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Merton Council

Children and Young People

Overview and Scrutiny

Panel



Date: 8 February 2023

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Council chamber - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

AGENDA

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

Councillors:

Usaama Kaweesa (Chair)
Chessie Flack (Vice-Chair)
Michael Butcher
Caroline Charles
Jil Hall
Billy Hayes
Andrew Howard
Linda Kirby MBE
Samantha MacArthur
James Williscroft

Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative Secondary and Special
Sectors
Roz Cordner, Church of England Diocese
Becky Cruise, Parent Governor
Representative
Dr Oona Stannard, Catholic Diocese

Substitute Members:

Max Austin
Sheri-Ann Bhim
Jenifer Gould
Edith Macauley MBE
Robert Page

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- ⇒ **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

11 JANUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 8.40 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair), Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor James Williscroft, Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner, Cruise and Dr Stannard

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Brenda Fraser (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) and Councillor Sally Kenny (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) Councillor Billy Christie (Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services)

Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer), Richard Ellis (Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation), Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help), Roger Kershaw (Interim Executive Director of Finance and Digital), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), Dheeraj Chibber (Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Maisie Davies (Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships) and Keith Shipman (Social Inclusion Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

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

4 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2023-2027 (Agenda Item 4)

The Cabinet Member for Finance said the budget pack contains the reports from October and December cabinet meetings. The cabinet member thanked to officers and said he is confident that growth proposals are robust reasonable and sustainable. However severe financial constraints mean some savings will need to be made.

The Interim Director for Finance and Digital gave an overview of key areas within the report and highlighted there is still a budget gap of £4.3m for 2023-2024. Inflationary pressures are a threat, there are extra resources for providing for inflation, the council has benefitted from prudent pension fund investments. Further savings will be provided to January cabinet,

The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said the budget contains growth proposals for children's social care workforce and around home school transport.

There is a 1% efficiency saving. This will be met by reductions in printing, rise in remote meetings, blended approaches in working with young people. A Panel member asked for clarification on the number of out of borough placements for Children with SEND. This will be provided.

A panel member asked about the impact of the salary uplift on children's social care and what benefit will be seen. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said there will be less reliance on agency staff.

A panel member asked about the impact on services of the 1% efficiency saving. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said this would not have an impact on service users, training will be conducted in different ways and there are savings in printing costs.

A Panel Member asked about the autumn statement, and the additional monies for education. The Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation said the details are still coming through. It looks like an increase of £5.6million, which is a 4% increase for schools.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the budget preparation
Number of SEND Children in out of Borough placements to be circulated to Panel Members

5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN SCRUTINY (Agenda Item 5)

The Social Inclusion Manager gave an overview of the report stating that the Residents Survey highlighted that young people do not always feel listened to and scrutiny can play an important role in giving a voice to young people. The report proposes a young inspector is attached to each panel.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the officer for his report

6 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Departmental update

The Chair thanked officers for the successful SEND inspection which was achieved by collective hard work of staff across children's services.

A Panel member asked how alternative education providers are evaluated. The Social Inclusion Manager said they are all Ofsted registered and inspected. Good practice from around the country is reviewed and there is a Quality Assurance process provided by the School Improvement Team and partners.

A panel member asked how the progress of gifted and talented pupils is measured. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said teachers will use their assessment processes in the classroom.

A panel member asked if the council train and develop maths teachers. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said the recruitment of maths teachers can be challenging but there are no concerns at the moment. There is a maths hub with a strong programme of professional development and the local authority's own advisor provides training and bespoke support for schools across the borough.

A panel member asked if the Black curriculum workshops had been successful. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said there had been a mixed response and some found it useful.

A Panel Member asked about how would be available from the Youth justice Turnaround Fund and how to identify the right children who would benefit. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Justice said he will provide the panel with the detail on the figures.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the report

The Assistant Director will provide figures on the turnaround fund

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships gave an overview of the report.

RESOLVED.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was noted.

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 8th February 2023

Agenda item:

Subject: Children and Young people's Mental Health

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member: Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services

Contact officer: Keith Shipman, Head of Education Inclusion; Jacqui Wilson, Interim CAMHS Transformation Manager/Commissioner, South West London Integrated Commissioning Board

Recommendations:

A. Members to note the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The aim of this report is to give a summary of the key issues faced by children and young people in Merton with regards to their mental health, including the continued impact of the pandemic and the return to "normal" life. It also outlines the support being provided by mental health support services in Merton, how that support has been adapted in response to need, and how the expansion in preventative support continues to offer a service that is valued.
- 1.2. The pandemic and lockdown responses had a significant effect on young people's mental health and referrals to support services. We know this from feedback from young people in the Merton Young People's survey, and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)/Integrated Care Service (ICS) monitoring presented at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) board. Mental health and wellbeing continue to be an issue for many young people but there are also signs that presenting problems are starting to change. This can be seen in the detail below.
- 1.3. Mental health support services are commissioned largely by the South West London Integrated Care Board (SWL ICB) and the effectiveness of the support and its integration is led by the CAMHS board which is co-chaired by the SWL ICB and Local Authority.
- 1.4. In 2015 the Department of Health published its 'Future in Mind' guidance, outlining the aims for transforming the way CAMHS services are delivered nationally. This has brought a restructuring and investment to support mental health services for young people. As recommended by 'Future in Mind', the Merton CAMHS Board decided in 2018 to move away from traditional models of CAMHS and implement a model called "i-THRIVE". This has involved a culture shift in practice as well as a reconfiguring of services. The model moves away from the old tiers of service (tiers 1 – 4), to the following categories: 'Getting Advice and Support'; 'Getting Help'; 'Getting More Help';

and 'Risk Support'. This involves ensuring that in all services access should be made easier, and linked more to community provision across the providing partnership. Embedding the new model remains a key priority as we recover from the impact of the pandemic.

- 1.5. The wider ICS region of SWL is now joining Merton in implementing i-THRIVE (see Appendix 1). It is hoped that this will assist cross borough providers such as the South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust to move fully to an i-THRIVE model regionally. Next steps in Merton's journey is an i-THRIVE audit to benchmark progress to date and develop an action plan to deepen the work, particularly around 'Risk Support'. The i-THRIVE Steering Group, and the separate Implementation Group, have worked on a Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation protocol. This has been widely consulted on, with input from schools and parents and has now been rolled out to all schools in Merton.
- 1.6. i-THRIVE implementation has led to the development of more preventative services (Getting Help) including, in 2019, a young people's self-referral service for 11 – 25 year olds, run by Off The Record. Further detail is provided below.
- 1.7. In addition, the SWL ICB and LA have worked together to continue to develop clusters of schools working together, and each supported by their own Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST). Funding for these clusters has been achieved through successful bids to the Department for Health, with additional SWL ICB investment.
- 1.8. There are now five clusters, with an offer for all Merton schools and Merton College. The MHSTs are operated by the South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust and by Off the Record, and offer services linked to the needs identified by schools in their cluster and also pan Borough. A key focus for schools is working towards a whole school model of mental health support, and as part of this all schools have mental health leads who are supported through a whole borough mental health leads network.
- 1.9. At the 'Getting More Help' level all referrals are triaged by the Single Point of Access (SPA). This has meant that families get a reply about initial referrals more quickly. As well as taking referrals from professionals for all age groups, the Merton SPA also takes self-referrals from 16/17 year olds, although the numbers of children and young people choosing this route in to seeking support is low. The self-referral rate has remained low so far for this group.
- 1.10. The Young Inspectors supported the CAMHS board by mystery shopping KOOTH, Off the Record and CAMHS self-referral online processes. Feedback was given and improvements were made. The Board will monitor self-referrals across the year.
- 1.11. The SPA has a short-term treatment offer and continues to offer weekly consultation slots to schools within the borough. The uptake of these consultation opportunities varies from one to five schools per week. The average number of cases each school brings is three per meeting. Most cases are regarding referrals that have already been made, or

understanding a decision made by CAMHS regarding Autism and ADHD assessments.

- 1.12. We have also increased community-based specialist services. Additional capacity has been given to Cricket Green School, the Youth Justice Service and Melbury College. There have been challenges with recruitment to these posts as a result of a national shortage of therapists.
- 1.13. Merton LA commissions a CAMHS in Social Care team where therapists work alongside social workers. The Health and Wellbeing Board is currently looking at the structure, funding and impact of this service so that they can refresh the secondment agreement between the Local Authority and St George's. This team is very impactful and was singled out for praise in Merton's safeguarding inspection.

