, youth violence and exploitation). The audit was completed in September 2018 and the findings have supported an expression of interest to Bedfordshire University (who have developed the framework) to receive additional support to implement the contextual safeguarding framework within Merton.

- 2.17 The intended impact of implementing a Contextual Safeguarding Framework will be more holistic assessments of harm, plans that aim to address the contexts where harm is most pronounced (including locations of concern and peer groups) and increased capacity of those who have an influence over contexts outside the family. These would not replace current child protection procedures or interventions with adolescents and their families, but would broaden the impact and intervention on systemic issues outside of the home. An Early Intervention Funding application has been made to increase the capacity for delivering peer group and location based interventions.
- 2.18 **Knife Crime Action Plan** – The Mayor’s Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner has requested that each council produce a multi-agency and community partnership plan to prevent knife crime. This has been completed with a range of actions and activities across the partnership.
- 2.19 **Think Family** – The Think Family strategy has been developed jointly with adults emphasising the ways in which we will work holistically with the family to address their needs and provide the support they require. The Think Family approach formed the focus for the MSCB annual conference in March 2018 and was well received by all attending. The new strategy is being consulted on over the coming months, enabling the strategy to be ready for April 2019.
- 2.20 **Inspection Update** – Preparations for upcoming inspections are in hand including for the Youth Offending and SEND inspections for which continued progress is being made. Main developments since the last meeting are summarised below:
- **Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS)** – the Annual Engagement Meeting with the regional HMI was held on 3 October, based on an initial self evaluation that was submitted towards the end of September. This set out many improvements made since our last inspection in June 2017.
 - **Joint Targeted Area Inspection** – the theme for this has moved on as part of the six monthly programme and is now focussed around child sexual abuse within the family. Given the fairly recent safeguarding inspection and new ILACS framework, we consider it unlikely that the council will be inspected in this theme which runs from September 2018 to March 2019 and will look at ten local authorities.

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: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Performance Report October 2018

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

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

Recommendations:

- A. Members of the panel note the contents of the performance report and discuss current performance and the changes proposed to the scrutiny performance framework by the panel's performance leads.
 - B. To agree the proposed changes to the performance report to come into effect from the November 2018 meeting.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides members of the panel with performance information to the end of August 2018 along with quarterly performance measures as at the end of quarter 1.
- 1.2 The report also presents a number of proposed changes to the performance framework for the panel which have been proposed to come into effect from the November meeting, if agreed by the panel.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Performance Highlights

2.2 Following implementation of the Mosaic case management system in May 2017 there were a number of challenges that got in the way of effective performance management and reporting. This meant that local reporting within social work teams was retained outside of the system in order to continue to provide assurance that our children and young people are being effectively safeguarded.

2.3 Extensive work has been undertaken in recent months to enable normal reporting to be resumed. The performance report attached demonstrates progress made in this regard and the few areas which remain a challenge. The areas in which we are currently unable to report performance are highlighted within the report and summarised below:

- 1: Common and Shared Assessments – this indicator is not currently captured within Mosaic and has a revised approach for which new performance measurement processes need to be established.

- 6: Number of family groups subject to child protection plans – this is not currently captured within Mosaic, but is due to be incorporated early in 2019 with the introduction of group working upgrades within the system. At this point, reports will be developed to enable reporting through Mosaic.

- 2.4 Performance indicators currently performing particularly well are:
- 93% of schools Ofsted inspections rated as “Good” or “Outstanding”
 - 95% of our pupils are educated in schools rated as “Good” or better.

2.5 **Proposed Changes**

- 2.6 With the advent of a new Council and several new members on the Scrutiny Panel, it presented a good opportunity to review the current performance framework for the Panel and ensure that it is fit for purpose moving forward. It is proposed that the changes are implemented from November and are in effect for the duration of this Council, subject to annual review in conjunction with the Panel’s performance leads to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and meets changing priorities.

- 2.7 At a meeting in September with Cllr Eleanor Stringer and Cllr Hayley Ormrod, the two performance leads for the panel, a number of changes were considered to the scrutiny performance framework. These changes and a brief reason for each is summarised below.

2.8 ***Performance Indicators for Removal***

- 2.9 The following indicators have been proposed for removal following review:
- 7: Percentage of children subject to a child protection plan with an allocated social worker – this indicator is always 100% and is monitored extensively within the department to ensure that there are no unallocated cases.
 - 15: Percentage of looked after children with an allocated social worker – this indicator is always 100% and is monitored extensively within the department to ensure that there are no unallocated cases.
 - 24: Percentage of Children’s Centres Ofsted inspections rated as “Good” or “Outstanding” – this is an old measure where inspection arrangements have changed, so it is no longer meaningful to report on.

2.10 ***Performance Indicators for Inclusion***

- 2.11 The following indicators have been proposed for adding into the scorecard following review:
- 7a: Child Protection Plan caseload: The average caseload for social workers in the safeguarding and child protection teams holding CP Plan cases. This is considered to be a more relevant measure for the panel than the allocated cases which has been proposed for removal.
 - 14: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC): The number of UASC in the care of the council at the end of the month. This is a growing area of interest and, whilst being part of our Looked After Children cohort, is worthy for separation so that members are aware of the current numbers within the borough.
 - 15a: Looked After Children caseload: The average caseload for social workers in the permanency, looked after children and care planning teams holding LAC cases. This is considered to be a more relevant measure for the panel than the allocated cases which has been proposed for removal.

- 39: Social Care Workforce: Percentage of agency social workers. Recognising the importance of a stable and permanent workforce the leads wanted to ensure that the panel is sighted on the levels of agency social workers within the council.

2.12 **Performance Targets**

- 2.13 Within the report, a number of performance indicators have targets, whilst others are shown as “not a target measure”. These indicators are largely those which are provided for context or where it is not desirable to set a target (e.g. we would not aim to have a certain number of children subject of a child protection plan, or not to visit some children within the required period).
- 2.14 For some measures we would hope that performance would be within a range rather than an absolute number (e.g. we would expect within the region of 10-20% of children to be subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time: below this would cause concern whilst too far above this could indicate that we are not addressing their needs sufficiently during their first plan).
- 2.15 In discussion with the performance leads it is proposed that we take a more informative approach to target setting to emphasise the second point above and reflect performance within a desirable band, changing to amber as it moves to the edge of the acceptable band and red if outside of the band agreed.
- 2.16 This is pertinent to the indicators listed below:
- Percentage of children that become the subject of a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time. It is proposed that this should be in the range of 12-18% which will be confirmed by the management team.
 - Stability of placement moves of Looked After Children – children with 3 or more moves in the year. It is proposed that this should be in the range of 10-16%, which is also subject to confirmation with the management team.
 - Percentage of reception year surplus places. It is proposed that this should be in the range of 5-9%, which allows new people moving into the borough to be accommodated in schools, whilst enabling a high degree of occupancy in classes.
 - Percentage of secondary school (Year 7) surplus places. It is proposed that this should be in the range of 5-9%, which allows new people moving into the borough to be accommodated in schools, whilst enabling a high degree of occupancy in classes.

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 – Performance Report

- 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 9.1 None

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Performance Index 2018/19



No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2018/19	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2017/18 performance											Notes
				Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England	London		Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18 / Q1	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18 / Q2	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18 / Q3	Jan-19	Feb-19	
Assessments																				
1	Number of Common and Shared Assessments undertaken (CASAs)	Quarterly	Not a target measure	171	422	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure			n/a								Quarterly (Time lag in collating CASAs from partner agencies) YTD	
2	% of Single Assessments authorised within the statutory 45 days	Monthly	93%	89%	91%	83% (2016/17)	82% (2016/17)	Red	85% (117/138)	78% (251/320)	78% (402/513)	79% (559/712)	80% (720/895)						Year to Date	
3	% of Education, Health and Care plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (new, including exceptions)	Monthly	55%	34% (Jan 2018)	19% (Jan 2017)	61.3% (Jan 2018)	52.4% (Jan 2018)	Green			63% (45/72)								Year to Date	
Child protection																				
4	Child Protection Plans rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure	41.7	27.2	43.3 (2016/17)	39.1 (2016/17)	Not a target measure	41.9	39.6	37.4	34.9	36.8						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
5	Number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan	Monthly	Not a target measure	196	197	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	197	186	176	164	173						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
6	Number of family groups subject of Child protection plans	Monthly	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
7	Percentage of children subject of a Child Protection Plan with an allocated social worker (DELETION)	Monthly	100%	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%						Monthly - as at the end of the month - to be defined	
7a	Average caseload of workers for Children subject of a Child Protection Plan (PROPOSED)	Monthly	New	New	New	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available		New	New	New	New	New						Monthly - as at the end of the month - to be defined	
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Quarterly	95%	n/a	89%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available				99%								Quarterly	
9	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	Monthly	96%	n/a	99%	92% (2016/17)	96% (2016/17)	Green	96% (190/197)	96% (178/186)	93% (164/176)	96% (157/164)	96% (166/173)						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
10	% of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a 4 weekly CP visit within timescales in the month	Monthly	Not a target measure	n/a	94%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	77% (152/197)	85% (159/186)	90% (158/176)	92% (151/164)	92% (160/173)						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
11	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	Monthly	16%	13%	13%	19% (2016/17)	15% (2016/17)	Green	33% (5/15)	22% (8/37)	17% (8/48)	16% (11/67)	15% (13/86)						Year To Date (NI 65)	
Looked After Children																				
12	Looked After Children rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure		34	62 (2016-17)	50 (2016-17)	Not a target measure	33.6	34.0	33.4	34.7	34.5						End of the month snapshot	
13	Number of Looked After Children	Monthly	Not a target measure		158	72670 (2016-17)	9910 (2016-17)	Not a target measure	158	160	157	163	162						End of the month snapshot	
14	Number of UASC children and young people (PROPOSED)	Monthly	Not a target measure	New	New	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	25	27	27	30	30						Monthly - as at the end of the month	
15	Percentage of Looked After Children with an allocated social worker (DELETION)	Monthly	100%	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%						Monthly - as at the end of the month - to be defined	
15a	Average caseload of workers for Looked After Children (PROPOSED)	Monthly	New	New	New	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available		New	New	New	New	New						Monthly - as at the end of the month - to be defined	
16	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	Quarterly	26 weeks	31 weeks	25 weeks	31	No relevant benchmarking available				n/a								Quarterly	
17	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	Monthly	96%	88%	97%	Not published	Not published		86%	87%	88%	89%	90%						Year To Date (NI 66)	
18	% of Looked After Children participating in their reviews in month	Monthly	Not a target measure	99%	99%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a						Year to Date	
19	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - number of moves (3 moves or more in the year)	Quarterly	11%	17%	16%	10% (2016/17)	12% (2016/17)	Green			1% (1/157)								Year To Date (NI 62)	
20	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - length of placement	Quarterly	65%	69%	71%	70% (2016/17)	69% (2016/17)	Green			68% (38/56)								End of the month snapshot (NI 63)	

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2018/19	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2017/18 performance												Notes
				Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England	London		Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18 / Q1	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18 / Q2	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18 / Q3	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19 / Q4	
21	% of Looked After Children placed with agency foster carers	Quarterly	40%	n/a	44%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			38% (47/125)									Quarterly	
22	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	Quarterly	15	11	15	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			3									Year to Date	
23	Number of Looked After Children who were adopted and agency Special Guardianship Orders granted	Monthly	Not a target measure	12	17	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	0	0	5	6	6							Year to Date	

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2018/19	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2017/18 performance											Notes
				Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England	London		Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18 / Q1	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18 / Q2	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18 / Q3	Jan-19	Feb-19	
Childrens Centres and Schools																				
24	% outcome of all Children Centre Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness) (DELETE)	Quarterly	100%	100%	100%	66% (31 August 2015)	72% (31 August 2015)	Green			100% (5/5)							Year to Date. National and London Comparitors as at 31/08/2015.		
25	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services	Quarterly	Not a target measure	58%	68%	89% (31 March 2017)	93% (31 March 2017)	Not a target measure			n/a							Year to Date Cumulates (Target 19% per quarter)		
26	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	Quarterly	91%	93%	91%	89% (31 August 2017)	94% (31 August 2017)	Green			91% (51/56)							Year to Date. National and London Comparitors as at 31/08/2017.		
27	Number of Primary permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	1 (AY 2016/17)	0 (AY 2015/16)	1145 (AY 2015/16)	105(A Y 2015/16)	Not a target measure	0	1	1	1	1					August End of Acad. Yr. YTD (August data interim until November). September start of the new Acad. Yr.		
28	Number of Secondary permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	19 (AY 2016/17)	17 (AY 2015/16)	5445 (AY 2015/16)	805(A Y 2015/16)	Not a target measure	5	6	6	7	7					August End of Acad. Yr. YTD. September start of the new Acad. Yr.		
29	Secondary persistent absenteeism (10% or more sessions missed)	Annual	Not a target measure	8.4% (AY 2016/17)	12% (AY 2015/16)	13.1% (AY 2015/16)	11.7% (AY 2015/16)	Not a target measure										Annual Measure 6 half-terms DfE Published SFR maintained and academies		
30	% of Reception year surplus places	Annual	Range	7.7% (AY 2016/17)	3.5 (AY 2015/16)	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available											Annual measure		
31	% of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places	Annual	Range	9.6% (AY 2016/17)	6.5% (AY 2015/16)	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available											Annual measure		
Young People and Services																				
32	Youth service participation rate	Annual	1800	1,967	NRTP	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available											Annual Measure		
33	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	3.0%	1.6% (Q4)	1.5% (Q4)	2.8%	No relevant benchmarking available	Green	1.5% (58/3883)	1.5% (60/3883)	1.4% (56/3885)	1.4% (55/3877)	1.4% (75/3874)					Monthly (totals are adjusted) - reported a month in arrears		
34	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) education, employment or training status 'not known'	Monthly	Not a target measure	0.9% (Q4)	1.5% (Q4)	3.2%	No relevant benchmarking available		1.6% (61/3883)	1.4% (53/3883)	1.4% (55/3885)	1.7% (67/3877)	1.7% (67/3874)					Monthly (totals are adjusted) - reported a month in arrears		
35	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	Monthly	50	54	63	326.90 rate per 100,000 (2016)	405.50 rate per 100,000 (2016)	Green			12							Year to Date		
36	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system	Quarterly	Not a target measure	0.50	0.55	1.04(2013)	1.10(2013)	Not a target measure			n/a							Quarterly (NI 19)		
37	TF: Number of Families engaged for year 1 of Expanded Programme	Quarterly	Not a target measure	320	320	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure			n/a							Quarterly		
38	% of commissioned services for which quarterly monitoring was completed	Quarterly	100%	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			100%							Quarterly (Time lag in collating from partner agencies)		
39	% agency social workers (PROPOSED)	Quarterly	New	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			n/a							Quarterly (Aligned with HR reporting)		

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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Children & Young People's Plan 2019-23

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

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

Recommendations:

- A. Members of the panel to discuss their priorities for the children and young people of Merton for the period 2019-23 and to provide their views to feed into the consultation and engagement activity underway to support development of the plan.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report is an opportunity for members to engage in pre-decision scrutiny to inform development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The current Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) covers the years 2015-19 over which time significant progress has been made in delivering on the priority areas identified at the time. The CYPP is the key partnership strategy for the Children's Trust and aims to unite all partners around a common cause delivered through pooling or alignment of their respective budgets. The key priorities to be delivered through this plan were:
- Deliver early help and improve outcomes for those subject to the effects of disadvantage
 - Safeguarding children and young people
 - Looked after children and care leavers
 - Closing the gap in educational outcomes and opportunities
 - Engage and enable young people to achieve better outcomes
 - Children with special educational needs and disabilities
- 2.2 With delivery of the plan nearing the end, progress on these with a year to go has been assessed and is summarised as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 In establishing the new plan, there is a great opportunity to engage with children and young people, and with many partners, service users and other interested groups within the borough. It has been decided that rather than engaging with some draft priorities for ratification, we will offer a 'blank sheet of paper', supported by a suggested

framework for consideration to enable all groups to feed in their individual thoughts. These will then be grouped to identify emerging priorities and some of the key things that people want to see the partnership achieve in each of these areas.

- 2.4 Due to the continuation of the austerity agenda, there is a lack of resource within the public sector to invest in as many discretionary and preventative services as may be desired in order to retain sufficient funding to provide our statutory services. This means that, to deliver this type of plan, it is essential to think creatively about the respective roles and responsibilities of individual people, their local communities and organisations within the wider society in not only identifying, but also in meeting children and young people's needs.
- 2.5 Fundamental considerations for the new CYPP will be how we maximise the opportunities available through working effectively in partnership to build the resilience of individuals and our communities. This will be essential in supporting development of services, the local offer through voluntary and community sector groups and in enabling our children and young people to reach their full potential – now and in the future. This will help us in creating strong, healthy and prosperous families within communities where they can thrive, invest and see a future within the borough.
- 2.6 Priorities for the new CYPP will need to recognise some key considerations:
- Many services have responsibility for children from conception to 25, and even where this is not so, organisations are increasingly recognising the unique needs of adolescence extend into the mid-twenties, so the plan must be relevant for those that are very young, primary age, at secondary school, or transitioning to adulthood.
 - Some of these young people and families will be receiving support through our services at a range of levels of need as set out within our Child, Young Person & Families Wellbeing Model (Appendix 2) and others will not be requiring any support or services at the current time.
 - To be broad ranging and provide a holistic approach we should be thinking about the wider community children and young people are growing up within, and how we enable young people to achieve their desired outcomes. Every Child Matters gave a helpful framework for these:
 - Be healthy
 - Stay safe
 - Enjoy and achieve
 - Make a positive contribution
 - Achieve economic wellbeing
 - In addition, when the Every Child Matters outcomes were originally identified, young people's own priorities included their relationships with family and friends. Our plan should also therefore acknowledge this.
- 2.7 We do not seek to consult on a set of pre-identified priorities, proposals and ideas in order to gain endorsement. Instead, this consultation aims to give an update on what we sought to achieve through the last plan, where we think we are now and within the framework for consideration outlined above, to attract open views on what our priorities should be for the next 4 years. Scrutiny are requested to consider:
- How might we want to envisage Merton for children, young people and families in 2023;
 - What are your priorities for Merton's children, young people and families in the future; and

- What are some of the key outcomes that should be achieved in order to say that we have been successful in taking the borough on this journey as far as children, young people and their families are concerned.

2.8 The views provided by the Scrutiny panel will be incorporated with feedback received over the coming months from a range of stakeholders including our partners, residents, service users and – above all - our children and young people who we want to be the future of the borough. This will help us develop a Children & Young People’s Plan for the borough that is informed by a range of opinions and is widely owned. The final plan will be presented for approval through Cabinet and the Children’s Trust by spring 2019.

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 – Children & Young People’s Plan 2015-19 delivery update.

8.2 Appendix 2 – Child, Young Person & Family Wellbeing Model.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

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2016-19 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

A BACKWARDS LOOK AT KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

DELIVER EARLY HELP AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR THOSE SUBJECT TO THE EFFECTS OF DISADVANTAGE

Joined-up and effective early help

Continued strong partnership working between schools, health services and the local authority to provide support to children and young people below statutory thresholds through a range of core and buyback services (e.g. Education Welfare, Virtual Behaviour, TAMHS).

Early help services recognised as outstanding in most recent Ofsted inspection (May 17). This includes strong local early years provision and effective services to meet the needs of new demands around early education for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds.

Maintained successful Transforming Families programme to deliver support to families with multiple and complex needs. Partnership working facilitated 434 families achieving Significant and Sustained Progress (March 18).

- ☺ Young people placed Transforming Families as 8/9 on a satisfaction scale of 1-10.
- ☺ *'The stability and support from my worker led to my own inner strength to change'* (parent attending the Transforming Families parent forum).

Embedded Merton's Single Point of Access (SPA) to CAMHS to streamline referrals and ensure the appropriate level of service at the right time and place.

Implemented new commissioning priorities with services focused on children missing from home or care, children at risk of sexual exploitation, advocacy for children on CP plans/LAC/Care Leavers, young carers and children with disabilities.

- ☺ *'My advocate got my opinions out loud, made people listen to me and got what I asked for'*. (Young person supported by Jigsaw4u advocacy service).

Streamlined and targeted early years services

Re-shaped Early Years service with streamlined management structure and co-location of Community Health services staff to enable better collaborative working. This partnership working has resulted in increased referrals made by health visitors for children's centre and early help services.

Re-designed children's centre programme includes provision of a range of evidence-based programmes including Incredible Years, Triple P and PIPT. Assertive outreach activities promote services to families living in defined areas of the borough and targeted plans engage families eligible for 2 year-old funding.

- ☺ 95% of families said they had experienced improved outcomes after attending a children's centre programme or service, including feeling more confident in, and enjoying caring for their child; understanding their child's needs; feeling able to support their child's development in learning and play; managing behaviour; and knowing how to access further support (Early Years Service Review 2017/18).

Positive progress on outcomes within Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy under *Theme 1: Best start in life-early years development and strong educational achievement*. Since 2015, the three-year trend has demonstrated an increase of six percentage points in children achieving a 'Good Level of Development' (74% in 2016-17).

Increased the % of FSM pupils achieving a 'Good Level of Development' in early years from 58% (AY 2015-16) to 64% (AY 2016-17).

Increased the number of 2 year olds accessing 'Free child places' from 396 (Summer 16-17) to 450

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Delivering multi-agency priorities in partnership

Ensuring vulnerable cohorts such as children at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), missing children, young people at risk of radicalisation and violence against women and girls (VAWG) are safeguarded via a range of activity including through multi-agency panels and associated strategies/protocols/guidance, improved data sets/profiles and triangulation, awareness training and development and frontline work on complex caseloads.

- ☺ Young people supported by Catch 22 were involved in service needs assessments with regard to type and location of activities; including participation in the design of diversionary interventions to reduce a group of young people from going missing together.

Development of a multi-agency Neglect Strategy and Neglect tool to support its effective consideration in practice and ensure the issue is widely understood. Positioned neglect as a key cross-cutting issue across MSCB priorities.

Addressing national issue around growing youth violence locally through development of a multi-agency serious violence protocol and move towards contextual safeguarding to raise awareness and improve safeguarding practice.

Focusing on frontline practice

Confirmed systemic practice model for Merton Children's Social Care and continuing to roll out and embed Signs of Safety to the wider safeguarding network so that its solution-focused and engagement centred approach can be applied to different parts of the Merton Well-Being Model.

- ☺ *'It's getting down to the point, and having a connection with the family and understanding their dynamics which I really feel you did which helped us to move forward to a better place. We now have our lives back.'* (Parent supported using the Signs of Safety approach).

Continued work to deepen policy and practice around the MSCB's priorities of Think Family, Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents and Early Help. Commenced work on new partnership arrangements to succeed MSCB to continue to deliver on safeguarding commitments.

Continued to deliver a comprehensive MSCB training and development programme for professionals from multi-agency and multi-disciplinary backgrounds to gain knowledge, skills and expertise.

Appropriate and timely safeguarding responses

Reviewed the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and implemented changes to improve leadership and quality assurance, build shared understanding of thresholds across partners and put in place a stronger partnership response and single-agency improvements for better MASH outcomes.

- ☺ **Positive feedback from professionals about the MASH** included – *'available, supportive, clear on thresholds, and gives feedback on the outcome of the referral'*.

Maintained performance on % of children subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time (13% for 2017-18).

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

Timeliness of care proceedings and achieving permanence

Strengthened procedures and processes in relation to care proceedings to improve timeliness to ensure compliance with Public Law Outline.

Delivering transformation projects such as the Family Drug & Alcohol Court (FDAC) and Social Impact Bond (SIB) to prevent children from coming into care.

Improved permanency planning through rigorous tracking of plans to ensure steady progression.