2 DETAIL

- 2.1. In the Young People's Survey, undertaken immediately post pandemic, they told us that the pandemic had affected their physical and mental health. Young people told us that they worried about their families, especially where they were key workers. They were also worried about world events, poverty and the death of George Floyd. Many children suffered family bereavements and their worlds have changed. Pandemic responses affected their access to services, socialisation and education. This led to worries about falling behind in school and the value of their qualifications.
- 2.2. Young people also told us that they are feeling happier now. However, post pandemic we know that school attendance has been 2% lower across the country and persistent absence levels have been double those seen pre pandemic. This in part is related to higher anxiety amongst young people and their parents.

2.3. Referrals to CAMHS 2019 – 2023 (Getting More Help Service)

Referrals received (last 2 years)



- 2.4. Referrals to CAMHS decreased during the lockdowns, and whilst there was a very high rate of referrals by the end of 21/22, these have started to decrease over 22/23. The initial hypothesis for this decrease is that it may be the result of the improvement and access in the 'Getting Help' domain, and the work of the MHSTs, which means that issues are being managed at an

earlier stage. However, this will need to be monitored for a longer period before any clear conclusions can be reached.

2.5. CAMHS reasons for referral

The SPA captures the primary reason for referral as written with the referral itself. It is important therefore to note that the information presented below is not final diagnosis information.

In the last year the main three reasons for referrals were:

22/23

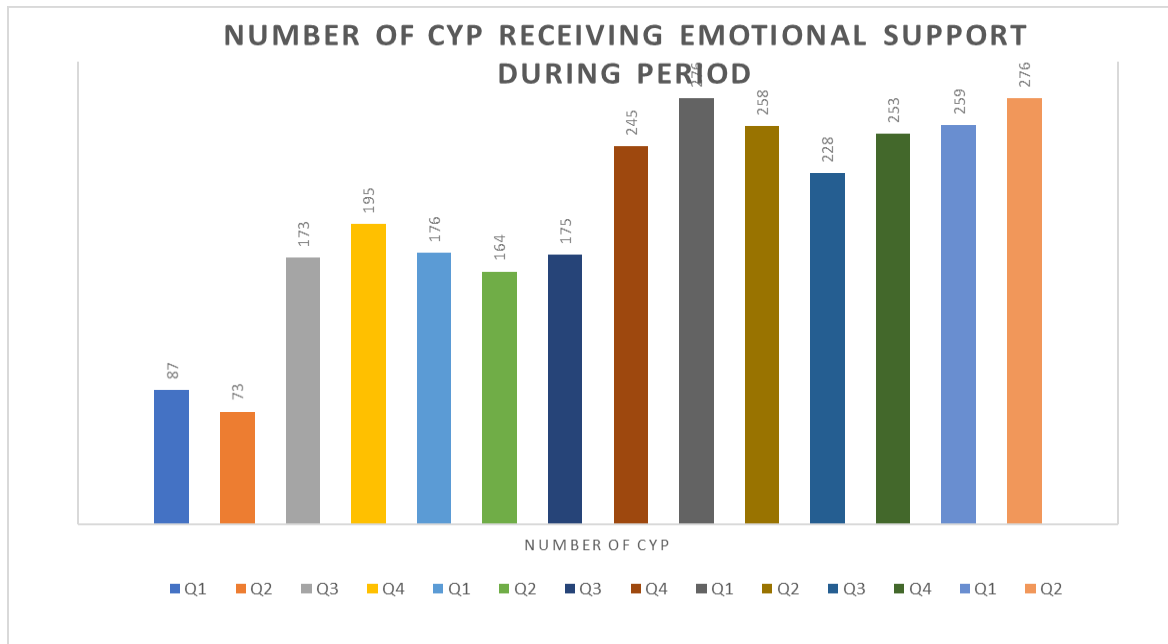
Presenting problem	Q2	%	YTD	%
Anxiety	132	24.4%	283	25.2%
Neurodevelopmental Conditions, excluding Autism Spectrum Disorder	121	22.4%	245	21.8%
Self harm behaviours	56	10.4%	127	11.3%

2.6 This year however there has been a significant change, and 39.9 percent of all referrals are in relation to Neurodevelopmental Conditions, and those identifying Anxiety as the primary reason for referral reduced by 4%. Referrals for self harm and conduct disorder have also fallen slightly.

Presenting problem	Q2	%	YTD	%
Neurodevelopmental Conditions, excluding Autism Spectrum Disorder	136	26.3%	304	26.1%
Anxiety	116	22.4%	244	21.0%
Suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder	78	15.1%	161	13.8%
Depression	54	10.4%	127	10.9%
Self-harm behaviours	36	6.9%	116	10.0%
Conduct disorders	51	9.8%	108	9.3%
Behaviours that challenge due to a Learning Disability	12	2.3%	19	1.6%
Unexplained physical symptoms	9	1.7%	17	1.5%
Relationship difficulties	2	0.4%	15	1.3%
Diagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder	6	1.2%	15	1.3%
Post-traumatic stress disorder	3	0.6%	10	0.9%
Eating disorders	6	1.2%	9	0.8%
Obsessive compulsive disorder	3	0.6%	8	0.7%
In crisis	2	0.4%	3	0.3%
Gender Discomfort issues	0	0.0%	2	0.2%
Suspected First Episode Psychosis	2	0.4%	2	0.2%
Adjustment to health issues	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Attachment difficulties	1	0.2%	1	0.1%
Self - care issues	1	0.2%	1	0.1%
Personality disorders	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Total	518	100.0%	1164	100%

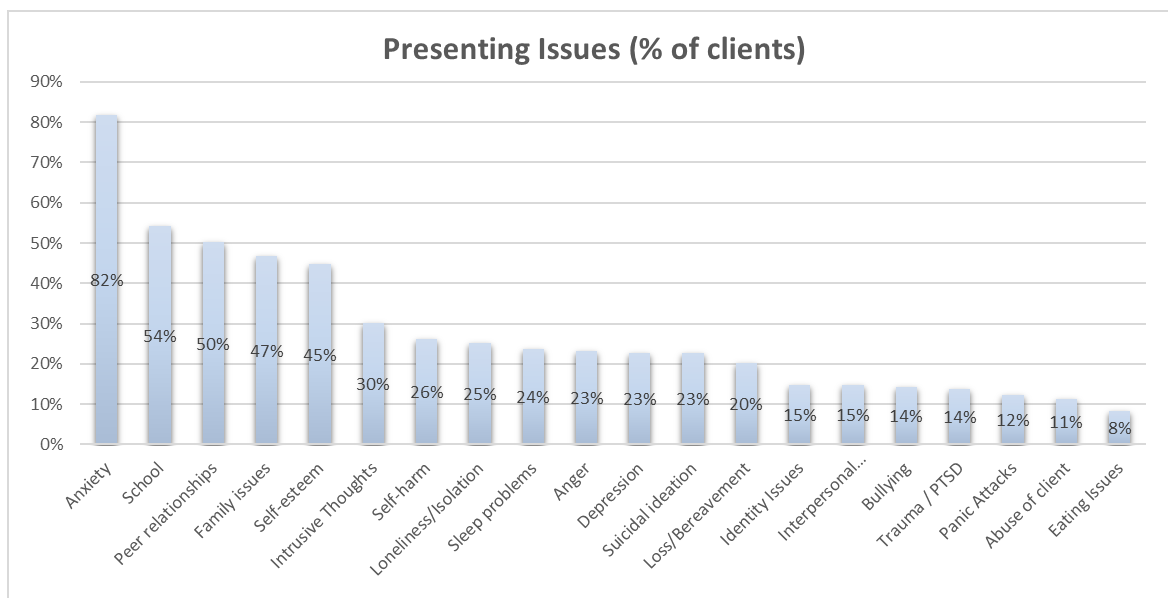
2.7 Referrals to Off The Record (Getting Help Service)

The chart below shows the number of those receiving a service from Off The Record over the past three and a half years. This shows an increase in young people receiving support over the past year.



2.8 Over 22/23 38% of referrals were self-referrals, 22% came from CAMHS and 40% came from other professionals including schools. We are pleased at the high level of self referrals as one the key aims of i-THRIVE is to improve ease of access to services for young people.

2.9 There continues to be an overrepresentation of female clients, but within schools the number of referrals for males and females are more evenly matched. The service is seeing an increasing number of young people who identify as non-binary (an increase of 3% on the last quarter). Off the Record have started to record the sexuality of the young people they work with, though this is not done for schools. Of those young people that did share their sexuality, 26% identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.



2.10 For Off The Record referrals, Anxiety remains the top presenting issue and has increased this quarter in comparison with the previous two quarters. At 67%, this represents just over 2/3 of young people worked with by the service. The number of young people reporting family issues has fallen below the number citing school and peer relationships. This is probably due to the fact that this year has seen a return to a more “normal” way of life and young people now being back in school.

2.11 During therapy the issues that young people present with are also recorded. 48% report issues with regards to family; 44% with regards to school; 42% with regards to peer relationships; and 41% with regards to self-esteem. This paints a picture of the sort of issues young people are really struggling with in their relationships, both at home and at school.

2.12 The difference between CAMHS and Off The Record in terms of the key presenting issues can be explained by the fact that Off the Record does not provide neurodevelopmental assessments. It is also potentially a sign that those accessing Off The Record are benefitting from the service provided there, and so do not need to be escalated to CAMHS.

2.13 A fifth of the young people present to Off The Record with either self-harm or suicidal ideation, and there are additional processes in place to help manage safeguarding of those individuals.

2.14 Off the Record continue to refer to CAMHS when appropriate and there is a close relationship between the two services.

2.15 **Mental Health in Schools Teams (MHSTs)**

There are five MHSTs in place. 100% of Merton schools have access to these teams which is well above the national average. Some are funded as a result of successful bids to the Department of Health, but there is also additional funding from the ICB. We are indebted to Merton Head teachers and the Principal of South Thames College for their leadership of the clusters.

2.16 Cluster 1 (the 'Trailbazer Cluster', led by Holy Trinity Primary School)

As the first cluster established in the borough, the schools working within it are primarily now consolidating activity, with a new focus on looking at attendance patterns and the link to mental health. They have seen an increase in referrals to the education wellbeing practitioners, and that this support has been successful. The cluster is using the i-THRIVE model, signposting families towards the support available. There has been strong take up and engagement in workshops

The schools in this cluster are this year focusing on the embedding of zones of regulation, and working with families around emotional regulation. Those schools that have not taken up some of the facilities on offer as part of the MHST work are being encouraged to do so.

2.17 The Further Education Cluster (led by South Thames College Group)

This cluster has focused on improving the induction experience for new students. This has involved the team working closely with school and college staff, and with both parents and students.

There was a good uptake for parent workshops focusing on helping teenagers settle, and to manage anxiety.

The South Thames College Group have new pastoral teachers whose aim is to focus on early intervention and the identification of low-level mental health needs. The team has been involved in their induction training, and helping them to think about how to talk to young people, how to identify needs, and how to have a better understanding of mental health for early intervention. The Merton campus will be developing this programme over the next term.

Work has also included the engagement of the college principals, developing their support for their mental health leads, including to work together and provide early intervention.

2.18 Mitcham and Morden Cluster (led by Hillcross School)

This Cluster is supported by Off the Record. Referrals and engagement is strong in all schools. The whole school model to support mental health is developing practice across the schools particularly with regards to school attendance. There is also a pilot of drama therapy being rolled out by this cluster, as an important intervention for traumatised children.

2.19 SEND Cluster (led by Cricket Green School)

This is the most complex cluster as it works across Sutton and Merton. Cricket Green took over the leadership of this cluster from a Sutton School when their headteacher retired. Working across two boroughs with different cultures has proved challenging. There is a good take up of support from the MHST in the mainstream schools. A play therapy pilot is being developed and rolled out. The ICS is working with Sutton on the engagement of their schools within the cluster. As this pertains to Sutton children that is outside of the scope of this paper.

2.20 Wimbledon Cluster (led by Bishop Gilpin School)

This is the most recently formed MHST. The cluster has a particular focus on attendance, as part of which the team will undertake activity with pupils and

parents to improve attendance, and again with a focus on early intervention. The team has linked with all the cluster schools, developing links with their attendance officers. Research shows that attendance in the first two weeks of term is quite predictive of attendance across the year, so it is planned to look at those attendance levels in order to identify and work with schools across the term.

- 2.21 All clusters report their progress to the CAMHS board and a pan SW London governance board, which has been evaluating the impact of school based services across SW London. Whilst collecting hard data has been affected by the pandemic, the conclusion of the independent evaluation has been that there is considerable qualitative evidence that the schools' based teams had improved the offer for children, families and staff with regards to mental health. There was particularly strong evidence that they are supporting parents and families well.
- 2.22 The cultural change that a whole school approach to mental health requires is incremental. Different schools have joined the programme at different points, meaning that they are all at different stages of its implementation.
- 2.23 Issues highlighted in the evaluation include: the need for school based services for children with more severe mental health issues; some traditional rigidity in the offer by some teams; and the recruitment and retention of staff, in particular regarding Emotional Wellbeing practitioners. This role is seen as a good stepping stone for wider careers in mental health services.
- 2.24 A key focus of the CAMHS board in 2022/23 has been the monitoring of waiting times to see a therapist at the 'Getting More Help' level, following triage by the Single Point of Access. There have been vacancies in the past, and a rise in complexity of cases which led to significant waits for treatment. A plan was actioned by St George's to review all children waiting, to risk assess them and provide advice and support. Additional resources were provided to the Trust to recruit additional staff. This has now been done and waiting times have significantly reduced. All waiting times are now published live by the South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust. <https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/camhs-area/camhs-specialist-services/waiting-times>. This focused work means at the time of this report Merton has the shortest average wait times in South West London to be seen by SPA and to access Treatment.

2.25 EATING DISORDERS

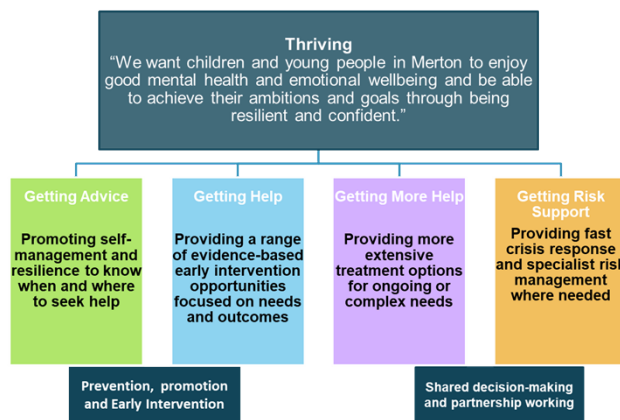
- 2.26 The numbers of children and young people presenting with eating disorders are relatively low in Merton. For Off The Record, 8% of the presenting issues were in relation to eating in 21/22. In the case of CAMHS it has only accounted for 0.8% of referrals so far this year as opposed to 1.4% in 21/22, suggesting a small decrease. However, there has been an increased focus on support for this aspect of children and young people's health.

2.27 Following a rise in presentations of disordered eating across London, the Transformation Partners in Health and Care (previously the Healthy London Partnership) worked closely with a group of experienced clinicians and experts by experience to develop a set of guiding principles for how to best support and meet the needs of this group. The group developed guidance and a series of resources to raise awareness of disordered eating, and to improve care pathways to better meet the needs of young people with this presentation. They are also currently running webinars for professionals working with young people with these issues, focusing on improving referrals and supporting young people, effective approaches to joint working and listening to young people.

2.28 I-THRIVE IMPLEMENTATION



i-Thrive Concept



I-THRIVE SERVICES

2.29 NHS England have sent out a self-assessment tool for all ICB areas to complete. The ICS are now overseeing the self-assessment process for SW London, but Merton services and commissioners are currently completing this piece of work.

2.30 There are now separate meetings in place for each of the domains overseen by the ICB and the LA, and the self-assessment tool, once completed, will be used to ensure agendas are further sharpened and provide a clear focus on areas that require more work.