Sustained significant progress made around timeliness of child's journey to adoption through increased

	<p>management oversight and scrutiny of care planning to enable early identification of factors causing delays.</p> <p>Improved the 3-year rolling average of time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family from 531 days (2013-16) to a provisional rate of 393 days (2014-17).</p> <p>Actively engaged with the South West London Adoption Consortium and currently on track to move towards regionalisation of adoption in line with the national context.</p> <p>☺ Adoption and permanence team bi-annual report states that adopters are positive about each stage of the adoption process: <i>'We were allowed to progress at our own pace with support and clarification.'</i></p>
<p>Placement choice and stability</p>	<p>Delivered successful recruitment campaigns year on year to recruit in-house foster carers including those for target groups through a cost-effective mix of marketing, communications and events.</p> <p>☺ The majority (94%) of children and young people felt safe in their homes 'all or most of the time', in comparison 75% of children in the general population felt 'totally safe' at home. (LAC Strategy consultation).</p> <p>Annual refresh of LAC Sufficiency Strategy renews focus on demand and areas of development.</p> <p>Maintained approval numbers for in-house foster carers (11 in 2017-18).</p> <p>☺ 84% of respondents to the foster cares survey described their level of satisfaction with the fostering service as 'good' or 'very good'.</p>
<p>Health and education outcomes</p>	<p>Continuing to deliver robust challenge, tracking and facilitating individualised intervention through Merton's Virtual School to raise aspiration and attainment for LAC. Targeted support includes monitoring and scrutiny of the Pupil Premium grant and attendance and quality assurance of Personal Education Plans at all phases as well as the education portion of Pathway Plans post-16.</p> <p>☺ A higher proportion of looked after young people in Merton liked school (84%) and felt that their carers showed an interest in their education (97%) compared to their peers in the general population. (LAC Strategy consultation).</p> <p>Implemented new process resulting in timely and effective dissemination of health reviews and information for looked after children and care leavers following Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>☺ Compared to the general population, a higher proportion of young people in Merton were happy with their appearance, felt that the things they did in their lives were worthwhile and felt positive about their future.</p>
<p>Supporting Care Leavers towards independence</p>	<p>Refreshed Merton's Staying Put policy which offers greater incentives to carers to keep young people beyond their 18th birthday. This has seen an increase in the number of young people staying put with 14 currently taking this option.</p> <p>Developed a Care Leavers Local Offer covering health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society. These web pages are in development and are due to be published as part of the Young Merton Directory at the end of October.</p> <p>Provision of a Personal Advisor till age 25 to ensure appropriate advice and support is given to manage transition and settle into independence and adult life. This includes coordinating provision of services, support to find further education, employment or training, providing information on finances and housing options, and remaining informed about progress and well-being.</p> <p>Continued to buy into the Aim Higher organisation's targeted programmes for LAC to raise aspirations and understanding of higher education (HE). In 2017-18, two young people attended the post-16 conference – both of whom are on Level 3 programmes and on course for university. A more bespoke, individual programme involving outreach, careers advice and progression routes other than HE is in development which Merton LAC can access.</p>

<p>Participation and voice of LAC and Care Leavers</p>	<p>Continuing to seek the views of LAC and Care Leavers through a variety of mechanisms such as the Children in Care Council (CiCC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Children in care council informed planning on a range of issues: housing; 'Staying Put'; budgeting; visa status; health; emotional well-being; LAC reviews. <p>Commissioned independent advocacy services to support attendance and participation in LAC Reviews to enable children and young people to be listened to and part of the decision-making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ 99% of LAC participated in their review (68% attended the meeting themselves), and 99% of reviews were conducted within timescale.
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CLOSING THE GAP IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND OPPORTUNITY

<p>Delivering high-quality education and focus on disadvantaged pupils</p>	<p>Continuing to provide high-quality education in Merton with 100% of secondary schools rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding', 93% of all schools rated 'Good' or better and 95% of pupils educated in schools rated 'Good' or better (June 18).</p> <p>Monitoring and support to Merton schools to raise the educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils through effective use and impact of Pupil Premium funding and targeted training to help lower attaining groups.</p> <p>Increased the % of children meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 from 57% (AY 2015-16) to 66% (AY 2016-17).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ In one example of 'pupil voice' a primary school used pupil feedback to inform the implementation of new activities and resources to support pupils' writing and literacy; these are presented in poster form in each classroom. <p>Strong improvements for disadvantaged pupils in 2016-17 with 52% reaching the expected standard in the combined indicator.</p> <p>Reduced secondary school persistent absenteeism from 12% (AY 2015-16) to 8.4% (AY 2016-17).</p>
<p>Ensuring availability of local school places</p>	<p>Responded to demand for additional secondary school places through the opening of Harris Academy Wimbledon and made a reasonable offer of a place to all residents (June 18).</p> <p>Work is underway to support the further increase in provision and sufficiency of local SEN places in special schools, particularly in response to the continued rise in ASD and SEMH. This has seen further expansion of Perseid and Cricket Green expansion currently underway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ 64% of parents who responded to the High Needs Strategic Review consultation were able to find educational placement for their child which was a reasonable distance from their home, and which met their needs.
<p>Developing and maintaining services for vulnerable cohorts</p>	<p>Engagement of secondary schools in the Fair Access Protocol to place eligible 'hard to place' children. Implementation of a Fair Access and Managed Moves Protocol at primary phase.</p> <p>Continued to operate an effective multi-agency Children Missing Education (CME) panel in order to ensure vulnerable children and young people receive and engage with a suitable education offer.</p> <p>Continued to commission provision for Key Stage 4 pupils requiring EAL support to access teaching in relation to individual needs whilst experiencing normal school life – results have been exception year on year with see 16th Sept 2016</p>

ENGAGE AND ENABLE YOUNG PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE BETTER OUTCOMES

<p>Diverting young people</p>	<p>With numbers of First-Time Entrants (FTE) into the Youth Justice System reducing, significantly better outcomes are being delivered (compared to London and nationally) for young people in Employment,</p>
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<p>from the Youth Justice System</p>	<p>Training or Education at the end of their order.</p> <p>Specific interventions and projects undertaken to reach and support relevant young people, particularly members of the BAME community. Delivered extensive planned and coordinated interventions via group work and 1:1, where appropriate, through the Youth Offending Team to stem re-offending and engage young people to build better futures.</p> <p>☺ Delivered the monthly Youth Board Forum for young people involved in youth justice which led to service developments in response to the young people's requests including: notification of home visits, timings of youth board meetings, access to the building.</p> <p>Reduced the number of First-Time Entrants into the YJS (aged 10-17) from 61 (2015-16) to 47 (2017-18).</p> <p>Lowered the rate of reoffending by young people in the YJS from 0.88 (2015-16) to 0.50 (2017-18).</p>
<p>Promoting safety in schools and the community</p>	<p>Re-commissioning of the Safer Schools Partnership with Safer Schools officers now key members of the children's and school's workforce to provide a safe and secure learning environment.</p> <p>☺ Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) delivered a manifesto based on young people's top concerns (crime, gangs and health and safety) including a gangs 'think tank'; first aid training; 'and a day of action' on health, environment and crime prevention.</p> <p>Increased focus in local partnership working around gangs and county lines crime to develop a coordinated response and linking to contextual safeguarding.</p> <p>☺ Delivered a 'County Lines' workshop for parents which have led to developments based on parents' feedback including parenting support, and gang awareness training for primary school years 5&6.</p> <p>Refreshed Merton's Serious Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation Protocol to improve multi-agency practice in combating this issue and reduce harm to individuals and communities in the borough.</p>
<p>Targeted support for NEET young people</p>	<p>Continuing school-based and individually targeted intervention to reduce NEET. Coordinated work across the My Futures, Transforming Families and YOT to manage complex cases.</p> <p>☺ <i>"I really appreciate how understanding you are, it makes a change from all the other adults who just get angry with me all the time about stuff like this, thank you."</i> (Young person supported by the My Futures ETE Team).</p> <p>Created a NEET post within Merton's Virtual School for LAC to provide support for individual young people to access training and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Decreased the number of CYP (16-17 year olds) NEET from 2.2% (2015-16) to 1.6% (2017-18).</p>
<p>Diversionary intervention and support</p>	<p>Established the Risk and Resilience Service with a number of positive outcomes achieved to date including delivery of a range of diversionary activity courses, meaningful contact through detached youth work, targeted workshops in education and youth settings, a large number of opportunistic alcohol brief interventions and good engagement in comprehensive treatment interventions.</p>
<p>Sustaining youth services and participation</p>	<p>Refreshed the Merton Youth Partnership to be based on new model of youth provision steered by Merton Voluntary Services Council with local authority support for mobilisation and delivery.</p> <p>☺ Uptown Youth Service voluntary sector youth centre set up the 'Saturday Step Up' inclusive session supported by peer mentors, in response to requests from its young people.</p> <p>Facilitated a range of forums for children and young people to influence and enact change in the borough including the Youth Parliament, young advisors and young inspectors, CiCC and KidsFirst.</p> <p>☺ <i>'We developed confidence over time by being as active and involved as we can'</i> (Merton Youth Parliament Member).</p>

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

<p>Strategy and integrated service development</p>	<p>Refreshed the SEN Self-Evaluation Framework as a tool to improving joined-up practice in identifying and responding to the needs of children with SEN or disabilities, improving their outcomes and ensuring inspection readiness.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement around Merton's Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategy and pathways undertaken. Merton's Autism Outreach Service provides advice and guidance to schools to support inclusion of ASD and Social Communication Difficulties in mainstream settings.</p> <p>☺ Feedback from children and young people with autism and their families was used to set the priorities and actions of the new Merton Autism Strategy.</p> <p>Continued review and development of Portage service with new pathways and more defined criteria and service offer to support holistic assessment and children's transition from home into community settings and early years provision.</p> <p>Co-production, publication and ongoing expansion work to improve Local Offer information on all relevant services. Establishment of permanent post to support families around awareness and use. Creation of new information hub via merging of Family Service Directory, Young Merton website and Local Offer to improve quality and variety of services listed.</p>
<p>Meeting health needs</p>	<p>Re-commissioned Community Health contract to deliver integrated and specific services including health visitors located in children's centres, therapy services and a co-located EHC planning team.</p> <p>☺ 75% of parents who responded to the High Needs Strategy Review consultation were satisfied or better with the support given by their child's nursery/ school/ college as set out in the EHCP.</p> <p>Jointly funded EHCP Health Team based within SEND Integrated Service to provide health advice and guidance in the development of EHC Plans and facilitate referrals and access to services for continuing care and community health services.</p> <p>Seamless transition services at school entry with health visitors and school nurses working jointly for smooth handover, early identification of need and support and to ensure school readiness.</p> <p>Provision of school nursing services including work with children with SEN and disabilities to support health and wellbeing needs and help for schools with regard to policies, procedures and training on aspects of medicine management.</p>
<p>Transition and supporting independence</p>	<p>Strengthened transition arrangements through establishment of dedicated 14+ SEN team to facilitate preparation for adulthood and development of a Transitions Procedure for all agencies to ensure the process is timely, appropriate and proportionate to complexity of need. Development of a guide for young people providing an overview of choices available as they approach adult life.</p> <p>☺ <i>'Thanks so much for your help, I really appreciate everything you do'</i>. Parent of 18 year old with very complex needs and ASD supported by our MIASS post-16 service.</p> <p>Initial roll out of personal budgets for short breaks and transport and publication of policy statements for these services.</p>
<p>EHC Planning and Assessment</p>	<p>Successfully delivered the transfer of existing SEN Statements and LDA assessments to EHC Plans in accordance to deadline.</p> <p>☺ In response to concerns raised by Kids First forum for parents of children with SEND we streamlined the Education, Health and Care Plan application (EHCP) process, and delivered training in schools for senior case officers on delivering an effective assess, plan and review process for pupils with SEND.</p> <p>Responded to a continued increase in demand for new EHC Plans and established additional resource to improve timeliness of these plans to enable more to be completed within the 20 week timescale and ensure that those going over timescale are achieved as quickly as possible whilst producing a robust plan.</p>

Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model (MWBM) 2017 www.merton.gov.uk/mwbm



Promoting well-being of unborn babies, infants, children, young people and their families / carers

MWBM Blue Tier of Need:
Prevention

MWBM Green Tier of Need:
Early Help

MWBM Amber Tier of Need:
Complex / Statutory

MWBM Red Tier of Need:
Acute / Specialist / Statutory

Consultation

← Services offered in parallel with assessment of need →

Two-thirds children or young people approx have needs addressed by Universal Services

MWBM Blue:
Prevention Responses:
Universal In-house
Assessment & Support

MWBM Green:
Early Help: Responses to low/
moderate additional needs via
OASA/TAO/TAF for targeted or
multi-agency coordinated support

MWBM Amber:
Responses to higher level complex needs
such as Child In Need; complex Special
Education Needs or Disabilities; OAMHS Tier 3;
Youth Cautions-Referral Orders

MWBM Red: Responses to acute or
intensive needs where child may be at risk
of significant harm – Child Protection; Court
proceedings; Hospitalisation; OAMHS Tier 4;
Residential, Remand, Public Protection.

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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Care Leaver Accommodation Follow-up Report

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

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

Recommendations:

- A. Members of the panel discuss and comment on the progress against the actions established in response to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel review of Care Leavers Accommodation.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides members of the panel with an update on delivery of the actions proposed in relation to the accommodation of care leavers, following on from the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel report of October 2017 and actions presented to this Panel in January 2018.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel made recommendations to Cabinet on aspects to explore in order to further improve the Council's support for care leavers in gaining suitable independent accommodation upon leaving care.
- 2.2 The report made nine recommendations, responsibility for which is shared between Children, Schools and Families and Community and Housing departments. Officers worked together to develop an action plan to further explore, or address the recommendations made. This report provides an update on delivery of the actions, attached as Appendix 1, with progress summarised within this report.
- 2.3 **HMO Provision** – The current project of 5 units is working well, although there have been some issues raised about anti-social behaviour. There is currently provider interest in offering additional units, although these are not local to Merton. Discussions are also in hand to explore further providers and understand if opportunities can be created for more local provision.
- 2.4 **Lead Tenants** – Whilst shared housing takes place within HMO provision, the current cohort of care leavers are not suitable to make one vulnerable young person, as a lead

tenant, responsible for the actions of other tenants. Where suitable candidates and access to two bedroom properties is available, this will be considered as an option. Merton does not have a housing stock and one of the main barriers is that private landlords want guarantors: this barrier is currently being explored.

- 2.5 **Shared Lives** – This is now offered as part of the menu of placement options for young people with additional needs. Whilst referrals have been made, at present no referrals have been accepted, but we are working with some young people with mental health difficulties who turn 18 shortly and may benefit from this approach.
- 2.6 **Building Schemes and Quotas** – Work continues along with the housing needs service to enable these young care leavers to be offered permanent tenancies through housing. This has currently been achieved for 28 young people. Further work continues to explore options within the private rental market, where some success has been achieved for individual young people.
- 2.7 **Staying Put** – The number of young people staying put is continuing to increase and currently stands at 14 as of September 2018. This is comprised of 9 with in house foster carers and the others staying put with independent fostering agency provision. This continues to grow from 5 young people as at the end of November 2017, and 2 in June 2017 at the time of the Ofsted inspection.
- 2.8 **Young People in Foster Care** – These aspects and further opportunities are being picked up within the refresh of the Care Leavers Strategy, which is currently in development, and will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board for approval later in the year. The strategy will also take forward several of the other recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel, along with other priorities identified by our young people.
- 2.9 **Pre-Tenancy Support and ESOL Training** – The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) has grown since the last update and stands at 34, as of end September 2018. Coffee meet ups take place on a monthly basis for these UASCs. A Young Migrants Early Intervention pilot project has also been proposed to apply for additional ESOL support.
- 2.10 **Peer Mentors** – Further work to develop peer mentors has not currently progressed, but instead care leavers are used to informally support other care leavers. With the Children in Care Council (CiCC) having recently been reinvigorated, they will consider some of these issues and determine their priorities for progressing and providing suitable support.
- 2.11 **Encouraging Saving for Rent and Deposit** – Young people in care are already encouraged to save through a number of activities. Over the coming year, the Children in Care Council will be engaged in reviewing this work and considering new opportunities such as independent living workshops will be investigated to help care leavers in developing the skills required to fund their accommodation needs and live independently once they leave care.

3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial implications from the actions contained within this report have yet to be fully costed and further information is required on what funding will be provided by the government in order to offset the costs of the new responsibilities in relation to providing support to care leavers until the age of 25.

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 – Care Leavers Action Plan

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Cabinet Papers 16 October 2017 Agenda Item 9 – Reference from the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – consideration of care leaver accommodation

Care Leavers Accommodation Action Plan

Number	Issue	Outcome	Service / Area	Action	Responsible AD / Head of Service	By when	Reviewed by
2.3.3 i	Housing, Future Merton and Children, Schools and Families departments to continue working with private landlords and partners like Evolve to offer more HMO opportunities to care leavers. A pilot project for Evolve is explored.	Young care leavers are enabled to enter suitable shared accommodation with other people to support their transition to independent living	ART	Pilot project of 5 units with provision of support available Review to determine success and future needs	Head of Access to Resources & CWD	Oct-17 Jul-18	SC Scrutiny
2.3.3 ii	The "lead tenant" model has been found to be successful and should be considered	Care leavers are supported by more experienced / responsible tenants to make a successful transition into independent accommodation		Lead tenant model to be considered within Care Leavers Strategy development	Head of Permanency, LAC & Care Leavers	Jul-18	SC Scrutiny
2.3.3 iii	Explore the potential for extending suitable Shared Lives accommodation to young people with more complex needs leaving care	Young care leavers with more complex needs are supported into semi-independent accommodation		Offer with Shared Lives to be extended to care leavers Suitable young people to be identified	Head of Access to Resources & CWD		SC Scrutiny
2.3.3 iv	Explore other longer term opportunities: Housing First, co-operative building schemes and Merton developing extra accommodation for itself (e.g. Y-Cube model)	Care leavers are supported to make a successful transition into independent accommodation		Explore practicalities and opportunities for Y-Cube for care leavers Establish quota of units to meet anticipated need	Head of Access to Resources & CWD		SC Scrutiny
2.3.4 i	Consider implications of "staying put" policy	Young people are afforded the opportunity to stay put where appropriate and the impact of this on overall provision of foster provision is minimised	ART	Review and refresh policies New arrangements to be identified and tested	Head of Access to Resources & CWD	Dec-17 Mar-18	SC Scrutiny
2.3.4 ii	Focus on working with young people whilst in foster care with the aim of achieving better engagement when they enter semi-independent provision	Improved engagement of young people after they leave care to support them into adulthood and independent living	14+ ART Transitions	Consider within Care Leavers Strategy development Work with foster carers to support them in promoting transitions to independence Review "My Guide to Independence" and Pathway Plans	Head of Permanency, LAC & Care Leavers	Jul 18 ...	CYP Scrutiny
2.3.4 iii	Maintaining good work and integration of pre-tenancy help into ESOL provision to provide support for care leavers that speak English as an additional language	Integration of pre-tenancy help into ESOL provision to provide support for care leavers that speak English as an additional language	14+ ART Transitions	Content of commissioned ESOL training reviewed to include other financial and tenancy skills Explore opportunities for an English language coffee shop or social facility for asylum seekers or others for whom English is not their first language	Head of Permanency, LAC & Care Leavers	Jan-18 18	CYP Scrutiny
2.3.4 iv	Encourage care leavers who have successfully transitioned into independent accommodation to become peer mentors to offer support to those that are yet to successfully achieve this transition	Care leavers are supported to make a successful transition into independent accommodation	14+ ART Transitions	Explore the approach in K&C Consider if / how to resource similar approach Report back on recommendations Work proactively with Young People to support transition Look at making care leavers pledge into regulations	Head of Permanency, LAC & Care Leavers	Jan-18	CYP Scrutiny
2.3.4 v	Explore how to encourage and support young people prior to leaving care to understand the benefit of saving to build up a rent deposit / property maintenance fund	Young people understand the need to save for rent or property maintenance and are therefore in a better financial position to sustain independent accommodation	14+ ART Transitions	Discuss regular savings proposals with Children in Care Council Consider independent living workshops and how these are provided in the future	Head of Permanency, LAC & Care Leavers		CYP Scrutiny

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9th October 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: User Voice Activity and Update Report

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

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

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

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and consider the range of User Voice engagement activity undertaken with children and young people each year as summarised within the report.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Children and Families' Voice Framework end of year review 2017/18 provides members of the panel with information on some highlights from the range of 'user voice' activity undertaken within the Children, Schools and Families Department over the year 2017/18.

2. DETAILS

2.1 The department's 'user voice' framework has been in place since 2014 and states our commitment to ensuring that children, young people and families have a key role in influencing the design and delivery of children's services. The framework is underpinned by an annual action plan, which sets out the significant amount of engagement with children, young people and their families that is conducted across the department. This is an integral aspect of our service planning process and enables us to ensure that we consider how best to engage with our young people in ensuring that our services best meet their needs. This end of year review, attached as Appendix 1, shows cases 'user voice' activity during 2017/18 within CSF and across the wider partnership, and its positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.

2.2 The attached report summarises the key activities taken over the past year across our range of services. Some of the key highlights for the year include:

Commitment One – Delivering on our Participation Promise: providing opportunities for *all* children and young people to influence Merton the place. Notable activities and impact this year included:

Youth forums (including pupil voice) and youth driven activities.

Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) implemented a manifesto based on the top concerns of local young people – delivered a gangs 'think tank' event on crime prevention and gang awareness, a young lifesavers training event, and a 'Student Day of Action'

enabling local pupils of all ages to discuss improvements to health and well-being, local environment, and crime prevention. MYP members said their involvement in the forum enabled them to *develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills, confidence and self-esteem*. Pupil voice - review processes in schools are informed by pupil voice and have led to a range of developments in individual schools including, the implementation of a whole school survey, and a review of the costs of after school clubs.

Feedback from LGBT+ pupils informed the development of a Trans Inclusion toolkit for schools in Merton and Wandsworth. My Futures ETE team facilitated youth led summer activities – one young person said “*I really appreciate how understanding you are, it makes a change from all the other adults who just get angry with me all the time about stuff like this, thank you.*”

Consultations to inform the development of priorities and actions in key strategies. *Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy; the Autism Strategy; and the Great Weight Debate 31 recommendations.*

Activities which support the community. Merton Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) are a uniformed youth group which supports the community in a broad range of events and activities “*This is one of the best days in Cadets, everyone pulling together to help each other, and it’s been great to cheer on the runners, they’re amazing!*” (young cadet who supported the London Marathon)

Commitment Two – Child focused: enabling children and young people *who are service users* to influence improvements to our systems, services and processes. Notable activities and impact this year included:

Consultations to inform the development of priorities and actions in key strategies. Merton Looked After Children (LAC) strategy consultation report states that the majority (94%) of children and young people said they felt safe in their homes ‘all or most of the time’, compared to 75% in the general population. Children’s views on all areas of their lives - home, school, activities, health and well-being, and relationships with carers and friends - have been used to develop the new LAC Strategy.

User forums for vulnerable children in receipt of services.

Children in Care Council informed discussions on a range of issues – housing, homelessness, budgeting, Staying Put in foster care, growing up undocumented, health, emotional well-being, LAC reviews, and Independent Reviewing Officer service. Transforming Families youth forum said they would like more access to positive activities and the team organised a go-karting trip. Young people placed Transforming Families as 8/9 on a scale of 1-10. Youth Justice Youth Board (forum for young people) requested a range of developments - organising home visit, timings of youth board meetings, and access to the youth justice service building, these have been implemented by the Youth Justice Team.

Recruitment and training. Care Leavers delivered workshops for prospective foster carers during the assessment process.

Learning from serious case reviews. *Part of our response to the expressed views of Child B* was the implementation a new Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy and protocol.

Commissioned and partner services ensuring effective youth participation.

Commissioned services facilitated user led activities - service evaluation, planning and improvement; decision making about finances and strategy; recruitment; publicity; and the development of web based information and advice. One young person supported by the Catch22 risk and resilience commissioned service said, “*[C22 workers] listened to me and believed I could change...being positive and helpful and never judging me...I now have a course I enjoy at college.*” Uptown Youth Service set up a new ‘Saturday Step Up’ inclusive session supported by peer mentors, in response to requests from its young people.

Commitment Three – Delivering on Merton’s approach to casework practice: Putting the wishes and feelings of children and young people who are subject of a plan, at the centre of decision making and planning. Notable activities and impact this year included:

Child centred practice approaches for assessment, planning and review.

Child’s participation in their child protection (CP) conference - Twelve children attended their CP conference, and 8 gave feedback. The majority said they were happy or very happy with their conference, scaling at 9/10 or 10/10 for all aspects. Views expressed by children after their conference led to improvement actions including ensuring that the child’s feedback goes immediately to the Chair of the conference and is actioned before the next meeting, finding child and family friendly conference venues. Child’s participation in their LAC review – *Ninety nine percent* of reviews for looked after children were conducted within the statutory timescale, 99% of LAC participated in their review, and 68% of these attended the meeting and spoke for themselves. Foster Carer Review - views expressed by foster carers’ children during this process led to a number of improvement actions to ensure that carers are meeting the needs of their own children. Let’s Talk - views expressed to foster carers by their looked after child during this process were shared with the children’s social workers to inform individual casework. Young people’s youth justice self-assessment - views expressed by a young person during this process enabled the Serious Organised Crime project team to identify a suitably engaging work experience placement.

Advocacy support for children and young people in care or on a child protection (CP) plan. Jigsaw 4u commissioned advocacy service supported 53 children on a CP plan and 45 looked after children. One young person said: *‘My advocate got my opinions out loud, made people listen to me and got what I asked for’.*

‘User voice’ included in case audit process.

Bi monthly audit of children’s plans June 2018 (‘Stepdown’; CIN, CP, LAC and ‘pathway’) identified very good evidence of children and families’ engagement in the development of the plan. For example, in response to a child’s views, their plan was escalated to the CP process, and in another a CP plan remained in place because a parent said that her family need more support. As part of the audit process, a young person fed back that she is *aware of the LAC plan and is happy with it, her social worker listens to her and she feels she can always speak to her if she is not happy about any aspect of her care plan.* Audit of casework of the 0-5 Supporting Families Team identified good evidence of ‘persistence in engaging families in the intervention’. It also identified an improvement action to ensure that actions set during supervision are shared with parents.

Commitment Four – Think Family: enabling families, parents and carers to influence change, which empowers them to manage their own affairs, impact decisions about their children and ultimately deliver better outcomes. Notable activities and impact this year included:

Families influencing casework and case reviews.

Signs of Safety child and family centred casework practice approach enabled a parent to use ‘words and pictures’ to explain to her children how her mental health had impacted on her ability to be a parent. The parent initially said the process was *‘a waste of time’*, but now she sees *‘what a difference it has made’.*

Parent participation in CP Conferences Twenty two of the 27 parents who gave feedback on their initial or review CP conference rated their level of satisfaction as 8/10 or above, regarding how well their child’s views informed the meeting. Actions are in place to collect samples of qualitative feedback after conference especially to investigate reasons for low satisfaction. Merton advice and guidance for parents of children with SEN and Disabilities in a survey of 50 users of the service 92% said that the support *‘made a real difference’.* In response to parents’ concerns about their child’s support needs in education post-16, we are developing a support approach for

the South Thames College consortium (post-16 education) on Education Health and Care (EHC) planning.

User forums for parents and families who are in receipt of services

Kids First forum for parents of children with SEN and Disabilities fed back their concerns about inconsistencies in schools' applications for EHC plans; we have now streamlined the EHC plan process, and delivered training in schools for senior case officers on delivering an effective assess, plan and review process for pupils with SEND. Transforming Families parent forum requested a range of developments including access to advocacy, and developing a service leaflet to advertise the service to the community. *'The stability and support from my worker led to my own inner strength to change'* (feedback from forum). Parents who attended a County Lines workshop requested parenting support, and awareness raising sessions in schools, to help to prevent their child being involved in serious youth violence or child criminal exploitation; this is now being rolled out.

Consultations to inform service and strategy developments.