2.31 There is a current SWL ICB wide review of the previous “Transforming Mental Health Services for Children, Young People (0-25) and their families

across South West London plan”. This will also inform the work plan going forward.

3 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

3.1 Young People’s Survey

4 TIMETABLE

4.1 Not applicable

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Not applicable

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Not applicable

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Not applicable

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Not applicable

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable

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

10.1 None

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

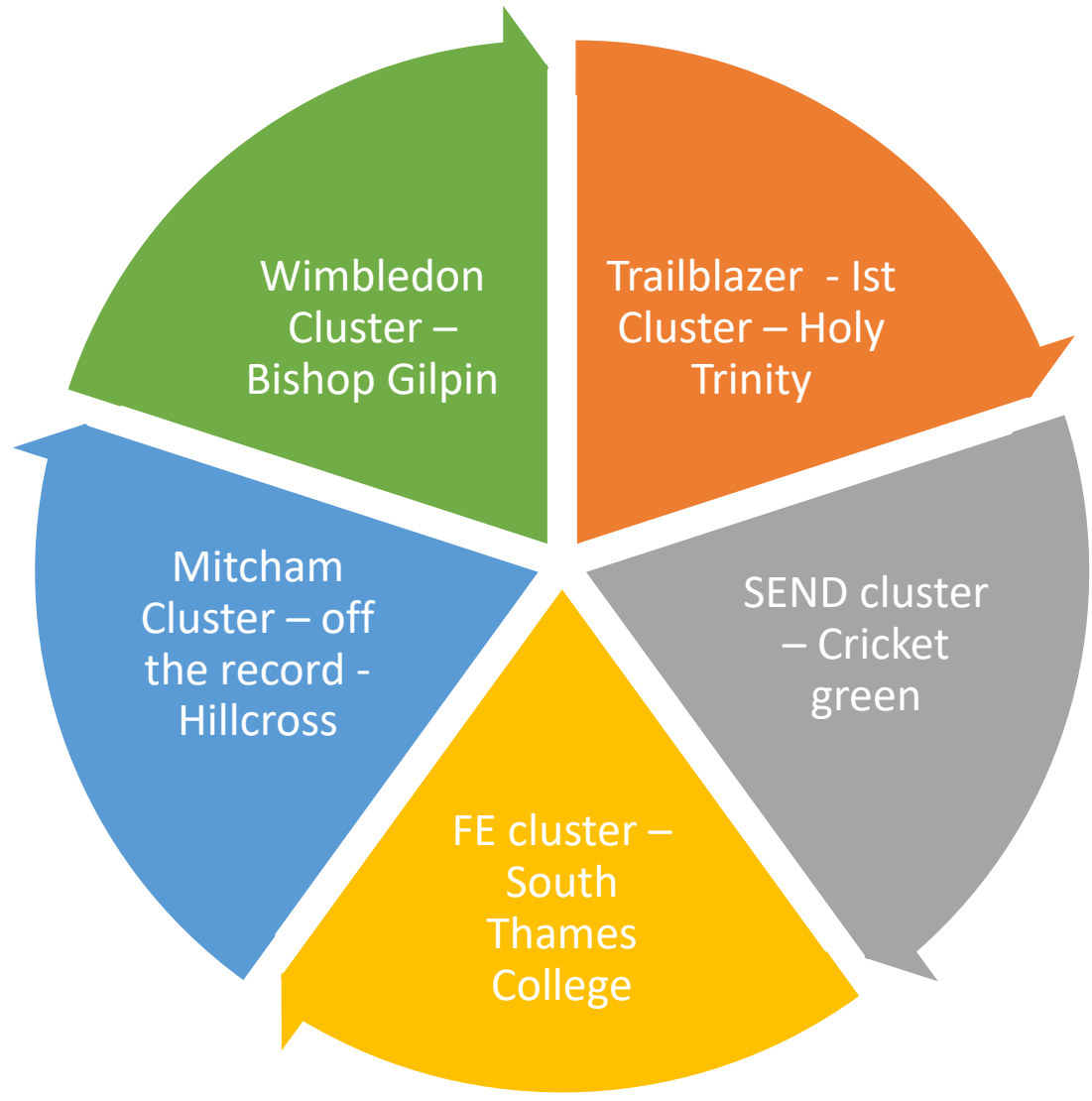
11.1 None

i-Thrive Concept





Mental Health in Schools Teams



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Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 8th February 2023

Wards: All

Subject: Departmental Update

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services, and Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Maisie Davies - Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

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 affecting the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (CLLF) Department, and not covered elsewhere on the agenda. It focuses on those aspects of particular relevance to the department.

2 DETAILS

CHILDREN, LIFELONG LEARNING & FAMILIES

Supporting Schools

School Ofsted Inspections

- 2.1 There have been seven school inspections so far since the beginning of this academic year in September 2023. Of these, five were primary schools: Park Academy, Wimbledon Park, Hatfeild, The Priory and Dundonald. There were two inspections in secondary schools: Harris Academy Merton and Harris Academy Wimbledon.
- 2.2 Both Wimbledon Park Primary School and Harris Academy Merton were found to be outstanding. Park Academy remains a good school following an ungraded (Section 8) inspection with a report that indicates the school may be outstanding at its next graded (Section 5) inspection. Hatfeild Primary was judged to require improvement. Any school which is judged to be less than good receives additional support from our school improvement team and an improvement plan to enable it to move to good or better as soon as better. The reports for the remaining three schools that have been inspected have not yet been published.

- 2.3 School inspections were suspended during the pandemic but in November 2020 Ofsted committed to inspecting all schools between May 2021 and July 2025. In academic year 2022/2023 Ofsted will gradually reduce the gap between inspections of currently Good schools to about five years from the last inspection. This means that there may be a larger than usual number of inspections this year.

Social Workers in Schools

- 2.4 The Social Workers in Schools Project in Merton was set up in September 2020 and is the scale-up of the DfE funded pilot run by the What Works Centre and Cardiff University. The project initially ran from March 2021 until the end of March 2022, but has since been extended until August 2023.
- 2.5 Merton's innovative Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) programme embeds social workers in secondary schools. It delivers reduced referral rates to children's social care (CSC) and to reduce the numbers of Section 17 or Section 47 investigations, along with the overarching aim of reducing the number of children in care and improving educational attainment.
- 2.6 It also aims to promote better inter-agency working between schools and the children's social care system. The SWIS Service in Merton has already evidenced reduced referrals into children's social care and stronger preventative work with children and young people.
- 2.7 The SWIS project is now in its second year and there is evidence of strong relationships between the schools involved and the local authority. This has been supported by the senior leadership teams across both schools and the Local Authority that has championed and supported the project.
- 2.8 On 5th January, Cllr Fraser met with the SWIS team and this was a wonderful experience for the SWIS team to both hear from Cllr Fraser and also to share with her their social work journey, their work with schools and the impact of SWIS project within the schools. The team are currently funded by the DfE until August 2023 and as an authority we would like to explore long term plans for this team beyond August 2023.

Supporting Vulnerable Children

Supporting Vulnerable Children and with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

- 2.9 As at the 31st December 2022, Merton maintained 2,471 EHCPs.
- 2.10 Over the past calendar year, the service has received 383 requests for an EHCNA (Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment), has agreed to undertake 334 EHCNAs, and agreed to issue 229 EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans).
- 2.11 The EHCNA process should be completed within 20 weeks. As of 31st December, the year-to-date timeliness for completing an EHCNA is at 81% in the total number of EHCPs being issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptions. Although we of course aim to ensure that all EHCPs are issued within this

timescale, our performance is well above the national average, and continues to improve as a result of the concerted efforts of officers in the SENDIS team and the wider SEND partnership.

- 2.12 Following the annual review processes this calendar year the Local Authority has ceased to maintain 174 EHC Plans. 136 children and young people with an EHCP moved out of Merton to another Local Authority and 8 moved abroad. In addition, 84 children and young people with an EHCP moved into Merton and their plan was adopted.

Safety Valve

- 2.13 The third quarterly Safety Valve monitoring report to DfE was submitted to DfE on the 20th January 2023. We await confirmation of the release of the third quarterly payment of £875k. The next return is the year end return due in May 2023. The fourth quarter's payment is expected to be paid in March 2023.
- 2.14 The work against all of the nine conditions in the Safety Valve Agreement are progressing well. As at quarter 3, the in-year deficit had reduced by £3.6m compared to the start of the year. We are still working through the detail of the Dedicated Schools Grant settlement, but we have received at least the growth expected in the plan as well as additional growth to fund 3.4% uplifts in the funding for in-borough community special schools, Additionally Resources Provision (ARPs) and the Alternative Provision (sometimes referred to as the PRU).
- 2.15 We have received feedback from DfE on our application for a new special free school in borough. They have confirmed that the application meets their criteria and that the identification of sites options is the next step.
- 2.16 All other things being equal, we are on course to meet the DfE Safety Valve requirement of balancing the DSG budget ahead of the DfE deadline of 2026/27.

Recruitment and Retention

- 2.17 Further to the work undertaken to review the workforce recruitment and retention offer, the department has worked with colleagues across HR and Finance to make a revised offer to Social Work staff and managers in hard to fill posts. This was informed by a benchmarking exercise which demonstrated that neighbouring and statistically similar boroughs in London offered a higher rate of pay. As a result, and in light of the successful Growth Bid, the department has increased the market supplement offer for Social Workers, Team Managers and Services Managers in specific qualifying roles. All staff affected and staff side representatives have been informed. This information will be used as part of focussed recruitment activity in coming months to recruit and retain social work staff and managers in Children's Social Care.

Family Hubs

- 2.18 Merton's Children Lifelong Learning and Families (CLLF) department, in partnership with Public Health colleagues, have been successful in securing funding through the national DfE Family Hub Local Transformation Fund (TF1) from November 2022 until March 2024.

- 2.19 This Family Hubs Local Transformation Fund is a key part of the government's commitment to champion Family Hubs and is funded through HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, which aims to test innovative ways of working across the public sector to address complex policy challenges.
- 2.20 To support the development and implementation of the family hub model, following on from a competitive bidding process, the DfE are providing funding to Merton, as one of 12 LAs that do not currently have family hubs. The fund will pay for the change process only, supporting LAs to move to a family hub model through a revenue transformation programme (circa £800k) and capital funding (circa £100k).
- 2.21 Family hubs are defined as a *“place-based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services. They bring services together to improve access to services and connections between families, professionals and communities - putting relationships at the heart”*.
- 2.22 A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, whole-family, joined up family support services. Family Hubs deliver these family support services from pregnancy, through the child's early years and later childhood, and into early adulthood until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities). Family hubs are a 'front door' to a range of early help, public health, and wider support services at universal and early help level.
- 2.23 In Merton we are currently developing our programme in line with the national framework which has three main thematic requirements and delivery expectations:
- Access - More accessible – through clearly branded and communicated hub buildings, virtual offers and outreach.
 - Connections - Better connected – family hubs drive progress on joining up professionals, services and providers (state, private, voluntary) – through co- location, data sharing, shared outcomes and governance. Moving from services organised for under-fives, to families with children of all ages, reduces fragmentation (even though an emphasis on early years and the 'Start for Life' offer will remain).
 - Relationships - Relationship-centred – practice in a family hub builds on family strengths and looks to improve family relationships to address underlying issue.
- 2.24 Please see below for links and attachments providing further information:
- National Centre for Family Hubs: National Centre for Family Hubs
 - Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme: Family hubs and start for life programme: local authority guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 2.25 Over the coming months there will be a series of task and finish groups as well as workshops as we co-design and co-produce our programme. We anticipate a range of stakeholder engagement across the borough, with a focus on the geographical areas where the main Family Hubs are planned in Cricket Green (Phipps Bridge Youth Centre and Church Children Centre) and Longthornton

(Acacia Children's Centre and Adventure Playground). Please contact Allison Jones allison.jones@merton.gov.uk for further information.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

- 2.26 The government funded Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) Programme funds holiday clubs to offer physical exercise; arts and cultural activities; healthy food; trips out; and other enriching activities to children from five to fifteen years old who are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM) . HAF clubs must provide a minimum of four hours, four days per week, for at least one week in the Easter and Christmas holidays, and four weeks in the summer holiday.
- 2.27 Merton currently has 6,000 children eligible for free school meals and this number has risen significantly over the last two years. Merton has extended the eligibility to attend a HAF club, beyond those eligible for FSM, to children with an EHCP; children with a social or family worker; young carers; children from Ukraine; refugees; and those displaced by the Galpin Road tragedy. We also gave schools flexibility to identify a few more children in families facing other challenging circumstances.
- 2.28 The DfE originally awarded Merton £686,570 to deliver HAF during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2022. This was later increased by an additional £33,640 in December 2022. The budget was also supplemented by £8,000 from the Early Years and Childcare service, and £1,750 of fund-raising to enable attendance at the pantomime.
- 2.29 All holidays saw a wide variety of activities on offer, including multi-sports, Brazilian capoeira and film-making, with additional enrichment activity including theatre workshops, dance, African drumming, and a reptile experience. Many camps had external trips for example to the south coast, central London, West-end theatres, animal petting at Dean City Farm, and visits to theme parks. In addition, approximately 340 children attended pantomimes at New Wimbledon and Polka theatres at Christmas. Providers are all quality assured through on-site visits and the quality of delivery has largely been strong.
- 2.30 Easter's programme – the first HAF programme which followed Covid - was led largely by Merton's voluntary sector and a few pioneering schools. The programme delivered good volume, with 1,400 places on offer, good participation rates and diverse activities enriched by a "carousel" of providers offering additional enrichment. This was delivered at a cost of £65 per session, and the HAF Board identified that this would need to be reduced to reach more children in future programmes.
- 2.31 Summer and October HAF programmes saw some operational gains: a more robust "code per child" system to ensure participants were eligible; a fixed price of £25 per session (£30 for children in extended categories); and a broader range of providers, including swimming lessons at Canons for many who had never been in a swimming pool before. The voluntary sector still delivered 50% of the programme and an increasing number of schools provided premises. While costs were reduced, and the offer increased, participation rates varied across providers.

- 2.32 Christmas saw us increase grant payments from £25 to £27.50 per child, (with the exception of refugees who were funded at £30). We also piloted some additional SEN provision with four providers. Though marketing improved, seasonal flu affected participation at several providers.
- 2.33 Overall, our HAF programmes have performed well, with a rich variety of activities, trips out and hot food on offer. Around a quarter of participants have a special educational need or disability, and these children have generally thrived well in the activities on offer. Secondary pupils make up less than a quarter of participants, and in 2023 we are seeking to develop provision more tailored to 11-to-15-year-olds, We are developing outdoor learning, film-making, cultural and a wider range of creative arts activities, and more age-targeted sports competitions.
- 2.34 To better meet the needs of children with more complex levels of Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, we are examining how we might improve the links between HAF, short breaks provided for children with SEND, and provision for Children With Disabilities. We plan to put on more specialist SEND provision and we will work with schools to better meet the needs of pupils with SEND in mainstream schooling in mainstream HAF provision.

Merton Safety Valve 3rd Monitoring Report

January 2023

Date Submitted	20 th January 2023
Signed off by: Director of Corporate Services (S151 Officer) Director of Children's Services	Roger Kershaw Jane McSherry

Summary:

Progress against the plan remains good. We are seeing the impact in the number of referrals received and accepted, and in subsequent approval of EHCPs. Prior to the commencement of the plan, the numbers of EHCPs had been rising by around 300 per year and the plan was based on an assumption that they would continue to grow by 313 per year without action. As of December, the number of EHCPs is 43 fewer than the same period last year. This reflects a significant turnaround in practice and the way we work with schools. However, this also reflects a higher number of families moving out of the borough.

The in-year deficit is £3.6m lower than at the end of 2021/22, which is a significant reduction. Provider inflation uplifts are well above the 2% assumed in the plan and although we have managed these carefully, this has added £550k to costs this year. Some independent sector schools have already submitted bids for next year's uplift of 10%, although we will not be considering those until we are clearer about the trajectory of inflation.

There is also a time lag between taking the actions to pull back activity and create new capacity and seeing the full financial impact. A lot of cost is tied up in placements in the independent sector and change mostly happens at the natural pupil transition points. We did have movement in September (including some moves from the independent sector) which is reflected in the £1.2m savings from the new special school capacity at Whatley Avenue for example. Reducing these costs is taking longer than anticipated in the plan but the capacity development and demand management puts us in a strong position to get back to plan.