SEN and Disabilities High Needs Review consultation with parents is being used to set priorities for developments to education provision for children with SEND. Seventy seven per cent of parents who responded to the survey said that Merton does need to develop additional in borough provision, and 58% said additional provision should be by new specialist bases within mainstream schools. Foster Carers Survey 2018 highlighted a number of recommendations for improvements to our fostering service related to training for children's social work teams, fostering payments, placements, and carer retention.

Feedback from users on their level of satisfaction with services

Central London Community Health Care 'patient reported experience measures' show that 99% of patients said they were treated with respects, and 94% would recommend the service. Early Years, childcare and children centres service review states that 95% of families said they had experienced improved outcomes after attending a service or programme. 100% reported improved outcomes after attending a parenting programme. *'I feel comfortable sharing my worries and it made me feel more confident as a parent'*. Adoption and Permanence Team bi-annual report states that adopters are positive about their experience of each stage of the adoption process – *'we were allowed to progress at our own pace with a great deal of support and clarification'*. Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub received positive feedback from professionals during this year's MSCB conference who said that the services is *available, supportive, clear on thresholds, and gives feedback on the outcome of the referral*.

Families and the wider community leading on delivering services which benefit children and families

Monday Club Fit and Fun Club at Phipps Bridge is run by local parent volunteers for themselves and their children. It provides an opportunity for informal support through peers, and if necessary, access to appropriate local services.

Adventure Playground coffee morning is run by local volunteers supported by the Salvation Army who can learn new skills, and build social networks and confidence.

Commitment Five – Building capacity across the Children's Trust to engage in good quality, ethical and impactful 'user voice' activity, the learning from which is shared with all stakeholders, including participants. Notable activities and impact this year included:

Processes in place to support meaningful and ethical participation in commissioned and partner services

Kids First forum has refreshed its good practice guidance which clearly states its role to independently represent the voice of children with SEND and their families. Commissioned services contract monitoring processes collects quarterly information from services on their user voice activity and impact; this is reported annually. EHC plan process has been reviewed to ensure that it captures the views of children and families.

Outcome of user voice activity communicated within organisations, across the Children’s Trust, and to participants.

Central London Community Health Care put together ‘patient stories’, the key learning from which is shared at senior management meetings. In response to one patient story the children and young people’s occupational therapy (OT) team are taking forward actions to raise awareness of children’s OT needs in schools. *Newsletters* – a number of service areas share information with users via a regular newsletter, this includes South West London Adoption Consortium (SWLAC), and Kids First parent forum. *Young Merton Together* termly online magazine shares ‘user voice’ good practice articles across the Children’s Trust.

- 2.3 Whilst the summary above and the overall User Voice Report 2017/18 summarises much of the activity undertaken throughout the year, it is not possible to include everything, or the level of detail about some of the engagement that has been undertaken. One specific piece of engagement with our looked after children is particularly worth recognising, building on what is summarise within the report attached as appendix 1. This piece of work undertaken as Bright Spots is included as Appendix 2, which provides more evidence of the sort of opportunities that are taken to engage our children and young people, whilst updating the Panel on the views of these young people.

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 – User Voice End of Year Review 2017/18

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None

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Children and Families' Voice Framework End of Year Review 2017/18 Merton Children's Trust

Issue Date	Author	Date Of the Next Review	Lead officer
August 2018	Lisa Deer, Policy and Planning Officer	August 2019 (Children and Families' Voice Framework 2017-19)	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Merton Children’s Trust’s Children and Families’ Voice Framework 2017-19 restates and refines our commitment to put children, young people and families at the centre of our approach, to delivering services which have a positive impact; it follows on from the User Voice Strategy implemented in 2014. The framework recognises the importance of the voice of families in the context of our refreshed Wellbeing Model and “Think Family” approach, which aims to enable families to manage their own affairs and strengthen their own resilience. The framework represents our systemic approach to working with children, young people and families, believing that listening and allowing true participation will enable us and them to deliver better outcomes.

1.2 This end of year review is a summary of user voice activity and its positive impact on outcomes for children and families during 2017/18. It ensures that the key governance groups, including the Children’s Trust and the Merton Safeguarding Children Board, are able to monitor and evaluate user voice activity to inform the continuous improvement of children’s services. It also forms part of our commitment to share good practice across agencies, illustrating that children and families’ participation is central to practice, service planning and delivery.



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY










2.1 This is the first year of the implementation of the Children and Families’ Voice Framework. In line with the recommendations for the year (2017/18) put forward by the User Voice Strategy end of year review 2016/17:










- ✓ services in the Children’s Schools and Families’ Department have maintained an annual programme of ‘user voice’ activity as a core element of service planning;
- ✓ a good range of partners across Merton’s Children’s Trust have made contributions to reporting and information sharing activity;
- ✓ we have reviewed and reduced our reporting schedule from quarterly to annually to better meet the needs of Merton’s Children’s Trust;
- ✓ and continued to share good practice across Merton’s Children’s Trust.






2.2 In direct response to the participation of children, young people and families, the following developments and improvements have been made this year:

2.2.1 Positive impact of participation on children, young people and families.

How have children, young people and families participated?	What has been the impact of their participation?
Commitment 1: Delivering on our participation promise.	
 Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) conducted consultations with a broad range of children and young people who fed back that their top concerns are: crime, gangs and health and safety.	✓ MYP developed a ‘Manifesto’ work programme that focused on these top concerns: preventing crime, gang awareness and health and safety.
 Young people who spend time in and around Mitcham Library told local youth workers that they feel unwelcome in the library and local shops and that ‘no one cares about us’.	✓ We set up of a new youth group in Mitcham library to ease tensions with library staff and to support young people to feel more welcome in their community.

How have children, young people and families participated?	What has been the impact of their participation?
 Young people who are supported by the My Futures NEET team said that they would like to go to University but thought they 'could not afford it'.	✓ The team set up a new 'University programme' to take NEET young people on University visits to find out about grants and funding and to learn about student life.
 Pupils at Abbotsbury Primary School were consulted on how school outcomes in writing and literacy could be improved.	✓ The school used the pupils' feedback to inform the implementation of new activities and resources to support pupils' writing and literacy ; these are presented in poster form in each classroom.
 Young people who attend a range of LGBT+ groups in Merton and Wandsworth fed back their views on how to support Trans pupils in schools.	➤ Development of a Trans Inclusion Toolkit for schools in Merton and Wandsworth to promote good practice in supporting Trans pupils, informed by young people's feedback .
Commitment 2 – Child focused: enabling children and young people who are service users to influence improvements to our systems, services and processes. <i>These changes will improve things for all our young service users.</i>	
 Children, young people and families were involved in consultations and focus groups to inform the development of a number of key strategies which will be implemented this year.	➤ The following strategies address the expressed views and needs of our users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategy 2018. • Looked After Children Strategy 2018. • Young Carers' Multi-agency Strategy 2018-21. • SEN and Disabilities High needs strategic review 2018.
 Young people who attend the Transforming Families (TF) young people's forum said they would like more access to positive activities.	✓ The TF team organised a go-karting trip for young people
 Young people involved with the Youth Justice Service (YJS) expressed a range of ideas for improvements to the service, via the Youth Board forum for young people.	✓ The YJS implemented these ideas for development including: sending reminders (via email or letter) for home visits; making sure that the youth board meetings do not clash with college commitments; and fixing the intercom at the front door.
 Young people supported by our commissioned services were able to participate in a range of ways in the services they used including being involved in: committees, advisory groups, forums, service reviews, and volunteering.	✓ Young service users led the following activities across our commissioned services: service evaluation, planning and improvement; decision making about finances and strategy; recruitment; publicity; and the development of web based information and advice.
 Young people who attend the Uptown Youth Service told youth workers that some of their siblings have learning or physical disabilities and would like to attend, but feel they need extra support	✓ Uptown set up a new 'Saturday Step Up' inclusive session at Uptown youth centre , supported by peer mentors
Commitment 3 - Delivering on Merton's approach to casework practice: Putting the wishes and feelings of children and young people who are subject of a plan, at the centre of decision making and planning. <i>These changes will improve things for the individual child and their circumstances.</i>	
 During the feedback process after their Child Protection Conference one young person said that they found the conference environment unwelcoming and they had not had the opportunity to express themselves.	✓ A number of improvement actions are now in place: face to face feedback to be taken from young people after each conference; feedback to go to the Chair of the conference immediately after the meeting and any concerns to be followed up prior to the next meeting; and continued work to identify more child and family friendly conference venues.

How have children, young people and families participated?	What has been the impact of their participation?
 In their Youth Justice self-assessment one young person who had been involved in serious organised crime (SOC), said that they are interested in setting up a clothing business.	✓ The team took this to the project board who are responsible for supporting young people involved in SOC, who identified a clothing design company to offer a work experience placement to the young person.
 During the foster carers' review process a number of foster carers' children said that they feel they are not able to spend enough time with their parents.	✓ This issue was raised with the relevant foster carers and positive solutions were implemented to ensure that their own children's needs are met.
 Through the 'Let's talk' process between looked after children and their carer, one child identified that they were anxious about their upcoming exams, and another said that they wanted more contact with their family and were worried about being adopted.	✓ The feedback was shared with the children's social workers to inform their planning and further discussions with young people, to ensure that any issues are addressed .
Commitment 4 - Think Family: enabling families, parents and carers to influence change which empowers them to manage their own affairs, impact decisions about their children and ultimately deliver better outcomes	
 A mother and practitioner using the Signs of Safety approach worked together to create a 'Words and Pictures' story board about how her mental health has impacted on her ability to look after her son.	✓ The mother is able to have conversations with her son about her mental health, and she is able to use the story board again whenever he needs to talk about the situation and why he is not living at home.
 During an audit of children's plans one parent fed back that they had not agreed to a Children in Need Plan, and another said that they had not been involved in its development, and did not agree with the plan for closure.	✓ An action is included in the audit action plan to ensure that information is provided to families on the issue of consent .
 Parents who attend the Mencap Kids First forum for parents of children with SEND fed back that they are concerned that Special Educational Needs coordinators in schools are inconsistent in applying for EHCPs.	✓ Streamlined the Education, Health and Care Plan application (EHCP) process, and delivered training in schools for senior case officers on delivering an effective assess, plan and review process for pupils with SEND
 Our Merton Information, Advice and Guidance Service for SEND has fed back that parents are concerned about their child's support needs in education post-16.	➤ We are now developing a support approach for the South Thames College consortium (post-16 education) on ECH planning.
 Parents who attend the Transforming Families (TF) parents' forum fed back a range of ideas for improvements to the service.	➤ The TF team are implementing a number of developments : supporting families to access advocacy to support them in meetings with professionals including the school; ensuring that new families are reassured that endings will be well prepared and appropriate, as this is embedded in TF practice; and developing an information resource such as a leaflet to advertise the service in the local community.
 Parents who attended a workshop to raise awareness of the 'county lines' drug supply issue, said that they needed: support to establish open communication with their young person and implement 'tough' parenting; more information on the county lines issues; and access to activities outside their home.	✓ We have a range of parenting programmes, support sessions, and awareness raising sessions in schools for years 5 and 6.

How have children, young people and families participated?	What has been the impact of their participation?
 Feedback in this year's foster carers survey has highlighted a number of recommendations for improvements to our fostering service.	➤ We are now implementing an action plan for improvements to our support to foster carers including: training for children's social work teams on the need to work closely with foster carers; minimising inaccuracies in fostering payments; maximising the use of available placements; regular feedback from carers and exit interviews to aid in retention.
 An audit of casework of the Early Year's Supporting Families Team identified that that a low number of casework documents included a family map and action plan of specific and achievable child led outcomes.	➤ Actions are now in place to ensure that family maps are regularly updated and reviewed, and that actions set during supervision are shared with parents.
 Adopters fed back that they would have liked to have heard adopters' experiences of the adoption process, rather than social workers, when they started their adoption journey.	✓ We delivered a 'meet the adopter' drop in session to enable potential adopters to meet current adopters to hear about their experience of adopting in Merton.
 One parent who attended the community led 'fun and fit' club at Phipps Bridge centre was able to talk informally about some concerns and issues regarding herself and her children.	✓ We were able to identify that the children needed some specific support and were able to refer the family to an appropriate local service.
<u>Commitment 5 - Building capacity across the Children's Trust to engage in good quality, ethical and impactful 'user voice' activity,</u>	
 The Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy (CYOT) team have produced a 'patient story' based on the experience of a parent whose child has ASD. It includes the patient's recommendations for preventing the problems the young person and family endured before input by CYOT.	➤ The team are implementing: additional parent training sessions on 'meltdowns' and other similar issues for children and young people with ASD; increasing OT involvement in education in setting; and delivering a teacher training day at local Universities on supporting children with OT needs on school.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2018/19

3.1 The following are recommendations for the implementation of the Children and Families' Voice Framework during 2018/19.

- Children, Schools and Families Department to continue to maintain an annual programme of 'user voice' activity as a core element of service planning.
- Continue to expand input from a range of partners across Merton's Children's Trust, into reporting and information sharing activity.
- Continue to report annually on activity to senior managers (DMT, Children's Trust, and MSCB).
- Continue to share good practice across Merton's Children's Trust.

4. COMMITMENT ONE - DELIVERING ON OUR PARTICIPATION PROMISE: PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFLUENCE MERTON THE PLACE.

4.1 We are committed to providing a range of participation opportunities for all children and young people who live, study or work in Merton in order to influence policy on key issues, which affect their lives. We have a dedicated Youth Participation and Engagement team responsible for implementing Merton's Participation Promise: enabling children and young people to be listened to; take responsibility; be involved in making choices and decisions; and be involved in how we spend money for children's services and other public services. Notable examples this year are as follows:

Facilitating young people's forums (including 'pupil voice' in schools), and youth led service delivery.

4.2 This year **Merton's Youth Parliament (MYP)** has continued to influence and be part of the democratic processes of the local authority. This year's MYP manifesto commitments were formulated in direct response to the Young Residents' Survey 2017 and a consultation conducted by MYP with young people at the Mitcham carnival. **Young people told the MYP that they should address the following areas of concern in their work:**

- Preventing crime, with a focus on knife crime, hate crime and theft in school...
- Gang awareness...
- Health and safety

How did the MYP respond?

Implemented the MYP manifesto, which led to following areas of success:

- ✓ **Delivered a gangs 'think tank' event for young people** to address crime prevention and gang awareness – this included a discussion about concerns about gang activity, and learning about the 'myths' and 'consequences' of being in a gang; and a Q&A session with a panel of professionals on why people join gangs, why they are dangerous, and strategies for preventing gang crime.
- ✓ **Merton youth lifesavers first aid training event** – sixty young people were trained by St John's ambulance in first aid. The purpose is to increase the capacity of the community to deliver potentially lifesaving intervention including CPR, and assisting someone having an asthma attack.

4.3 In their annual report the MYP highlighted that their involvement in the forum has enabled them to develop the following skills:

- ☺ **Teamwork** – 'ice breaker' activities and a residential enabled us to work as a team - *'we feel that this was key to us being able to work together well' and leading to 'multiple successes'*.
- ☺ **Leadership** – all members have had leadership opportunities such as chairing meetings and sub groups, *'this has given everyone a chance to take charge and learn how to manage a group'*.
- ☺ **Communication** – within the group this developed over time; *'these interactions became friendships built on respect and trust'*.
- ☺ **Confidence and self-esteem** – *we developed confidence over time by being as 'active and involved as we can'*.

4.4 This year the MYP also delivered a 'Student Action Day' involving around 100 students from the Children's Parliament and a number of secondary schools. The purpose of the event was for students to work together to discuss issues of concern and to devise an action plan of 'solutions'.

What were the main areas of concern discussed by the young people?

- Seeking advice and information on **sexual health**...
- **Environment** - Recycling at home and school; litter; traffic pollution...
- **Crime** – feeling safe on the streets later at night.

What solutions did young people put forward?

- **Sexual health clinics** need to advertise where young people will see it, and the venue should be private; apps and online information.
- More **recycling** and waste bins in schools, and controlling food portions to reduce waste.
- Environment officers to be present and **fine those who litter**.
- **Reducing traffic** around schools.
- **More Police** visible in and around schools.
- **Better street lighting**.

4.5 This year our **Youth Participation and Engagement Team** has continued to respond to the expressed needs of Merton’s children and young people, in order to support positive engagement and well-being.

Young people who spend time in Mitcham library said that staff had barred them for what they deemed unacceptable behavior. Young people reported that they felt that *‘no one cares about us’* and that they are *not welcomed locally in the library and shops*.

How did the Youth Participation and Engagement Team respond?

- ✓ To build improved relationships the team delivered youth engagement activities at the library, with the young people and staff taking part. This developed into a youth group at the library, which will be transferred to the Phipps Bridge Youth Centre.
- ✓ In response to this project, library staff and young people had a greater understanding of each other’s perspectives and one member of staff said that they are now **‘really happy to come to work’**.

4.6 Our **My Futures Education Training and Employment (ETE)** team work with young people who are NEET (not in education, training or employment), or who are at risk of NEET. Each year they provide a summer scheme for young people, providing opportunities for positive activities.

Since summer 2017, this scheme has involved young people themselves as peer mentors. The mentors help to plan the scheme, including trips and activities that are inspiring, improve team work, communication, self-belief and confidence, as well as model good behaviour and attitude.

Young people told the **ETE team** that they are keen to go to University, but didn’t feel they could ever afford to go.

How did the ETE Team respond?

- ✓ Introduced a ‘University programme’ supporting young people to attend workshops at local Universities to find out about courses, application process, funding, grants and continued support once on campus. This helped to dispel myths about funding and gave an opportunity to spend a day on campus as an insight into Uni life.

- ☺ *“I didn’t really know what UCAS was before this workshop, I now understand it and have decided I definitely want to go to University now.”* Female 16
- ☺ *“I really appreciate how understanding you are, it makes a change from all the other adults who just get angry with me all the time about stuff like this, thank you.”* Male 17
- ☺ *“I am coming to realise that I struggle with showing gratitude. I am grateful for your support and the support provided by My Futures. You have been a great help with a lot. Referring me to counselling helped a lot too.”* Male 18

4.7 Schools across the borough are committed to providing opportunities for children and young people to contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning in schools, service developments that will improve children's lives, and to learn about and take part in all levels of the democratic process. The school review process involves feedback from pupils, which is then addressed by school leaders. Examples of the impact of this process include:

- Pupils requested that the school carry out a pupil survey, in order that the school has a more comprehensive understanding of their perceptions about school.
- Pupils said that the school should scrutinise the cost of after school clubs to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged on the basis that their family cannot afford the cost

This year **Abbotsbury Primary School** organised a range of participation opportunities for their pupils, with the following impact:

- *Pupils in Key Stage 2 shared their ideas about how best to support their writing skills, and boys' literacy skills – two areas for development highlighted by analysing school attainment and progress data...*
- *The school's 'Feeling Safe' survey showed that children were overwhelmingly positive that they felt safe at school, and know who they could go to for help. Some younger children said that they feel scared to see the foxes on the school field and are worried by the fire alarm...*

What did the school and pupils do?

- ✓ Included the pupils' ideas about the activities and resources that best support their writing and literacy, in the school development plan, and presented in poster form in each classroom.
- ✓ Older children suggested having 'role play' sessions on fire safety and the purpose of the fire alarm.
- ✓ Older children created a documentary on foxes and their habitat, and introduced a soft toy fox as a class reward, both to create a more positive image of foxes.

Another example is the work of **Harris Academy Morden** whose 'Student Leadership Team' and 'School Council' allow students to make a positive contribution to their learning environment and to develop their own leadership qualities; and give teachers a better understanding of students' insights and capabilities. In response to the discussions and work of these two student groups, the following developments have been made in the school:

- ✓ Healthier snacks now provided for revision classes.
- ✓ Improved spiritual, moral, social and cultural development curriculum for Key Stage 4.
- ✓ Used 'Jack Petchey' funding to improve the sports facilities, including new football nets and basketball courts.

Enabling young people to take part in consultations and surveys, which inform service and strategy developments

4.8 This year we have developed a **Young Carers Multi Agency Strategy** for 2018-21 in consultation with young carers and their families. The strategy illustrates that while young carers value their role in their family, there are some negative aspects of their caring role, and, it is nationally recognised, many young carers experience poor outcomes. The strategy brings together all agencies in joint actions to prevent young carers being involved in inappropriate caring and to offer the support they need to learn, develop and thrive and to enjoy positive childhoods and youth. **In the consultation on the strategy young carers said they want professionals to:**

- Listen to them (particularly in respect of the knowledge they hold in relation to the person they care for)...
- Ensure that their own health needs alongside the health **needs of their family were addressed...**
- Be able to access activities and opportunities enjoyed by their non-caring peers...
- Periodically 'check-in' on them to check they are 'ok' in relation to their own well-being...

How did we respond?

We developed the Young Carers' Strategy to include the following actions in the implementation plan:

- Young carers views inform their needs assessment and they develop their own care plan in partnership with their family and key professionals
- Young carers are considered as a priority group for access to key health services, especially mental health related services
- Young carers are supported to develop care packages appropriate to their caring role and which engage them in a range of activities.
- Educational establishments regularly identify and refer young carers using assessment tools and periodically 'check-in' on young carers.

4.9 Merton Council's **Public Health Team and Merton Clinical Commissioning Group** have developed an **Autism Strategy for 2018-23** which sets out how the borough will support and deliver services to people of all ages, who have autism. As part of the consultation process Merton's Participation and Engagement Team conducted a focus group with a number of young people who have a diagnosis of ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) who are supported in mainstream school. The group looked at each of the six themes of the strategy and gave their views via an open discussion:

On the six themes outlined in the strategy, young people said:

1. *The assessment process should be quick and not repetitive...*
2. *Young people with autism should be involved in the design and delivery of services...*
3. *Work experience placements should be longer, to give both the young person and employer time to understand fully what it is like for someone with autism in a work environment...*
4. *There should be support for families and carers...*
5. *We would like access to information about activities and opportunities, made available via schools...*
6. *Apart from those who work with people with autism, most people do not understand autism well and this can lead to exclusion...*

How did we respond?

The borough's **Autism Strategy** actions include:

- Redesign local referral, assessment and support services to meet the needs of children and young people and their families who may need diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder.
- Actively involve people with autism, families and carers in co-designing services and take steps to promote equality.
- Review existing opportunities for supporting students with autism in further education and look to improve these opportunities, with a specific focus on preparing for employment and independent living.
- Review opportunities to improve support for families and carers of people with autism, such as strengthening signposting, peer support networks, advocacy services and direct work with families and short breaks
- Strengthen the 'local offer' for children, young people and adults to provide a single point of access to clear, comprehensive information about local services
- Deliver autism awareness training as part of equality and diversity, to NHS and Merton Council staff, and staff in other organisations, developed by those with autism.

4.10 Our **School Improvement Team** supports schools to implement good practice and progress in tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and has achieved a 'Stonewall rating' of 1st in London and 13th out of 39 local authorities. As part of this work this year the team, in partnership with colleagues from Wandsworth, supported young people to deliver a conference for schools and colleges on supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people in education. Young people delivered two presentation and discussion sessions which looked at 'gender identity' and 'a guide for teachers and parents on how to support your child if they are on the LGBTQ+ spectrum'. In addition, the team, also in conjunction with Wandsworth

has gathered feedback from Trans young people who attend various LGBT+ groups in Merton and Wandsworth on the development of a Trans Inclusion Toolkit for schools in both boroughs. The toolkit sets out guidance and good practice for schools to ensure that Trans pupils are included and supported. The toolkit is currently being piloted in a number of schools as a final consultation, and will be implemented in the Spring of 2019. Key issues raised by young people, which have been used to inform the toolkit are as follows:

- *'Teaching staff must be sanctioned for intentionally using the wrong names and pronouns of students'*
- *'Each member of staff in school should have to complete individual training on trans issues. They should have to pass this test to stay teaching in schools. It could be a recognised qualification, which is advertised, so students know who is safe to be approached'*
- *'Legislation should be introduced to protect trans people who come out to specific staff members. It should be that the young person must consent to other staff being informed and the young person must have the final say'*
- *'It would be useful to be able to select different pronouns on school and college applications and then easy for them to modify on their database. The pronoun 'they' should be an option'.*

4.11 **Merton Public Health** commissioned a local 'Great Weight Debate Merton' to engage with residents, particularly in the East of the borough to work with them to understand the issues and opportunities in tackling childhood obesity. Nearly 75% of respondents to the survey believed that tackling childhood obesity should be a top or high priority. The following issues were raised: residents said there is a link between childhood obesity and the availability of cheap unhealthy food; parents said that while Merton's parks and green spaces are an asset they have safety concerns about letting their children play outside; young people said there is cheap unhealthy food in schools, and there should be access to lessons on healthy eating and cooking skills. As part of the project, 31 recommendations have been produced, with parents, adults and young people also asked to come up with solutions to tackle childhood obesity in Merton:

- *Produce useful and practical advice and guidance around healthier eating and cooking including meal planning and recipe advice).*
- *Encourage low cost and free activities that let families be physically active together and with their community.*
- *Work with schools to encourage healthy eating and cooking education in lessons.*
- *Help families "buddy up" to get healthy and physically active together.*

Supporting young people to take part in activities that have a positive impact on their lives and the community.

4.12 **Merton's Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC)** group is run by the Merton Police Youth Engagement Officer and aims to empower young people, presenting them with new opportunities and a chance to make a significant positive difference in their communities, and to operational policing. During the year, VPCs have participated and supported the community in a broad range of events and activities. This is what they said about their involvement:

- ☺ **Support crew for the London Marathon** - *"This is one of the best days in Cadets, everyone pulling together to help each other, and it's been great to cheer on the runners, they're amazing!"*
- ☺ **Army exercise weekend** - *"This is completely different to anything we've done before, we have learnt a lot. It's been great to see how our Army colleagues operate and see the kit they use. I even got medically evacuated to a helicopter whilst role-playing an injured civilian!"*
- ☺ **National Police Air Service (NPAS) visit** - *"This has really opened our eyes to the complex and demanding job our colleagues do, and seeing inside the helicopter, with so much tech in a small area, I really admire what they do. Thank you NPAS for an amazing day, and all you do for units on the ground!"*

develop a variety of skills, volunteer and get involved in sports. In April this year, nearly 387 Merton young people were presented with certificates and badges, by local dignitaries, for their Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award achievements.

- ☺ At 61%, Merton has enjoyed one of the highest completion rates in London this year.
- ☺ The young people from 13 secondary schools across the borough were recognised for their perseverance and hard work, which meant they completed the awards over 12 months at bronze, silver and gold levels.
- ☺ One of the pupils who achieved their gold level award is now working as a part time youth worker at the Open Award Centre, helping others to take part in the DofE scheme.

5. COMMITMENT TWO - CHILD FOCUSED: ENABLING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE SERVICE USERS TO INFLUENCE IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND PROCESSES. THESE CHANGES WILL IMPROVE THINGS FOR ALL OUR YOUNG SERVICE USERS

5.1 We are committed to enabling children and young people who are users of children's services to influence improvements to systems. To support this we have built in a number of processes including dedicated capacity to support the engagement of our looked after children and care leavers and child protection (CP) cohorts. We aim to empower service users to shape and improve services and processes. We want to learn from individual experiences to influence improvements for all service users. Notable examples of user voice activity this year include:

Enabling users to take part in research and consultations that inform service and strategy developments.

5.2 To inform this year's development of our refreshed **Looked After Children Strategy** we commissioned a Coram Voice: Your Life, Your Care survey. Thirty seven percent of our LAC (52) took part in the survey and gave the following positive feedback about the support they receive from Merton Council as their corporate parent:

- ☺ The majority (94%) of children and young people felt safe in their homes 'all or most of the time', in comparison 75% of children in the general population felt 'totally safe' at home.
- ☺ The majority (96%) of children and young people had a good friend. This was similar to their peers (97%) in the general population.
- ☺ All of the youngest children trusted their carers 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes', felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling, liked school, and got to have fun at the weekends.
- ☺ All of the 8-11yrs trusted their social worker and knew that they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.
- ☺ A significantly higher proportion of young people (11-18yrs) were happy with contact arrangements with their fathers compared with their peers across 13 other LAs.
- ☺ A higher proportion of young people in Merton liked school (84%) and felt that their carers showed an interest in their education (97%) compared to their peers in the general population.
- ☺ Compared to the general population, a higher proportion of young people in Merton were happy with their appearance, felt that the things they did in their lives were worthwhile and felt positive about their future.

Looked after children who responded to the survey said:

- They **only sometimes get to have fun** and have the opportunity to go out (38%)...
- They want to **know more about why they are in care** (29%)...
- They are 'sometimes' or 'all or most of the time' **worried about their feelings or behaviour** (52%)...
- They **do not like their bedroom** - linked to safety, sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging (higher than nationally)...
- They are **sometimes afraid to go to school because of bullying** (15%)

In response, we have used the following suggested actions to inform the new Looked After Children Strategy:

- Ask children and young people what they want to do at the weekends and in their spare time.
- Help children understand why they are in care.
- Continue to ask about worries children have about their feelings and behaviour.
- Work with carers to ensure children and young people are happy with their bedrooms, and that young people's feelings are taken into account.
- Continue to work with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school, and support children and young people to make and keep friendships.

5.3 Our **14+ Team** continues to provide support and activities for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people in order to help them to build resilience, independence,

friendships, experience of life and culture in their new home. This year's events have included a games night at a local coffee shop and a trip to Twenty20 cricket at the Oval. Plans are in place for a residential to the Isle of Wight during summer 2018, a visit to the Houses of Parliament, and a trip to the theatre.

Facilitating user forums for vulnerable children who are in receipt of services.

5.4 **Merton's Children in Care council** is a forum for looked after children and care leavers to meet and discuss issues in order to influence service improvements and positive outcomes for young people. Topics discussed this year include: Housing; budgeting; 'Staying Put' in foster care; LAC reviews; Independent Reviewing Officer service; health, emotional well-being and support when you leave care; growing up undocumented, and homelessness.

In addition, the questions included in the Your Life Your Care survey (see 4.2 above) were discussed with the CiCC before the survey was finalised and implemented.

5.5 This year the **Transforming Families (TF) Team** have continued to facilitate meetings for young people who they are working with, to give feedback on their views of the service. Positive feedback from one such meeting included the following:

- ☺ *Workers are always clear about the purpose of meetings with the young person, and always discuss the plan for the following session.*
- ☺ *Young people like the fact that the main focus of the work is on moving things forward and 'getting things done'.*
- ☺ *Young people enjoyed taking part in activities and felt this helped them to build a good relationship with their worker.*
- ☺ *Young people placed Transforming Families as 8/9 on a scale of 1-10.*

A number of suggestions for developments were highlighted by the young people:

- *An opportunity for a residential trip...*
- *More opportunities to take part in a range of activities such as 'go karting' or 'quad biking'...*

How did we respond?

- *These suggestions have been discussed within the team, and in the first instance, a trip to a go karting centre has been arranged for later in the year.*

5.6 The **Youth Justice Youth Board** (for young people involved with the Youth Justice Service) has continued to meet regularly this year, discussing issues for improvement which have been added to a formal action plan for implementation by the youth justice team. Here are examples of the impact of young people's feedback over the year:

At the Youth Board forum young people said:

- *If different workers have different roles then they should focus on their remit (specialist workers don't need to ask about family issues, case workers need to spend time to know me)...*
- *Home visits feel awkward especially in front of family. Be mindful of who is around. Don't treat like an investigation. Being taken out for lunch would be nice...*
- *Send letters / reminders for visits early enough...*
- *Fix the microphone/ intercom at the front door. Door doesn't work properly...*
- *Review when Youth board is held in September as this clashed with College 'sign up'...*

How did the Youth Justice Team respond?

- ✓ *Manager discussed the issue with the specific workers involved, and their line manager. This is now an action in YJS team plan.*
- ✓ *'Home visit' issues are now actioned in the team plan for ongoing monitoring.*
- ✓ *'Timescale of visit letters/ reminders' issue now actioned in the team plan for ongoing monitoring.*
- ✓ *Contacted the facilities manager and raised the issue with the council's health and safety group.*
- ✓ *Youth board is now set in advance during school holidays and poster put up in reception.*

Supporting users to take part in recruitment, training and development.

5.7 Our **Foster Carer Learning and Development team** continues to support young people who care leavers to **run workshops for prospective foster carers** delivered as part of the assessment process. This is widely enjoyed and appreciated by carers as an opportunity to talk with young people about the impact of fostering.

Learning from serious case reviews

5.8 **Merton Safeguarding Children Board's Learning and Improvement System** ensures that as a result Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), there is a process of widely disseminating lessons learned. In addition, focus of attention is paid to ensuring that the child's voice is central to the review process. As a result of the Serious Case Review 'Child B', commissioned by the MSCB at the end of 2015, there have been a number of significant service improvements informed by the voice of the child. Child B (age 16) was seriously assaulted by their mother resulting in significant injury. B's mother had a long history of mental illness, including in-patient and community based mental health services. B had been on child protection and child in need plans and was a young carer:

During the SCR process 'child B' said:

- *I started to care for my Mum when she was unwell, when I was in primary school. No-one told me to look after her. But I had to look after her, even from a young age'...*
- *'I was left to get on with it. **Mental health** workers stopped coming to the house – when they had come it had put Mum and me at ease'...*
- *'My Father found it hard to accept that my Mother got ill. He believed **in traditional beliefs** and that mother's illness was because she had been 'bewitched' or because of 'black magic'...*
- *'Young Carers (**Carers' Support Merton**) understood – I didn't have to pretend; 'I could feel like rubbish' – they had talking sessions about a physical or mental illness which were very helpful, and didn't focus on any one person. The focus was not just on me. I didn't feel pitied'..*

In response to Child B's views the following have been implemented:

- ✓ A revised multi agency Young Carers Strategy which addresses the need for **early identification, assessment and support.**
- ✓ New multi agency protocol to meet the needs of children and unborn children whose parents or carers have **mental health problems.**
- ✓ Work with practitioners on understanding **culture and belief.**
- ✓ Increased work with **Carers Support Merton** on supporting young carers.
- ✓ A presentation of Child B's views at the MSCB Conference which was focused on: *No Wrong Door A spotlight on parental mental health.*

5.9 Merton's **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub** is the single point of contact for all safeguarding concerns regarding children and young people in Merton. At this year's MSCB Conference the service sought feedback from professionals about their satisfaction with the service. Feedback included the following:

- ☺ *supportive whenever they call for consultation.*
- ☺ *MASH social care workers understand thresholds.*
- ☺ *open and always willing to help.*
- ☺ *we receive feedback from the MASH following referrals.*

Supporting commissioned and other partner services to ensure that young people's participation is central to their work

5.10 All of our **children and young people's commissioned services** are required to adhere to the Merton Participation Promise. Participation and participatory activity is monitored as a part of the quarterly monitoring process. These services include Advocacy and Independent Visiting; Boys and Young Men's Service; Children Missing from Home or Care and CSE; Risk and Resilience Service; Short-breaks services for Children with Disabilities; Young Carers; Support to PSHE delivery in schools.

The report '**The Review of the Impact of Commissioned Voluntary Services 2017/18**' sets out how young people participated in the work of these services over the year:

- ✓ Early stage development of a care leavers website to disseminate advice and information on a range of issues.
- ✓ Involved in their own care planning.
- ✓ Involved in committees, advisory groups and forums regarding service decisions (at local agency and partnership level).
- ✓ Establishment of a new Young Leaders Committee and the coordination of secret shopper reviews of METRO youth services in line with the 'You're Welcome' accreditation.
- ✓ Formal and informal service evaluations which include young people.
- ✓ Involved in service needs assessments with regard to type and location of activities; including participation in design of diversionary interventions to reduce a group of young people from going missing together.
- ✓ Recruitment of staff, service publicity and design.
- ✓ Volunteering activities including administrative tasks.
- ✓ Decision making regarding activities, service spend and strategy design.
- ✓ Committee members tracking and monitoring decisions made with young people and reporting progress back to young people.
- ✓ A young person participating in 'Think Family' safeguarding conference and achievements celebrated with young people in a variety of forms.
- ✓ Development of web-based media such as through Jigsaw and Young Carer's websites.

5.11 The **Uptown Youth Service** is part of the borough's youth offer delivered by the voluntary and community sector. They provide a dance academy, youth club and learning centre. Participation opportunities for young people provided by the service include: opportunity to volunteer within the youth club as trainee youth workers or session support; and support to sign up for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In addition, young people's views and ideas are sought through group discussions with members, management and youth work staff used to shape service delivery and program of activities.

- *Young people said that some of those attending the service had siblings with learning or physical disabilities who felt they could not attend the club...*
- *They suggested that current young club members could act as befrienders to help young people with SEN or disabilities to feel supported in accessing the service...*

How did Uptown respond?

- ✓ Targeted training was offered via the short breaks team and Merton Youth Service to skill up staff and youth volunteers in safeguarding and disabilities; autism, inclusion; and diversity.
- ✓ The new '**Saturday Step up**' inclusive youth club session was introduced.

6. COMMITMENT THREE - DELIVERING ON MERTON'S APPROACH TO CASEWORK PRACTICE: PUTTING THE WISHES AND FEELINGS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE SUBJECT OF A PLAN, AT THE CENTRE OF DECISION MAKING AND PLANNING. THESE CHANGES WILL IMPROVE THINGS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD AND THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES.

6.1 We want to ensure that vulnerable children and young people are supported to participate meaningfully in the assessment, planning and review processes for their case. Effective engagement with them will improve things for those individual children and their circumstances. We are committed to making sure that our approach will meet the diverse needs of our children, including that which relates to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This is in line with our practice model: an approach to assessing and managing risk and promoting well-being and stability based on a 'systemic' culture, in which services are child and family led and responsive to their needs. Notable examples of user voice activity this year include:

Using child centred practice approaches for assessment, planning and review

6.2 The voice of Merton's children and young people with a child protection (CP) plan – Children and young people are supported to **participate in their CP Conference** either by ensuring that their views are included in the social worker's report (the most common method), by attending in person (children 12 or over), by being represented by an independent advocate. Decisions made about a child's care are more likely to meet their needs when directly informed by the child's expressed views, wishes and feelings. Our Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Report for 2017/18 includes a good practice example from a CP Conference Chair, of the impact that the inclusion of the child's voice via an advocate had on the decisions that were made about their care:

- ☺ Young person would like to have attended the child protection conference but declined because of her parents. She met with the social worker and subsequently an advocate from Jigsaw4U and provided a comprehensive written statement for the conference.
- ☺ Social worker listened to the young person, completed a thorough assessment and within a short period of time initiated care proceedings. The young person has said they feel they have been listened to, supported and feel relatively safe - CP Chair

During the year, eight of the 12 children and young people who attended their conference gave feedback on their experience.

What did they say about their experience?

- *They were happy or very happy with their conference, scaling at 9 or 10 (out of 10) for all aspects...*
- *They had the opportunity to meet with the Chair beforehand and all felt prepared and understood what the conference was about...*
- *The had the opportunity to say what they wanted to say and felt listened to...*
- *One young person did not feel that he had the opportunity to express himself or that he was involved in the plan. He found the environment unwelcoming...*

The following improvement actions are now in place to improve children's participation in their CP conference:

- Face to face feedback to be taken from young people after each conference.
- New participation officer to obtain more in depth views from children and young people who do not attend conferences.
- Feedback to go to the Chair of the conference immediately after the meeting and any concerns to be followed up prior to the next meeting.
- Continued work to identify more child and family friendly conference venues.
- Letters from Chairs to children to advise them directly of the outcome of the conference.

6.3 The voice of Merton's looked after children and young people – The IRO report for 2017/18 also states that during the year:

- ☺ 99% of reviews for looked after children were conducted within the statutory timescale.
- ☺ 99% of children and young people participated in their review.

The most common method for young people's views to be represented in their LAC review was by **young person attending the meeting and speaking for themselves – 68%**. In addition, IROs have a responsibility to seek the views of individual children who do not wish to attend their reviews and to find out what they would like to assist them in putting forward their views. In having these conversations the age, ability and communication requirements of the individual child is taken into account, as is the venue, participants and timing of the review. The following feedback from a looked after young person highlights the positive impact of the IRO having been consistent in the young person's life.

- ☺ *"IRO, for as long as I have known you, you have never changed, you've always been kind, thoughtful and made these meetings enjoyable. So thank you". "17 Years and what a 17 Years it's been but I made it somehow so thank you all".*

6.4 Merton's Foster Carer Review process gathers information from foster carers, their children, and from looked after children, in order to develop and continuously improve the support offer delivered by Merton's Fostering Supervision Team. Over the year feedback has been positive, and where issues have been raised these have been addressed:

Looked after children said:

- ☺ *They are in the main happy in their placements and are forming relationships within their fostering families.*
- ☺ *They feel safe and secure; their foster carers and their foster carer's extended families support them.*
- ☺ *They are encouraged to take part in activities and hobbies, and to develop life skills and make plans for the future.*

Foster carers' children said:

- *They are positive about living in a fostering household, meeting new children, playing with them, taking them out and seeing them develop...*
- *They felt it was good to know that they were helping...*
- *A number of adult children were keen in their roles as back-up carers and were looking forward to attending training.*
- *A number of children raised concerns about not being able to spend time with their parents as it seemed that the foster child's needs came first...*

What happened in response to the concerns?

- ✓ *The issues were raised with the foster carers at their review and positive solutions were implemented to ensure that their own children's needs are met.*

Foster carers said:

- ☺ *They are happy with the support and services they receive from the fostering team including their supervising social worker.*
- ☺ *They receive excellent support for them and their foster child from Merton's Virtual School for LAC.*
- ☺ *They receive invaluable support from CAMHS.*
- ☺ *They feel valued and appreciated.*

6.5 In addition, looked after children are able to give feedback during the **‘Let’s Talk’ process** that is a conversation that takes place between the child (aged 5-15 years) and their carer. A dip sample of the ‘let’s talk’ forms over the year highlights the following themes:

- **On education** – all the children were in full time education, and most felt ‘happy’ and ‘positive’ about at school or college. One young person expressed anxiety about upcoming exams...
- **On placements** – all the children were happy in their placements reporting that they take part in a range of activities and get help with home work. One young person said ‘it’s like a family. Thank you for helping me with everything’ another said ‘it was the best place’ and another said it was ‘cool’...
- **On the care plan** – A number of children said that they were not aware of their care plan. A good proportion said that they were happy with their reviews and felt ‘listened to’. In one case the child said they wanted more contact with their family and were scared of being adopted...

How did the fostering service respond?

- ✓ This feedback has been shared with the children’s social workers to inform their planning and further discussions with young people, to ensure that any issues are addressed.

6.6 Our **Youth Justice Service (YJS) assessments** are informed by a self-assessment completed by the young person themselves, which sets out their views on the support they need. An audit of this process completed in November 2017 (based on orders starting between May and November 2016) showed that **86% of cases have a completed young person’s self-assessment**. This is a very good increase since the audit completed in November 2015 (based on orders starting between March and October 2015) where 36% of cases had a completed young person’s self-assessment. In addition, a recent report of assessments, completed between April and June 2018, shows a further **increase to 93%**.

The YJS is part of the delivery of the Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Project that aims to support young offenders who have been involved in serious organised crime, by engaging them in employment and training. Information from the young person’s self-assessment is used to match the young person with an employment/ training opportunity in which they are interested.

In their self-assessment one young person said that they are interested in setting up a clothing business...

- ✓ In response, the YJS took this to the SOC project board who were able to identify a clothing design company to offer a work experience placement to this young person.

Providing advocacy support for children and young people in care or on a child protection plan

6.7 We commission **Jigsaw 4u, a voluntary sector organisations, to offer advocacy support** to Merton’s looked after children and those on a child protection plan. The 2017/18 commissioned services annual report pack identifies the following take up of the service:

- ☺ In excess of the target of 45, 53 children and young people on a CP plan engaged with the advocacy service.
- ☺ All of the target 45 looked after children engaged with the advocacy service.

Positive feedback from these young people about the impact of the service include the following:

- ☺ *Because my advocate was with me, I didn't get angry. No one had contacted me for 3 weeks, the advocate called and I met with her, she helped me get my views across and I'm now in a new placement and regularly getting my food vouchers.'*
- ☺ *'My advocate is a good person and is really good at helping young people. She can speak for me whenever I want her to in meetings'.*
- ☺ *'My advocate got my opinions out loud, made people listen to me and got what I asked for'.*
- ☺ *'She stayed with me at my LAC review, took the time to help me understand what was being said - thank you Jigsaw'*

6.8 As part of our **quality assurance processes** in children's social care, an audit of a sample of cases is conducted every two months. The June 2018 audit report illustrates that in 21 'children's plans' ('Stepdown'; children in need; child protection, looked after children and 'pathway') reviewed, there was very good evidence of children and families' engagement in the development of the plan. The overall grades of the plans were: Good' 62 %; 'Requires Improvement' 33%; and 'Inadequate' 5%. Regarding children and families' engagement, the following was highlighted:

- ☺ Children and young people's voices were well evidenced in the majority of the 'children's plans' reviewed.
- ☺ The majority of 'children's plans' evidenced collaboration with parents and carers and were written to be easily understood.
- ☺ 57% of the sample group of children and families contributed their views to the audit process.

The audit report illustrates that overall, children and families' voices were taken into account in the development of plans. Two notable examples of the impact of this are as follows:

- ☺ An 8 year old was supported to express her views and this led to the escalation of her case to the child protection process.
- ☺ In response to a mother's feedback, that she felt that there was still more work to do to support her and her family a child protection plan remained in place.

In addition, the report includes feedback by families during the audit process, on the **positive impact of the 'children's plan'**:

- ☺ A young person said that she *is aware of the LAC plan and is happy with it. She says her social worker listens to her and she feels she can always speak to her if she is not happy about any aspect of her care plan.*
- ☺ A mother said that she is happy with the supportive relationship with the social worker. The support provided under the child protection plan *has been positive, her eldest daughter has been regularly attending school and there has been a marked improvement in her behaviour.*

One of the recommendations of the audit report is in response to feedback from two parents:

- *A mother felt that she had not been part of developing the CIN Plan and was now not in agreement with the plan for closure...*
- *A mother said that at the Initial Child Protection Conference she felt like she was on trial and that the power was being given to her elder child. She did not agree to a CIN Plan but felt she did not have a choice...*

- In response, the audit report 'actions' state that information should be provided to families on the issue of consent.

7. COMMITMENT FOUR - THINK FAMILY: ENABLING FAMILIES, PARENTS AND CARERS TO INFLUENCE CHANGE WHICH EMPOWERS THEM TO MANAGE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS, IMPACT DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN AND ULTIMATELY DELIVER BETTER OUTCOMES

7.1 We are committed to enabling families to manage their own affairs and strengthen their own resilience. This is evident in our refreshed Wellbeing Model and “Think Family” approach. Feedback from families through audits, learning reviews and serious case reviews has taught us that actively engaging those who are difficult to engage is critical if we are to support the meaningful empowerment of our vulnerable groups. We are continuing to develop our skills and tools to enable effective engagement through a variety of methods. Notable examples of user voice activity this year include:

Supporting families to influence casework and case reviews.

7.2 This year practitioners across Children’s Social Care have continued to embed **the Signs of Safety (SoS)** approach into Merton’s safeguarding services. SoS offers a collaborative approach to children’s safeguarding starting with practitioners who perceive themselves as agents of change, working with families to generate their own solutions. Two case studies produced this year describe the use of the ‘Words and Pictures’ tool within the ‘Signs of Safety’ approach in work with families:

A **‘Words and Pictures’** activity was undertaken by practitioners (not allocated to the case), working with the mother. Together they created a visual narrative about how the mother’s mental ill health has impacted on her ability to provide safe and consistent care to her youngest son and his siblings. It included the court proceedings process and decision making about whether the child could remain at home, go into foster care or be placed with family. The final illustration was a combined representation of the concerns and worries of the family and the local authority.

The practitioner said that the key areas of positive impact of the ‘Words and Pictures’ process were as follows:

- ☺ *“The best thing about the work was the creativity it gives you and the family when trying to explain their lived experience. The process when done **correctly empowers the service user** and invites them to be the expert of their story”.*
- ☺ *“Mum said that it has **helped her have conversations with her son** about her mental health and that they have read the story often when he has needed reminding about her mental health or why he is not living at home.*
- ☺ *Mum has asked that a story board be done for each of her other children as she thinks they each need one too and it has been so helpful for her other son that she thinks it will be helpful for each of them and the worries are different.*
- ☺ *Mum said at first she thought this process was a waste of time because professionals had already told her son why he wouldn’t be living at home, but now **sees how valuable it is and what a difference it has made**”.*

The second case study describes how a **words and pictures** story was created with mum, which was read by her to the children, to help them to understand the situation. Two older children in the family completed a **‘safety house’** which helped them to think of rules for their house. Mum created her own **safety plan** for when dad visited and then the whole family worked on a safety plan together that they could all follow. In response to the process the mother said:

- ☺ *‘It’s getting **down to the point**, and having **a connection with the family** and understanding their dynamics which I really feel you did which helped us to **move forward to a better place**. We now have our lives back.’*

7.3 **Parents are supported to participate in child protection conferences** in order for their views to be heard and for them to be at the centre of decision making and planning. After each conference the parent is asked to give feedback on how well they were prepared for the conference, their experience of the meeting, and how well they feel their child's views were taken into account. A short report on feedback from parents in the first quarter of 2018/19, focusing on responses to the statement '**The wishes and views of my child were an important part of the meeting**', highlights the following:

'The wishes and views of my child were an important part of the meeting'

- *Eight of the nine parents who gave feedback on their Initial CP Conference rated their level of satisfaction on this statement as 8/10 or above...*
- *14 of the 18 parents who gave feedback on their CP review rated their level of satisfaction as 8/10 or above...*

The following improvement action is now in place to improve parents' feedback on the CP conference:

- Minimum of two independently facilitated conversations per week to obtain more qualitative feedback – this will be helpful in identifying issues where the satisfaction level is low.

7.4 The **Merton Information, Advice and Support Service for SEN and Disabilities (MIASS)** continues to receive very high levels of requests for support from parents and increasingly from schools and other professionals seeking specific guidance and information around SEN and disabilities. A survey of 50 users of the MIASS for SEND, conducted during quarter one of 2017/18 showed a high level of satisfaction with the service, with 92% saying that the information, advice and support given 'made a great deal of difference'. Positive feedback includes:

- ☺ *We've always found the MIASS officer's knowledge and advice to be invaluable – parent.*
- ☺ *Thank you for your help. I really appreciate it. It is all much clearer now - new SENco in school.*
- ☺ *Just a kind note to say thank you, K started his new school last week and he is loving it...could not have done it without your help - parent who used the EHCP transfer process to move their child to a more suitable school.*

A Post-16 Information Advice and Guidance Worker provides a support service as part of the MIASS. The role supports young people with SEN and disabilities post 16, in the transition into adulthood via further training and ultimately towards employment opportunities. A case study produced during the year illustrates how listening to the young person's views was key to the positive outcome:

A year 11 pupil dropped out of their ARP (additional resource provision) in a mainstream school, and were effectively NEET (not in education training or employment). The service met with the young person and their parent over a number of sessions, and after some disagreement between the two, managed to come to a consensus about the most appropriate setting. The service ensured that the young person's new EHCP (education, health and care plan) represented their personal outcomes and aspirations for their journey into adulthood, and included the name of a suitable setting.