Our consultation with schools was supportive on the proposed transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. We await Secretary of State approval for an additional £500k (cash amount) transfer as set out in the SV plan agreed with DfE, and the transfer from Early Years to High Need Block.

If the block transfers assumed in the plan for 2022/23 and 2023/24 are approved, we are confident of being on or close to plan next year,

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 1: 3.1 Support Mainstream Schools to adopt inclusive practice to enable more children and young people to remain in mainstream settings where appropriate. Develop a graduated response which sets clear guidance on support that should be available in mainstream settings.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Green	Green	Green	RAG

Progress Update:

The EPS/ SALT/ Behaviour Team and Learning team have met in several “field force day”. The first resulted in “single conversations” with all schools in the borough. This has highlighted overlaps and gaps in specific school provision which would enable them to develop better inclusive practice. From these meetings joint programs of support for each school are being developed, ensuring that officers from all teams are working to the same priorities. The second field force day was on 13th December and looked at how we better join up the SEND advisor pilot school work (see below) with the wider offer. A wider group of services were in attendance, including the commissioned services of Merton Autism Outreach Service, and OT.

Ordinary Available - Primary SENCOs, secondary SENCOs and all Early Years Providers (PVI and maintained) have been consulted on the draft Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) to ensure a grounded approach, and feedback has resulted in significant engagement by schools and settings about what this really means for them. OAG steering group has collated feedback to develop targeted guidance for early years, primary and secondary settings, and to highlight the requirements from settings/schools (e.g. central training) for successful implementation to occur. Case studies and examples enable a focus on what practice should look like in EYs, primary and secondary provision. Informal publication has taken place, whilst Ordinary Available discussions are on-going to deepen engagement and achieve impact.

Targeted visits

One full-time and one 0.6 FTE SEND leaders, and three Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs), have been seconded to the role of SEN Advisor. The three SLEs are senior leaders from two of LBM’s special schools and have experience of supporting mainstream schools.

School Inclusion Profiles for each LBM school have been created using available data linked to SEND. These include context, achievement and financial data. All schools have received a static copy of their profile. There is an on-going consultation with the data team to review and amend these profiles responding to school feedback.

Phase 1 of the project is providing 0.5 day a week of support to six primary schools and two secondary schools. Schools have been targeted based on their numbers of pupils identified with SEND at either SEN Support or with an EHCP, relative to their deprivation context. Phase 1 represents schools in areas of both high and low deprivation.

The Inspector for SEN and one of the SEN Advisors has met with the Headteacher and SENCo of each school in the phase 1 cohort. The agenda for each meeting has been driven by the School Inclusion Profile data and the school's own self-evaluation. The outcome of the meeting has been to establish a number of key areas of SEN provision for development. These areas link to improving meeting pupils needs at SEN Support with a particular focus on upskilling class and subject teachers.

Each school has created a one-page action plan with the SEN Advisor. This identifies aims of the support, what the school will do, what the SEN Advisor will do and agreed success criteria. SEN Advisors will join other inclusion service professionals at the school based 'one conversation' meeting in the spring term. Support in each school will follow the model of upskilling a small group of staff to create a best practice model to be shared more widely in the school alongside a programme of whole school awareness and strategy training for all staff. Best practice models will be shared with phase 2 schools and via the termly LBM SENCo Forum, termly secondary school SENCo meeting, SENCo working group and Headteacher meetings. Strategic feedback will be provided via the Education SLT SEN Strategy meetings.

Support for phase 1 schools will run for the latter part of the autumn term and spring term 2023. Phase 2 schools will be invited to join the project for the summer term 2023. Support for this phase will draw on lessons learned and support packages developed in phase 1. The number of schools joining in summer 2023 will depend upon the successful recruitment of more LBM SENCos. As a minimum we hope that 12 primary schools and 4 secondary schools will have had access to SEN Advisor support by the end of the academic year 2023. This represents over a quarter of primary schools, and just under half of secondary schools in the Borough.

LBM has a rolling recruitment programme to second SENCos to the advisor posts. The optimum number is three full-time SEN Advisors. In order to attract a strong field part-time options are being made available.

Through the planning meetings with schools the following issues have been raised / identified, which is informing how we develop our priorities and work with schools:

- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is the prevalent need area for pupils at SEN Support across the phase 1 schools. This is confirmed by LBM context data.
- The current model and capacity for speech and language therapy support in LBM, has resulted in a large proportion of this resource supporting EHC assessments and delivering to statutory provision. Guidance, support and training as part of the graduated approach at SEN Support has been insufficient. As a result many school staff lack basic skills and understanding of

how to plan for and meet SLCN in the classroom. Additional SaLT support will be required to enhance the work of the SEN Advisors.

- Schools have identified a growing number of pupils with complex needs. This is likely to be caused by the impact of the pandemic and lockdown including access to assessment and guidance during this period. Whilst this project focuses on meeting needs at SEN Support the impact of pupils with complex needs is affecting schools' capacity to meet needs earlier in the graduated approach.

Next Steps:

- Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) document for Primary settings to be published in final form post further engagement
- Further engagement to further develop Early Years and secondary specific OAG.
- Take OAG into single conversations with schools and settings.
- Complete support for phase 1 schools; share best practice more widely through SENCO forums etc
- Development of Merton SEND Inclusion Charter.
- Promotion of the DFE Early Years education recovery programme: supporting the sector to include level 3 SENCo qualification.
- Continue work with South Thames focused on curriculum, inclusion and finance.

Risks:

- There are a multitude of competing demands on the focus and energies of schools as they continue to recover from the pandemic, including the impact of whatever will replace the White Paper/Schools' Bill, the SEND Green Paper, all schools being inspected by 2025, and the impact of the pandemic on children's development, health, and academic achievement. In this context their capacity to manage such change must be clearly understood.
- It will be important to ensure parents continue to be brought with us, and that schools are supported so that they are able in turn to give parents confidence in the SEN support offer to their child our gradual approach to Ordinarily Available is in response to this
- In the context of school's own budget pressures (exacerbated by the rise in energy costs and the September 2022 workforce pay rises) they may not be able to focus resource on their Ordinarily Available offer/ capacity.
- The full impact of the pandemic is yet to be fully understood, including a possible increase in the numbers of children with a greater level of SEND complexity. Should this increase materialise, the Ordinarily Available offer from schools and settings will need to respond, though recognising that it might also result in an increase in the numbers of children needing EHCPs to ensure their needs are met
- Increasing costs across EY sector and pressures around sustainability/viability for free 2,3 and 4-year-old places that can impact pm quality and impact on SEND support

<u>Agreement Condition</u>	<u>Assurance Level</u>			
Condition 2: 3.2 Strengthen the SEN Support offer available in mainstream schools to reduce escalation of children and young people’s needs and manage demands for EHCP’s. This should include targeted investment on early intervention.	<u>Q1</u>	<u>Q2</u>	<u>Q3</u>	<u>Q4</u>
	Amber	Amber	Green	RAG
<p>The analysis of fixed term exclusions has resulted in a detailed understanding of placements in the PRU and assessment places in Melbury College. It shows strong evidence that Melbury development has kept more children with SEMH in Merton and that exclusions are not a driver for EHCPs.</p> <p>The London Children’s Practice has provided free training in Q3 on Zones of Regulation which was offered to all staff in Merton schools to increase staff understanding of supporting dysregulation in pupils. This will be offered on a termly basis for all staff.</p> <p>The Learning team, Behaviour Service and EPS are all supporting schools through SEN support offers, including increasingly aligned training and advice. Specific work has been undertaken to provide training to schools on dyslexia, to reduce demand for individual assessments. This work has strengthened the SEN support offer; however, we have noted that parental confidence is still an issue in more affluent areas where school feel an expectation for individual assessments. Similarly, in SEMH we have developed much greater capacity with all schools in Merton having access to school based Mental Health teams supporting low mood. A working group is developing guidance in line with the i-THRIVE model for mental health that advises on the range of provision for children and young people with emotional based school avoidance. This increase in ICS funded provision that can be accessed without an EHCP is strengthening the offer and reducing the requirement for EHCNAs for SEMH.</p> <p>Targeted investment in early intervention was boosted by Merton’s successful bid to develop Family Hubs through Transformation Fund 1 (TF1). This work will include the development of a multi-agency partnership approach to using Children’s Centres and Youth Centres as community early help provision. We have secured 900k to support the transformation across our early help system; improving outcomes for families across the 0 – 18 (up to 25 for SEND) age range. One aspect of this offer will be support to families where there are a range of additional needs, including SEND.</p> <p>Now the outcome of the national EY consultation for funding formulae and indicative budgets for 23/24 has been published, we will review the eligibility and criteria for access to SENIF in partnership with the sector, taking into account the OA work that is underway.</p>				