Over the year, feedback to the MIASS regarding the post 16 service has included the following:

- ☺ *Thanks so much for your help, I really appreciate everything you do. Parent of 18 year old with very complex needs and ASD.*
- ☺ *Many thanks again to the support ... You were really a great help. We'll keep you posted of any further developments.*

7.5 Our **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Integrated Service** uses a range of ways to ensure that the voice of children and families is central to service planning and delivery. The service works closely with the Kids First forum for parents of children with SEND on all aspects of the Children and Families Act SEND reforms. Key examples of the impact of this over the year are as follows:

Parents from the Kids First Forum said that they are *concerned that Special Educational Needs coordinators in schools are inconsistent in applying for ECHPs...*

How did we respond?

- ✓ SENCo working group streamlined the EHCP application process.
- ✓ Delivered training in schools for senior case officers on an effective assess, plan and review process (including for children at SEN support level).

The **Kids First Forum** also gave in depth feedback on their assessment of the effectiveness of local arrangements for children with SEND, across each of the three aspects of the upcoming SEND inspection by Ofsted and CQC (identification, meeting needs, and improving outcomes). Parents highlighted the following **positive aspects** of the support they receive:

Identification:

- ☺ Experience of having CAMHS therapists on site or all in the same centre really helps, for example at Cricket Green School which has a Speech and Language Therapy department in school.
- ☺ Merton Autism Outreach Service is a great service.

Meeting needs:

- ☺ Quality of EHC Plans in Merton is higher than other local authorities.
- ☺ All Merton Mencap services including Kids First and Talk Autism.

Improving outcomes:

- ☺ Travel training.
- ☺ Short breaks.

They also highlighted a **broad range of issues and areas for improvement**. In response to this Kids First now meets regularly with key senior members of staff to further discuss and focus down on the issues raised. One recurring theme raised by parents at these meetings relates to pathways for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; this had led to a review of ASD pathways.

7.6 The service also works closely with our **Merton Information Advice and Support Service for SEN and Disabilities (MIASS)** (see 6.5 above), to ensure that any feedback from families of children with SEND is fed into service improvements. A key example of the impact of this over the year is as follows:

The MIASS has feedback that *there has been an increase in people contacting the service about their child's support needs post-16...*

How did we respond?

- We are developing a support approach for South Thames Consortium (post-16 education) on Education, Health and Care planning.

7.7 This year the **Transforming Families (TF) Team** have continued to facilitate regular meetings for parents who are working with the team, to give feedback on their views of the service. If parents are unable to attend forums the team manager will conduct a feedback

session via telephone or visit, to ensure that their views are also heard. This year's feedback on the service by parents has been very positive:

- ☺ *Allocated practitioner explains the service well...*
- ☺ *TF supports families to have a voice in multi-agency meetings...*
- ☺ *Practitioners work closely with the child ensuring that their views are heard, to bring about change...*
- ☺ *The 'helping families' approach puts the families' views first...*
- ☺ *TF workers are consistent and keep regular contact with the family and families 'believe things can change'...*
- ☺ *'The stability and support from my worker led to my own inner strength to change'.*

Parents raised the following suggestions for improvements:

- *A TF leaflet explaining and advertising the service in the community would be useful...*
- *An advocacy service for families who need to attend professionals meetings, for example at school, would be beneficial...*
- *The ending of the service for a family should be well prepared and feel 'natural', rather than be because of a prescribed timescale...*

How did we respond?

- The development of a leaflet is under discussion with the team manager.
- The service is investigating accessing local advocacy/ support services.
- Reassured new families that endings will be well prepared and appropriate, as this is embedded in practice.

7.8 This year, **Merton's Transforming Families and the Youth Justice Service** hosted a workshop to raise awareness amongst parents and professionals about serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation. A key driver for the workshop was the growing concern about the involvement of Merton young people as 'runners' in the 'county lines' drug supply issue. A young person attended the session to share their experience of overcoming the challenges and temptation of 'street life'. After a discussion session, parents requested the following support to better enable them to prevent their children from being involved in criminal exploitation:

- *Support to establish open communication with their children, including more oversight and understanding of the media content they consume – social media, video games, and music - so that children can experience the love and nurture of a caring family...*
- *Support for parents to be 'tough' - setting the foundation of 'clear boundaries, morals and values'...*
- *Access to affordable positive activities outside the home...*
- *County Lines awareness raising sessions in schools...*

How did we respond?

- ✓ Our Parenting Officer is being trained to run the 'Who's in charge?' parenting programme addressing child to parent violence and understanding the potential negative impact of social media, video games and music.
- ✓ Parents have completed a Gangs Resistance Empowerment Awareness Training to equip them with ways to regain their confidence in parenting teens, and supporting their children to resolve conflict.
- ✓ The team have secured funding to deliver Purposeful Empowered Parents creative art therapy session at Phipps Bridge youth centre.
- ✓ Gangs, youth justice, and CSE workers have delivered sessions to primary years 5 and 6 on 'county lines' and how to stay safe on the streets and online.

Enabling users to take part in consultations and surveys, which inform service and strategy developments.

7.9 During the year we conducted an online survey asking parents, headteachers and SENCOs, and other professionals working with children and young people to feedback their views on the local education provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities, to shape future priorities and service developments. The information is currently being used to inform our SEN High Needs Strategic Review.

Positive feedback about current education provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities includes the following:

Parents:

- ☺ 64% were able to find an educational placement for their child which was a reasonable distance from their home, and which met their needs.
- ☺ 75% were satisfied or better with the support given by their child's nursery/ school/ college as set out in the EHCP.
- ☺ 68% were satisfied or better with their child's education provision's access to equipment and resources.
- ☺ 69% were satisfied or better with the qualifications on offer to their child by the school/college.

Head teachers/ SENCOs:

- ☺ 66% agreed that the physical infrastructure of their education provision is sufficient to meet the current needs of children with SEND

Professionals:

- ☺ 69% of professionals agree that in general, education providers make reasonable adjustment to include children with SEND.

The following issues were highlighted as areas for development:

Parents:

- 77% - Merton **does need to develop additional in borough provision...**
- 58% - **additional provision should be by new specialist basis within mainstream schools...**

Head teachers/ SENCOs:

- 65% - Merton needs to develop **additional provision in borough** focussing on ASD, SEMH (social, emotional and mental health), and SLCN (speech, language and communication)...
- 87% - staff would benefit from **additional training** including working with children with specific needs such as ASD, SLCN and SEMH; adapting curriculum delivery; developing children's weaker skills; SEND identification, planning and review; and working with families whose child has an EHCP...

Professionals:

- 82% - Merton needs to develop **additional provision in-borough**; they state the same focus as that expressed above by head teachers...
- 50% - staff in education provisions would benefit from **additional training**; they state the same focus of training as that expressed above by head teachers...

➤ In response, this information will be used to inform Merton's **High Needs Strategic Review, and set priorities.**

7.10 Each year we conduct a foster carers survey with the aim of ensuring an up to date knowledge of the views of Merton's foster carers, and to identify areas of practice and support that could be improved to ensure that they are assisted to undertake their challenging role. This year's survey highlighted the following areas of success:

- ☺ 84% of respondents describe their level of satisfaction with the fostering service as 'good' or 'very good'.
- ☺ 72% would encourage others to foster with Merton.
- ☺ 92% rate their supervising social worker as excellent, very good or good – this is an increase on last year and higher than national.
- ☺ 92% rate the training support offered as good to excellent - this is an increase on last year and higher than national.
- ☺ 86% state that the support provided by the Virtual School was good or very good – an increase on last year.
- ☺ 81% said the service given by the LAC Health was good to very good – an increase on last year.

In addition, results from the survey have led to a number of recommendations:

- While 68% of respondents rated the **child's social worker** as good, very good or excellent, *this is a decrease from 78% in the previous year...*
- While the majority - 76% - of carers were happy with the service provided by the **payment team**, *a third of respondents stated that payments were sometimes/ occasionally inaccurate...*
- While carers were happy overall with the matching of **placements** *38% felt they had not been given all the information they needed to care for the child, and 54% of carers had no placement when they could have taken one...*
- Whilst the vast majority of carers are happy with the service, *25% of foster carers said they had considered resigning...*

- Guidance and training for **children's social work teams** so that they are aware of the need to work more closely with foster carers.
- Review **internal finance processes** to minimise the numbers of inaccuracies in payments to foster carers.
- Review the **placement process** to maximise the use of available placements and ensure carers have accurate relevant information to care for any child in their care.
- Regular individual and group discussions with carers to identify potential areas that may aid the **retention of foster carers**.
- **Exit interviews** offered to all foster carers considering resigning from the service, to collect data on which to consider future support provided.

Enabling feedback by families, and carers on their level of satisfaction with services.

7.11 **Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH)** collects information about patients' level of satisfaction with children's health services via the Patient Reported Experience Measures survey, and by 'friends and family test' comment cards. The end of year (March 2018) CLCH Quality report shows the following high levels of user satisfaction on a range of indicators:

- ☺ Proportion of patients who were treated with **respect and dignity** – 99%
- ☺ Friends and family test - percentage of people that would **recommend the service** – 94%
- ☺ Proportion of patients whose care was **explained in an understandable** way – 97%
- ☺ Proportion of patients who were **involved in planning their care** – 93%
- ☺ Proportion of patients rating their overall experience as **good or excellent** – 94%
- ☺ Proportion of patients' **concerns (PALS)** responded to within **5 working days** – 98%

7.12 Our **Early Years, Childcare and Children's Centres** service provides an early help and evidence based model of early years, early education and learning, and family support, in partnership with a range of providers across all sectors including health, care, and education. This year's service review (2017/18) reports on the reshaped service delivery model which was launched in April 2017, using a new performance framework. The reports illustrates high levels of positive feedback from families who have used the broad range of services provided:

- ☺ 88% of families asked, said that they were **satisfied with the service they received** from a group programme.
- ☺ 95% of families said they had experienced **improved outcomes** after attending a programme or service.
- ☺ For all individual programmes - supporting families team; evidence based parenting programmes; ELT programmes; and children's centre courses - **a very high proportion of parents said they had experienced improved outcomes**, well above the target of 85%.
- ☺ **Improved outcomes include:** feeling more confident in, and enjoying caring for their child; understanding their child's needs; feeling able to support their child's development in learning and play; managing behaviour; and knowing how to access further support.

The **0-5 Supporting Families' team (SFT)** plans and delivers support and services for children under 5 years old and their families.

- ☺ 100% of families asked, said that they were **satisfied with the service they received** through SFT casework.

This year the Supporting Families Team has received a number of compliments from users:

- ☺ *I would like to thank the Family Support Worker for doing such a great job of supporting a family through transition into our nursery class... her input has helped a lot with meeting the child's needs **and she has clearly been a huge support to the parents (from a primary school).***
- ☺ *Everything that has been discussed has been fantastic, the support I am getting has been a learning curve for me, thank you (parent on completion of the CASA process).*

An audit of SFT casework was conducted during the year focusing on seven cases with 6 graded as good, and one graded as requires improvement. In terms of evidence in the audit of the families' participation in the case work process the audit report identifies good evidence of 'persistence in engaging families in the intervention'. However, one area for improvement was identified:

There is evidence in only one case reviewed of a family map and action plan, which reflects the assessment and contains specific and achievable child led outcomes. The audit report highlights the following for development:

- Family maps to be reviewed and updated throughout intervention, and during case management supervision.
- Strengthen process to ensure that actions set during supervision are shared with parents.

One example of an evidenced based parenting programme offered by the service is **Incredible Years**. This aimed at priority families to help them to understand their child's needs and how they can best support them.

- ☺ 100% of parents reported improved outcomes after attending an evidence based parenting programme.

During the year the service has received a broad range of positive feedback about the Incredible Years programme from parents, highlighting improved outcomes which include understanding their child's needs, better communication within the family, and feeling that their concerns and issues can be shared and heard:

- ☺ *I have a greater understanding of what my baby is learning when we play together and I feel better equipped to cope with issues that arise.*
- ☺ *I used to think my son was just being very naughty but not any more, I now understand his behaviour much more"*
- ☺ *One parent reports that by attending the course together they are better able to understand where their partner 'is coming from' and that their partner has 'their own way of putting in place limits and boundaries for the children'; they are now 'on the same page'.*
- ☺ *I felt comfortable sharing my worries and it made me feel more confident as a parent.*
- ☺ *I was listened to*
- ☺ *You will feel more confident and you will have time to think about your personal happiness and find time for yourself.*

7.13 The **Adoption and Permanence Team** asks adopters to complete a feedback form to assess level of satisfaction at various stages of the process. The most recent bi annual report from the team (March 2017) shows that adopters are very positive about their experience of each stage of the adoption process:

- ☺ *We were allowed to progress at our own pace with a great deal of support and clarification (stage 1).*
- ☺ *Some great training and lots covered (preparation training).*
- ☺ *Questions brought up a lot and helped us to reflect on how best we could support a child, we discussed together and with our support network.*
- ☺ *We knew exactly what to expect [regarding adoption panel] and had a positive experience.*
- ☺ *Our social worker gave us a great deal of time, patience and expertise; having the same one throughout made a difference.*

Adopters who have been through the whole adoption process feedback that at the start of their journey it was most useful to hear from adopters about their experiences, rather than social workers...

In response:

- ✓ The Adoption Team delivered a 'meet the adopter' drop in session to celebrate this year's national adoption week.
- ✓ Adopters shared their experiences with prospective adoptive parents and answered their questions about the adoption application and approval process, how children are matched to adoptive parents and about family life with their adopted child.

Supporting families and the wider community to lead on delivering services which benefit children and families

7.14 Over the year our **Education Inclusion Service** has delivered two projects which aim to empower the community to run local services, including greater involvement in youth provision. This aims to help build confidence in vulnerable local families who have not historically accessed services.

The Monday Fun and Fit Club at Phipps Bridge is run by local parent volunteers for themselves and for their children. Parents attend the club with their children aged 6+, accessing circuit training and any other healthy activities whilst the children can take part in arts and crafts, play games and table tennis. The members of the club also support youth service events, volunteer for the youth centre and decide what they would like to see happening at the centre. The following shows the positive impact for one family, of attending the club, and how we were able to listen and respond to her expressed needs:

- By coming to the club, one parent was able to form relationships with other local people and improve her social support networks. Her children enjoyed spending time with their mum and siblings whilst having fun and meeting other young people.
- At the club she was able to **talk informally about some concerns and issues regarding herself and her children.**

- ✓ As the mother felt able to talk about her issues, we were able to identify that the children needed some specific support and were able to refer the family to an appropriate local service.

The **Adventure Play Ground** coffee morning is run by volunteers and supported by the Salvation Army. The APG benefits from the community meeting at their venue as they have become good supporters of the playground and increased membership. The volunteers are able to learn new skills, build their social networks and improving confidence.

8. COMMITMENT FIVE - BUILDING CAPACITY ACROSS THE CHILDREN'S TRUST TO ENGAGE IN GOOD QUALITY, ETHICAL AND IMPACTFUL 'USER VOICE' ACTIVITY, THE LEARNING FROM WHICH IS SHARED WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING PARTICIPANTS.

8.1 We are committed to supporting services across Merton's Children's Trust to build their capacity to facilitate participation opportunities for the children and families with whom we work. This includes supporting commissioned services to ensure that young people's participation is central to their work, and sharing good practice across the borough in order to continuously improve engagement methods. This approach aims to maximise expertise and fully utilise our shared capacity. Notable examples of user voice activity this year include:

Good practice guidance and training for services, on meaningful and ethical participation

8.2 During the year Merton Mencap's **Kids First parent forum** has refreshed its good practice guidance including a code of conduct for the Kids First Steering Group, and the roles and duties of a Kids First representative. The purpose of these documents is to clearly set out the role of Kids First in ensuring that the voices of children with SEN and disabilities are represented in the borough, and to have clear guidelines on confidentiality and conflicts of interest.

8.3 This year **Merton's Participation and Engagement Team** have continued to support a number of Children's Trust services to develop their 'user voice' approaches. This has included:

- Reviewing the **SENDIS** Education, Health and Care Plan process to ensure that it captures the views of children and their families and, with the help of members of MYP, exploring the best ways to implement participation opportunities for young people with SEN and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Meeting **Catch22**, who are commissioned to provide a range of services to support young people, to advise on monitoring and evaluating 'user engagement' approaches.

Supporting commissioned services to ensure that young people's participation is central to their work.

8.4 As part of the contract monitoring process, **Merton's Commissioning Team** collects evidence each quarter from the commissioned providers, on the services they have delivered. This includes information on user voice activity and impact. Each year the team produces a report which details the impact that commissioned providers have had on children and young people, including information about how they have supported young people's participation.

This report '**The Review of the Impact of Commissioned Voluntary Services 2017/18**' sets out the range of ways in which commissioned services meet the Merton 'Participation Promise to Children and Young People', and gives a number of examples of the positive impact of this work (see section 4.10 above for a summary). It is circulated to senior managers across the Children's Trust (via Children's Trust Board and MSCB), in order to evidence our commitment to user voice in all services, and to share good practice.

Completing the feedback loop to those who participate in 'user voice' activities, and sharing learning from user voice activity across organisations and across the Children's Trust.

8.5 **Merton Kids First** forum for parents of children and young people with disabilities or special needs produce their own **termly newsletter** for members and practitioners. The content of the newsletter is guided by requests from members for information and advice. Articles this year have included an overview of 'self harming behaviour'; feedback from the local authority on SEND reforms; events; publications; and information on local and national support organisations.

8.6 Merton is part of the **South West London Adoption Consortium (SWLAC)**, which offers advice and support to adoptive families through every step of the adoption process and beyond. SWLAC produces a regular newsletter for adoptive families covering news, adoption experiences, feedback from adopters about the adoption process, dates Adoption UK support meetings, and other local support.

8.7 **Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH)** puts together '**patient stories**', the key themes from which, including staff learning points and action plans, are **shared at the beginning of all senior management meetings, including at the Trust's Board of Directors, and at team and service-level meetings.** Patient stories are narratives of individuals' healthcare experiences, told by an adult, young person or child service user, or someone close to them, such as a relative or carer, which can be positive, negative, or combine elements of both. Here is an example of the positive feedback from a 'patient story' from June 2018 based on the experience of a user of the Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Team (CYPOT).

What was positive about your experience with the CYPOT?

- ☺ *The speed in which we were seen following GP referral...*
- ☺ *Parent training – empowering and educating parents and giving them hope...*
- ☺ *Communication from therapist was really effective, and child and parent felt listened to and understood...*
- ☺ *Were offered practical solutions that helped...*
- ☺ *Confident in the advice given by therapist...*
- ☺ *Integrated working with TAMHS [targeted mental health in schools]...*

In addition, the patient fed back a number of recommendations for preventing the problems the young person and the family had endured before input from CYPOT. This information has been used to inform a number of actions for the team to take forward over the following year:

- After school the young person had 'huge meltdowns' as a response to feeling over stimulated and anxious while at school – *'as a family we were finding this very difficult to cope with'...*
- The OT sent her support and strategy recommendations for the young person to the school TAMHS worker – *'I would love to see more OT input in liaising with the schools, following up with the schools to ensure that all recommendations are put in place... bring more awareness of OT'...*
- *'I feel training on awareness of children's differing needs and OT should be part of teacher training as they [teachers] are often not aware'.*

In response, the CYOT team are taking forward the following actions:


- Additional parent training sessions focussing on managing 'meltdowns' and other smaller issues.
- OT to be involved with education in setting.
- Deliver a teacher training day at local Universities on supporting children with OT needs in school.

8.8 **Young Merton Together** online e-magazine is published termly and includes articles focusing on user voice activity and impact across Merton's Children's Trust. This is communicated to all levels of Merton's children's workforce. This year each of the termly editions included an average of 10-12 user voice related articles that represent each of the strategy commitments. The magazine, which receives around **13k hits in its first month of publication**, is distributed to professionals and staff who work with children, young people and families across the borough. This aims to ensure that all organisations take children and young people's views into account, and apply learning from external 'user voice' activity where relevant, to their own service planning and delivery.

9. FURTHER 'USER VOICE' RESOURCES:

- Children and Families' Voice Framework 2017-19
- Merton CSF - 'Participation Framework for Commissioned Services'
- [Participation Promise to Merton's Children and Young People](#)
- [We've got your back with 32 pledges](#) – A pledge to children in care and care leavers in Merton.
- Children in Care Council - Principles for Participation.
- [Merton's Practice Model for Social work.](#)
- [Merton's Quality Assurance Framework.](#)
- [Young Merton Together.](#)

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Your Life, Your Care:

*a survey of the views of
looked after children and
young people aged 4-18yrs in
Merton*

April 2018

Levana Magnus, University of Bristol

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About this research

Bright Spots

This research is part of the Bright Spots programme: a partnership between the University of Bristol and Coram Voice.

The programme aims to:

- improve the care experience for all looked after children;
- give children a voice on their own well-being; and
- highlight the 'Bright Spots' of practice that contribute to children flourishing in care.

The project was funded by the Hadley Trust and the DfE Social Care Innovation Fund.

- Through the programme we developed the *Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators*, which put children's experience and voices at the heart of how we measure subjective well-being.
- The indicators are measured by the '*Your Life, Your Care*' survey – a tool grounded in research and comparable to national data sets.
- The survey was developed from literature reviews, roundtable discussions with professionals and from focus groups and individual interviews with 140 looked after children and young people living in nine different local authorities.
- The survey identifies the areas where children appear to be flourishing and where things could be improved, providing an evidence base of children's experience and well-being to inform service improvements.

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Section 1: Summary: Key Findings

Key findings

The overall response rate was 37%. Girls and children and young people living in foster care were over-represented. Merton is a small local authority. Although the response rate was good, remember that the responses came from 19 children (4-11yrs) and 33 young people (11-18yrs) when looking at the findings.

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Looked-after children and young people in Merton appear to be thriving. No children (4-11yrs) and only one young person (11-18yrs) has low well-being. There were numerous Bright Spots, where children and young people in Merton were doing as well as the general population or better compared to looked-after children in other local authorities (LAs).



All young people (11-18yrs) had medium or high scores on whether they felt the things they did in life were worthwhile and only a small proportion of young people in Merton had low scores on life satisfaction, happiness yesterday and positivity about the future.

Compared to the general population and other looked-after young people a greater proportion of young people had very high scores (9 or 10) on all the well-being scales



31 (94%) young people and 7 (78%) children felt that their lives were improving.

Key findings



All but one of the youngest children (4-7yrs) knew who their social worker was.



the majority of children (4-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) in Merton trusted their workers.



Over half (59%) of young people reported that they had only had one social worker in the last year, a higher proportion compared with young people (34%) in other LAs.



Almost all children and young people had a trusted adult in their lives, however 4 did not.



Around half of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) were happy with contact arrangements with their mothers and siblings.

7 young people had no face-to-face contact with either parent.



Children and young people in Merton reported positive relationships with their carers, the majority:

- trusted their carers;
- felt their carers showed an interest in their education; and
- thought their carers noticed how they were feeling.

Key findings

The majority of children and young people were positive about their placements



They reported that they felt safe and settled in their homes.



However, around a quarter of the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs age groups did not like their bedrooms. Some young people used the text boxes to write that they wanted a bigger room or that they did not want to share with siblings.



Others also wrote that they wanted to have a pet.



Section 2: Methodology

Methodology

- Page 95
- Three online surveys were used to capture looked after children and young people's views on their own well-being. The three versions were for:
 - a) younger children aged 4-7yrs (16 questions);
 - b) children aged 8-11yrs in primary school (31 questions); and
 - c) young people of secondary school age 11-18yrs (46 questions).
 - There was a common set of 16 core questions.
 - Paper surveys were also available and used in cases where no Internet was available, or when the child preferred this method.
 - In Merton at the time of the survey 142 children and young people aged 4-18yrs were looked after and able to complete the survey.
 - Children and young people completed the survey anonymously: individual identifiers such as name, school etc. were not collected in order to allow responses without fear of consequences.
 - If children recorded names or any identifying information on the survey these were removed by the researchers.

Methodology

- The survey was distributed through the virtual school to head teachers and designated teachers in schools.
- Social care staff, including foster carers and social workers, were asked to encourage children and young people to complete the survey.
- Regular reminders were sent to head teachers and designated teachers and some schools were followed up directly.
- The survey was promoted at the Looked After Child and care leavers consultation which was attended by partnership agencies, designated teachers and social care staff.
- Most children and young people were asked to complete the online survey in school in February and March 2018, with a trusted adult present. The trusted adult was usually the designated teacher, learning mentor or SENCO.

Methodology

Subjective well-being:

Are children flourishing?

- Subjective well-being in this survey refers to children's own evaluations of how they feel about their lives.
- There are questions in the surveys about affect (e.g. how happy a child feels now), cognitive judgements (e.g. evaluations of relationships) and the inner world (e.g. life having meaning).
- All these elements help us understand whether children are flourishing.

- Where possible, LA data are compared to data on children in the general population, and to the average responses from 13 local authorities.
- Data were weighted and tests run for significant difference between LAs.
- In addition to questions that measure overarching well-being indicators (happiness, life satisfaction etc.) the questions cover four domains that are important to children and young people: Relationships, Resilience, Rights and Recovery. The report covers each of these.

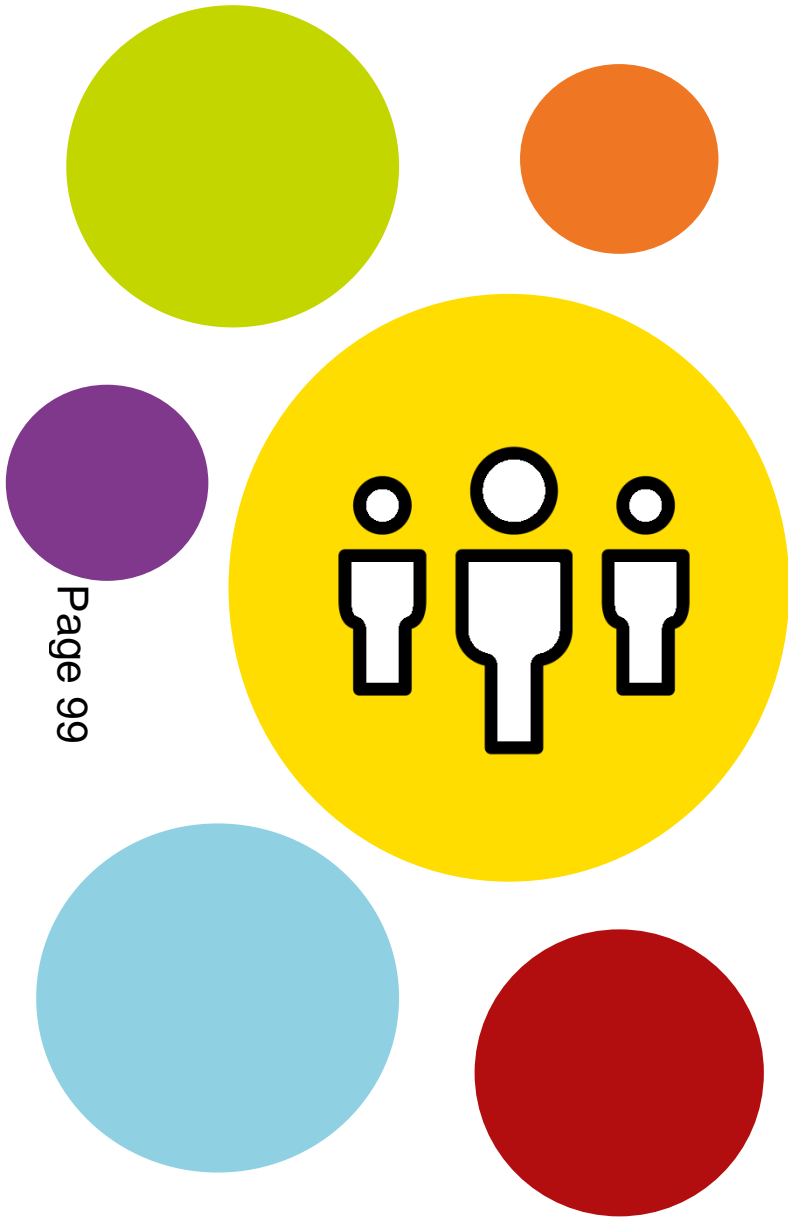


On some pages of this report you will see a '**Bright Spots**' icon (shown left). This indicates a 'good news' story – a positive aspect of practice in your local authority.

This is where children and young people are doing significantly better than children in care in other local authorities or report the same or higher well-being than their peers in the general population.



Section 3: Survey results



1. Demographics

- Sample sizes
- Age and gender
- Ethnicity
- Placements
- Length of time in care

Sample sizes

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Although the sample size must be borne in mind when considering the representativeness of the data, the response rate was significantly better than in some similar surveys. *The State of Nation: Children in Care 2015*, for example, had a response rate of 3%.

- 52 children and young people responded to the surveys from an eligible looked after population of 142.
- The overall response rate was 37%.
- There was a particularly good response from the youngest children (4-7yrs), where two-thirds (67%) of looked-after children completed the survey.

Age	Care population <i>n</i>	Responses <i>n</i>	Response rate %
4-7yrs	15	10	67%
8-11yrs	28	9	32%
11-18yrs	99	33	33%

Age and gender

- In Merton, 63% of the looked after population were boys.
- Girls were over-represented in the survey. A higher proportion of girls completed the survey compared with the proportion of girls (37%) in the looked-after population.

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Age group	Girls <i>n</i> (%)	Boys <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say/no reply <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)
8-11yrs	4 (44%)	5 (56%)	0 (0%)
11-18yrs	15 (45.5%)	18 (54.5%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	25 (48%)	27 (52%)	0 (0%)

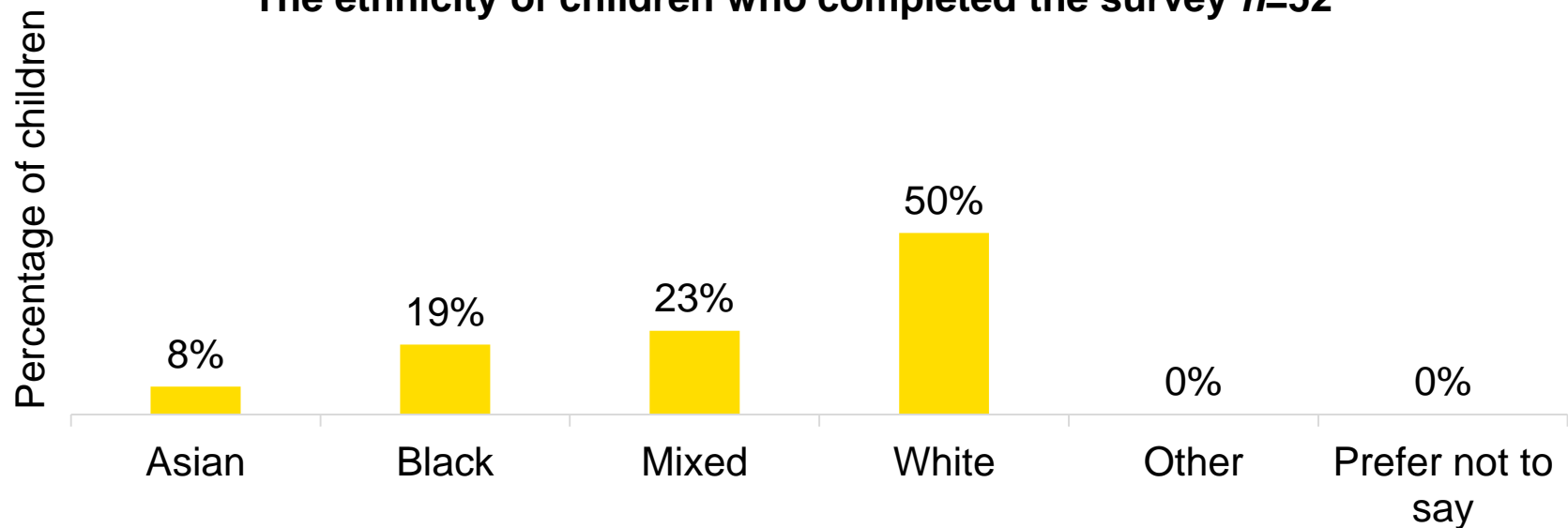
Ethnicity

Children of Asian, black and mixed ethnicity appear proportionately represented in the survey, as they make up 49% of the care population in Merton's statistical return to the DfE (2017) – compared to 50% in our sample.

- Half (50%) of children and young people who completed the survey were white.
- A higher proportion of children and young people identified as being of mixed ethnicity (23%) compared to the 10% in the DfE published statistical return. (DfE, 2017)
- However, none of the children or young people identified as 'other' whereas the DfE (2017) statistics show 10% of Merton's care population as being of 'other' ethnicity.

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The ethnicity of children who completed the survey *n*=52



Placements

Children and young people in residential care were under-represented in survey responses: in Merton 66% are placed with foster carers and 26% live in residential care. (DfE, 2017)

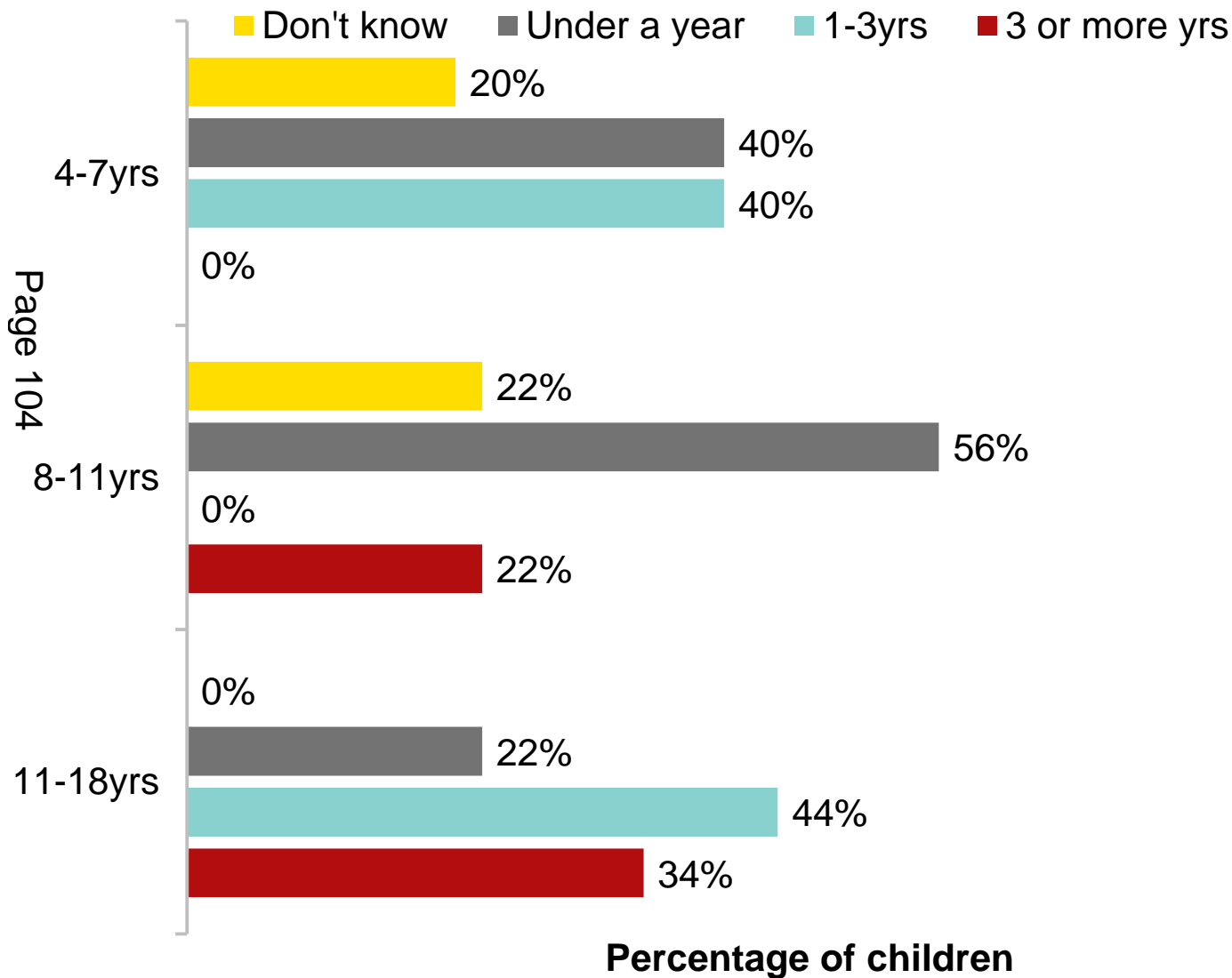
- The majority (71%) of children and young people were living in foster care.
- Children and young people living in foster care were over-represented: 73% of those who completed the survey were in foster care compared to 66% of looked after children in Merton.

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Age group	Foster care %	Family or friends care %	Residential care %	With parents %	Somewhere else %	Prefer not to say %
4-7yrs	50%	40%	0%	10%	0%	0%
8-11yrs	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%
11-18yrs	73%	6%	18%	0%	0%	3%
TOTAL	71%	13%	12%	2%	0%	2%

Length of time in care

How long have you been in care?





2. Relationships

- Family contact
- Good friends
- Pets
- Adults you live with:
Continuity and trust
- Social worker:
Continuity and trust

Family contact

The youngest children (4-7yrs) were not asked questions about family contact, as it was thought that they might become distressed or anxious.






Children and young people (8-18yrs) were asked whether they were *content with the frequency of contact that was taking place with their mother, father, and siblings.*

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- All of the children (8-11yrs) had contact with at least one parent. In the older age group (11-18yrs) seven young people had no contact with either parent.
- Around half of children and young people saw their mothers and siblings 'just the right amount'.
- 14 (47%) young people and 2 (22%) children felt that they saw their fathers 'just the right amount'.
- No-one felt that they saw their family members 'too much'.
- A significantly greater proportion of young people in Merton were happy with contact arrangements with their fathers when compared with results from 13 other LAs. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Family contact

Family member	Age group	Too much	Just right	Too little	I am unable to see them	Don't have any siblings
 Mother	8-11yrs n=9	0 (0%)	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=31	0 (0%)	16 (52%)	7 (22%)	8 (26%)	-----
 Father	8-11yrs n=9	0 (0%)	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	3 (33%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=30	0 (0%)	14 (47%)	7 (23%)	9 (30%)	-----
 Siblings	8-11yrs n=9	0 (0%)	6 (67%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
	11-18yrs n=32	0 (0%)	17 (53%)	7 (22%)	5 (16%)	3 (9%)

*all rows may not add up to 100% because of rounding

Family contact: 8-11yrs

Children were also given the option of providing *comments about contact*.

- 5 children took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. 3 children wanted more contact whilst 2 children were happy with their current contact arrangements. Quotes are shown below.

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I'm ok with how it works.

No not really, but I would like to see my auntie, uncle and cousins.

I like it just the way it is.

I would like to have more contact with them.

I haven't had contact with my brother, my niece, or my older sister and I would love to have contact with them.

Family contact: 11-18yrs

- 12 (36%) young people took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. 5 young people wrote that they had limited or no contact with family members. 4 young people wrote that they liked contact and got to have fun with their family. 3 young people wanted more contact with their family members. Example quotes are shown below.

My contact feels good.

I cannot contact them because they live in [country].

I would like to have more contact.

I see them quite a lot every holiday time and we have fun together and there is one [family member] I live with.

*Don't want to see mam.
Don't want to see dad.
No other comments because I don't see them – apart from my nan and brothers.*

Like seeing Dad – we go out to eat.

Good friends



A lack of friendships is associated with loneliness and anxiety. All children and young people were asked whether they *had a really good friend*.

General population: *The Millennium Cohort Study (2015)* of young people aged 14yrs found that 3% of young people did not have a good friend.

- The majority of the children and young people stated that they had at least one good friend but 2 (4%) did not.
- This was similar to their peers in the general population.
- All of the youngest children had a good friend. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

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Age group	Yes I have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)	No, I don't have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	9 (100%)	0 (0%)
8-11yrs	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)
11-18yrs	31 (97%)	1 (3%)
TOTAL	47 (96%)	2 (4%)

Pets



Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked **if they had a pet in the home they lived in.**

Focus group feedback

Pets were important to children in all the focus groups we ran.

Children and young people said that pets are non-judgmental – they love you no matter what and are always pleased to see you. They can also give children an opportunity to take responsibility.

- 4 of the 8-11yrs children lived in a household with a pet.
- In the older (11-18yrs group), 11 young people had a pet where they lived.
- 5 children and 11 young people wanted to have a pet where they lived.

I would like to be able to have a little pet where I live.
8-11yrs

Adults you live with: Continuity & trust

Placement moves



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked, *how many placements have you had since coming into care?*

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Number of placements	Percentage
1 placement	44%
2-4 placements	41%
5-7 placements	9%
8-10 placements	3%
11+	0%
Don't know	3%

Trust



Children and young people were asked whether they *trusted the adults they lived with (i.e. carers, parents).*

- 100% of children (4-7yrs) trusted their carers. This is a Bright Spot of practice.
- All but one (89%) of those aged 8-11yrs; and
- 97% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.

My life in care feels very stable, better and calm in comparison to previously.
11-18yrs

Social worker: Continuity & trust

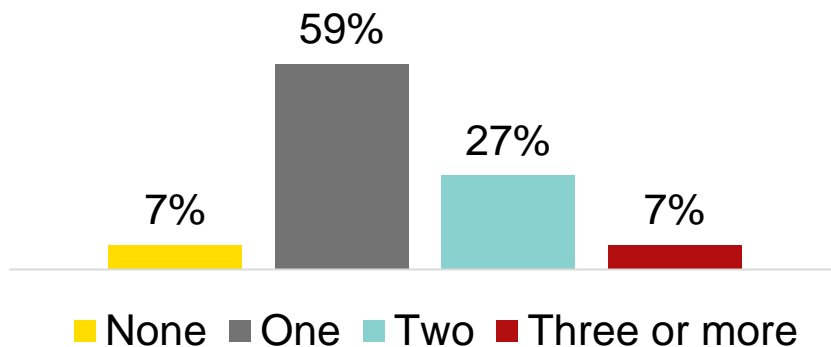
Changes in social workers



11-18 year olds were asked, *how many social workers have you had in the past 12 months?*

59% had only one social worker in the previous year. This was a significantly greater proportion than in other LAs, where 34% of young people only had one social worker in the last year.

How many social workers have you had in the last 12 months?



Trusting social worker



Children and young people ($n=48$) who knew who their social worker was were asked if they *trusted their social worker*.

- The level of trust in social workers was high. One of the youngest children did not trust their social worker.
- 89% of children (4-7yrs);
- 100% 8-11yrs; and
- 97% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their social worker.



3. Resilience

- Trusted adult
- Being trusted & helping out
- Liking school
- Adults you live with:
Support for learning
- Having fun & hobbies
- Access to nature
- Second chances
- Life skills
- Access to Internet at home

Trusted adult



Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked, **do you have an adult who you trust, who helps you and sticks by you no matter what?**

- Most children and young people wrote that they had a trusted adult in their lives:
 - 89% of children (8-11yrs); and
 - 90% of the 11-18yrs young people.
- 4 looked after children and young people had no such adult in their lives.

A key turning point

The availability of one key adult has been shown to be the turning point in many looked after young people's lives. (Gilligan, 2009)

Having a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events.

Being trusted & helping out

Younger children (8-11yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to help the teacher*.

Focus group feedback

Children had said in the focus groups that they were never trusted to show visitors around school or deliver a message because they were looked after.

age 11-16

- 3 children (8-11yrs) responded that 'all or most of the time' they were asked to help and 4 answered 'sometimes'.
- 2 wrote 'hardly ever' or 'never'.

It's a lovely experience and having love within the family your living with is great. I feel like foster carers need to trust their child a lot more but knowing their limits. Negotiating rules could help with this... It's lovely overall, sometimes it can be stressful.

11-18yrs



We asked young people, *how often do you get the chance to show you can be trusted?*

Focus group feedback

Having trusting relationships and being trusted were key issues raised by the children in the focus groups that underpinned the development of this survey.

- 17 (57%) of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted and 11 (36%) given them 'sometimes'.
- 2 (7%) responded 'hardly ever'.

Liking school



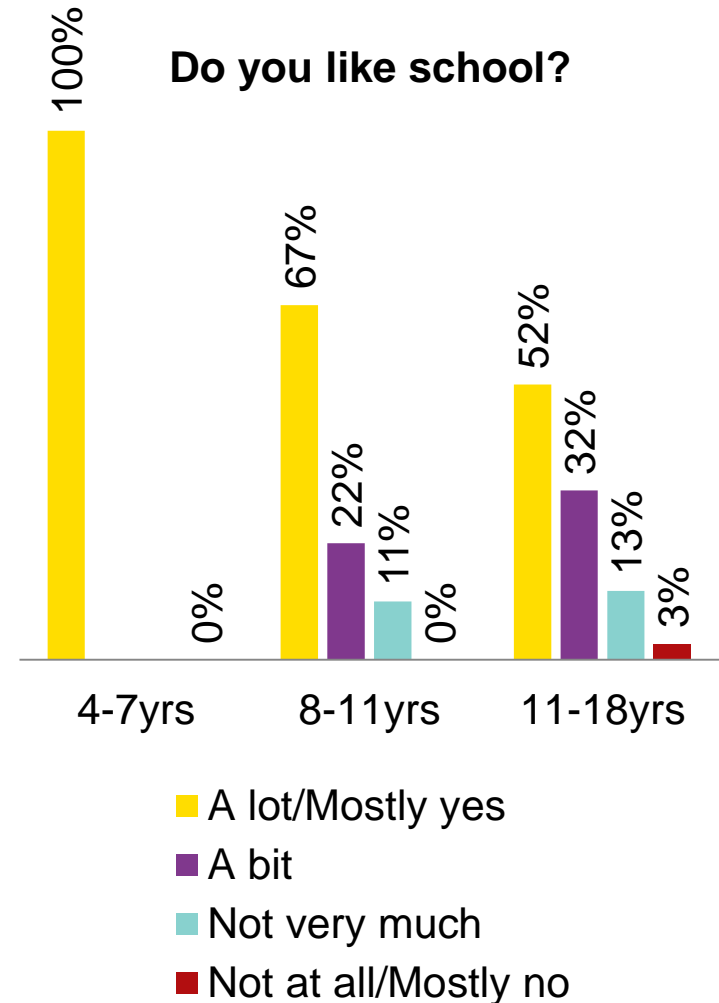
All the children and young people were asked how much they *liked school or college*.

General population: Liking school

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (2015) of 5,335 young people (11-15yrs) reported that 80% liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' and 20% 'not very much' or 'not at all'. Liking school decreased with the child's age and girls were more likely to say they enjoyed school 'a lot' in comparison with boys.

- All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and the majority of children (8-11yrs) and (11-18yrs) liked school.
- 84% of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit', which is a greater proportion compared to the general population.

Do you like school?



Adults you live with: Support for learning



Children in the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs surveys were asked whether the adults they lived with (e.g. carers, parents)

showed an interest in what they were doing in school or college.

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General population: Support with learning

In comparison the *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (11-15yrs) reported that 90% of children in England said their parents were interested in what happened at school.

- 8 (89%) of 8-11yrs and 29 (97%) of 11-18yrs recorded that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- A greater proportion of young people reported that their carers showed an interest in what happened at school compared to their peers in the general population, where 90% reported that their parents showed an interest in their education.

Having fun & hobbies

Children aged 4-11yrs were asked if they had *fun at the weekend*.



The 11-18yrs survey asked young people if they were able to *spend time on their own hobbies or activities outside of school*.

- The majority of children and young people did have fun and were active.
- All of the youngest children felt that they had fun on the weekends. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

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Age group	Yes, I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	Sometimes I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	No, I don't have fun or take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	9 (100%)	-	0 (0%)
8-11yrs	5 (56%)	2 (22%)	2 (22%)
11-18yrs	18 (60%)	9 (30%)	3 (10%)
TOTAL	32 (67%)	11 (23%)	5 (10%)

Access to nature



Contact with nature can reduce stress and improve mental health. (Play England, 2012)

We asked whether children and young people had opportunities to *explore the outdoors*, such as visiting parks, beaches, fields and forests.

Focus group feedback

Some of the children in our focus groups said safeguarding fears limited their opportunities.

General population:

About 11% of children (6-15yrs) had not visited the natural environment in the last year. (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey, 2016)

- 5 (56%) of children (8-11yrs) and 27 (90%) of young people (11-18yrs) answered that they did have access 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- It was surprising that only 56% of children felt they had opportunities to explore the outdoors, but 90% of young people did.
- It is more common that the youngest children are taken by their carers to play in parks, woods etc. So, whilst looked-after young people (11-18yrs) in Merton reported similar levels of access to their peers in the general population, there are concerns for the younger children.

What would

make care better?

Maybe going out more often instead of staying in all the time.

8-11yrs

Second chances



Young people aged 11-18yrs were asked if they felt they *got a second chance if they did something wrong.*

Focus group feedback

All children make mistakes and need a second or many more chances. It is part of learning and growing up.

Many children involved in the focus groups stated that looked after children were too readily refused a second chance.

- 57% responded 'all or most of the time';
- 40% answered 'sometimes'; and
- 3% thought they 'hardly ever' or 'never' got a second chance.

Life skills



We asked the young people in the 11-18yrs group, *how often do you get to practice life skills like cooking healthy food, washing clothes or going to the bank?*

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Focus group feedback

This question was asked as many young people in the focus groups thought that they had been insufficiently prepared for independence.

What would make care better?

Stop having a go constantly and let me practice independent skills.

11-18yrs

- 30 (97%) young people answered that they were taught independence skills 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' but one (3%) thought this was 'hardly ever' true.

What would make care better?

I would like to have my passport so that I can travel to different countries and do different things. I would also like to have a bank card so that I would be able to learn to save and do online shopping.

11-18yrs

Access to the Internet at home



Young people 11-18yrs were asked *if they could connect to the Internet from home.*

General population: Access to the Internet

- In the UK, 98% of households with children have an Internet connection. (ONS 2017)
- The *Millennium Cohort Study* of children aged 11yrs old found that children who never used the Internet outside school had a high probability of low well-being. (The Children's Society, 2014)

- The *majority* (90%) of young people reported that they did have access to the Internet.
- 3 (10%) young people 'hardly ever' or 'never' had access.

What would make care better?
Faster internet.
11-18yrs

4. Rights

- Included in decision-making
- Stigma of being in care
- Feeling safe in placement
- Bullying
- Knowing and contact with social workers



Included in decision-making



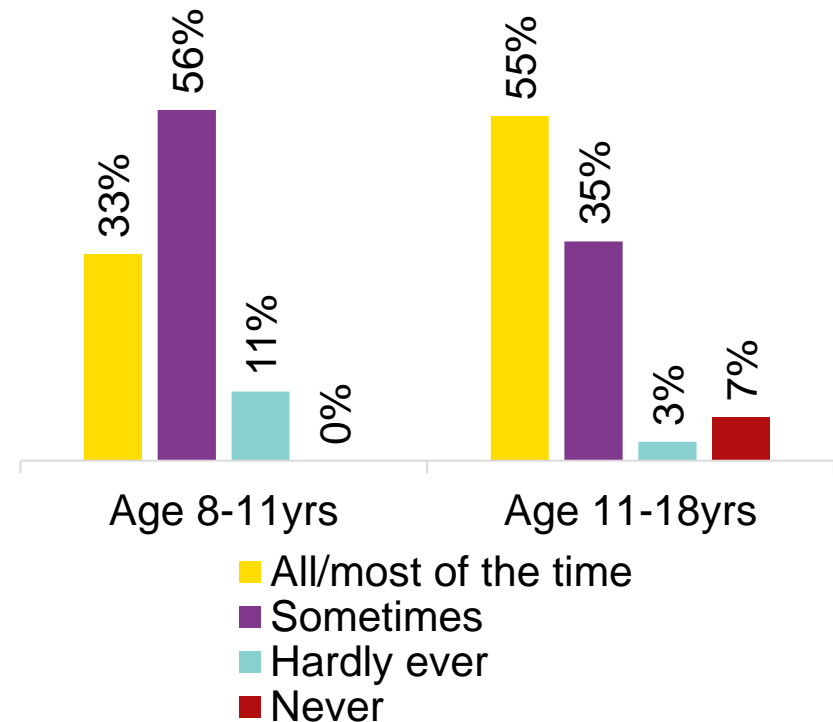
Children aged 8-18yrs were asked, *do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?*

- 8 (89%) of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
28 (90%) of 11-18yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.