Next Steps:

- Review of Early Years SENIF funding and criteria for allocation of funds and support to settings via consultation and stakeholder engagement.
- Work with Merton Special Training Alliance (MSTA) to further develop aligned central training offer for schools and settings, consideration of what could be available free of charge, particularly for identified schools.
- Develop with MSTA their offer for individual schools.
- Develop involvement of curriculum advisors within the school improvement team to strengthen the SEN support offer in schools in their areas of expertise.
- Develop the role of the Early Years Early Intervention and Inclusion officers, improving the approach to whole setting support and developing OA and inclusive practice across the sector.
- Consideration of GL speech and language assessments across early years and primary phases.

Risks:

- Maintaining services within the statutory SEND arena whilst offering more to improve the SEND support offer.
- Emerging fragility with regard to sustainability of the EY sector, meeting needs of young children and enabling attendance at training and CPD events.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 3: 3.3 Strengthen the professional networks across mainstream settings to promote learning and confidence in meeting children and young people’s needs, including articulating school level inclusion standards.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Green	Green	Green	RAG

Progress Update:

There was continued high attendance at the autumn term LBM SEN meetings. These include SENCo Forum (all schools – an in-person event), Secondary SENCo meeting – (virtual event) and the SENCo Working Group (virtual meeting with representatives from each school cluster across LBM).

Each event had a focus on the aims of the LBM SEND Strategy (including Safety Valve activity.) For example, at the SENCo Forum SENCos reviewed the content of the Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) collated so far. A workshop exercise run by the new SEN Advisors took SENCos through the School Inclusion Profile and its contents. SENCos provided feedback on what works well and additional data they would like to have access to. An overview of the SEN Advisor support project was

provided. Follow up activities and feedback were shared at both the Secondary SENCo meeting and the SENCo Working Group. The new SEN Advisors are now members of the latter.

The Inspector for SEN who is overseeing the SEN Advisor support project has provided all schools with regular updates about the progress of the project. This also provides an opportunity to raise the profile of the SEN Advisor role and encourage applications for secondment to the post.

Feedback on the impact of the project and sharing of practice is scheduled for the next SENCo Forum in early March 2023. The spring meetings will also include a focus on meeting needs in the mainstream classroom. For example, joint training from the Curriculum Advisor for maths and the SEN Advisors.

Next Steps:

- New SEN Advisors to continue work with the SENCo Working Group to support the development and collation of inclusive practice across Merton schools.
- Schools working with SEN Advisors to provide feedback of support to the wider school network.
- A regular SEN Strategy newsletter is planned to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the development work that is being undertaken and the impact this is having.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 4: 3.4 Develop Merton’s sufficiency strategy to ensure that current specialist provision is being used most effectively, including working closely with school leaders to optimise availability of provision. Expand specialist provision within the LA appropriately in order to meet the needs of children and young people within the authority.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Green	Green	Green	RAG

Progress Update:

Significant progress was reported last quarter where phased works were completed for the start of term in September 2022 to allow 40 children to start at Whatley Avenue Campus (a satellite site for Melrose School), expansion of ARPs at West Wimbledon Primary School and Hatfield Primary School, and the opening of the ARP at Cranmer Primary School.

Since this time works were fully completed at Whatley Avenue at the end of the October half term, and design work has started for the main phase works at Cranmer Primary School and West Wimbledon Primary School, to complete in September

2023. The detailed brief is in the process of being agreed for the expansion of Perseid School, for design work to start in January 2023.

Following in-principle support for the proposed new Special Free School in June, our bid was submitted on 28 October 2022 which included suggestions for sites. Since this time we have been in dialogue with the DfE Capital Directorate, enabling feasibility work to be undertaken on some possible sites. We have been advised that all other aspects of the application have been assessed to the DfE teams satisfaction and the firming up of site options is the key outstanding issue.

Next Steps:

- Further liaison with DfE on site options and other work on progressing the new school to allow Minister approval
- Progressing the next round of school expansion project for special school provision, with the priority being the next phase of Cranmer and West Wimbledon, and for Perseid School
- Start work with Ricards Lodge and Rutlish to agree their approach to expanding their ARPs
- Final stages of ARP/ASD lead

Risks:

- Site risks for the new school
- Developing additional ARPs in the secondary sector is more challenging, especially with two good/outstanding academy secondary schools having physical space according to former net capacity assessments, but not currently wishing to provide the provision.
- The creation of new specialist places can lead to a new demand. The provision available in specialist placements will be explicitly described so that placements of children and young people with lower-level needs than intended for the provision should not take place

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 5: 3.5 Secure collaboration and financial commitment from partner agencies where appropriate, in particular ensuring health partners make adequate contributions to provision.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Amber	Amber	Amber	RAG

Progress Update:

The bulk of the contributions as set out in the plan have been delivered. Health contributions to EHCPs are £252k higher than in 2021/22, which is below the sum

assumed in the plan but a significant change representing a 27% increase.

Health contributions are obviously determined case by case. They contribute to a small number of cases, but where they do, their contribution is a high percentage. This is an area that requires further focus in the New Year to ensure that health contributions properly reflect the health elements of plans and that the joint panel is sufficiently rigorous in assessing this.

Partner	Forecast additional contribution 2022/23 As at Qtr1
ASC	£500,000
CSC	£500,000
Corporate	£500,000
Health	£252,229
Total	£1,752,229

We are in discussion with ICS about a joint Head of Integrated Children's Commissioning role which will help bring together our work to support CYP with SEND. We are aiming to have this in place early in the New Year. This will be a stepping stone to wider discussion on joint commissioning and integration of services.

Next Steps:

- Take forward interim appointment of Head of Integrated Children's Commissioning

Risks:

- The ICB will be restructuring for the new financial year and changes in personnel in partners can disrupt joint working.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Condition 6: 3.6 Develop and implement a clear planning and decision-making process for placements, in line with the sufficiency strategy.				
	Green	Green	Green	RAG

Progress Update:

There is ongoing focus on ensuring placement decision making is robust, focusing on pupils' needs. The Phased Transfer Panel has been established and is monitoring the destinations of pupils for Year 7, Year 12 and Post 14. Data on destinations will be analysed post 15th February (which is when we get the post 16 college data) and 31st March. Current data is showing that the majority of pupils will be placed in mainstream settings. The LA is working with mainstream schools to support and challenge consultation responses where the education setting is stating that they are unable to meet need. The LA is also working with parents about parental preference and being clear that the LA is not required to consult with schools not on the Section 41 list.

The Phased Transfer Panel has provided increased management oversight of consultations and destinations for pupils. EHC Co-ordinators are aware of the process and the rationale for this panel.

Next steps:

- Implement the Phased Transfer Panel

Risks:

- Ensuring the new ways of working are fully embedded throughout the structure

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 7: 3.7 Strengthen oversight and contracting with independent and non-maintained schools to ensure value for money, including reviewing expensive placements.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Amber	Amber	Amber	RAG

Progress Update:

The DPS for purchasing independent and non-maintained special schools went live on 7th of November 2022. The new contract will go live from 3rd of April 2023, and it will run for 5 years and end on 31st of March 2028. This robust and transparent procurement process will strengthen effective commissioning and monitoring of independent and non-maintained special school placements. The brokerage of the independent and non-maintained special school placements will enable a co-ordinated approach to the market with contractual mechanisms that will help monitor quality, improve outcomes and ensure placements offer best value for money. We are confident that we will have at least 20 schools signed up to the system by the end of January and then we will then work with other schools to increase that further.

Review of independent and non-maintained placements has led to a cashable savings recovery of £200k to date. Cost avoidance savings exceed £300k. There are ongoing provider meetings to support individual deep dive work.