I want to know what is happening with my mum and contact.
11-18yrs

I would like to know all options and services available to me.
11-18yrs

Do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?



Stigma of being in care



The 11-18yrs age group were asked a question in the survey about feeling different, *do adults do things that make you feel embarrassed about being in care?*

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Younger children were not asked these questions, as the focus groups suggested that being made to feel different was of much greater concern in adolescence.

- 2 young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.
- They wrote:

Well, they always talk to me as if I am 5 years old.
11-18yrs

[They] talk about it to other people and in front of me.
11-18yrs

Feeling safe in placement

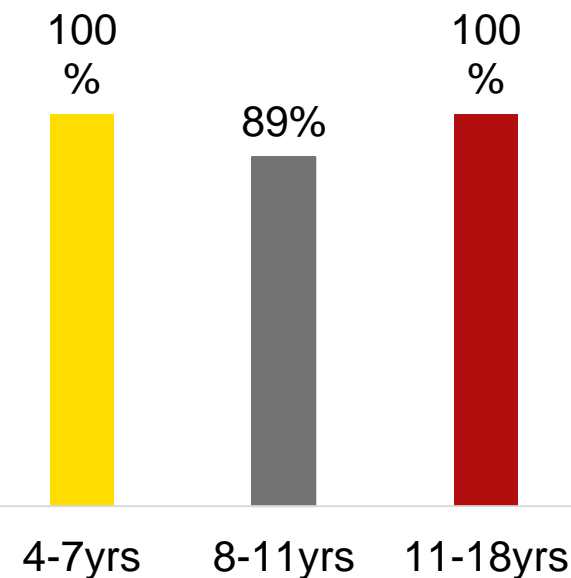


All children and young people were asked whether they *felt safe in the home they lived in now*. It is difficult to know what children were thinking about when answering, but feeling secure is about how the world *feels*, not necessarily how it is.

- Overall, 94% of children and young people reported that they 'all or most of the time' felt safe in their placements.
All 4-7yrs group and those aged 11-18yrs reported that they felt safe.
One child in the 8-11yrs group reported that they 'sometimes' felt safe in their home.

- A higher proportion of children and young people in Merton felt safe at home compared with their peers in the general population, where 75% reported that they felt 'totally safe' at home.

I feel safe in the home I live in all or most of the time



General population:

The Children's Worlds survey found that 75% of children (8-13yrs) in the general population felt 'Totally safe' at home. (Rees *et al.*, 2014) Not feeling safe is associated with raised cortisol levels and difficulty in learning and concentration. (Harvard University, 2012)

Bullying

Our question asked whether *children felt afraid of going to school because of bullying* and if they were bullied were they *getting support from an adult*.

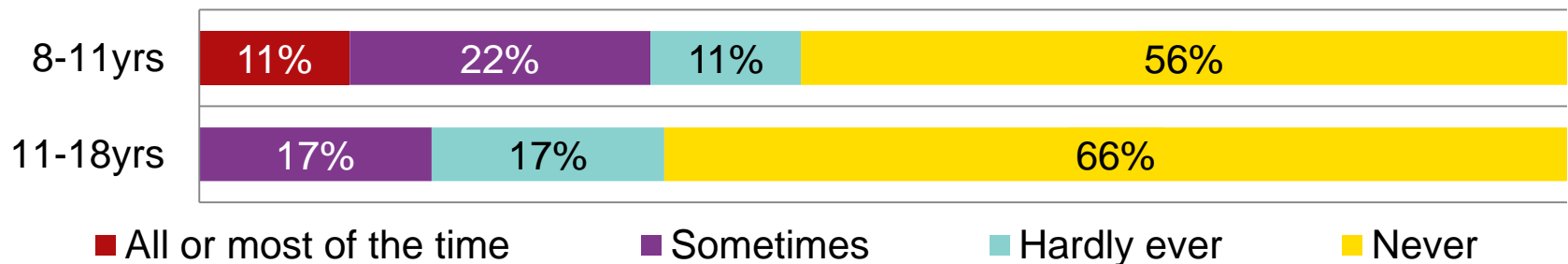
General population: Bullying

- The analysis of the *Children's Worlds surveys* in 22 countries has shown that being free from bullying is one of the most important factors in children's well-being. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)
- About 12% of children in England say they are regularly bullied at school. (ONS, 2016b)

- One child (8-11yrs) was afraid to go to school because of bullying 'all or most of the time' and 2 children were afraid 'sometimes'.
- Only one child (8-11yrs) reported they were getting support from an adult to cope with bullying.
- 5 young people (11-18yrs) reported that they were 'sometimes' afraid to go to school because of bullying. 4 of these young people felt they were getting help.

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Do you ever feel afraid of going to school or college because of bullying?



Knowing identity of social workers



All the children and young people were asked if they *knew their current social worker*.

- Overall 98% knew who their social worker was.
- All but one of the youngest children (4-7yrs) knew who their social worker was.
- All children and young people aged 8-18yrs knew who their social worker was. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

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Age group	Know social worker <i>n (%)</i>	Don't know social worker <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	8 (89%)	1 (11%)
8-11yrs	9 (100%)	0 (0%)
11-18yrs	31 (100%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	48 (98%)	1 (2%)

Contact with social workers



Children and young people (n=48) who knew their social worker were asked *how easy it was to contact them*.



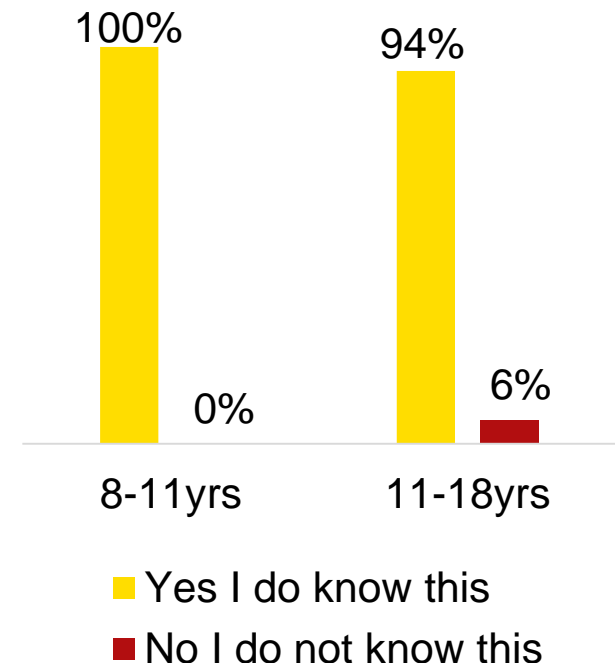
Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) were also asked whether *they knew they could speak to their social worker on their own*.

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- A high proportion (89%) of young people (11-18yrs) reported that they could get easily get in touch with their social worker 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. However, 3 (11%) young people could 'hardly ever' or 'never' get in touch with their social worker.

- All children (8-11yrs) knew that they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Do you know you have the right to speak to a social worker on your own?





5. Recovery

- Knowing reason for being in care
- Feeling settled in placement
- Liking bedrooms
- Adults you live with:
Sensitive parenting
- Adults you live with:
Sharing confidences
- Support with worries
- Parity with peers
- Happiness with appearance

Knowing reason for being in care



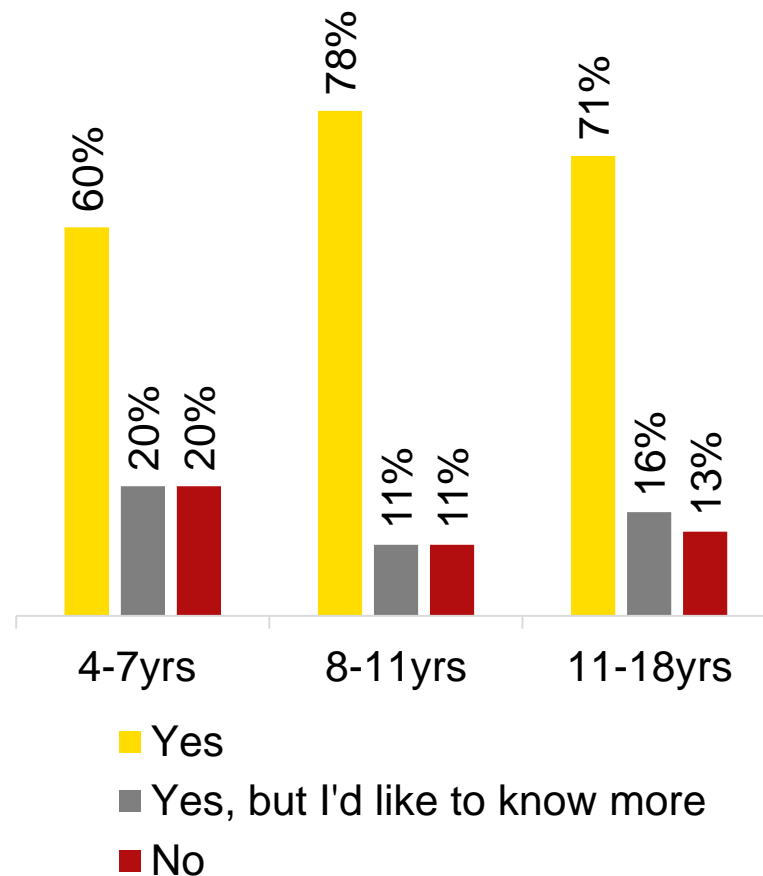
All the children and young people were asked if *someone had explained why they were in care.*

Important for recovery

Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect. (Adshead, 2012; Adler, 2012)

- The majority of children and young people knew why they were in care.
- 15 (28%) children and young people did not know why they were in care or wanted to know more about their life story.

Has someone explained why you are in care?



Feeling settled in placement



The surveys aimed to capture whether children felt a sense of belonging and felt at ease in their placements. Based on the advice from our focus groups, children and young people were asked,

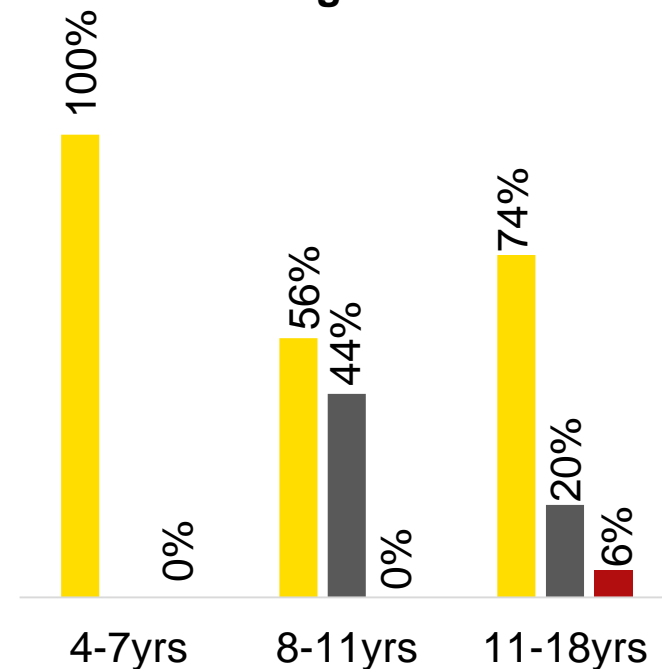
*do you feel settled in the home you live in now?
(Do you feel comfortable, accepted and at ease?)*

Answer options

Younger children (4-7yrs) could answer 'mostly yes' or 'mostly no'. Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) could answer: 'all or most of the time', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever', or 'never'.

- All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) felt settled in their homes.
- 5 of the 8-11yrs group felt settled 'all or most of the time' and 4 felt settled 'sometimes'.
- 23 of the 11-18yrs group felt settled 'all or most of the time' and 6 felt settled 'sometimes'.

Feeling settled



- All or most of the time/Mostly yes
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever/Never/Mostly no

Liking bedrooms



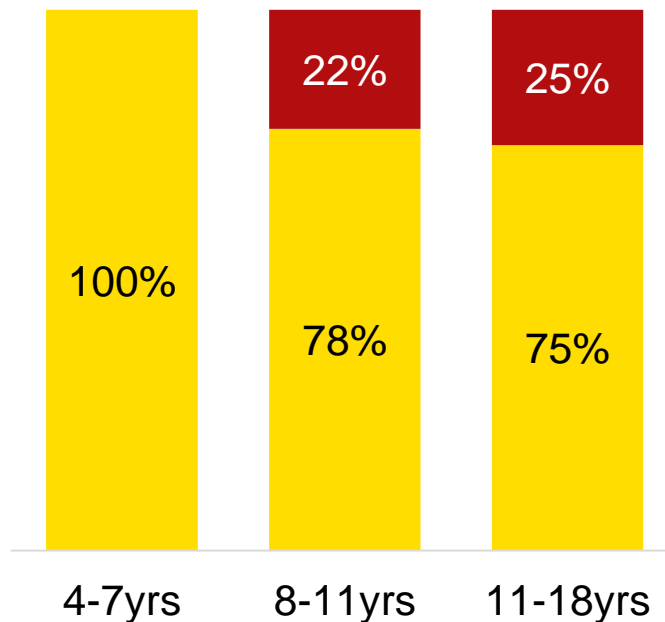
Liking your bedroom was an important feature for the focus groups we ran.

Focus group feedback

Young people reflected that their bedrooms were a place for being on your own in busy homes. It is linked to safety, sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging.

- The majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms.
- However, compared to looked after young people in 13 other LAs, a significantly larger proportion of young people in Merton did not like their bedrooms: 25% in Merton disliked their rooms compared to 6% elsewhere.

Do you like your bedroom?



■ Like

■ Dislike

What would make care better?
Have my own bedroom
(not with my brother)
11-18yrs

What would make care better?
A bigger room
11-18yrs

Adults you live with: Sensitive parenting



All children and young people (4-19yrs) were asked whether the adults they lived with *noticed how they were feeling*.

- All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 8 (89%) children, aged 8-11yrs, and 28 (97%) young people, aged 11-18yrs, thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.

Adults you live with: Sharing confidences



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked how frequently they *talked to the adults that they lived with about the things that mattered to them.*

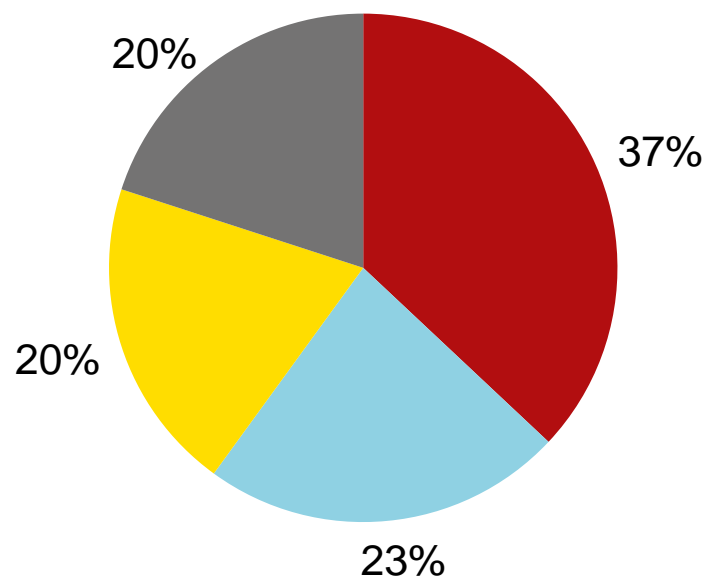
General population

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The *Understanding Society* survey (2017) found that 66% of children (10-15yrs) talked regularly to a parent.

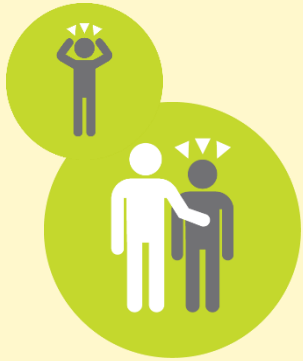
- 60% of young people talked regularly with their carers/parents about things that mattered to them.
- This is a slightly smaller proportion compared to their peers in the general population.

Speaking to adults about things that matter



- Most days
- More than once a week
- Less than once a week
- Hardly ever

Support with worries



Children and young people (8-11yrs and 11-18yrs) were asked if they *worried about their own feelings or behaviour* and, if they *did have concerns, were they receiving support*.

- 5 children (8-11yrs) worried 'sometimes' about their feelings or behaviour.
- 3 of the 5 children who reported worrying thought they were getting help.
- 4 young people (11-18yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 18 'sometimes'.
- 17 of the 22 young people who reported worrying thought they were getting help.

Page 137 General population & other comparative data: Mental health

In Merton, about 42% of looked after children have concerning SDQ scores. (DfE, 2017)

- Studies of looked after populations show that children's level of difficulties are much higher, ranging from about 45% of children in foster care to 75% of those in residential. (Ford *et al.*, 2007)
- In the general population, 13.5% of children have SDQ scores that suggest they have a clinical level of mental health difficulties. (ONS, 2016b)

Parity with peers



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to do similar things to their friends.*

- 93% of young people reported that 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' they did do similar things to their friends.
- 2 (7%) young people reported that they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends.

Happiness with appearance



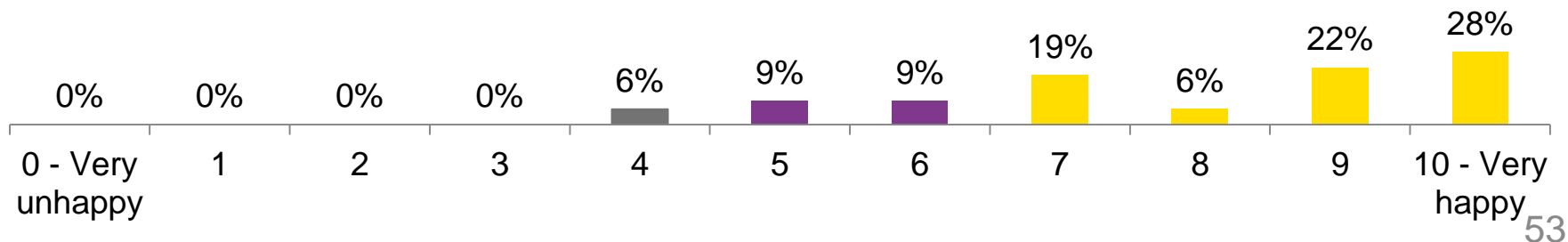
Studies have shown that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. (Cash and Smolek, 2011)

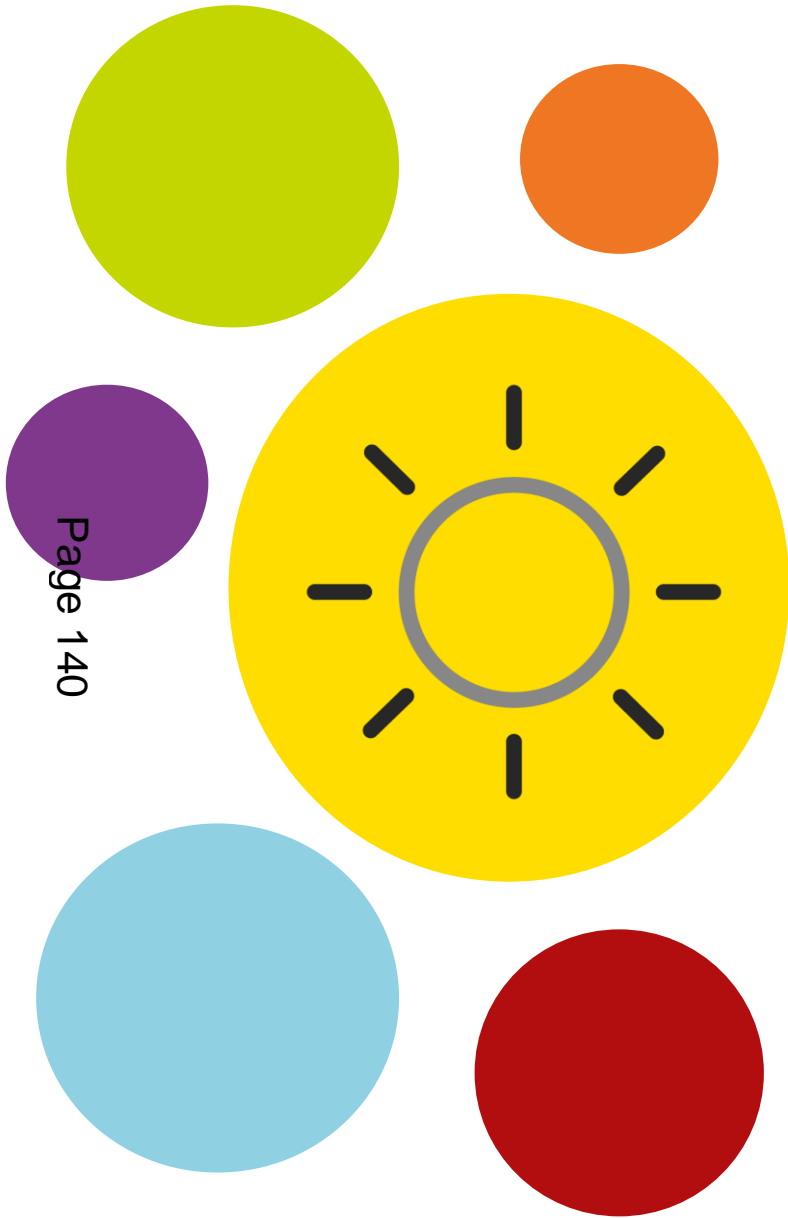
General population: Happiness with appearance

- 10% of 10-17 year olds in the general population are unhappy with their appearance. Girls are more likely to have a lower opinion of their appearance than boys. (The Children's Society, 2017)

- The majority of young people were happy with their appearance.
- In the general population 10% of young people dislike their appearance. Merton's young people were more positive and only 6% were unhappy with their appearance. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

How happy are you with the way you look?





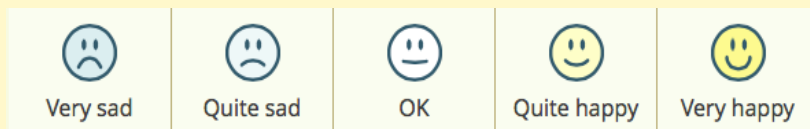
6. Well-being

- Happiness yesterday – affect
- Life satisfaction – overall evaluation
- Life is worthwhile – psychological/eudemonic well-being
- Life is improving
- Positivity about the future

Happiness

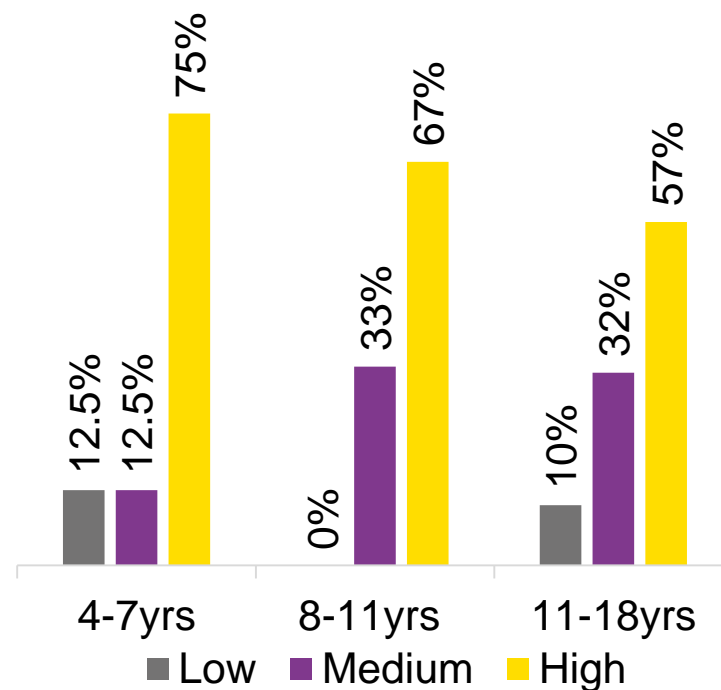
The decrease in happiness with age occurs in all surveys. Well-being decreases from school year 5 onwards with age 14-15yrs being the lowest point. It then starts to rise again. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)

- Children (4-7yrs & 8-11yrs) were asked to rate *how happy they were yesterday* on a five-point scale, from 'very sad' to 'very happy'.



- Young people (11-18yrs) selected a point on a 0-10 scale with 0 being 'very sad'.
- The majority of children and young people had been happy the previous day.
- One child (4-7yrs) and 3 young people (11-18yrs) reported that yesterday they had been 'quite sad' or 'very sad'.

Happiness yesterday



I am happy now.
4-7yrs

Life satisfaction



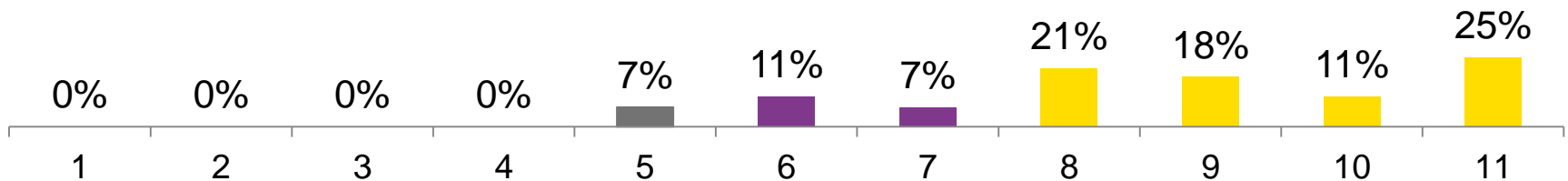
Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *how satisfied they were with their life* on a 0-10 scale.