Unfortunately, the high level of general inflation has been an understandable focus for independent schools and fee negotiations have taken up a lot of time. A total of 37 providers submitted inflationary fee uplift requests. Only 18 providers have had their inflationary uplift requests approved so far and there are ongoing negotiation meetings with providers. We estimate that the cost will be £550k more than allowed for in the SV plan. However, in the light of the high inflation levels, this represents a reasonable outcome and is £160k lower than the fee uplifts demanded.

There has been a noted increase of therapy and 1-to-1 increments as well. Fee negotiations are increasingly becoming more difficult, but the priority remains on supporting safe delivery of services to our most vulnerable children and young people.

We are already receiving fee uplift requests for next year for 10%. We will not deal with these until next year when we see the pattern of inflation and the national teacher pay award, but even based on an assumption of inflation falling back to 7-8%, the inflation pressure next year will be in the region of £800k above plan.

Although we continue to RAG rate this section amber, we are confident that we now have a robust system for commissioning and monitoring independent sector placements. We now have two full time SEND commissioning managers in place. Whilst there is always more to do, we are better placed to control costs.

Next Steps:

- Complete DPS bid evaluation and moderation including award governance paperwork
- Continue individual learner deep dives on all identified savings opportunity areas
- Finalise recruitment of 1 SENDIS Dedicated DPS Officer.

Risks:

- Although the market engagement exercise was positive, we cannot be sure how current independent providers will respond to the live DPS/procurement
- The high level of general inflation is driving demand for significant fee increases and is also a potential distraction from the wider discussions about delivery, outcomes and fees.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 8:	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4

3.8 Strengthen the EHCP annual review process in order that EHCPs can be stepped down where children and young people’s needs have been met appropriately.				
	Amber	Amber	Amber	RAG
<p>Progress Update:</p> <p>The Annual Review Improvement Plan has been reviewed at the SEND Governance Board. It has been agreed that Invision 360 will be purchased which is an audit tool for annual reviews and to monitor outcomes of the EHCP’s. This tool will support the support and challenge meetings with providers on their outcomes and delivery of the EHCP.</p> <p>Following the recruitment of more EHCP coordinators (bringing down case loads) their attendance at annual reviews has increased. This provides additional oversight and management of the review process.</p> <p>There has been a focus has been on the attendance at annual reviews for our post 19 co-hort. In Quarter 3 we ceased 25 EHCP’s with a Q3 savings of £50k and annual saving of £250k.</p> <p>Improved monitoring at Annual Reviews and engagement with providers has meant that we are aware of pupils who move out of area in a timely manner. 39 pupils moved out of area in Q3 and this resulted in a saving of £118,651.00 for Q3 (£350k fye).</p> <p>We track and monitor phased transfers at case level and undertake deep dives where apparent anomalies or adverse trends are identified.</p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of the Annual Review Improvement Plan 				
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level			
Condition 9: 3.9 Review and develop a clear SEND financial strategy that ensures case level decision making is strategic and appropriate.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Green	Green	Green	RAG

Progress Update:

The understanding of and commitment to the plan is more embedded. This is reflected in the nature of the discussion at Schools Forum and its SV sub-group. We continue to brief schools on the necessity of the actions in the plan, linked to the ambitions in the SEND Green Paper, seeking to bring them with us on the journey. These discussions continue through to individual school and case level, through SENCO attendance at SEN panels. System-wide training on the High Needs funding guidance has also commenced.

As we move towards getting back on plan financially, we will need to look for opportunities to invest in more short-term support to pupils and in Early Years at SEND support level.

The setting level for SEND data profiles we delivered for the new academic year are informing whole school accountability meetings.

We are forecasting ahead over the life of the programme and adjusting each month in line with our budget monitoring, which is reflected in the graph in the summary. If the indicative settlement and block transfer come good, we are confident of being back onto plan. And subject to delivery of the new school, we stand a good chance of getting to an in-year balance a year ahead of plan.

The Council's commitment to the programme remains. We report monthly to the Corporate Management Team and to the Leader and Cabinet Member for Education on progress and issues. We also provide updates to the Children & Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel.

Next Steps:

School Forum approval and Secretary of State (SOS) of the transfer of (0.5%) c£600k to c£700k from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (final value depending upon school block final DSG published allocation for 2023/24). This will represent 0.5% of the Schools Block allocation and is included within our published Safety Valve plan. Also seek approval from School Forum and SOS for an additional £500k (cash amount) as supported in 2022/23 and published within the Safety Valve plan for ongoing years.

Risks:

- It will be important to maintain strong partnership working with schools and parents, to ensure that we are all pulling in the same direction for the SEND financial strategy.
- Block transfers are a key element of the plan and SoS approval where needed is a risk to this.

Appendices:

- SEND Strategic Governance Board December 2022 minutes

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Work Programme 2022/2023



This table sets out the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2022/23; the items listed were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 22 June 2022. 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: Councillor Usaama Kaweesa

Vice-chair: Councillor Chessie Flack

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: 29 September 2022 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm, 20 September 2022)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Departmental update including update on: safety valve support given to pupils with English as an additional language. Attain Programme	Report to the Panel	Jane McSherry, Director of Children Schools, and Families	Review priority work streams within the Children Schools and Families Department.
SEND Strategy and Written Statement of Action	Report to the Panel	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Scrutiny of the current SEND strategy
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Head of Policy, Strategy and Performance	To review the basket of indicators
Work programme 2022/23	Written Report	Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer	To review the work programme and agree any changes

Meeting date: 10 November 2022 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 01 November 2022)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report.	Report to the Panel	Independent Scrutineer Sarah Lawrence and Young Inspector.	Review the work of the Partnership.
Child Healthy Weight Programme.	Report to the Panel	Julia Groom, Consultant in Public Health	To Scrutinise the projects within this programme
Departmental Update	Report to the Panel	Jane McSherry, Director of Children Schools and Families	Review priority work streams within the Children Schools and Families Department.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Work programme 2022/23	Written Report	Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer	To review the work programme and agree any changes

Meeting date: 11 January 2023 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 3 January 2022)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Budget/business plan scrutiny	Written Report	Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services	To discuss and make recommendations to forward to Cabinet
Departmental update report including Speech and language services Alternative education provision Support for gifted and talented pupils	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Director of Children, Schools and Families	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.
Cabinet Member Priorities	Verbal Update	Councillor Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member for Education and Life Long Learning Councillor Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	To scrutinise the Cabinet Member's priorities and key areas of concern
Children and Young people's Participation and Engagement in Scrutiny	Written Report	Councillor Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.	A report setting out plans to involve young people in scrutiny.
Performance monitoring		Maisie Davies, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern

Work programme 2022/23	Written Report	Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer	To review the work programme and agree any changes
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Meeting date: 08 February 2022 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 31 January 2022*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Departmental update report	Written Report	Jane McSherry Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.
Mental health and wellbeing of children and young people	Written Report	Keith Shipman, Head of Education Inclusion	Panel to receive an update on this issue to ensure that services are meeting the needs of residents in Merton
Task Group updates: Youth task group Mental Health	Verbal updates	Task Group Chair	Panel to receive an update on the work of the task groups

Meeting date: 15 March 2022

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
<p>Departmental Update Report:</p> <p>Care leavers accommodation</p> <p>Foster carer recruitment</p> <p>Support to young children (0-5), who have been identified as having significant special needs. including the Portage services</p>	<p>Report to the Panel</p>	<p>Jane McSherry, Director Children, Schools and Families</p>	<p>An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.</p>
<p>Special Meeting on Cllr's Corporate Parenting Role - including presentation on Cllr Corporate Parenting responsibilities and Corporate Parenting Annual Report.</p>	<p>Report/Presentation</p>	<p>Jane McSherry, Director Children, Schools and Families</p>	<p>Review Corporate Parenting role and the work undertaken in this area.</p>
<p>Performance monitoring</p>	<p>Basket of indicators</p>	<p>Maisie Davies, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance</p>	<p>To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern</p>
<p>Schools Standards Annual Report</p>	<p>Written Report</p>	<p>Elizabeth Fitzpatrick Assistant Director of Education and Early Help</p>	<p>To scrutinise attainment information</p>

		Keith Shipman, Head of Education Inclusion	
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