This question exactly replicates The Children's Society survey question. A score of 7 or more is considered to be high life satisfaction. (The Cabinet Office, 2012)

- The majority (75%) felt positive about their future.
- Like the general child population in England there was a positive correlation between high life satisfaction scores and being happy at school.

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How satisfied are you with your life?



Are the things you do worthwhile?

Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *if the things they do in life are worthwhile*.

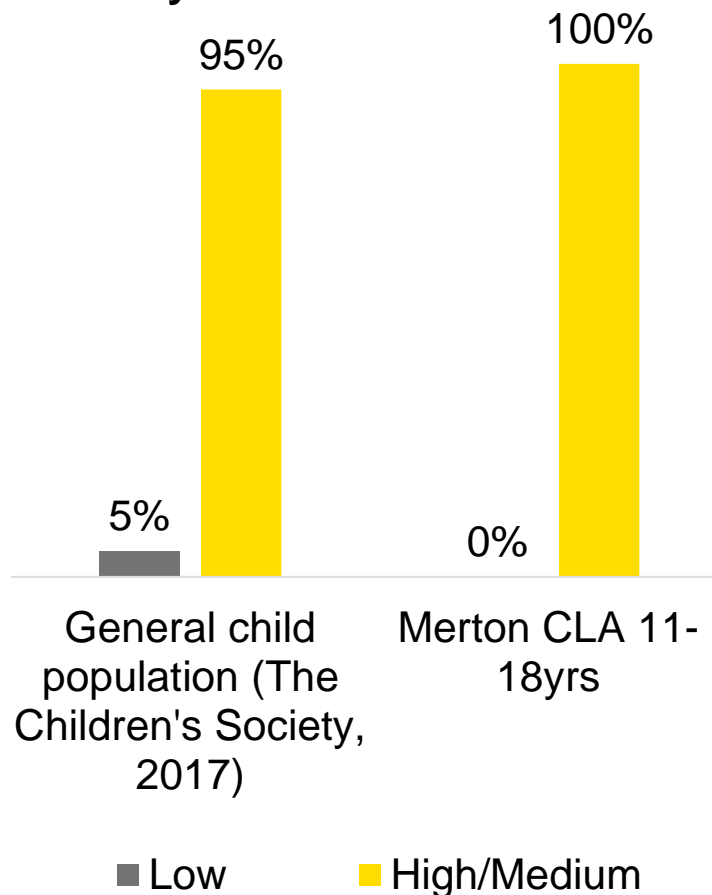
Importance of purpose

Having a meaning or a purpose to life is strongly associated with well-being. (ONS, 2014)

Young people (11-18yrs) completed the same 0-10 scale as used by The Children's Society (2017) in their household survey with 3,000 young people aged 10-17yrs.

- 70% of young people scored high or very high, and 30% medium.
- No young people had low scores.
- All the young people (100%) in Merton had high or medium scores; a greater proportion than children (95%) in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Overall, to what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?



Positivity about the future



Young people were asked on a scale of 0-10 *how positive they were about the future.*

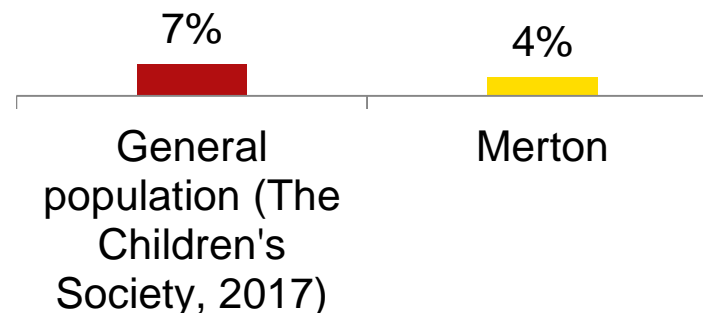
Links to happiness

Optimism about the future is linked with happiness and resilience. (Conversano et al., 2010)

- 20 (74%) were very positive about their future.
- One young person had a low score suggesting they felt pessimistic about their future.
- A smaller portion of young people in Merton had low scores compared with their peers in the general population.

[Being in care] has given me a chance to do things.
11-18yrs

Young people who were pessimistic about their future: comparison of Merton's (11-18yrs) looked after children with the general child population



Comparisons

Levels of well-being – Merton’s looked after young people (11-18yrs) compared to peers (10-17yrs) in the general population (The Children’s Society, 2017) and to the average scores of looked after young people in 13 other LAs.

Well-being measure	Score	Merton	2018 average in 13 LAs	Peers in general population (10-17yrs)
Life satisfaction	High scores	36%	34%	27%
	Low scores	7%	15%	5%
Happiness yesterday	High scores	39%	39%	26%
	Low scores	11%	19%	8%
Things done are worthwhile	High scores	52%	36%	29%
	Low scores	0%	12%	6%
Positive about future	High scores	44%	35%	19%
	Low scores	4%	11%	7%

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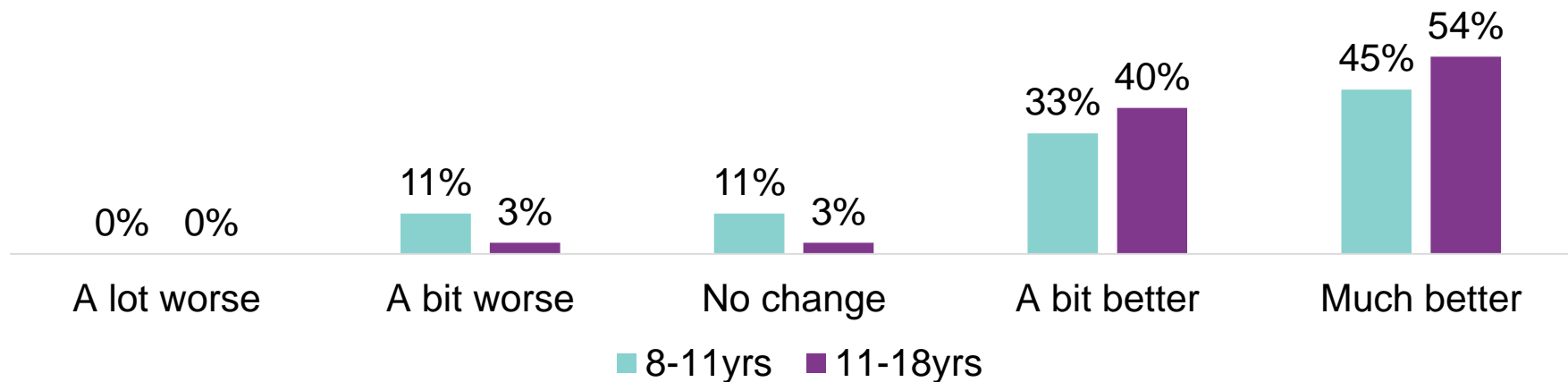
Life is improving

Children aged 8-18yrs were asked whether they thought their *life was getting better*, and could choose from a five point scale ranging from 'A lot worse' to 'Much better'.

- The majority (83%) of children in Merton felt that their lives were improving.
- 2 children and young people felt that their lives were getting a bit worse, and 2 felt there had been no change in their lives.

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Is your life improving?



Low well-being



4-7yrs

- One child in the 4-7yrs group described themselves as having been 'very sad' the day before the survey.
- However, the child responded positively to all other questions in the survey and did not appear to have low well-being.
- When asked what would make care better the child wrote:

*Hugs and tickles.
Playing.
4-7yrs*



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8-11yrs

- None of the children in the 8-11yrs group described themselves as 'quite sad' or 'very sad' yesterday.

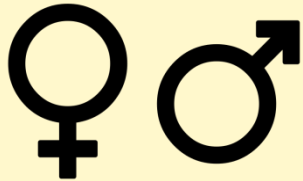
bright spots



11-18yrs

- One young person had low well-being (i.e. scored 4 or less on two or more of the 0-10 well-being scales).
- This young person reported that they:
 - Did not have a trusted adult in their life.
 - 'Sometimes' worried about their feelings or behaviour.
 - 'Never' had opportunities to explore the outdoors.
 - This young person also did not like school and was 'sometimes' afraid of going to school because of bullying.

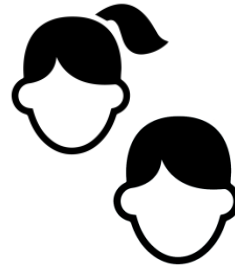
Gender differences 11-18yrs




The Children's Society (2017) reported that in the general

population one in seven (14%) girls (10-15yrs) were unhappy with their lives as a whole as were one in ten boys.

Examining gender differences in our surveys in 2017, we found no gender difference in the surveys for 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs but girls aged 11-18yrs were more likely to report low well-being. Girls were four times more likely to be unhappy with their appearance and this contributed to gender differences in well-being.



- We could not explore gender differences in the Merton 11-18yrs survey as the numbers were too small for statistical analysis.



Section 4: Children and young people's comments

Is there anything else you would like to tell us? What would make being in care better for you?

Comments: 4-7yrs

- 5 children (age 4-7yrs) gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 2 children wrote about playing.
- 3 children wrote about their homes and families.

If my big sister was there and my toy monkey was alive.

I have a real cat at home and she is a bit naughty but she does like me.

It's good living with Nan.

What would make care better and other comments: 8-11yrs

- 7 children gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 3 children wrote about their hobbies and wanting to have more fun.
- 2 children wrote that they wanted a pet.

I want to go when I am sixteen – maybe get a house. I want some more pocket money because I have 45 pounds and I spend my money on games.

Would like to see dad more and try living with him again.

I would like to be able to have a little pet where I live, have more time outdoors (not just in a garden), not be pulled out of class by MRS [name] ALL THE TIME!

I am happy now.

Maybe going out more often instead of staying in all the time.

I would like a pet to keep me comforting – hamster.

What would make care better and other comments: 11-18yrs

- 15 (45%) young people gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 4 young people wanted more contact with family members.
- 3 young people wanted to be trusted more or have more independence.
- 2 young people wrote that they did not want to be in care.
- Several other young people wrote about their placements, including wanting a bigger bedroom, more food or a different house.
- One young person wanted more time with their key worker.
- One young person was angry with Merton for not helping their mum.
 - ***YOU GUYS FROM MERTON DID NOT HELP MY MUM WHEN SHE NEEDED YOU MOST.***
- Other young people wrote:

Staying with my Mum for short periods of time.

I would not like to be in care so they can't make anything better.

Negotiate rules within the house would be better. To be trusted more.

Probably more time with my keyworkers.

Faster internet. A bigger room. More food and bigger fridge.



Section 5: Positive aspects of practice and areas for improvement

What's working well

In Merton, several areas stood out as Bright Spots of practice:

- The majority (94%) of children and young people felt safe in their homes 'all or most of the time', in comparison 75% of children in the general population felt 'totally safe' at home.
 - The majority (96%) of children and young people had a really good friend. This was similar to their peers (97%) in the general population.
 - All of the youngest children trusted their carers 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes', felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling, liked school, and got to have fun at the weekends.
- All of the 8-11yrs trusted their social worker and knew that they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.
- A significantly higher proportion of young people (11-18yrs) were happy with contact arrangements with their fathers compared with their peers across 13 other LAs.
 - A higher proportion of young people in Merton liked school (84%) and felt that their carers showed an interest in their education (97%) compared to their peers in the general population.
 - Compared to the general population, a higher proportion of young people in Merton were happy with their appearance, felt that the things they did in their lives were worthwhile and felt positive about their future.

What could be improved

- **Ask children and young people what they want to do on the weekends and in their spare time.** 15 children and young people felt that they only sometimes got to have fun and 5 felt that this 'hardly ever' happened. 4 children (8-11yrs) also felt that they 'hardly ever' got the opportunity to explore the outdoors.
- **Help children understand why they are in care.** 15 (28%) children and young people wanted to know more about why they were in care.
- **Continue to ask about worries children have about their feelings and behaviour.** 5 children (8-11yrs) and 22 young people were 'sometimes' or 'all or most of the time' worried about their feelings or behaviour.
- **Work with carers to ensure children and young people are happy with their bedrooms, and that young people's feelings are taken into account.** Compared to other LAs, a higher proportion of young people in Merton did not like their bedroom (linked to safety, sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging).
- **Continue to work with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school, and support children and young people to make and keep friendships.** 5 young people and 3 children reported that they were afraid to go to school because of bullying.



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Understanding Society <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

For enquiries about the Bright Spots project see:
<http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/professional-zone/bright-spots>

or contact:

brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk



bright spots

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Voice 
getting young voices heard



University of
BRISTOL

Funded by the Hadley Trust

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9 October 2018

Wards: All

Subject: Children's mental health – initial scoping

Lead officer: Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Councillor Natasha Irons, chair of the task group

Contact officer: Stella Akintan; stella.akintan@merton.gov.uk; 020 8545 3390

Recommendations:

- A. That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel discuss, comment on and approve the initial scoping of the task group as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.11 below
-

PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To present the initial scoping of the children's mental health task group to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for its comment and approval.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1 The members of the Children and Young People (CYP) Overview and Scrutiny Panel resolved that they wish to undertake a task and finish group looking at the mental health of children in Merton.
- 2.2 The Panel initially indicated it wished to focus on what can be done to support prevention/engender resilience. Whilst this remains a focus, the Panel has been keen to look more widely initially and is yet to finalise its terms of reference. This paper therefore seeks to provide the Panel with an update on activity and to share its initial scoping for comment with the final terms of reference to be finessed over the coming weeks.
- 2.3 To date the task group has determined that it aims to promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people in Merton. The task group has identified that it will do this by examining:
- 2.3.1. the causes of poor mental health and whether these are being addressed effectively;
 - 2.3.2. prevention, especially that focused on younger children and provided through schools;
 - 2.3.3. the effectiveness of referral pathways in Merton;
 - 2.3.4. the effectiveness of CAMHs services including support to schools;
 - 2.3.5. self-referrals by children and young people, whether these come via schools or another pathway;
 - 2.3.6. the support offered where assessment determines a referral isn't warranted; and

- 2.3.7. the charities that are supporting the mental health offer in Merton.
- 2.4 The task group has already held an initial meeting with colleagues from the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group and the Children, Schools and Families Department who are responsible for child and adolescent mental health service commissioning. This has established:
 - 2.4.1. Prevalence in Merton is lower than the averages for the rest of London and England. This is assumed to reflect socio-economic factors and the relatively higher rates of affluence in the borough;
 - 2.4.2. Conduct disorders are most prevalent in children and young people in Merton, followed by emotional disorders, hyperkinetic disorders (ie: ADHD) and then a group labelled less common disorders. There is a strong gender bias in terms of need; boys tend to be more prevalent in demonstrating conduct disorders and girls emotional disorders;
 - 2.4.3. The average distance from home for in-house treatment is 73 miles with the resulting negative impact on resilience and recovery noted; and
 - 2.4.4. The percentage of young people referred to the ASD/ADHD service seen within the 12-week target is 54.2% against a target of 90%. From the data presented, this appears to be the service that is performing least well against target and reflects the discussion had a CYP.
- 2.5 As a result of this initial consultation with the CCG, the task group has determined its next steps to be:
 - 2.5.1. Gain clarity on the role of the Council in terms of commissioning services;
 - 2.5.2. Seek clarification from the CCG on how it assesses what is successful and not of existing provision;
 - 2.5.3. Understand how the service is viewed by users. Groups highlighted to meet/visit are: GPs, young people themselves (through the Youth Parliament) and schools (through a visit);
 - 2.5.4. Look at the community initiatives of other boroughs;
 - 2.5.5. Look at the revised CAHMs transformation plan when it becomes available (19 September 2018);
 - 2.5.6. Look at the Health and Wellbeing Strategy ([here](#)) which highlights improving the Tier 3 CAHMs pathway and an integrated mental health pathway as key targets; and
 - 2.5.7. Allowing the scrutiny officer to do some additional research to suggest a list of possible witnesses for the next phase of evidence gathering.
- 2.6 Support will be provided by the Scrutiny Officer.

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

There has been preliminary consultation with officers from the Public Health, Children, Schools and Families Department and the Clinical Commissioning Group for Merton.

5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this covering report. Any resource implications will need to be taken into account when drawing up and approving specific review recommendations

6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none specific to this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are none specific to this report.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are none specific to this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 None

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 [Best start in life: Promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people](#) (Local Government Association). This is an accessible initial briefing document;
- 11.2 [Future in mind: promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#). This is the government's task group that reported in 2015; and
- 11.3 [Prevention and Access Task and Finish Group Report - Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Task Group](#). This is part of the Future in Mind work which was specifically focused on prevention and access

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Children and Young People Work Programme 2018/19



This table sets out the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2018/19; the items listed were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 27 June 2018. 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 Sally Kenny

Vice-chair: Cllr Edward Gretton

Scrutiny Support

For further information on the work programme of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel please contact: -

Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer

Tel: 020 8545 3390; Email: stella.akintan@merton.gov.uk

For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Meeting date: 27 June 2018 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 19 June 2018*) **COMPLETE**

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic lead	POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance (TBC)
Cabinet Member priorities	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Children, schools and families glossary	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	
Briefing for new members: Education, Health and Care Plans	To allow the Panel to understand EHCPs to continue to monitor performance in this area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education Karla Finikin, Service Manager – SEN & Disabilities Integrated Service 	
Performance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring; and Selection of a Panel Member to act as a lead on performance monitoring. 	Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Department update report	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	

Routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts task group – monitoring the implementation of the recommendations	The Panel will take an update on what has been achieved in delivering the task group's recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Williams, Programme Manager Economy, futureMerton • Kim Brown, Head of Organisational Development & HR Strategy • Keith Shipman, Social Inclusion Manager • Dawn Jolley, Head of Commercial Services 	
Scrutiny review: user voice	Panel to consider how it can listen to the voices of children and young people so that these can inform its scrutiny of services.	Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer	
Agreeing the Panel's work programme	To agree the Panel's work programme and consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thematic approach to the work programme; • appointing topic leads; • getting the best from performance monitoring; • the Panel's use of task groups; • opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny; and • monitoring task group recommendations. 	Cllr Sally Kenny, Panel chair, and Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer	

Meeting date: 9 October 2018 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 1 October 2018*)

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic lead	POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance (TBC)

Cabinet Member priorities	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Performance monitoring	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Department update report	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
Pre-decision scrutiny: Regional Adoption Agency	Pre-decision scrutiny prior to Cabinet's consideration in November of authorisation to enter into joint agreement with other local authorities for a Regional Adoption Agency. This is to discharge Merton's statutory duties in respect of adoption (in line with DfE requirements to establish Regional Adoption Agencies across England).	Paul Angeli, Assistant Director, Children's Services	
Pre-decision scrutiny: Children and Young People Plan	This is the plan of the Merton Children's Trust and details the how the partners operating the trust will work together to achieve its priorities. This provides an opportunity for the Panel to undertake some pre-decision scrutiny in the run up to the delivery of a new plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families • Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance 	
Progress monitoring: care leaver accommodation	To monitor progress against the reference to Cabinet on care leaver accommodation made in partnership with the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families 	

reference		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance • Steve Langley, Head of Housing Need 	
Scrutiny review: Children and families voice framework	For the Panel to take the annual report on children and families voice. To consider how the work already undertaken to listen to children and families will inform the work of the Panel in scrutinising services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families • Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance 	
Progress monitoring: Prevent task group recommendations	For the Panel to take an update on the progress that has been achieved in delivering the recommendations of this task group.	Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer	
Scrutiny review: children's mental health	To receive and approve the terms of reference of the children's mental health task group that will be operating throughout this year.	Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer	
Work programme	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: 7 November 2018 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 30 October 2018*)

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic	POSSIBLE external witnesses/visits and

		lead	questioning guidance (TBC)
Children, Schools and Families Budget/business planning (Round 1)	<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"> • Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families • Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, will provide training before the meeting giving a detailed guide to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. <u>All members are encouraged to attend.</u> • Scrutiny of finance – Councillor workbook (the Local Government Association).
Cabinet Member priorities	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Merton Safeguarding Children Board annual report	An in-depth review of safeguarding for children and young people in Merton. This will focus on strengths and areas for review during the coming period.	Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Makin, the Independent Chair of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board attending. • Safeguarding Children – a practical guide for overview and scrutiny councillors (Local Government

			Association and the Centre for Public Scrutiny)
Update report: school admissions	To provide a detailed statistical report providing a summary of school admissions in Merton and the resulting spare capacity in the system.	Tom Proctor, Service Management Contracts and School	•
Performance monitoring	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Department update report	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
Progress monitoring: Prevent task group recommendations	For the Panel to take an update on the progress that has been achieved in delivering the recommendations of this task group.	Scrutiny Officer	
Work programme	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: 16 January 2019 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 8 January 2019)

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic lead	Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance
Children, Schools and Families	To enable the Panel to consider the Council's budget and business plan proposals. Additionally to forward	• Rachael Wardell, Director of Children,	• Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate

Budget/business planning (Round 2)	<p>any comments/recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to compile a scrutiny response on the Budget/Business Plan to Cabinet.</p> <p>To include discussion of major projects identified in the CSF draft service plans.</p>	<p>Schools and Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services 	<p>Services, will provide training before the November meeting giving a detailed guide to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. <u>All members are encouraged to attend.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of finance – Councillor workbook (the Local Government Association).
Harris Wimbledon update	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families • Tom Proctor, Service Management Contracts and School Organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Daniel Moynihan, CEO and Sarah Musgrave, Projects Director, of the Harris Group, will attend the meeting to update members on the Harris Federation model for guaranteeing good and outstanding schools. • A visit to Harris Merton is planned for Nov 2018. This will be to see the expansion project and to hear from the provider of the new school first hand and in situ • Free schools: challenges and

			<u>opportunities for accountability</u> : Centre for Public Scrutiny
Cabinet Member priorities	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Performance monitoring	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts task group – monitoring the implementation of the recommendations	<p>The Panel will take an update on what has been achieved in delivering the task group's recommendations. At the meeting in June the Panel resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive information on the work currently being undertaken by Coram with Looked After Children and Care Leavers and to see the resulting strategy; and • Data should be provided to the Panel in six months time including the number of apprenticeships by Directorate fulfilled by those within the target groups. Of these how many have started, stayed and left should be stated. Members requested that an appropriate representative from the HR team attend the meeting to explain these statistics. <p>To include information from the study with children in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Williams, Programme Manager Economy, futureMerton • Kim Brown, Head of Organisational Development & HR Strategy • Keith Shipman, Social Inclusion Manager • Dawn Jolley, Head of Commercial Services • Mark Gwynne for the Coram research 	

	care that has been undertaken by Coram.		
Department update report	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
Corporate parenting annual report	To review the care provided to those children for which the Council is the corporate parent.	Paul Angeli, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	Kathy Bundred, Children's Improvement Adviser for the Local Government Association to be invited to attend as an external expert on corporate parenting. A visit by Panel members to the Children in Care Council is being scheduled.
Work programme	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: 13 February 2018 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 5 February 2019*)

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic lead	Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance
Cabinet Member	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member.	Cabinet Members for	

priorities	Questions from the Panel.	Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Health and wellbeing strategies for children and families	In partnership with public health, look at strategies to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people. To include consideration of the latest immunisation data.	Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite relevant members of the CCG and mental health teams • Invite attendance by Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) to provide oversight of the commissioned services it provides • <u>10 questions to ask if you're scrutinising local immunisation services</u> (Centre for Public Scrutiny) • <u>Best start in life: promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people</u> (Local Government Association)
Scrutiny review: welfare benefit reforms	Members' interest is in examining the impact welfare benefit reforms have had on children's wellbeing and school performance. Initially, this will be started by	David Keppler, Head of Revenue and Benefits	

	understanding the number and profile of families who have been/will be impacted by the introduction of Universal Credit in Merton		
Briefing: EHCP parental research	To provide the Panel with information resulting from the survey work with parents involved in the EHCP process.	Karla Finikin, Head of SEND Integrated Service	
Performance monitoring	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Department update report	Update on developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the last scrutiny Panel meeting. Questions will be taken from Panel members.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	
Work programme	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: 13 March 2019 (***Deadline for papers: 12pm 5 March 2019***)

Theme: setting the work programme			
Item	Purpose/intended outcome	Responsible officer/Member topic lead	Possible external witnesses/visits and questioning guidance
Cabinet Member priorities	Update from the responsible Cabinet Member. Questions from the Panel.	Cabinet Members for Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and Children's Services (Cllr Kelly Braund)	
Schools annual report	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. The report also provides data on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cathy Dawson, Head of Cricket Green and Chair of the School

	attainment and achievement of key cohorts.	<p>Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education 	<p>Effectiveness Partnership has been invited and has accepted to attend to provide a schools' perspective on the report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits to Key Stage 5 provision to happen before the meeting. <u>Back to School – Ways for scrutiny to influence local education and support school leaders to improve results</u> (Local Government Association and the Centre for Public Scrutiny)
Progress monitoring: care leaver accommodation reference	To monitor progress against the reference to Cabinet on care leaver accommodation made in partnership with the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance Steve Langley, Head of Housing Need 	
Children's mental health task group	The draft final report of the task group will be presented to the Panel for approval prior to be taken to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Irons, Task group chair 	

draft final report	Cabinet for its approval.	• Scrutiny Officer	
Performance monitoring	Discussion of the existing basket of performance indicators for on-going monitoring.	Mark Gwynne, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	
Department update report	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	
Topic suggestions 2017/2018	To seek topic suggestions from the Panel to inform discussions about the 2018/19 work programme	Scrutiny Officer	
Proposal: transitions tracking study	For the Panel to consider the proposal for it to track a cohort of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and multiple needs through an anonymised case study approach to see how their various needs are met. To be finalised subject to the outcomes from the children's mental health scrutiny task group review.	Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families	